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POL 372-001

April 16, 2013

Asheville City Schools: Safe Schools?

Violence is a significant issue in America, and one of the ongoing concerns for society. Parents tend to choose schools that will help their children to maximize learning with less discouragement, however, violence in schools plays a part in discouraging student to learn and participate in school. No state, town, or city is immune to violence in the school system, not even North Carolina. By comparing Asheville, NC, to the nation, this will help to determine if parents and school officials within these close communities should be on the lookout for certain variables that may cause a surge in violence. Violence in school systems has a variety of variables, but not limited to a regions demographics population and alternative schools and programs to help limiting recidivism.

The United States has a population of 312,000,000, and it is growing at a rate of 11%, and it needs to be noted that over 23% of the U.S. population is under the age of 18. North Carolina is a state with a population of over 9,000,000 people with a growth rate of 19%. Let take an even deeper look. Nestled in the mountains is the city of Asheville with a population of 84,000 and a 21% growth rate. The Asheville population has increased by 21% from 2000 to 2012. The U.S., like most other countries, has more than one race. According to statistics, Caucasians compose 83% of the overall population, 75% of the N.C. population, and 77.75% of Buncombe county. African

Americans represent 9% at the national level, 21% of North Carolina's population, and 18% of the Asheville population. Asians represent 2% at the National level, 1% of the N.C. population, and they represent 2% of Asheville population. Other races (American Indian, Native Hawaiian, and others) 7% nationwide, 4% of North Carolina's population, and 4% of Asheville's population (United States Census).

	United States	North Carolina	Asheville
Population	312,000,000	9,000,000	84,000
Caucasians	83%	75%	77.75%
African Americans	9%	21%	18%
Asians	2%	1%	2%
Other Races	7%	4%	4%

According to the United States Census, 42 million people of the American population are black, with 82% of African Americans have a high school diploma or higher. Eighteen percent of them over the age of 25 have a bachelor's degree, 1.5 million have an advanced degree, and 2.9 million are enrolled in colleges. North Carolina is a state that has 1,483,397 students and 2,550 schools. Fifty-four percent of NC students are white, 31% of them are black, and 12% of them are Hispanic, while other minority groups are 5% of the students. These numbers are important because they will determine if the nation, N.C. and Asheville are following the same trends,

allowing a pattern to establish school violence or if one system is battering African-American students more than the others (United States Census).

North Carolina Students by Race/Ethnicity

Race	% Students in School
White	54%
Black	31%
Hispanic	12%
Others	5%

(United States Census)

According to the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), African Americans now constitute nearly 1 million of the total 2.3 million incarcerated populations, and they are imprisoned at nearly six times the rate of whites. Even though African Americans and Hispanics make up around a quarter of the U.S. population, they consist of 58% of all prisoners. African Americans represent 26% of juvenile arrests. Forty-four percent 44% of their youth are detained. Of those children, 46% of them are judicially waived to criminal court, and 58% of the youth are admitted to state prisons (NAACP).

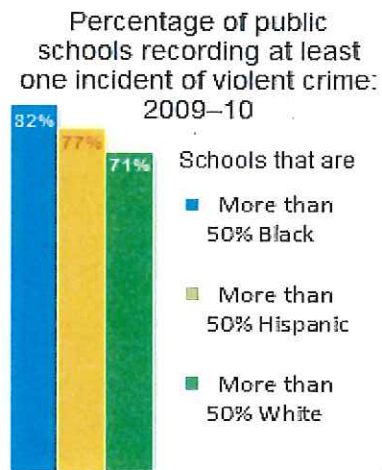
Violence crimes are crimes that composed of four offenses: murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Any action that

involves force or threat of force is consider to be violent crime. Studies have indicated that U.S. public schools have a 73% violence rate. When its divided into racial categories, 82% of these schools are more than 50% black, and have recorded at least one violent crime. If we compare these numbers to 77% of the majority Hispanic schools and 71% of majority white schools, black schools recorded fewer incidents than white and Hispanic schools. In such cases where violent incidents were more frequent, 29% of the majority of black schools recorded 20 or more incidents compared to 22% of Hispanic and 16% of white schools (Black Demographic).

From this average it can be ascertained that blacks are the leading contributor to violence in the school system, and represent a higher percentage of school violence. Whether this is a national problem or local one can be ascertained using statistical facts and information. What can't be determined by these facts is whether America, North Carolina, and Asheville are pushing African Americans towards crime, and causing this upward trend of school violence by African Americans and eventually criminal acts by African Americans. The crime rate in N.C. schools is slightly below the national average of 5% (United States Census).

The graph below indicates that schools that are more than 50% black have an 82% chance of seeing at least one violent crime in their school year compared to schools with a 50% or more white population that only have 71% chance (Black Demographic).

United States Percentage of Public Schools Recording at least one Incident of
Violent Crime 2009-2010



(Black Demographic)

North Carolina Schools Crime and Violence

Reporting Year	Total Acts	Act per 1000 students	Total Acts
2007-2008	11,276	7.85	11,276
2008-2009	11,116	7.59	11,116
2009-2010	11,608	7.97	11,608
2010-2011	11,657	8.03	11,657
2011-2012	11,161	7.63	11,161

(2011-2012 Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee 10)

Crime is designated into two categories, violent crimes and property crimes. The table shows the crime rates in the U.S. in 2011. The table below views the crime report for the U.S. in the 2011 year.

Crime Rates in the United States

Crime rates (2011)	
Crime type	Rate *
Homicide:	4.7
Forcible rape:	26.8
Robbery:	113.7
Aggravated assault:	241.1
Violent crime:	386.3
Burglary:	702.2
Larceny-theft:	1976.9
Motor vehicle theft:	229.6
Property crime:	2908.7
Notes	
* Number of reported crimes per 100,000 population.	
Source: FBI Crime in the United States 2011	

According to FBI's Uniform Crime Reporting Program, (UCR) and North Carolina State Board of Education violent crime is composed of four offenses: homicide and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Violent crimes are defined in the UCR Program as those offenses, which involve force or threat of force. While property crime is composed of three offenses: burglary, larceny-theft, and motor vehicle theft. In 2011, an estimated 1,203,564 violent crimes occurred nationwide, a decrease of 3.8 percent from the 2010 estimate. When considering five and ten-year trends, the 2011 estimated violent crime total was 15.4 percent below the 2007

level and 15.5 percent below the 2002 level. There were an estimated 386.3 violent crimes per 100,000 inhabitants in 2011. Aggravated assaults accounted for the highest number of violent crimes reported to law enforcement at 62.4 %. Robbery comprised 29.4 % of violent crimes, forcible rape accounted for 6.9 %, and murder accounted for 1.2 % of estimated violent crimes in 2011. Information collected regarding type of weapon showed that firearms were used in 67.7% of the nation's murders, 41.3 % of robberies, and 21.2 % of aggravated assaults.

According to the UCR and in the graph below, a simple 1-10 scale compares national rates to Asheville and Hendersonville (a small N.C. city located approximately 22 miles south of Asheville) violent crime and property crime rates. Violent crime and property crime in Hendersonville is higher than it is in Asheville, and that both violent crime and property crime in Asheville are on the same scale. While comparing Asheville to the U.S. on a scale 1-10 that the crime rate in Asheville is higher. Even though Hendersonville has a population of 13,270, it has higher crime rate than the nation per capita. The graph also demonstrates Asheville has a population of 84,000 has lower violent and property crimes rate than Hendersonville. The number below would increase if the crime rates increase in both local and States levels. White in Hendersonville represents 74% of the population, Hispanics are 14% while Blacks are 10%.

Crime Rates	Hendersonville	Asheville	U.S.
Violent Crime	9	7	4
Property Crime	10	7	4

According to the 2011-2012 Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee in 1993, the General Assembly passed the Safe Schools Act requiring Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to report specified acts of crime and violence to the State Board of Education (SBE). In that report, the wording describes the school principal's responsibility to report certain acts to law enforcement and lists a number of acts to be reported. The SBE has defined 16 criminal acts that are to be included in its annual reports. Nine out of the 16 acts are considered dangerous and violent: homicide, assault resulting in serious bodily injury, assault involving the use of a weapon, rape, sexual offense, sexual assault, kidnapping, robbery with a dangerous weapon, and taking indecent liberties with a minor. The other seven acts included in this report are: assault on school personnel, bomb threat, burning of a school building, possession of alcoholic beverage, possession of controlled substance in violation of law, possession of a firearm or powerful explosive, possession of a weapon.

According to the report, schools that report at least two violent acts and five or more violent acts per thousand students in two consecutive years and where "conditions that contributed to the commission of those offenses are likely to continue into another school year" are considered as dangerous schools. Looking at the North Carolina Public

School Report for 2011-2012, the number of reportable acts of crime and violence in grades K-12 decreased by 4.3% in 2011-2012, and NC crime rate declined by 5.0%. The reportable acts for Asheville City Schools in 2011-2012 were 21 acts, and the reportable acts rate was 18%. The table below shows the total acts and rate for each of the last five years. Of those five years, there were changes in the number of each of the offenses that had been reported. The table below compares the change in numbers of acts between 2010-2011 school year to 2011-2012 schools year, while the overall number of offenses went down, a majority of the violent offenses rose.

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(2011-2012 Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee 10)

Acts	2010-2011	2011-2012
Possession of controlled substance in violation of law	4,934	4,777
Possession of a weapon	3,954	3,613
Assault on school personnel	1,156	1,212
Possession of alcoholic beverage	1,068	971
Sexual assault	164	187
Sexual offense	69	79
Bomb Threat	78	73
Possession of a firearm or powerful explosive	75	73
Assault resulting in serious bodily injury	61	73
Assault involving the use of a weapon	64	64
Burning of a School	22	26

Building		
Kidnapping	5	4
Rape	1	4
Robbery with a Dangerous Weapon	5	3
Taking Indecent Liberties with a Minor	1	1
Death By Other Than Natural Causes	0	1
Total	11,657	11,161

(2011-2012 Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee 16)

According to an article by WRLA, the number of crimes and violent acts committed in North Carolina schools rose by 1% from 2008-2009. During the 2007-2008 school year it had been reported that there were 11,276 crimes and violent acts, while in 2007-2008 school year there were 11,013 crimes. In 2006-2007, the crime rate per 1,000 students went from 7.77 to 7.85, while violent crimes went down by 3.6% in 2008 and accounted for 3.8 % of all school crimes. In 2008, it had been reported that 85 % of the school crimes was due to drug possession, alcohol possession, and possession of weapons other than firearms or explosives. In the article, Superintendent of Public Instruction June Atkinson said, "We know that there often is a relationship between

crime and violent incidents, suspensions, and expulsions and high school dropouts," Atkinson made it clear that by consolidating reports that look at these areas one can have better understanding of how to efficiently address students needs and help more students stay in school and be successful. It is important for all education leaders to examine the policies to be sure none of them have the unintended consequence of encouraging students to drop out and to lower crimes and suspension rates and to help students remaining in school (WRLA.com).

The table below shows a comparison among county schools that are adjacent to Asheville City schools and their reported crime acts per 1000 students.

County Schools	Students Counts	Number of Reported acts	Reported acts per 1000 students
Asheville Schools	4030	21	17.53
Hendersonville Schools	13,435	39	9.95
Buncombe County Schools	25,556	234	30.57

Sperling's.com

Even though the 2011-2012 Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee did not list crime and violence acts per race and ethnicity, by looking at Table

below that contains grades 9-13 short-term suspensions and short-term suspension rates for each LEA the number of suspensions rates in each of Asheville, Henderson and Buncombe counties schools, will notice Hispanic students are the group least to commit crimes and get suspended. However, when comparing white and black students, the numbers seem to be hard to follow. Looking at Asheville City Schools, black female students are more likely to get suspended from school for their crime and violence actions than white female students, yet it is the opposite when looking at both Buncombe and Henderson county schools. On the other hand, black male students in the City of Asheville are more likely to get suspended from schools for violent acts than their peers in Buncombe and Henderson Counties, but surprisingly white male students in Buncombe County score the highest in short term suspensions. The table below correlates suspension, race, gender and county. By looking at these numbers, it becomes apparent that Asheville City Schools had fewer school violence or property crimes as they suspended 884 students; however of the 884 suspended, over 75% were African American students, yet African-Americans only constitute 18% of Asheville's city population. These statistics are very concerning when Hendersonville and Buncombe counties, both with a majority of Caucasian demographics, suspend 31% African-Americans. These numbers suggest Asheville School may have a tendency to suspend blacks on a higher average than white.

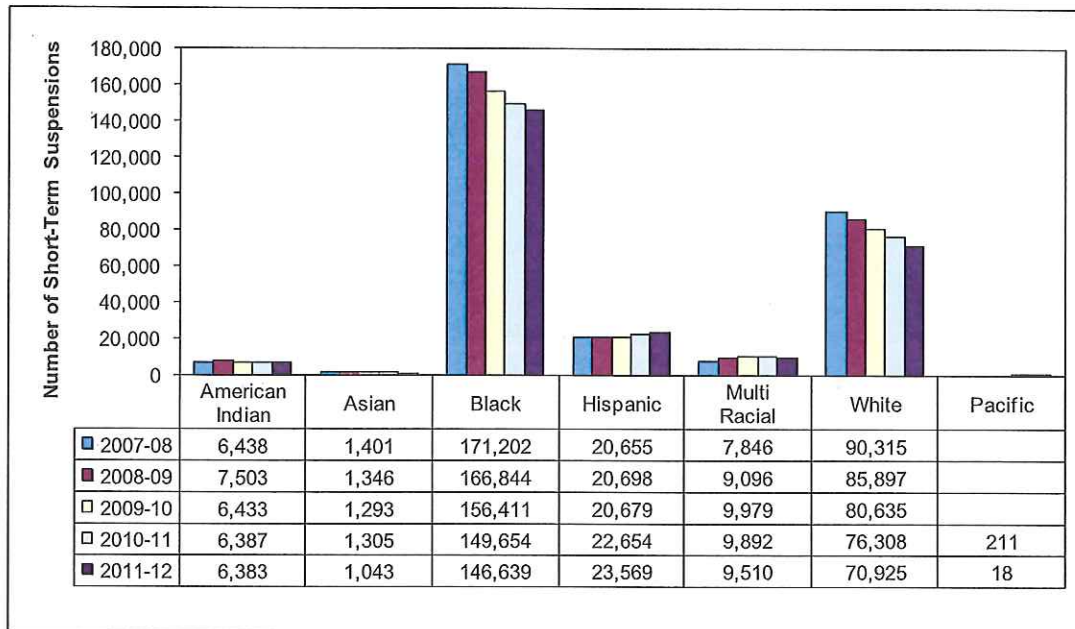
Number of Short Term Suspensions in 2011-2012 School year:

Schools County	Hispanic Females	Black Females	White Females	Hispanic Males	Black Males	White Males
Asheville	6	234	25	24	433	122
Buncombe	48	163	517	192	413	1,721
Henderson	27	31	127	104	79	521

(2011-2012 Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee 49-94)

North Carolina Short-Term Suspension by Race and Gender

Short-Term Suspensions by Race/Ethnicity

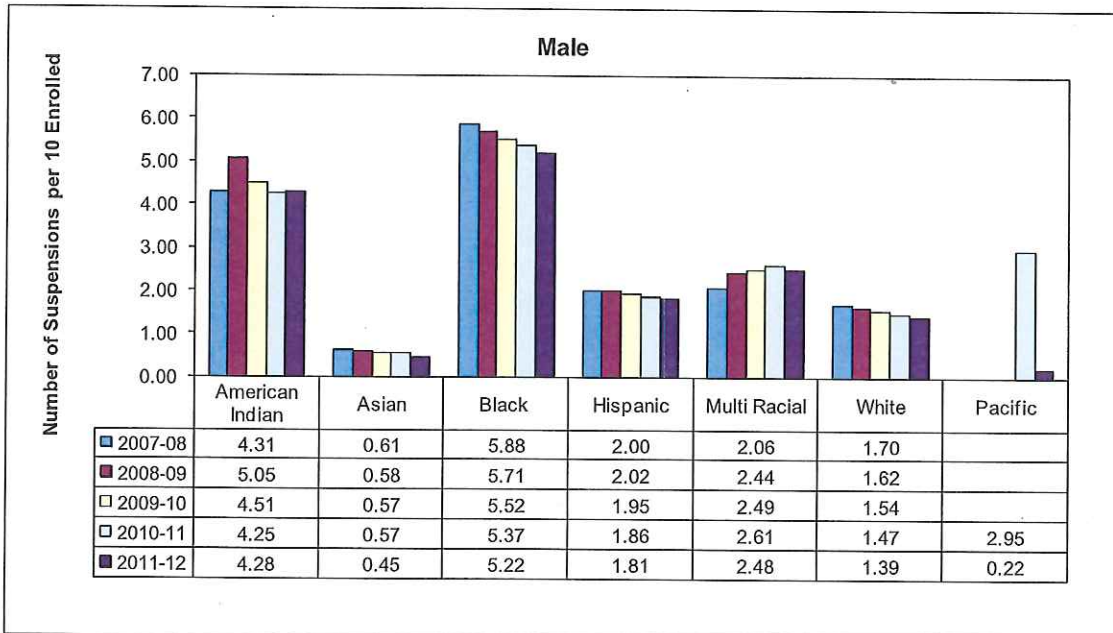


Note: Race/Ethnicity was not reported or was reported as "Other" for 10,250 short-term suspensions in 2007-08, 2,069 in 2008-09, 1,776 in 2009-10, 77 in 2010-11, and 110 in 2011-12.

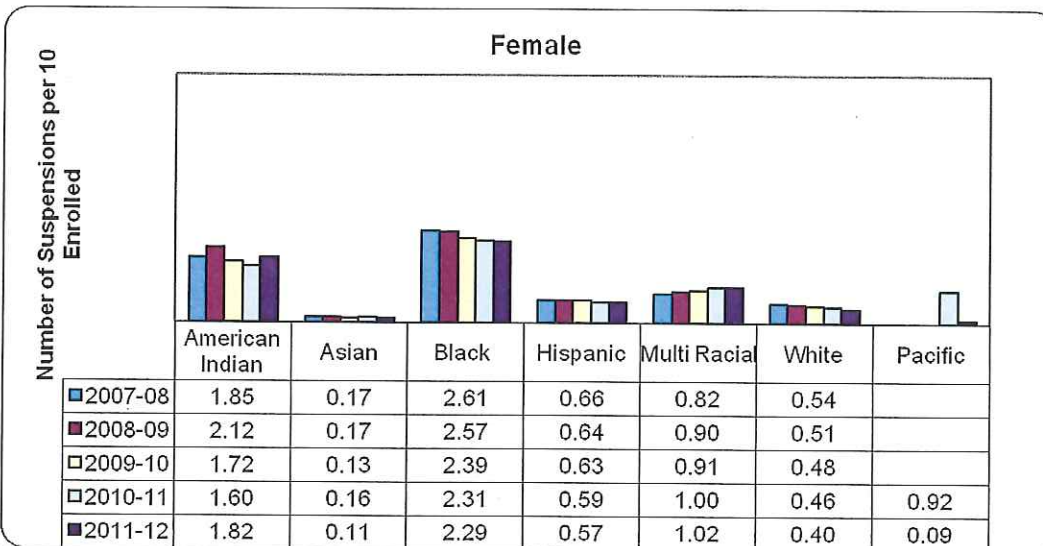
(2011-2012 Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee 26)

Short-Term Suspensions by Race/Ethnicity and Gender

The following charts show short-term suspension rates for recent school years, by ethnicity, for males (Figure S4) and females (Figure S5).



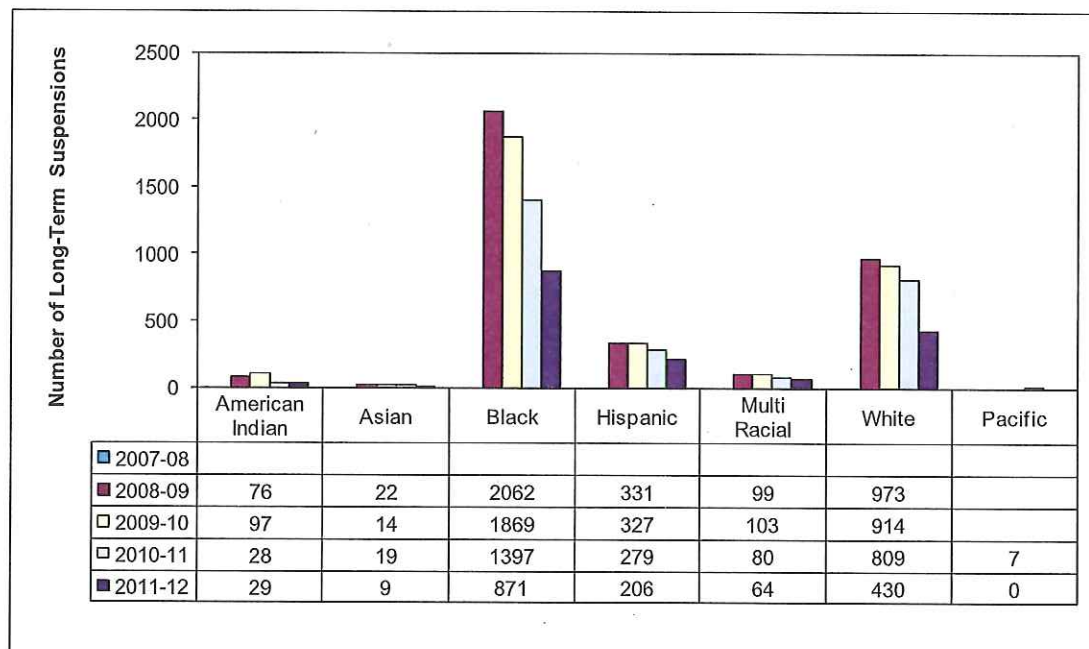
Note: Race/Ethnicity was not reported or was reported as "Other" for 10,250 short-term suspensions in 2007-08, 2,069 in 2008-09, 1,776 in 2009-10, 77 in 2010-11, and 110 in 2011-12. Rates calculated by dividing number of suspensions in race/ethnicity category by membership in that race/ethnicity category and multiplying by ten.



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North Carolina Long-Term Suspension by Race and Gender

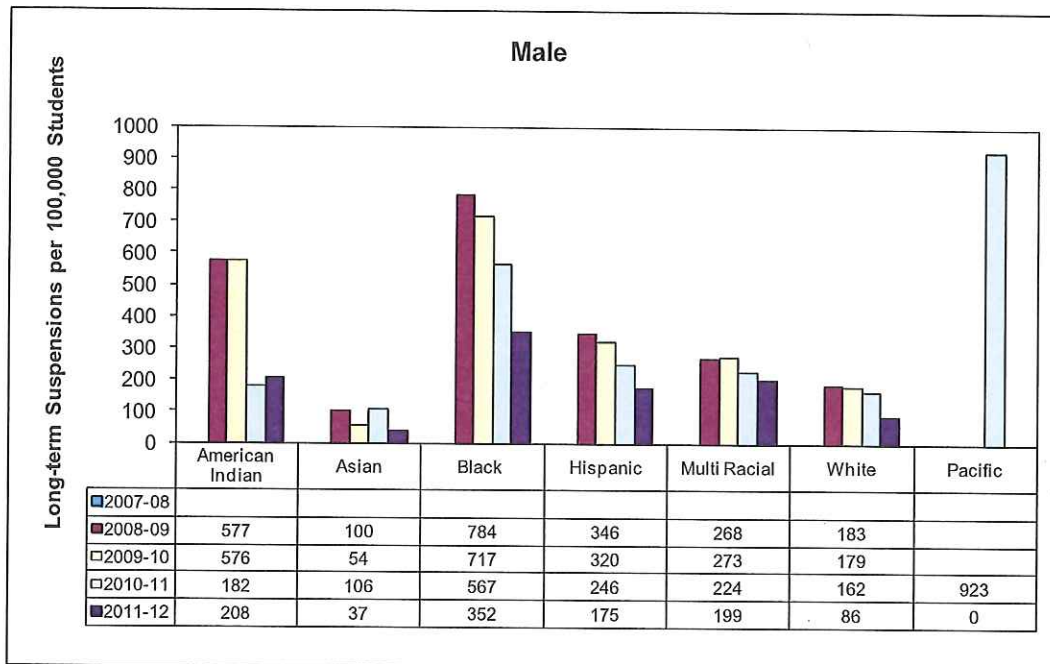
Long-Term Suspensions by Race/Ethnicity



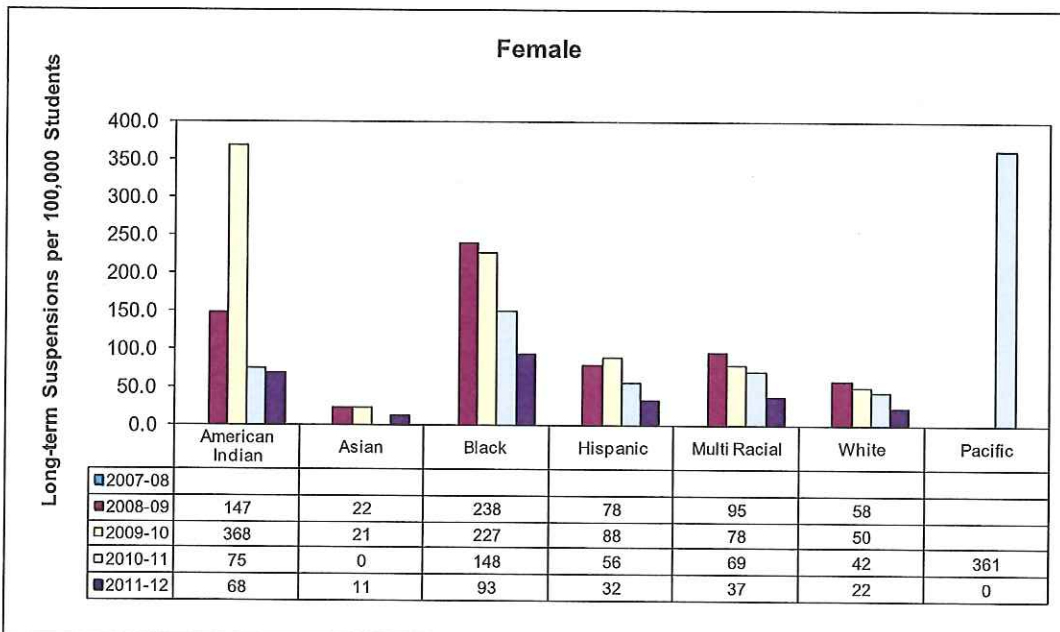
Note: Race/Ethnicity was not reported or was reported as "Other" for 29 suspensions in 2008-09, 44 suspensions in 2009-10, and two suspensions in 2010-11. 2007-08 is omitted due to lack of race/ethnicity data.

(2011-2012 Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee35)

Long-Term Suspensions by Ethnicity and Gender



Note: 2007-08 is omitted due to lack of ethnicity data. Rates calculated by dividing number of suspensions in race/ethnicity*gender category by membership in that race/ethnicity*gender category and multiplying by 100,000.



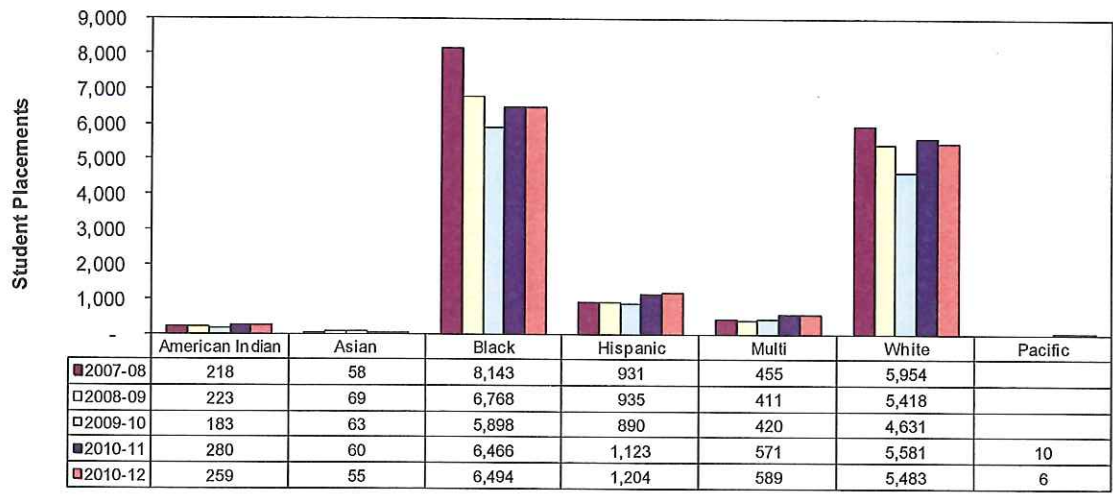
Note: 2007-08 is omitted due to lack of ethnicity data. Rates calculated by dividing number of suspensions in race/ethnicity*gender category by membership in that race/ethnicity*gender category and multiplying by 100,000.

Just by comparing these numbers it becomes obvious that black students are tending to commit more crimes in schools than others. Also, black students in Asheville have a higher suspension rate compared to others. Certain communities are focusing too much on stereotypical factors that are leading them away from the real problem within their cities and schools.

The report also explained that Alternative Learning Programs (ALPs) have been designed to help students in need. ALPs are defined as services for students at risk of truancy, academic failure, behavior problems, and/or dropping out of school. These services are designed to better meet the needs of students who have not been successful in the regular public school setting, which operates with a range of missions and primary targeting populations. In addition to students who are enrolled because of academic, attendance, and life problems (pregnancy, parenting, work), some ALPs also enroll students with mild, moderate, or severe discipline problems, including suspended or expelled students. Some ALPs are integrated within a regular school and some are schools in separate facilities. Usually, both alternative schools and alternative programs serve students in public schools within the school district. Suspended and expelled students in North Carolina are sometimes placed in ALPs based on their case.

The graph below views the percentage of attendance in the ALPs among different races for committing crimes. The graph suggests that black students have a higher percentage to attend ALPs since they commit more crimes than others.

North Carolina Student Placements



(2011-2012 Report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee 105)

School violence is not something that will completely disappear over time. As long as we have public schools students of different ethnicities, social classes, ages, and genders will mix and have problems. Schools boards believe that students have the right for a school environment that encourages learning and free of disruption. Crimes in schools are a disruption that could negatively affect student performance, and discourages their learning process. Asheville City Schools have to offer for the public information that could help families to determine which schools are safer for their children. Finding information about Asheville City Schools' safety was not easy there was a gap that limited this research. After looking at the graphs and number included in this research Asheville City Schools should offer safer environments for its students by putting rules that must be obeyed by everyone, and by offering programs that help students when needed.

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