



KEEPING KIDS IN CLASS II

**ANALYSIS OF SUSPENSIONS IN PRE-K THROUGH
2ND GRADE IN TEXAS SCHOOLS IN 2017-18**

August 2019



Table of Contents

Introduction 1

Executive Summary 2

Research Findings 3

New State Policy Landscape 10

Conclusion 11

Recommendations 11

References 12

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Introduction

A child's first years of school should be filled with curious inquiry, new friendships, and nurturing classroom environments that set children up for success. For young students who may already be starting school behind their peers, or experiencing the effects of trauma, developmental challenges, or instability in their lives, a supportive school environment is particularly important. A growing body of research shows that issuing repeated school suspensions to children as young as four years old — rather than implementing effective strategies to improve behavior — can undermine student learning, reinforce challenging behavior, and squash children's confidence just as they are starting school.

Over a year ago, Texans Care for Children released a report, *Keeping Kids in Class: Pre-k Through 2nd Grade Suspensions in Texas and a Better Way Forward*, analyzing early childhood suspensions administered by Texas school districts during the 2015-16 school year. That report found that districts issued over 100,000 suspensions to the state's youngest students, as early as prekindergarten, with a few districts issuing pre-k suspensions at a rate far outside the norm for the rest of the state. It further showed that Texas schools disproportionately suspended pre-k through second grade students who are Black, male, in special education, or in foster care.

In 2017, the Texas Legislature passed HB 674, prohibiting school districts from issuing out-of-school suspension (OSS) to pre-k through second grade students except in extremely limited circumstances, such as a child bringing a gun or drugs to school. The legislation did not explicitly address in-school suspensions (ISS), allowing districts to continue issuing ISS to the youngest students.

In the following pages, our new report explores whether school districts have eliminated out-of-school suspensions in the earliest grades, as required by state law, and the extent to which districts continue to rely on in-school-suspensions in pre-k through second grade. This report analyzes suspension data and point-in-time enrollment data that school districts reported to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) for the 2017-18 school year, after the new law went into effect. Data for the recently completed 2018-19 school year is not yet available.

This report also includes a deliberate focus on school districts' use of suspensions in pre-k. High-quality pre-k is proven to reduce the achievement gap and ensure young students are ready for kindergarten and on a path to be strong readers by third grade. In fact, Texas leaders took bold steps in 2019 to invest in full-day pre-k for eligible children and ensure these programs are even more effective. Texas pre-k programs largely serve four-year-olds who research shows gain the most from effective early education: children who are English language learners, low-income, experiencing homelessness, have a parent who is an active member of the military, or who have been in the conservatorship of Child Protective Services (CPS). For these students already at risk of falling behind, a year of quality pre-k is crucial. However, our research shows that many school districts continue to suspend pre-k students, children who can ill-afford missing valuable classroom learning time. These decisions disrupt routines and relationships and cause vulnerable students to be denied supports to improve behavior, while sending the message that school is potentially not for them.

Our findings show both good news and bad news. While districts have significantly reduced out-of-school suspension of students in the earliest grades, the data also show that during the 2017-18 school year, some districts continued to issue out-of-school suspensions to these students. Unfortunately, the data also show that the number of early childhood in-school suspensions remained virtually unchanged, with particularly high rates for certain student populations. It is clear that leaders have more work ahead to keep our youngest students in class, ensure educators receive the support they need to effectively curb challenging behaviors, and help young students succeed. If a school administrator is considering suspending a four-year-old or six-year-old, it is a sign that the student needs help; the teacher needs help; and/or the school environment may benefit from more effective classroom strategies and developmentally appropriate practices.

Fortunately, new school finance and school safety legislation approved by the Legislature in 2019 offer districts valuable opportunities to invest in high quality pre-k and implement school-wide positive behavioral supports. We hope Texas schools maximize these opportunities so that each and every young Texas student experiences an effective and supportive learning environment.

Executive Summary

A growing body of research shows that issuing repeated school suspensions to children as young as four years old — rather than implementing effective strategies to improve behavior — can undermine student learning, reinforce challenging behavior, and squash children’s confidence just as they are starting school.

- As outlined in our 2018 report, *Keeping Kids in Class*, there are a number of effective strategies that districts can implement to improve behavior and support students and teachers.

The good news is that after the Texas Legislature passed HB 674 in 2017, the total number of suspensions in pre-k through second grade declined due to a significant reduction in out-of-school suspensions in these grades.

- The total number of suspensions in these early grades — including both in-school and out-of-school suspensions — fell from 101,248 to 70,197 between 2015-16 and 2017-18, a decrease of 31 percent.
- The number of out-of-school suspensions in these early grades dropped from 36,475 in 2015-16 to 7,640 in 2017-18, a decrease of 79 percent.
- The use of in-school suspensions in these grades did not increase as districts reduced out-of-school suspensions.

Unfortunately, there is also bad news in the statewide data on pre-k through second grade suspensions from 2017-18.

- There was still a high number of suspensions in pre-k through second grade in Texas: a total of 70,197 suspensions, including both in-school and out-of-school.
- The high number of in-school suspensions remained virtually unchanged. School districts issued a total of 62,557 in-school suspensions in pre-k through second grade, compared to 64,773 in-school suspensions issued in 2015-16, a negligible decrease of just three percent.

- Despite the new state law virtually prohibiting out-of-school suspensions in pre-k through second grade, school districts still issued a total of 7,640 out-of-school suspensions in these grades.
- In these early grades, districts disproportionately suspended students in foster care, students in special education, Black students, and boys.
- Districts continued to suspend the very youngest children — students in pre-k. Districts issued 2,855 suspensions to pre-k students as young as four years old.

Additionally, pre-k suspensions in a small number of school districts, particularly Killeen ISD and Jasper ISD, were especially concerning.

- Killeen ISD issued 54 percent of the state’s pre-k out-of-school suspensions and 44 percent of the state’s in-school suspensions in 2017-18, despite representing less than 1.6 percent of the state’s pre-k enrollment. The district informed us that, in 2018-19, it nearly eliminated out-of-school suspensions in these grades, although data on the district’s in-school suspensions in 2018-19 were not provided.
- Jasper ISD had the worst pre-k in-school suspension rate in the state, 82 times higher than the state average.
- Despite the state prohibition on out-of-school suspensions for young students, five districts — including Killeen ISD — issued ten or more out-of-school suspensions to pre-k students.

More work is needed at both the state and local level.

- There are further steps that school districts and state leaders should take to reduce early grade suspensions, including giving teachers the support they need and better supporting the social, emotional, and developmental needs of young students.
- New state laws and funding passed by the Legislature in 2019 can help districts better support students and signals continued state interest in improving the ways districts handle student discipline.

Research Findings

Since the state law prohibiting out-of-school suspensions in pre-k through second grade went into effect, school districts reduced out-of-school suspensions in these grades by 75 percent — but some of these suspensions may violate state law.

In 2017, the Legislature passed HB 674, prohibiting out-of-school suspensions for public school students in pre-k through second grade except for narrow circumstances, such as a student bringing a weapon or drugs to school. The law still permits in-school suspension for these grades, as well as placement in Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEP) for students over the age of six. It also outlines best practices that districts may implement to reduce challenging behaviors and support students' needs.

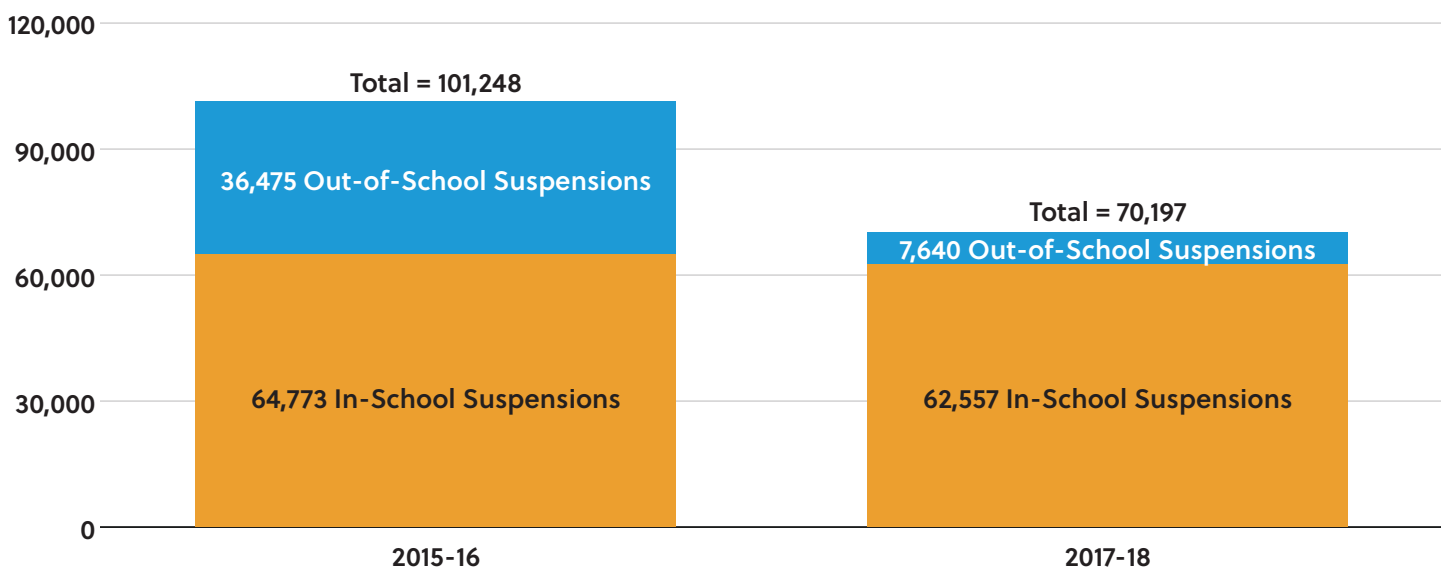
During the first year that the new law went into effect, the number of out-of-school suspensions issued to students in pre-k through second grade dropped by 28,835, a decrease of 79 percent from 2015-16 to 2017-18.

In 2017-18, districts issued out-of-school suspensions to 4,498 individual students in pre-k through 2nd grade, compared to 18,274 students in 2015-16, a reduction of 75 percent. However, the data continue to show that many students in the earliest grades are suspended multiple times, which reflects how suspensions are not an effective strategy to improve student behavior.

As a result of the decline in out-of-school suspensions, the total number of suspensions (ISS and OSS) in these early grades fell from 101,248 in 2015-16 to 70,197 in 2017-18. Factoring in changes in enrollment, districts issued 7.13 suspensions per 100 students in 2015-16, compared to 4.89 suspensions per 100 students in 2017-18.

Texas Early Grade Suspensions Declined Due to Reduction in Out-of-School Suspensions

Suspensions in Pre-k Through Second Grade



Source: Data provided to Texans Care for Children by the Texas Education Agency.

While it's good news that districts have significantly reduced their reliance on out-of-school suspension, it is troubling that districts issued over 7,640 out-of-school suspensions to 4,498 individual students in pre-k through second grade in 2017-18. Because of the very narrow exceptions outlined in HB 674, some of these out-of-school suspensions may violate state law.

Information we received from Killeen ISD suggests that districts may have further reduced early grade out-of-school suspensions in 2018-19, although state data are not yet available for that school year. (See the section below on Killeen ISD.)

In 2019, the Legislature passed HB 65, which directs TEA to collect additional information from school districts about their out-of-school suspension practices, including the basis for the suspension, the number of days students were suspended, and the number of suspensions that were inconsistent with the student code of conduct for all grades. All districts are required to adopt a student code of conduct consistent with state requirements that specifies the circumstances in which a student can be removed from class. The information

resulting from HB 65 will shed more light on the ongoing use of OSS, providing state and community leaders a fuller picture of what challenges students, families and schools are facing.

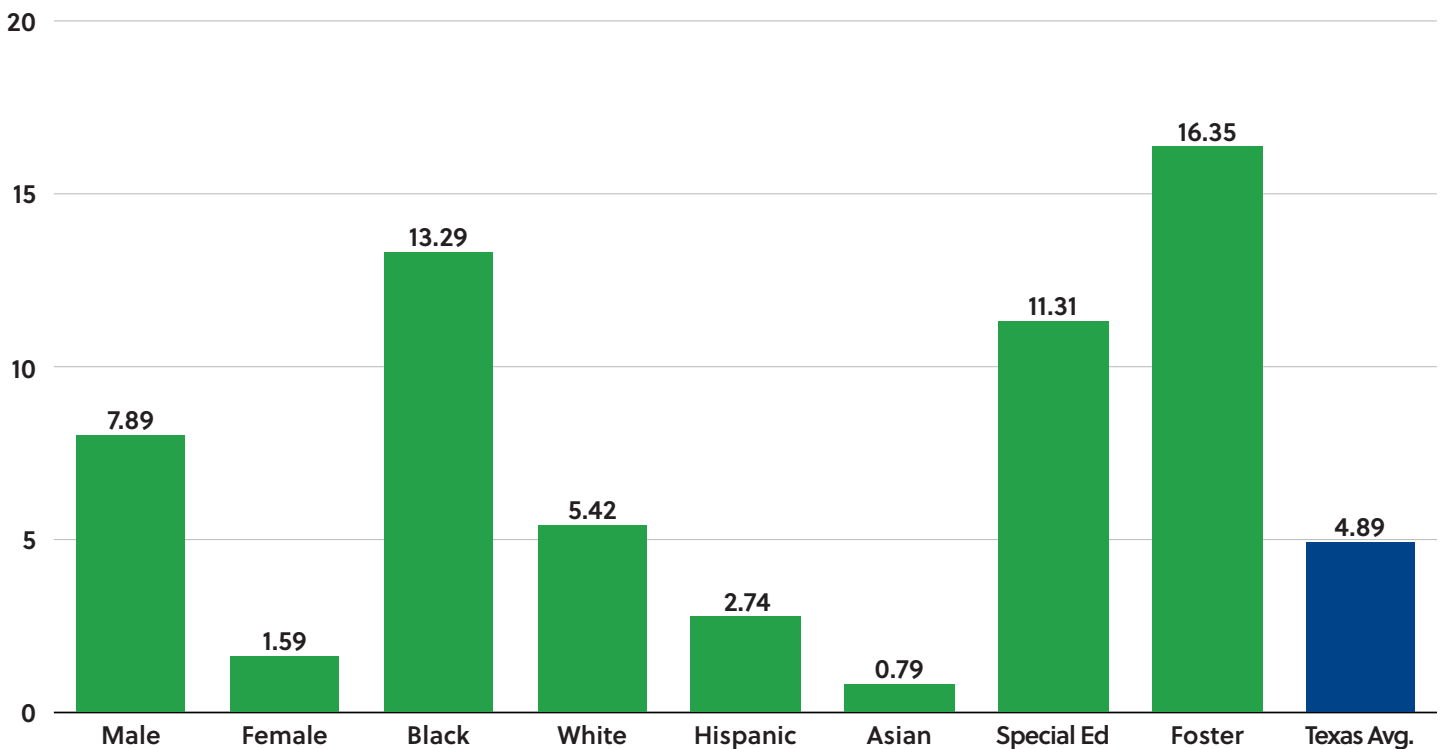
School districts continued to issue a high number of in-school suspensions to students in pre-k through second grade.

The number of in-school suspensions in these grades decreased by a negligible amount in the first year after passage of HB 674. Districts reduced in-school suspension by 3.4 percent from 2015-16 to 2017-18, issuing 62,557 total in-school suspensions to 27,262 students in pre-k through second grade.

In pre-k through second grade, Texas schools disproportionately suspended students in foster care, students in special education, Black students, and boys.

Schools Disproportionately Suspended Certain Students in Pre-k Through Second Grade: *Students in foster care, students in special education, Black students, and boys.*

Rate of suspensions per 100 students in 2017-18



Source: Data provided to Texans Care for Children by the Texas Education Agency.

For pre-k through second grade, Texas school districts were over three times more likely to suspend students in foster care compared to other students in those grades in 2017-18. Their suspension rate was the highest of any tracked group in 2017-18. Compared to the statewide 2017-18 pre-k – second grade suspension rate of 4.89 suspensions (combined OSS & ISS) per 100 students, children in foster care were suspended at a rate of 16.35 per 100 students. That rate represents an improvement over 2015-16 when there were 19.78 suspensions per 100 students.

In 2017-18, there were 9,169 students in foster care enrolled in pre-k through second grade classes statewide. Districts issued a total of 1,499 suspensions to these students. A total of 171 of these suspensions (about 11 percent) were out-of school. Despite representing only 0.64 percent of the pre-k through second grade enrollment, students in foster care represented 2.15 percent of the total suspensions in these grades.

Young students in foster care would benefit from more educational, behavioral, and mental health support, not punitive measures. Children who have experienced abuse or neglect, the trauma of being separated from their families, and frequent moves between homes or schools need stable, supportive learning environments. The Legislature took a positive step in 2019 by passing HB 811, which requires school districts to consider if a student is in foster care or homeless as part of decisions related to school discipline.

For pre-k through second grade, Texas school districts were nearly 2.5 times more likely to suspend Black students compared to White students and almost five times more likely to suspend Black students compared to Hispanic students. The suspension rate of Black students was 13.29 per 100 students, compared to 5.42 per 100 for White students and 2.74 per 100 for Hispanic students. Despite representing about 13 percent of the enrolled children in pre-k through second grade, Black students received 35 percent of the suspensions. A higher proportion of the suspensions of Black and Hispanic students were out-of-school suspensions (about 13 and 12 percent, respectively) compared to White students (about 7.5 percent).

More work needs to be done in Texas to address racial disparities in school discipline. There is a growing body of research on the role of implicit bias in school discipline decisions. Research led by Dr. Walter S. Gilliam of the Yale Child Study Center found that in a controlled study in which young Black and White children were behaving appropriately, both Black and White early educators were more likely to identify boys, particularly boys who were Black, as potentially misbehaving.¹

It is important for school districts to collect, analyze, and meaningfully utilize data on suspensions and other disciplinary practices to identify where targeted supports, training, and practice changes are needed. The Legislature and the Texas Education Agency should continue to provide resources and tools to assist administrators and teachers in identifying and addressing implicit bias.

Texas school districts were almost three times more likely to suspend young students in special education than students not enrolled in special education. Districts suspended students in special education at a rate of 11.31 suspensions per 100 students, compared to 4.23 per 100 students outside of special education. In 2017-18, districts issued 15,284 suspensions to 5,903 individual special education students. Students in special education represent 9.4 percent of the total enrollment of the pre-k through second grade enrollment, but made up approximately 23 percent of the total suspensions in 2017-18. About 14 percent of the suspensions issued to students in special education were out-of-school suspension, compared to about 10 percent for students not enrolled in special education.

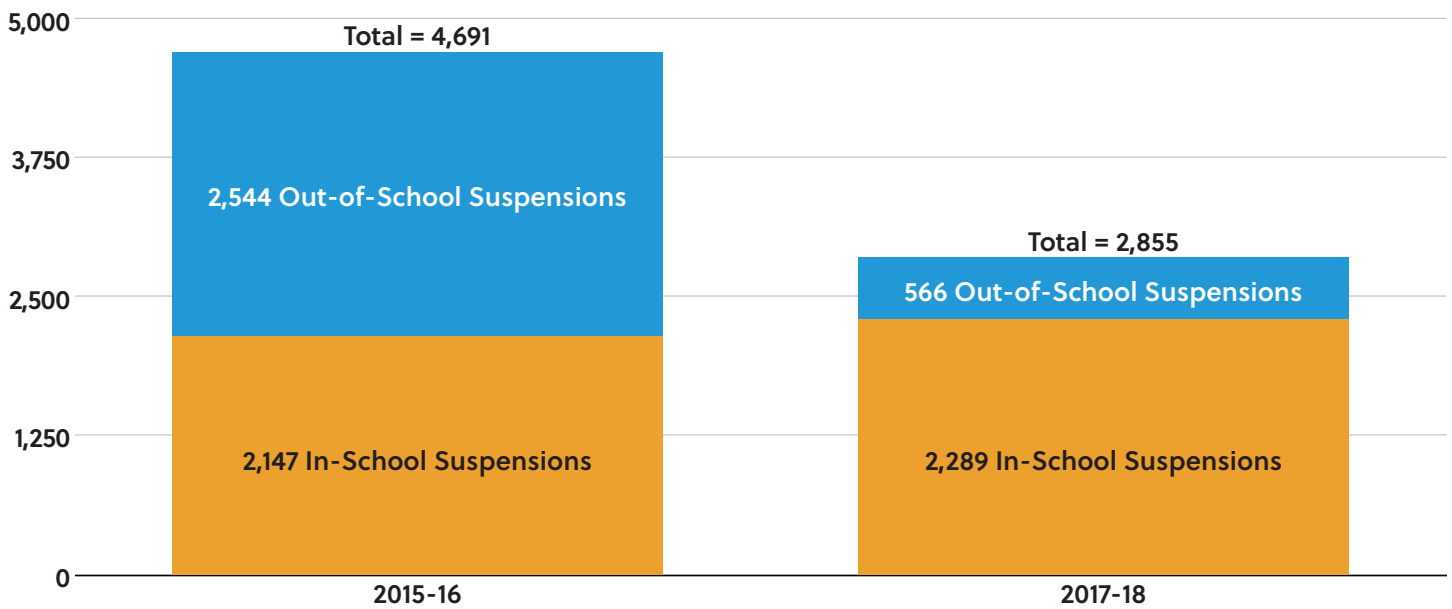
State and federal laws place some restrictions on suspensions of students in special education, particularly if a student is suspended for a total of ten or more days during a single school year. Yet, these protections have not shielded these students from the excessive use of suspensions. It is also important to recognize that the data only capture students whose disabilities have been formally identified, excluding those who have gone undiagnosed and lack any protections or specialized behavioral supports.

Texas school districts were over seven times more likely to suspend boys than girls in pre-k through second grade. In 2017-18, districts issued 58,648 suspensions to boys in pre-k through 2nd grade compared to only 11,154 suspensions issued to girls. Despite representing approximately 51 percent of the population of pre-k through second grade students, boys received nearly 84 percent of the total early grade suspensions. Like racial bias, research shows that gender and other biases can also lead to differences in how educators and administrators perceive different students' behaviors.²

Suspensions in pre-k fell, but schools still removed many pre-k students from class.

In 2017-18, districts reduced total pre-k suspensions by 39 percent compared to 2015-16. During this time period, overall pre-k suspensions in Texas declined from 4,691 to 2,855.

Texas Pre-k Suspensions Declined Due to Reduction in Out-of-School Suspensions



Source: Data provided to Texans Care for Children by the Texas Education Agency.

Nevertheless, it is concerning that districts continued to issue hundreds of out-of-school suspensions to pre-k students following passage of HB 674. Eighty-nine districts reported issuing a total of 566 out-of-school suspensions to preschoolers despite state law largely prohibiting the practice.

It is also concerning that the number of in-school suspensions in pre-k remained largely unchanged. In fact, there was a marginal uptick in the number of in-school suspensions in pre-k from 2,147 in 2015-16 to 2,289 in 2017-18.

Just as students are starting their academic careers and developing their understanding of how they fit into school, suspensions can send children as young as four years old the message that they are troublemakers and do not have what it takes to do well in school.

In the 2017-18 school year, Killeen ISD issued 54 percent of the state's pre-k out-of-school suspensions and 44 percent of the state's pre-k in-school suspensions, although the district indicated to us that it made recent progress on out-of-school suspensions.

In 2015-16, as our previous report documented, the number of pre-k suspensions at Killeen ISD far exceeded all other school districts in Texas. Killeen ISD relied heavily on both types of suspensions, accounting for 31 percent of the 4,691 pre-k suspensions statewide in 2015-16. These findings led to numerous media reports and Killeen ISD's assurance that it would "review individual cases" and commit to "continuous improvement of all district functions."³

Unfortunately, in 2017-18, Killeen ISD still suspended far more pre-k students than any other district in Texas. In the 2017-18 school year, of the 566 pre-k out-of-school suspensions statewide, Killeen ISD issued 303 of them to 97 individual Killeen pre-k students. The district also issued 1,018 of the state's 2,289 pre-k in-school suspensions. Despite representing less than 1.6 percent of the state's pre-k enrollment, Killeen ISD issued 54 percent of the state's pre-k out-of-school suspensions and 44 percent of the state's pre-k in-school-suspensions in 2017-18.

The district issued 1,018 in-school pre-k suspensions to 277 individual students, indicating that many children received multiple suspensions.

Killeen ISD's student population is noteworthy for the high number of students from military families.

Killeen ISD Represented a Massive Share of the State's Pre-k Suspensions in 2017-18

	Texas	Killeen ISD
Pre-K Enrollment	248,182	3,879
Total Pre-k Suspensions (OSS & ISS)	2,855	1,321
Pre-K Out-of-School Suspensions (OSS)	566	303
Pre-K OSS Rate	0.23/100	7.81/100
Pre-K In-School Suspensions (ISS)	2,289	1,018
Pre-K ISS Rate	0.92/100	26.24/100

Rate is calculated as the number of pre-k suspensions per 100 pre-k students enrolled.

Source: Data provided to Texans Care for Children by the Texas Education Agency.

However, the data from 2015-16 revealed that the district suspended non-military-connected students twice as often as military-connected ones.⁴

If each of the 303 out-of-school suspensions of Killeen ISD students was issued because these young children brought guns or drugs to school (i.e., the circumstances in which HB 674 permits early grade out-of-school suspensions), then further community supports for families may be needed. If not, then further steps should be taken to review these suspension decisions.

The district reported to us that it issued only four out-of-school suspensions in pre-k through second grade in 2018-19, a figure that represents a vast improvement over previous school years. While state data on suspensions in Killeen ISD and other districts are not yet available for the 2018-19 school year, Killeen ISD provided the information to us when we contacted the district about the findings contained in this report.⁵

It is important to note that the district did not address in-school suspensions in early grades for 2018-19 in its communication. When state data for the school year becomes available, it will reveal whether Killeen ISD continued to account for nearly half of the state's pre-k in-school suspensions.

At least five school districts — including Killeen ISD — issued ten or more out-of-school suspensions to pre-k students.

The three traditional school districts that issued at least ten out-of-school suspensions to students in pre-k in 2017-18 are Killeen ISD, Fort Worth ISD, and Central ISD. As mentioned previously, Killeen ISD issued 303 out-of-school suspensions to pre-k students at a rate of eight per 100 students. Fort Worth ISD issued 16 pre-k out-of-school suspensions, but with an enrollment of 5,780 pre-k students, that represents a rate of just 0.27 per 100 students, similar to the statewide rate of 0.23. Central ISD, a small district near Lufkin that only enrolled 60 students in 2017-18, issued eleven pre-k out-of-school suspensions at a rate of 18 per 100 students.

There were two charter schools that issued ten or more out-of-school suspensions to pre-k students in 2017-18. Trinity Basin Preparatory Academy in Dallas had a pre-k enrollment of 565 children and issued 10 out-of-school suspensions to pre-k students at a rate of two per 100 students. Waxahachie Faith Family Academy, with an enrollment of 248 pre-k students, issued 20 out-of-school suspensions to pre-k students at a rate of eight per 100 students.

Jasper ISD had the highest in-school suspension rate for pre-k of any district in the state.

Our previous report found that in 2015-16, Jasper ISD, a small district in East Texas, had the highest overall pre-k suspension rate in the state (65 suspensions per 100 students) and the highest in-school suspension rate (58 suspensions per 100 students).

In 2017-18, Jasper ISD continued to issue in-school pre-k suspensions at the highest rate in Texas, with a rate of 75 in-school suspensions per 100 pre-k students, nearly three times higher than any other district and 82 times higher than the state average of 0.92 per 100 pre-k students. Jasper ISD is a small district, enrolling only 122 pre-k students.⁶ In total, the district issued 92 in-school suspensions to 22 individual pre-k students. The district did not issue any out-of-school suspensions to pre-k students during this school year. In 2015-16, with an identical pre-k enrollment of 122

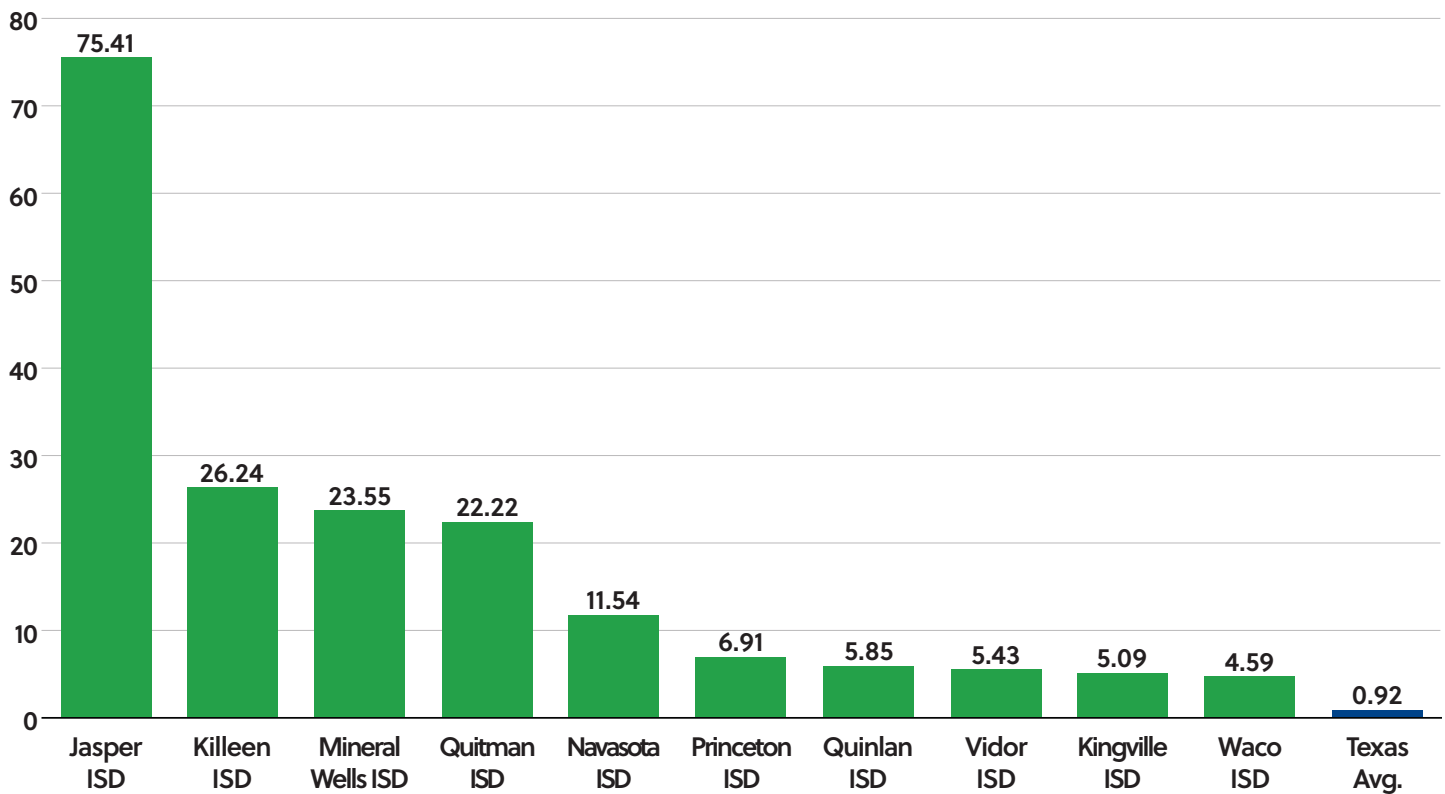
students, Jasper ISD issued 71 in-school suspensions to 23 individual students and 9 out-of-school suspensions to five individual students. Despite eliminating out-of-school suspensions, the district actually increased the total number of suspensions given to pre-k students. The data are a good indication that other, more effective strategies are needed to address student behavior and manage classroom learning. Jasper ISD did not respond to our request for comment.

After Jasper ISD's in-school suspension (ISS) rate of 75 per 100 pre-k students, the districts with the highest pre-k ISS rates were Killeen (26 ISS per 100 pre-k students), Mineral Wells ISD (24 ISS per 100 pre-k students), Quitman ISD (22 ISS per 100 pre-k students), and Navasota ISD (12 ISS per 100 pre-k students).

Killeen ISD, with a pre-k enrollment of 3,879 is much larger than the rest of these districts. Mineral Wells ISD, which enrolled just over 242 pre-k students, is the next largest among these districts.

Texas School Districts with the Highest Pre-k In-School Suspension Rates

Jasper, Killeen, Mineral Wells, and Quitman ISDs suspend pre-k students at a much higher rate than even other districts with high suspension rates



Rate is calculated as the number of pre-k suspensions per 100 pre-k students enrolled.

Source: Data provided to Texans Care for Children by the Texas Education Agency. Enrollment data for Jasper ISD comes from district reporting submitted to the Texas Public Education Information Resource website.

A Closer Look at Districts with the Highest Pre-k In-School Suspension Rates in 2017-18

District	Pre-k In-School Suspensions (ISS)	Pre-k Enrollment	Pre-k ISS Rate
Jasper ISD	92	122	75.41
Killeen ISD	1018	3879	26.24
Mineral Wells ISD	57	242	23.55
Quitman ISD	10	45	22.22
Navasota ISD	21	182	11.54
Princeton ISD	15	217	6.91
Quinlan ISD	12	205	5.85
Vidor ISD	10	184	5.43
Kingsville ISD	14	275	5.09
Waco ISD	47	1025	4.59
Statewide Average	2,289	248,182	0.92

Rate is calculated as the number of pre-k suspensions per 100 pre-k students enrolled.

Source: Data provided to Texans Care for Children by the Texas Education Agency. Enrollment data for Jasper ISD comes from district reporting submitted to the Texas Public Education Information Resource website.



New State Policy Landscape

During the 2019 session, the Legislature took strong steps to increase funding for school districts, support district efforts to improve school climate and student mental health, and improve the state's approach to school discipline. As a result, districts are now better positioned to support students and teachers, improve behavior, and reduce suspensions. Key bills that passed in 2019 are outlined below:

HB 3: Includes an additional \$6 billion for Texas public schools, including funding for full-day pre-k for four-year-old students who meet state eligibility criteria. This funding boost also provides an opportunity for districts to implement more effective strategies to improve student behavior and mental health. With the new law geared towards improving early literacy and other educational outcomes for students in the early grades, keeping more young students in class should be a priority for districts across Texas.

HB 18, HB 19, and SB 11: Includes training, policy, and planning requirements related to student mental health, the use of trauma-informed practices, social and emotional skill development, comprehensive suicide prevention, and more. These laws will give districts better guidance on implementing strategies that support students, help them develop strong social-emotional skills, and reduce challenging behaviors in the classroom.

HB 65: Directs TEA to collect additional information from school districts about out-of-school suspension, including the basis for the suspension, the number of days students were suspended, and the number of suspensions that were inconsistent with the student code of conduct. This information should help districts and policymakers better understand discipline decisions and the needs of students and families.

HB 692: Prohibits school districts from placing a student who is homeless in out-of-school suspension.

HB 811: Requires school districts to consider if a student is in foster care or homeless as part of decisions related to school discipline.



Conclusion

In 2017, when Texas leaders approved a ban on out-of-school suspensions in the early grades, they sent a strong message that removing our youngest students from class is not conducive to early childhood development, improving behavior, or supporting early learning. Texas leaders have since taken important steps to ensure districts and educators have more guidance and training to effectively implement classroom and school-wide positive behavioral strategies.

Unfortunately, state data clearly show that many districts continue to issue out-of-school suspension to students in pre-k through second grade, which

may be in violation of state law. In addition, districts issued more than 62,000 in-school suspensions for students in these earliest grades, indicating that there continues to be a strong need for more effective strategies to address challenging student behaviors. As districts and policymakers place a greater emphasis on the quality of early childhood classrooms, including meaningful professional development for teachers and administrators, districts should seek to continue reducing their reliance on suspensions and instead implement more effective, positive strategies to bolster student behavior and learning.

Recommendations

Texas Education Agency Recommendations

1. Ensure implementation of school mental health and safety legislation passed in 2019 (HB 18, HB 19, and SB 11) addresses the needs of young students. Districts need guidance and resources on creating school environments where all students feel safe and supported and providing effective in-school interventions and referrals to community services when needed. Teachers need tools like access to training and coaching on developmentally appropriate teaching strategies and addressing implicit bias.
2. Monitor districts' use of suspensions, including compliance with state law, rates of out-of-school and in-school suspensions in pre-k through second grade, and any continuing disproportionate impact on children in foster care, children in special education, Black students and other students of color, and male students. For districts that rely heavily on in-school suspension, provide targeted training and technical assistance to help districts implement more positive behavioral strategies in order to appropriately address the unique needs of students with disabilities and children in foster care.
3. Through effective monitoring efforts, ensure that districts are appropriately identifying young students eligible for special education services and providing them the services, supports, and protections to which they are entitled.
4. Report school climate data, including suspensions and expulsions, on annual state and district report cards by grade level.
5. Ensure a smooth transition for children moving from Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) programs for babies and toddlers to needed school-based special education services.

6. Include local child care centers in professional development opportunities offered to district staff, where possible.

Texas Legislature Recommendations

1. Monitor compliance with the ban on out-of school suspensions in pre-k through second grade and expand district reporting requirements on OSS to include ISS and placement in DAEP.
2. Ensure districts and communities have the financial resources to implement positive behavioral supports and address student mental health concerns.
3. In partnership with communities, support a network of community-based early childhood mental health consultants and/or behavior specialists to provide public school and child care educators with training and coaching on positive approaches to challenging student behaviors and restorative discipline practices.
4. Strengthen the state's pre-k and child care policies to support quality improvements, including establishing a limit on pre-k class sizes, so that more children can receive the individual attention they need to be ready for school.
5. Strengthen the state's Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) program to ensure all children under age three with disabilities and developmental delays receive the therapies and supports they need to address developmental challenges early.

6. Expand district reporting requirements on OSS to include ISS and placement in DAEP.
7. Ensure the school accountability system reflects school districts' lack of compliance with state law regarding suspensions and expulsions.

District Policy Recommendations

1. Leverage new school funding and school safety resources provided by the Legislature in 2019, and pending guidance from TEA, implement positive strategies to improve the school climate, support student needs, effectively improve behavior, provide teachers with support to address challenging behavior, and reduce out-of-school and in-school suspensions.
2. Collect, analyze, and meaningfully use data on suspension and other disciplinary practices to identify where targeted supports, training, and practice changes are needed at the campus and classroom level to improve child outcomes and reduce the disproportionate punishment of students who are Black, male, in foster care, or in special education.
3. Invest in more counselors, early childhood mental health consultants, and/or other behavior specialists to provide for training and coaching for educators and support for students.

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- 4 Texans Care for Children (2016). *Keeping Kids in Class: Pre-k through 2nd Grade Suspensions in Texas and a Better Way Forward*, p. 19. <https://txchildren.org/posts/2018/3/23/report-shows-texas-students-in-pre-k-through-2nd-grade-still-at-risk-of-getting-suspended>
- 5 Email correspondence with Killeen ISD Deputy Superintendent, Eric L. Penrod. July 22, 2019.
- 6 Enrollment data comes from district reporting submitted to the Texas Public Education Information Resource website. <http://www.texaseducationinfo.org/Home/Topic/Prekindergarten%20Programs>

