

**THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF STRATEGY & OPERATIONS OFFICER**

**Maurice L. Woods
Chief Strategy & Operations Officer**

Signatures on File

March 9, 2015

TO: All Principals

FROM: Maurice L. Woods
Chief Strategy & Operations Officer

VIA: Desmond K. Blackburn, Ph.D.
Chief School Performance & Accountability

SUBJECT: **INCIDENTS AND SUSPENSIONS IN BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS,
2011-12 THROUGH 2013-14**

Student Assessment & Research staff completed an examination of behavior incidents and suspensions occurring in Broward County Public Schools during the 2011-12 through 2013-14 school years. There was a reduction in number of both incidents and suspensions in this time period, with the total number of incidents decreasing by 25% (from 133,646 to 100,171, with 33,475 fewer incidents) and the total number of suspensions decreasing by almost 29% (from 81,956 to 58,536, with 23,420 fewer suspensions).

The rates of incidents decreased for each of the three major racial groups over the three year period, with the overall pattern remaining the same. Black students registered the greatest rate of incidents with 19% of the Black student population committing at least one incident (down from 24% in 2011-12), followed by Hispanic students at 9% (down from 13% in 2011-12), and White at 8% (down from 11% in 2011-12). The pattern of suspension rates mirrored that of incidents, with all racial groups receiving suspensions at a slightly lower rate than the rate of incidents registered (14%, 6%, and 5% for Black, Hispanic, and White students respectively).

In recent years, the District shifted focus from the number and rate of suspensions to examining specific behavior incidents resulting in a suspension. The department of Student Support Initiatives works closely with schools to determine the proper interventions to adjust students' behaviors and attitudes towards specific offences occurring at each school. In line with this shift, this report breaks out incident and suspension rates by incident type at each of the four school levels (elementary, middle, high, and centers).

Questions regarding this report should be directed to **Director Richard Baum, Student Assessment & Research at 754-321-2500**. This memo and report may also be accessed via the Student Assessment & Research Web site at: <http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/sar/index.htm>.

DKB/MLW/NB/RGB/SLS/JAC:rs
Attachments

cc: School Board Members
Senior Leadership Team
Directors, School Performance & Accountability



Research Brief

BEHAVIOR INCIDENTS AND SUSPENSIONS IN BROWARD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, 2011-12 THROUGH 2013-14

Student behavior incidents and suspensions in Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) were examined for the 2013-14 school year using district-wide data from traditional and charter schools. This report looks at the types of incidents that occurred at each of the school levels (elementary, middle, high, and centers), the frequency in which different types of suspensions were issued for different types of incidents, and the differences in frequencies of both incidents and suspensions by major racial groups (Black, Hispanic, and White).

The District's Code of Student Conduct 2013-2016 (School Board Policy 5.8) provides specific information regarding the rules to which all students are expected to adhere to as well as consequences for violating the rules. The District's Discipline Matrix breaks violations out into eight categories (attendance, rules violation, disruptive, substance abuse/drugs, acts against persons, property, bus, and other criminal) and assigns specific consequences to each category. The Code of Student Conduct and Discipline Matrix are reviewed annually by District stakeholders, including parents, teachers, administrators, counselors, and other community representatives (The School Board of Broward County, Florida, 2013). Beginning with the 2013-14 school year the Discipline Matrix allowed more flexibility for school administrators to make disciplinary decisions on a case by case basis.

Suspensions are classified into three categories: in-school, out-of-school, or alternative to suspension (AES). The District's AES program offers students who would otherwise receive an external suspension the opportunity to continue academic study in a structured environment separate from both their school and their home. The program also offers counseling and behavioral intervention (Iskandar & Jones, 2004).

This document examines data from the three most recent school years, excluding summers. For each school year, the total population reflects the number of students in grades Kindergarten through 12 who attended a BCPS center, traditional, or charter school for at least five days during the year.

Results

Incidents

The total number of incidents in the District decreased by 25% (33,475 fewer incidents) from 2011-12 to 2013-14. Middle schools had the highest number of incidents (43,784) followed by high schools (33,076) and elementary schools (18,933). Figure 1 illustrates the proportion of total incidents for each type of behavioral incident for the 2013-14 school year. At each school level, disruptive behavior was reported as the most common type of incident. The proportion of incidents related to attendance and rules violations increased as students progressed towards the high school level. Conversely, disruptive incidents and incidents related to acts against persons decreased as students

progressed towards the high school level. Behavior violations for the past three years were examined to identify trends, and showed that this year's distributions were similar to previous school years. These data include all incidents (including those that did not result in suspensions; see Appendices A1 and A2).

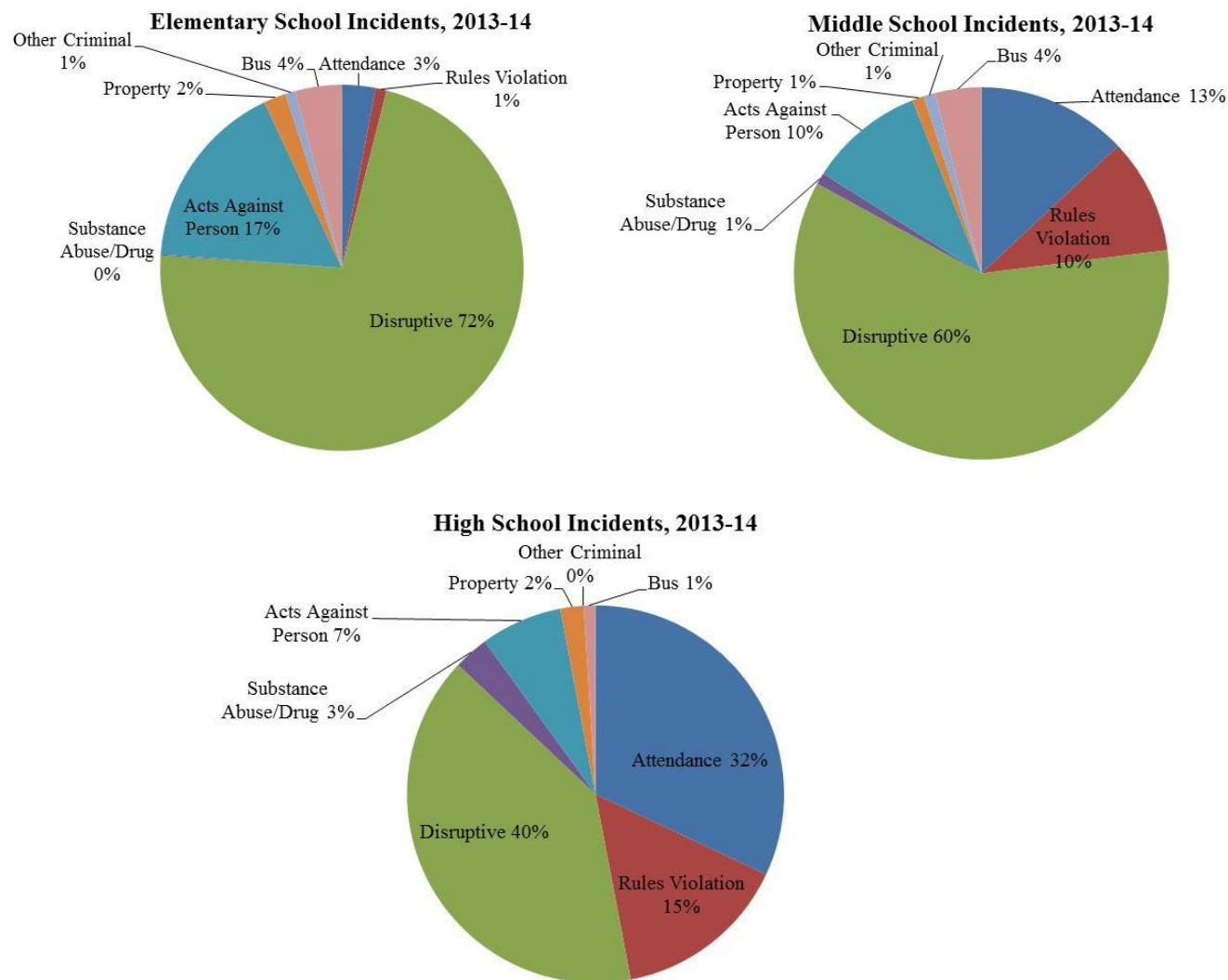


Figure 1. Distribution of incident types by school level for 2013-14. For example, of all the incidents registered in high schools in 2013-14, 40% were disruptive behaviors.

While Figure 1 illustrates the relative proportions of the various behavior incidents, it does not inform as to how common the incidents are among the student population. Figure 2 puts the incidents into the context of the student population, displaying the percent of students who committed incidents by school level for the previous three school years. **Overall, the rate of incidents has decreased over the past three years, which was most evident in disruptive, attendance, and rules violation incidents types.** At each school level, disruptive behavior was reported as the most common type of incident. While disruptive behavior has decreased over time, it continues to be the most prevalent type of incident. Most incident types increased from elementary school to middle school and then decreased in high school, with the exception of attendance which continues to increase at the high school level.

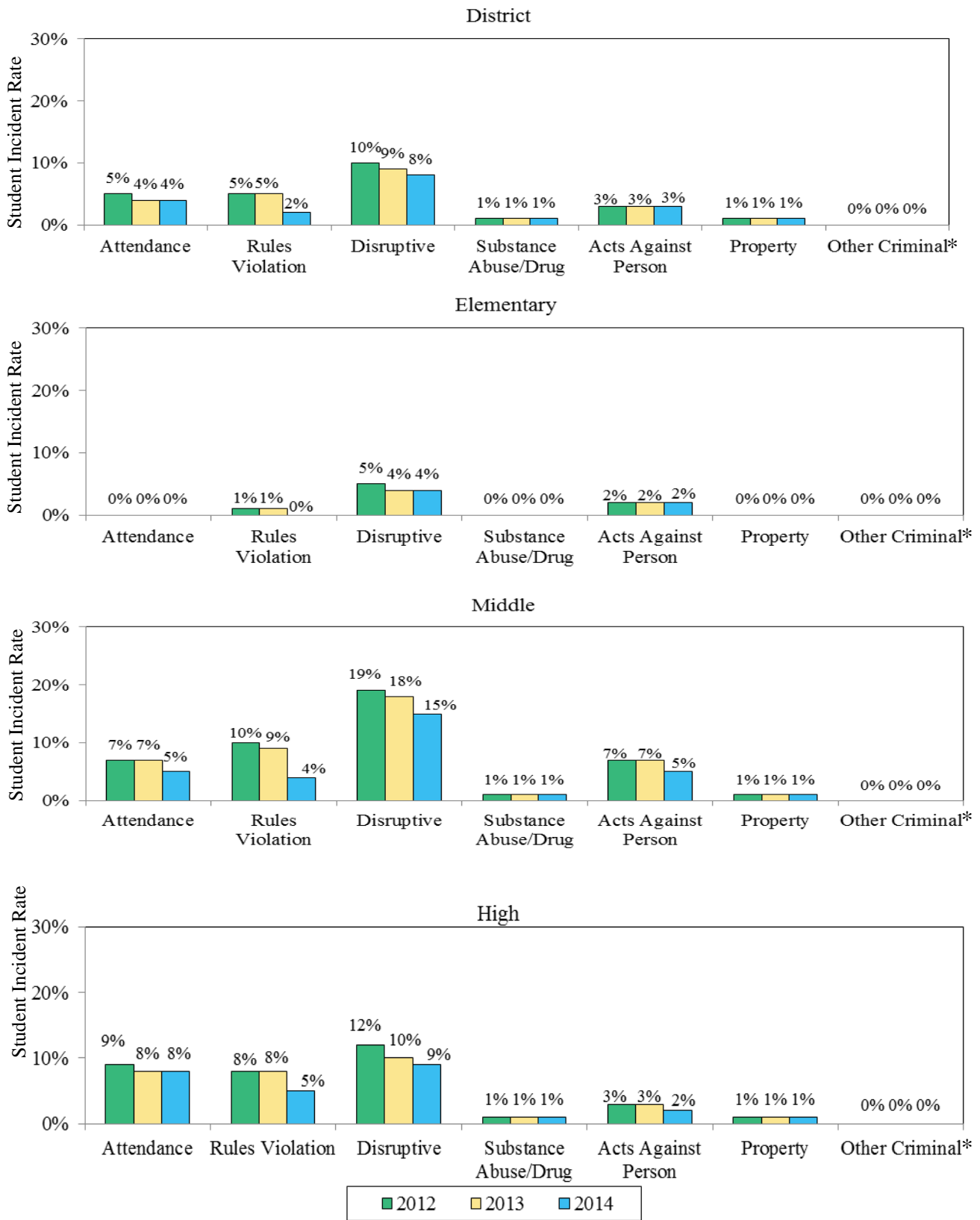


Figure 2. Percent of students who committed an incident by type of occurrence, by school level, and school year. For example, 9% of all high school students registered an attendance incident in 2012. See also Appendix A-2. (* Number of students is less than 1%).

Figure 3 illustrates the relative distributions of incidents as committed by each of the three major racial groups for the 2013-14 school year. Inspection of these charts suggests that there are differences in the types of incidents across student groups. Disruptive behavior comprised more than half of the incidents involving Black students (59%) and half of the incidents committed by Hispanic (49%) and White (50%) students. Rule violations and attendance comprised a larger proportion of incidents among Hispanic (13% and 22% respectively) and White students (11% and 21% respectively) compared to Black students (8% and 15% respectively).

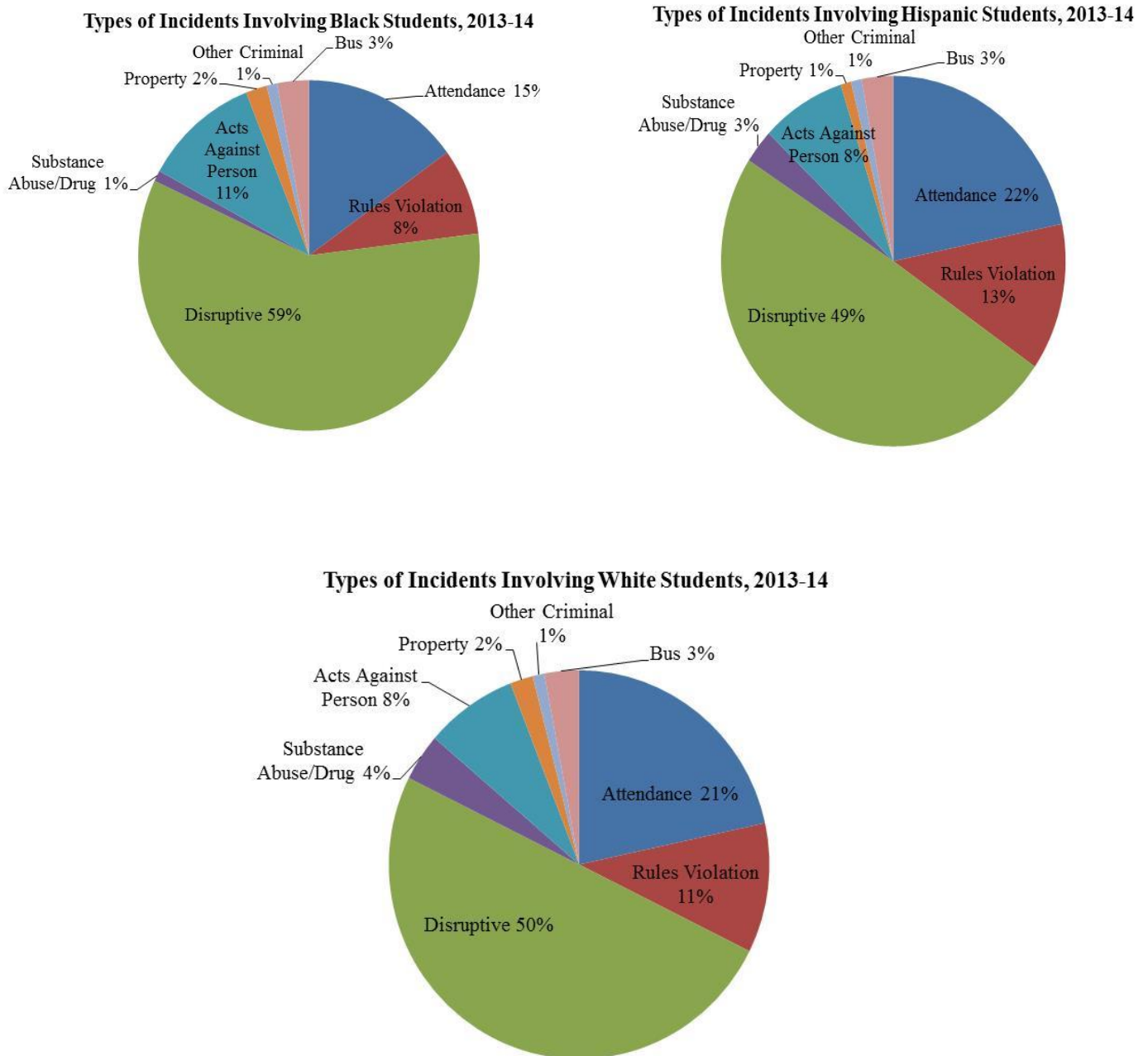


Figure 3. Distribution of incident type by racial group for 2013-14. For example, of all the incidents registered by White students, 11% were rules violations.

Figure 4 places the incidents into the context of the student population over the past three years. The figure displays the incident rate of Black, Hispanic, and White students who committed a specific incident type. The highest rates of disruptive, rules violation, acts against persons, and attendance incidents were registered by Black students, followed by Hispanic and White students for all three years. White and Hispanic students recorded similar incident rates for all three school years. Overall, student incidents decreased across all three school years for Black, Hispanic, and White students.

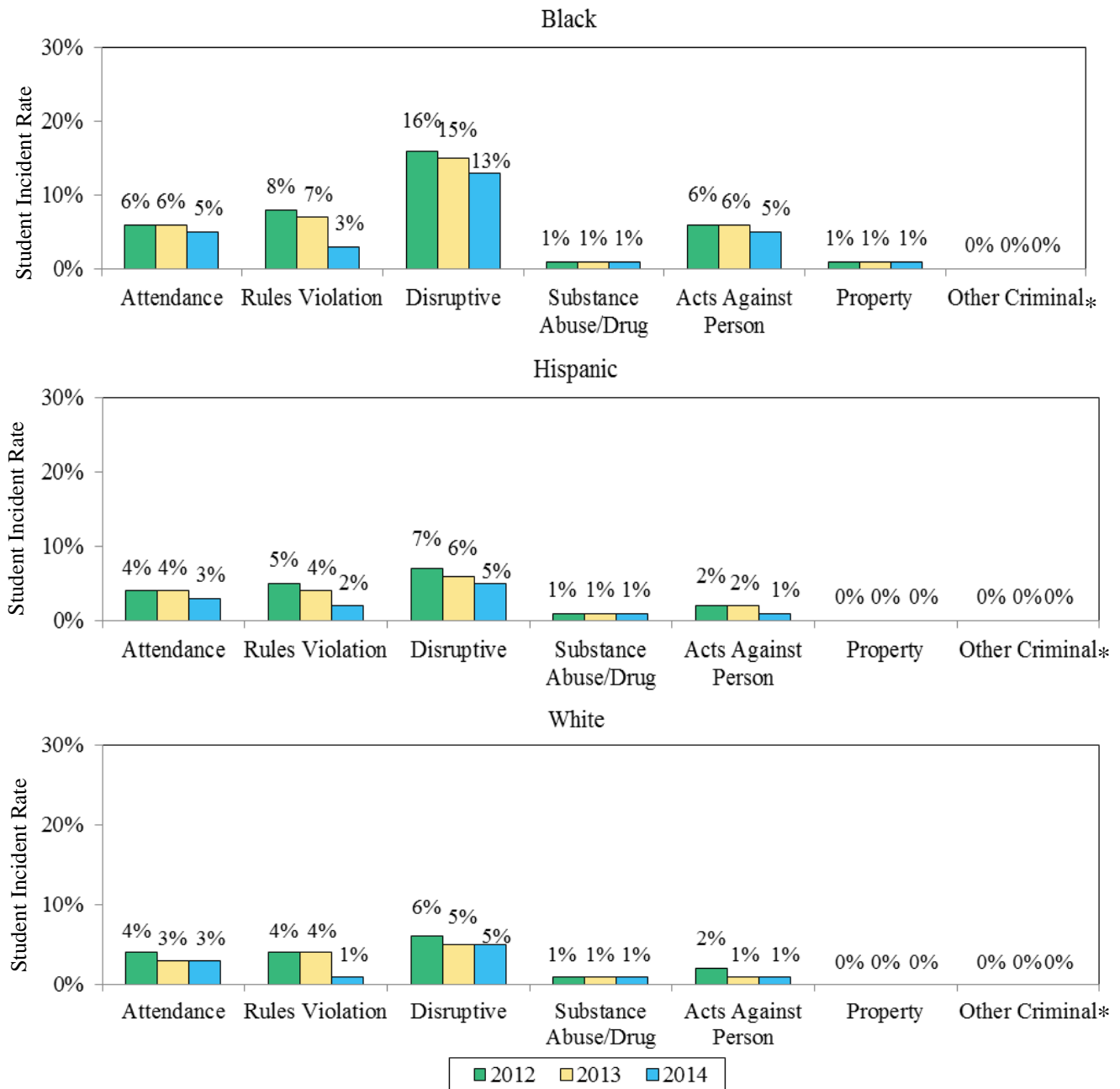


Figure 4. Percent of students who committed an incident by type of incident and racial group. For example, 4% of all White students registered an attendance incident in 2012. See also Appendix B-2. (* Number of students is less than 1%).

Suspensions

The total number of suspensions in the District decreased by 28.6% (23,420 fewer suspensions) from 2011-12 to 2013-14 school years. Data representing Districtwide internal, external, and AES rates appear in Figure 5. These data follow a similar pattern found as incidents; elementary suspensions remained stable but decreases in suspensions at the middle and high school levels were evident. During the 2013-14 school year, the largest student suspension rate was internally suspended students at the middle schools (14%). Among elementary, middle, and high schools, in-school suspensions were the most common type of suspension issued.

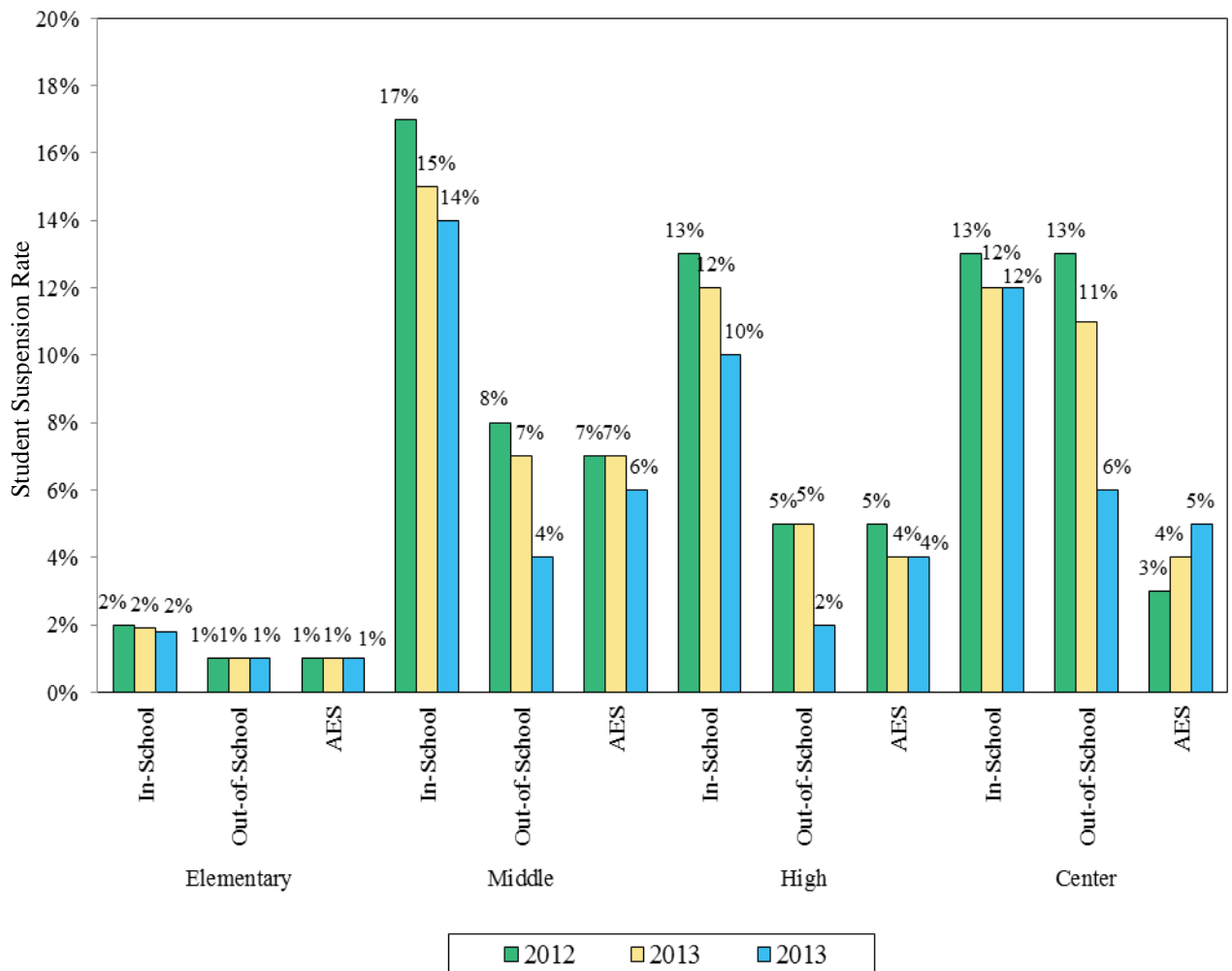


Figure 5. Suspension rates for elementary, middle, high, and center school students by type of suspension and school year. For example, 2% of all elementary school students received an in-school suspension in 2012. See also Appendix C.

Suspension rates among the District’s three largest racial groups are displayed in Figure 6. These data indicate that, across all years, the rates for all types of suspensions were higher among Black students, compared to the rates registered by Hispanic or White students. During the most recent completed school year, 2013-14, the overall suspension rate for Black students was 14%, compared to 6% and 5% for Hispanic and White students, respectively. This pattern mirrors that of the rate of incidents by racial groups by year (19%, 9%, and 8% for Black, Hispanic, and White students respectively). For all three groups, the rates of all suspensions decreased across the three school years.

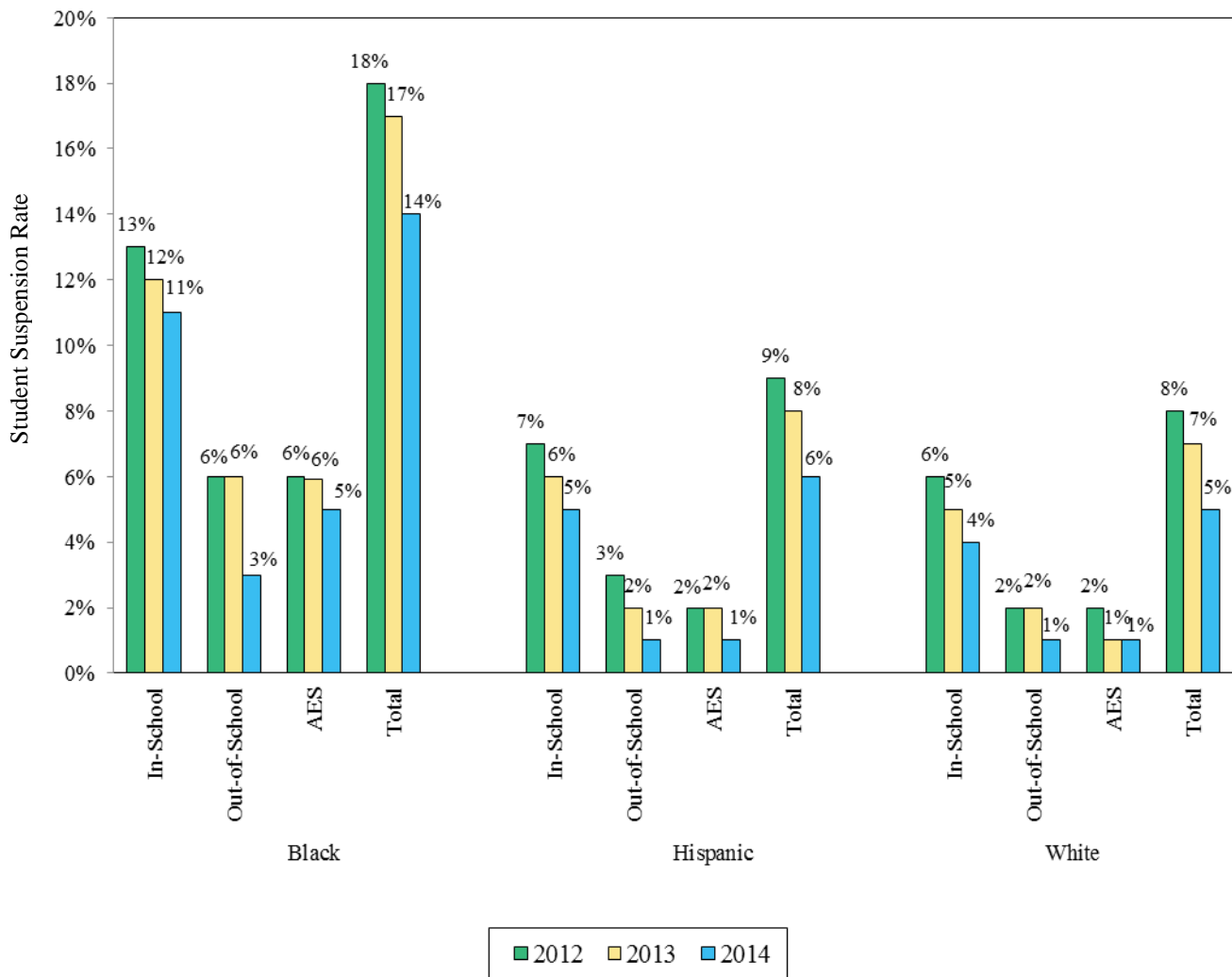


Figure 6. Suspension rates for three major racial groups by suspension type and school year. For example, 13% of all Black students received an in-school suspension in 2012. The total percent of students who were suspended for each racial group does not equal the sum of the three different types of suspensions because individual students may have received more than one type of suspension. See also Appendix D.

Figure 7 presents the rate that an incident resulted in a suspension by incident category, disaggregated by racial group. The data suggest that behavior violations resulted in suspensions at similar rates for all racial groups. Black students registered slightly higher suspension rates

than White and/or Hispanic students for rules violation and disruptive incidents (approximately three percentage points). However, Black students registered slightly lower suspension rates than White and/or Hispanic students for attendance (three and four percentage points), acts against person (six and three percent points), property (seven percentage points), and other criminal (six percent points) incidents.

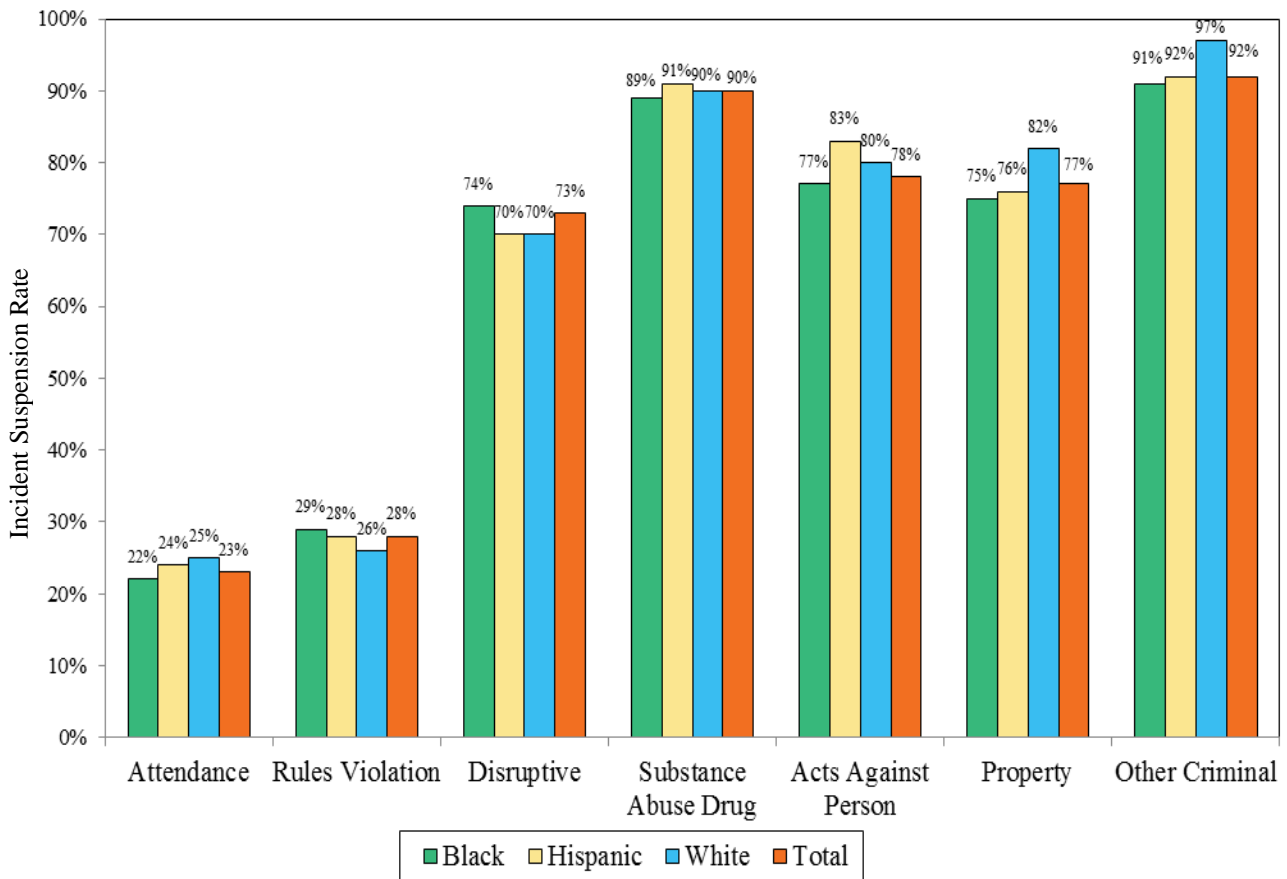


Figure 7: Rate of incidents resulting in an internal, external, and/or AES suspension by racial group for 2013-14. For example, 22% of all Black students who registered an attendance incident were suspended for that incident. See also Appendix E.

Summary and Discussion

District-wide data on incidents and suspensions for students enrolled in traditional, centers, and charter schools for the 2011-2012 through 2013-2014 school years were analyzed in this report. Overall, there was a 25% decrease in the number of incidents between 2011-12 and 2013-14 (from 133,646 to 100,171), and a corresponding 29% decrease in the number of suspensions (from 81,956 to 58,536) for that time period.

The greatest percent of incidents occurred in middle schools (44%), followed by high schools (33%), elementary schools (19%) and centers (4%). The pattern of suspensions followed that of incidents, with the most suspensions occurring in middle schools (50%), followed by high schools (33%), elementary schools (12%), and centers (5%). During each of the three years, in-school suspensions and AES assignments constituted more than three-quarters of all suspensions

assigned. That is, less than one-fourth of all suspensions removed the students from an academic environment.

At all school levels, disruptive behavior was the number one infraction (56%) for students who committed an incident. Incident and suspension rates decreased for each of the major racial groups, while maintaining the same pattern as previous years. Black students registered higher incident rates (19.4%) than Hispanic (9.3%) or White (8.0%) students. The pattern of suspension rates across ethnic groups remained similar to the pattern of incidents across racial groups, suggesting that students are suspended based on the infraction incurred.

The District has taken steps to ensure fairness and equity when determining disciplinary actions for students. The Discipline Matrix, which was introduced during the 2004-05 school year, was developed to assist school staff in making fair and equitable decisions related to the assignment and reporting of punitive actions. Schools are required by School Board Policy 5006: Suspension and Expulsion to use the Discipline Matrix as their guide in determining appropriate consequences for student infractions. Compliance with the Discipline Matrix is monitored by District staff.

The Information & Technology (IT) department has developed reports designed to assist schools with the monitoring of incident and discipline data. These online tools are available through the School Reports Menu on the Data Warehouse Intranet website, as well as through the Behavioral and Academics Support Information System (BASIS). Furthermore, the BASIS tool provides administrators and teachers with up-to-date, live data on academic, behavioral, and social and emotional risk indicators having an impact on student behavior and academic success. In addition:

- All schools are required to develop a unique School-wide Positive Behavior Plan. The created document details positive prevention and intervention strategies intended to reduce suspensions, expulsions, and law enforcement involvement at the school level.
- Schools are provided data outlining incidents resulting in suspensions. The data from these reports will assist school leaders in examining these cases by student sub-populations, so schools can target their interventions on the most prevalent behavioral concerns, and ensuring over-representation of minority groups is addressed. This data will drive strategic planning at the District and school-wide levels.
- Administrators are trained annually on current discipline legislation and local policy.
- Administrators are trained on the Breaking Barriers Professional Development series, which provides strategies for reducing suspensions and disciplinary referrals and creating a culture of learning in schools.
- Preventing, Recidivism through Opportunities, Mentoring, Interventions, Supports and Education (PROMISE) Initiative addresses the unique needs of students who have committed behavioral infractions that would normally lead to arrest and entry into the juvenile justice system. The initiative aligns best practice models to provide the supports needed by students to improve their behaviors, as well as developing their pro-social and resiliency skills.

The Diversity, Prevention & Intervention department handles all matters concerning student discipline. This discussion summarizes current initiatives related to student discipline. For further information regarding disciplinary policies and/or initiatives please contact Amalio Nieves, director of Diversity, Prevention & Intervention, (754) 321-2568

Detailed Appendices

Detailed data summaries are provided in the appendices:

Appendix A:

Table A-1: Total number and rate of incident occurrences by incident type by school level, 2011-12 through 2013-14

Table A-2: Total number and rate of students who committed incidents by school level, 2011-12 through 2013-14

Appendix B:

Table B-1: Total number and rate of incidents by student race/ethnicity, 2011-12 through 2013-14

Table B-2: Total number and rate of students who committed incidents by student race/ethnicity, 2011-12 through 2013-14

Appendix C: Total number and rate of suspensions and students suspended by school level, 2011-12 through 2013-14

Appendix D: Total number of suspensions by student race/ethnicity and special populations, 2011-12 through 2013-14

Appendix E: Total number and rate incidents assigned a suspension by student race/ethnicity, 2013-14

Appendix F: Total number of incidents by school, 2011-12 through 2013-14

Appendix G: Total number of suspensions by school, 2011-12 through 2013-14

Appendix H: Incidents categories specifics

References

- Iskandar, N. & Jones, E. S. (2004). *Alternative to External Suspension Program Evaluation, 2002-03*. Fort Lauderdale, Florida: The School Board of Broward County, Florida. Retrieved September 12, 2008, from http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/research_evaluation/Evaluations/AESEvaluation200203.pdf
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- School Board of Broward County, Florida, The. (2013, September 19). Code of Student Conduct. Fort Lauderdale, FL: Author. Retrieved August 5, 2014, <http://www.broward.k12.fl.us/sbbcpolicies/docs/P5.8.000.pdf>

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