

School Safety and Discipline

School Safety

The public in general and parents in particular make certain assumptions about schools that are even more basic than providing children with an education. One of the most basic is safety.

Uniform school violence reports for all districts are a creation of the early 1990s when school safety became a regular staple in news reports throughout the country.

Guns were – and still are – the most feared form of violence, but concerns from that era ultimately led to wide-ranging annual safety reports that are now a standard part of how schools are measured. The reports also contain information about suspensions and expulsions related to school violence and are often the only way to compare one school district to another.

Wake County's rates of violence, suspension and expulsion are typically a little bit lower than the state average and equal to or lower than most large districts. The charts below compare the largest systems in our state.

But as the largest system in the state, Wake often reports the largest raw number of acts in the state. Both forms of the data matter, but it's important to make sure both are considered when talking about school safety.

It's also helpful to consider the numbers as a guide rather a precise measurement. An incident recorded as an assault in one school might be seen as relatively minor and not worth reporting in another school. But in general, the reports are a good way to compare across districts as long as you don't put too much emphasis on any single figure.

The state Department of Public Instruction usually releases its annual suspension and expulsion data in March for the previous school year. Report highlights for Wake County and several other districts are included on the following pages. There is also a small section on the role of board members in helping enforce the Student Code of Conduct.

2007-2008 crime and violence reports

- The rate of Reportable Acts of Crime and Violence, which is based on 17 specific acts defined by State Board of Education Policy, was 14.55 acts per 1,000 students in WCPSS in 2007-08. This compares to a statewide rate of 15.57.
- The WCPSS rate of 14.55 was lower than other large school districts in North Carolina in 2007-08, including Durham (22.73), Guilford (17.80), Charlotte-Mecklenburg (15.98), and Forsyth (21.69). This rate is based on students in grades 9-12.

LEA	High school enrollment	Reportable Acts	Reportable Act Rate (per 1,000)
Wake	37,121	540	14.55
Mecklenburg	35,784	572	15.98
Guilford	21,568	384	17.80
Cumberland	15,808	232	14.68
Forsyth	14,937	324	21.69
Durham	9,502	216	22.73
State Average			15.57

2007-2008 suspensions and expulsions

- The statewide rate of short-term suspensions (i.e., suspensions of 10 days or less in duration) was 34.56 per 100 students in 2007-08. The WCPSS rate in 2007-08 was slightly lower, at 30.4 per 100 students. The rate is based on students in grades 9-12.
- Among other large NC districts, Durham (37.2), Forsyth (57.0) and Charlotte-Mecklenburg (36.9) had grades 9-12 short-term suspension rates higher than WCPSS in 2007-08, while the rate for Guilford (28.5) was slightly lower.
- The total number of short-term suspensions across all grades in WCPSS increased by approximately 6%, from 21,421 in 2006-07 to 22,707 in 2007-08. Long-term suspensions in WCPSS increased by 4.5%, from 1,055 in 2006-07 to 1,103 in 2007-08. WCPSS reported only one expulsion in 2007-08, compared to eight in 2006-07.

Grades K-12 Suspensions and Expulsion

LEA	Short term suspensions	Long-term suspensions	Expulsions
Wake	22,707	1,103	1
Mecklenburg	33,536	1,063	15
Guilford	12,016	100	1
Cumberland	12,162	122	1
Forsyth	15,478	66	40
Durham	6,809	85	0

Grades 9-12 Short term suspensions and suspension rates

LEA	Short term suspensions	short-term suspension rate (per 100 students)
Wake	11,294	30.4
Mecklenburg	13,206	36.9
Guilford	6,139	28.5
Cumberland	5,388	34.1
Forsyth	8,513	57.0
Durham	3,532	37.2
State Average		34.56

Discipline

Maintaining a safe and orderly school requires rules. And when students break those rules, there are consequences – such as the suspensions discussed above.

Every student and parent receives a copy of the Student/Parent Handbook, which includes a full list of the Student Code of Conduct as well as a description of due process procedures that occur when that code is broken. Student and parent must each sign and return a form stating that the handbook has been reviewed and discussed.

School board members serve on discipline appeal hearings. These occur when a long term suspension has been appealed and upheld at the school level as well as at the superintendent level.

The full handbook is available online at <http://www.wcpss.net/parent-handbooks/>. Portions of it have been reproduced here for emphasis.

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