

Fox25

School suspension numbers causing concern for parents, city council

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BOSTON —Nearly 70 kindergartners at just one school in Boston were suspended in the past year and now the city council is looking at the disciplinary practices across the board.

Not only are suspension numbers concerning, but the demographics of the students facing discipline show some glaring disparities.

“Parents call and they're like, ‘I've had to pick up my kid three times this week and two times last week,’” said Elizabeth McIntyre with Boston Legal Services.

Suspension rates for African Americans and Latinos are dramatically higher compared to Caucasian students. State data shows some charters schools are suspending students twice as much, if not more, than their city-run counterparts.

Boston City Council and Education Chair Tito Jackson want to know why.

“There are schools in the city of Boston that have nearly 50 percent suspension rates for students...68 kindergartners who were suspended from their school. To me, and I think to most, that is inappropriate,” said Jackson.

FOX25 ran the numbers on student school suspensions from the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

Of the 19,648 African American students in BPS, 8 percent were given suspensions.

Of the 7,985 Caucasian students in BPS, less than 2 percent were given suspensions.

The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice found that, "While charter schools only enroll 3 percent of the students in the state, they account for 6 percent of all disciplinary removals."

A hearing with the city council set for Monday is hoping to find out how suspensions are given out and if schools are following a 2012 state law requiring them to exhaust all options before taking a kid out of school for an extended period of time.

"When you sort of routinely deny them an education in those formative years, it is extremely concerning to the parent," said MacIntyre.

Parents are watching these numbers closely as the Senate currently debates a bill aimed at lifting the cap on the number of schools statewide.

The hearing on suspensions is scheduled for Monday at 6 p.m. in Roxbury.