

# From Classroom to Courtroom

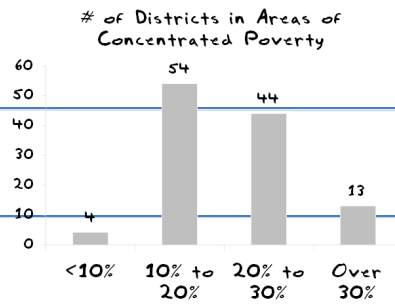
## North Carolina's Accelerated School-to-Prison Pipeline

When students are suspended or expelled without access to alternative education placements, many slip out of the mainstream and into the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems.

### 1. Struggling Schools

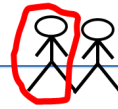
Too many of our most vulnerable students are enrolled in schools that are struggling with lack of resources.

During the 2008-2009 academic year:



Fifty percent of North Carolina's school districts were located in areas with at least 20% concentrated poverty.<sup>1</sup>

Half of North Carolina's students qualified as "needy," living in households earning at or below 185% of the federal poverty level.<sup>2</sup>

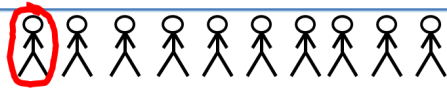


A recent report ranked North Carolina 44th in the country for public school funding.<sup>3</sup>

### 2. Harsh Discipline Policies

Zero-tolerance policies mean harsher discipline and higher suspension and expulsion rates. Repeated suspensions and expulsions have been shown to make it much more difficult for students to graduate.

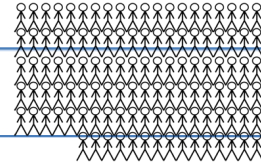
During the 2008-2009 academic year<sup>4</sup>:



1 out of 10 students received short-term suspensions.

3,524

students were suspended for at least 10 days.



115 students were expelled.

### 3. Lack of Alternatives

In North Carolina, disconnected students lose their basic rights to education. The state does not mandate alternative learning placements for suspended or expelled students.

\* In North Carolina, a student can legally quit school at age 16.

### 4. End of the Road: Criminal Justice System Involvement

Youth who are not in school are more likely than their peers to become involved with the juvenile justice or adult criminal justice systems.



In 2009, 2 out of 5 referrals to the juvenile justice system were for school-based offenses.<sup>5</sup>

Raise the Age

Harsh discipline policies and lack of educational alternatives send too many youth down a pipeline to prison. North Carolina's current policy to automatically prosecute all 16- and 17-year-olds in the adult criminal justice system wastes young lives, fosters crime, does not increase public safety and costs society more in the long-run.



North Carolina is one of TWO states that automatically prosecute all 16- and 17-year-olds in the adult system, without exception.

#### Data Notes and Sources

1. Baker, Bruce. David G. Sciarra and Danielle Farris. (2010) *Is School Funding Fair? A National Report Card*. Education Law Center, Newark, NJ.
2. Free and Reduced Price Lunch: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Special data request, August 2010.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Suspensions and Expulsions: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Special data request, August 2010.
5. CY 2009 School Based Offenses: North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Special data request, August 2010.