

**Gwinnett Parent
Coalition to Dismantle
the School to Prison
Pipeline**

Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline

Gwinnett_STOPP@yahoo.com

Have we become a society of hypocrites that over criminalizes teen behaviors?

Glance at the 2006-2007 Georgia Department of Education Discipline Report. The information is an eyebrow raiser. And two columns are the keys - "OSS" or out of school suspensions and the "other" category. 230,000 actions and 770,000 actions respectively. We hope that School Resource Officer arrests and charges filed against students are embedded somewhere in our state discipline statistics, but we are not sure where yet.

Parents need to challenge our schools to dig deeply into their data *and* provide parents with the results. Parents and schools need to make sure that "out of school suspensions" and "other disciplinary action" are deeply monitored by sub group categories, governed by policy and common sense, and above all - transparent to the public. We must ask the tough questions:

- ✓ *How many in- school suspensions are occurring for minor offenses that could have been handled within the classroom?*
- ✓ *How many out of school suspensions resulted in arrests or charges filed for students, again for minor offenses like "disorderly conduct"?*
- ✓ *How many out of school suspensions result in a loss of **all** educational services or compromise special education students' rights for an appropriate education?*
- ✓ *How many of those out of school suspensions by special education, race, and gender are disproportionate to the population?*

Think twice about those two columns. They are the entrances into the School to Prison Pipeline. The school to prison pipeline is a national trend wherein children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. This trend disproportionately impacts special education and minority students.

The vision of the Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline is to lead a parent-driven, community-centered partnership approach to dismantling the school to prison pipeline in Gwinnett County; to include parent/community education, district monitoring and accountability, and recommending national best practices.

Firm, fair and consistent consequences for teenage misdeeds, which result in changed behaviors, while providing a safe and orderly school environment for our children are a tangible benefit for everyone.

Let's see if we can challenge ourselves to find meaningful solutions that keep kids in school instead of pushing them out of school with suspensions, isolation in our alternative schools, and incarceration in our prisons.

Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline

My name is Benetta Standly; I am the Statewide Organizer and Public Policy Director for the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia.

The ACLU of Georgia is a proud member of the Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline (GPCDSTPP) because we want all children in Georgia to reach their full educational attainment.

We are fighting for racial justice in the public education system across the country, throughout Georgia, and in Gwinnett County. The Federal Department of Education requires that all children receive a quality public education.

We are excited to be working with Gwinnett parents to increase involvement in their children's education.

We are here to extend an olive branch to the Gwinnett County Public School Board in helping to decrease the number of children entering the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

I stand in solidarity with the GPCDSTPP, the Gwinnett Branch of the NAACP, and the Rho Kappa Lambda Chapter (GC) of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity in leading a parent driven effort to improve education, involvement and accountability in Gwinnett County Public Schools (GCPS).

As a member of the GPCDSTPP, I look forward to working with you to reduce student suspensions, expulsions, drop outs and alternative school transfers in GCPS.

Ms. Benetta M. Standly
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William L. Roston
President

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Subject: Support of the Gwinnett Parents Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline

I'm Bill Roston, President of the Rho Kappa Lambda Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

For those not familiar with our organization, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity is an international, inter-racial fraternity that was founded in 1906 at Cornell University as the first collegiate Greek-lettered organization for African-American men. For the past 102 years, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. has had as its purpose the promotion of scholastic excellence, community service and leadership development. We count among our distinguished members Dr. W.E.B. Dubois, Thurgood Marshall, and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Since 2000, the Rho Kappa Lambda chapter has championed these ideals in Gwinnett County through youth mentoring programs, college tours and scholarship programs, voter registration and voter education programs, financial empowerment workshops, and more.

We're proud to stand with the NAACP and ACLU as sponsors of the **Gwinnett Parent's Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline**. As the parent of two boys, I am acutely aware that they are expected and sometimes encouraged to underperform, simply because of their skin color. I am just as aware that there are many children of all races that don't have the parental support my boys enjoy, without which, a youthful mistake or careless association at school could easily result in their entering the pipeline.

The men of Alpha Phi Alpha strongly believe that all of the stakeholders in education – administrators, faculty, students, parents and the supporting communities and businesses - are best served by an environment of transparency, accountability and cooperation. We see the Coalition as a valuable tool in informing, empowering and mobilizing parents to be active partners in the education of their children. By encouraging thoughtful policy development, ensuring the equitable application of those policies, educating parents and students on their rights as well as their responsibilities and fostering a continual dialogue with the board, we seek to improve the educational environment we all must rely on and have confidence.

William L. Roston
President
Rho Kappa Lambda Chapter,
Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

Founders

Henry A. Callis, Charles H. Chapman, George B. Kelly, Eugene K. Jones, Nathaniel A. Murray, Robert H. Ogle, Vertner W. Tandy



N.A.A.C.P Gwinnett County Branch
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My name is Jennifer Falk and I am the Education Chair for the Gwinnett County Branch of the NAACP. The NAACP is proud to stand with these parents and organizations to educate our community about the Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline.

We know Gwinnett County Public Schools will benefit from an organization that brings together Gwinnett parents who have experienced discipline inequities with school and community leaders who care about kids. A new kind of dialogue is needed; one that demonstrates to the public that we have a problem. Too many kids in school are, without effective intervention and dialogue, headed to alternative schools and the juvenile justice system. And our citizens need to know we are prepared to reverse this awful trend.

We recognize that there are people inside of Gwinnett County Public Schools who understand the national trend of the school to prison pipeline and the devastating effects on students. People like Dr. Taylor, Susan White and Mary Anne Grimes have already had a positive effect on students who have entered the pipeline. But we need *more*.

With that said, the NAACP firmly believes that the broader discussion of the pipeline effects: discipline enforcement at the local level, accountability for our alternative schools and other interventions, must be discussed and debated among all who are invested in our children's future.

For the past five years the Gwinnett Branch of the NAACP has shared information with county officials about specific issues that have contributed to the schools to prison pipeline in our county. These issues include:

- the disparity of discipline for students, for panels, and for school specific in-school and out of school suspension;
- the increasing involvement of the School Resource Officer on school rule violations and the impact of those actions;
- permission for parents who cannot afford an attorney to have a parent advocate present during panel proceedings;
- the lost years of missing resources at the GIVE Centers such as a media center, a school nurse, student textbooks, and adequate staffing;
- supporting data to prove that our alternative schools are making a difference, that services are offered to all students, and that academic and behavioral outcomes are defined and monitored.

We have openly shared these concerns with decision-makers within GCPS. Never once have we knowingly left anyone out of the loop in our communications.

We know that hundreds of students are dropping out of school and thousands more are disenfranchised within their own schools when they enter the pipeline. Moreover, the general public is unaware of this tragedy.

We are here to enlist your hearts and minds for the benefit of the thousands of children under your care. We would welcome an invitation to meet and share the goals of the Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline.

Thank you.

Jennifer Falk
Education Committee Chair
NAACP Gwinnett County Branch

Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline

My name is Marlyn Tillman; I am the parent of two sons that are or have been educated in the Gwinnett County Public School System. I am supporting the Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline because I have a son that was being funneled into the pipeline. *Only* because of my advocacy is he now attending college as part of an honors program on a full 4-year academic scholarship.

The vision of Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline is to lead a parent-driven, community-centered partnership approach to dismantling the school to prison pipeline in Gwinnett County; to include parent/community education, district monitoring and accountability, and recommending national best practices. The school to prison pipeline is a national trend wherein children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. This trend disproportionately impacts special education and minority students.

I am proud to be a member of a coalition that unites a community of diverse thoughts and talents for the benefit of children, which ultimately benefits the community. Together, we can ensure that *all* children realize their full educational attainment.

Sincerely,

Marlyn Tillman
Co-Founder
Gwinnett_STOPP@yahoo.com

What is the School to Prison Pipeline?

The school to prison pipeline (STPP) is a national trend wherein children are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

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How does this happen?

Under the banner of "zero tolerance," schools increasingly are relying on inappropriately harsh discipline and, increasingly, law enforcement, to address less serious instances of school misconduct among even the youngest students.

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Who is affected?

- ❖ Many of these children have learning disabilities or histories of poverty, abuse or neglect.
- ❖ Nationally, minority students are suspended at rates of two to three times that of other students.
- ❖ Minority students with disabilities are particularly vulnerable.

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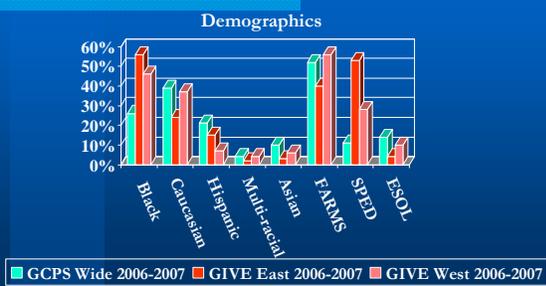
Why does this occur?

Some possible causes:

- ❖ Schools, while citing safety, have created zero tolerance policies that equate to zero sense.
- ❖ An incentive is created for schools by NCLB for schools to push out low performing students in order to boost their overall test scores and avoid facing federal penalties.
- ❖ Cultural miscues between teachers, and students and parents of diverse socioeconomic and racial backgrounds.

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What does the pipeline look like in Gwinnett?



6/11/2009

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Vision

The vision of the Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline is to lead a parent-driven, community-centered partnership approach to identifying and dismantling the school to prison pipeline in Gwinnett County; including parent/community education, district monitoring and accountability, and recommending national best practices.

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Goals

The coalition will build and maintain relationships with community leaders by:

- ❖ *Increasing public awareness of the injustice that all of our children face within the educational system as it relates to the pipeline and the judicial process.*
- ❖ *Promoting policy changes through data accountability and fact based incident reporting which serve to support and strengthen the dismantling of the student to prison pipeline in Gwinnett County.*

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Next Steps

- ❖ **Public Awareness Campaign (Jan 08)**
 - press release
 - select a focus cluster
 - publish information
- ❖ **Data Collection to demonstrate Pipeline effects**
- ❖ **Build relationships and expand partner members**

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Back to School Kick Off

- ❖ **Educational Series:**
 - ❖ Awareness – What Your Student/Parent Handbook Didn't Tell You
 - ❖ Has Your Student Received Suspension/Detention - Is It Time for an Intervention?
 - ❖ Rule 12, Disciplinary Panels, Juvenile Justice and the STPP Links
- ❖ **Policy Series:**
 - ❖ Accountability for GIVE
 - ❖ Partner with county to define & track measurable outcomes for students attending GIVE locations

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Who is involved nationally ?

The Harvard Civil Rights Project, NAACP and the ACLU are just some of the organizations involved in research and initiatives to focus on this trend.

The ACLU STPP initiative seeks to address some of these issues by:

- ❖ Getting stakeholders involved.
- ❖ Helping local communities to build coalitions.
- ❖ Supporting grassroots efforts.

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Grassroots Partners

❖ Local and State Partner Organizations

- Rho Kappa Lambda Alumni Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.
- NAACP of Gwinnett & Georgia
- ACLU of Georgia

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Rho Kappa Lambda Alumni Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.



For over 100 years, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. has supplied voice and vision to the struggle of African-Americans and people of color around the world.

Alpha Phi Alpha has stood at the forefront of the African-American community's fight for civil rights through leaders such as: W.E.B. DuBois, Adam Clayton Powell, Jr., Edward Brooke, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thurgood Marshall, Andrew Young, William Gray, Paul Robeson, and many others.

True to its form as the "first of firsts," Alpha Phi Alpha has been interracial since 1945.

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ACLU of Georgia

The American Civil Liberties Union is a national non-partisan organization with more than 280,000 members dedicated to preserving and defending the principles embodied in the Bill of Rights.

Locally, the *School to Prison Pipeline Project* falls under the Organizing Department; one of its functions is to build Statewide Acton Team (SWAT) . SWAT builds community participation in the preservation of rights and freedoms across Georgia.

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NAACP Gwinnett Branch

For more than ninety five years, the NAACP built and grew on the collective courage of thousands of people. People of all races, nationalities and faiths united on one premise, that all men and women are created equal. It is the nation's oldest civil rights organization.

The Gwinnett Branch continues this tradition with a membership that reflects the diversity of Gwinnett while implementing positive programs and having a great impact on the community.

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More Information

- ❖ www.acluga.org/schooltoprison.html
- ❖ www.naacpgwinnett.org
- ❖ www.rhokappalambda.org
- ❖ www.childrensdefense.org

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Gwinnett Opinions

GWINNETT OPINIONS APPEARS EVERY SUNDAY, WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY. EDITOR: SUSAN GAST, SGAST@AJC.COM

TELL US

Fare increases are proposed for Gwinnett County Transit. What do you think? Send responses to gwinnettletters@ajc.com.

YOUR THOUGHTS

E-mail, mail or fax your opinions to us. Letters should be 150 or fewer words and may be edited. Letters or columns may be published in the AJC or other databases and electronic formats. Include your full name and a daytime phone number for verification. E-mail gwinnettletters@ajc.com. Check ajc.com for new comments throughout the week.

GO AHEAD — VENT

"It's not bad enough that people are shooting at cops; now other cops are shooting cops."

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Public should monitor data on discipline in our schools

During recent days, the local media have reported two violent incidents that occurred in our public schools. Both involved alleged assaults with injuries in our Gwinnett County public schools.



WILLIAM ROSTON

No one is pleased to hear this — not parents, not school officials, not teachers and especially not students. We all have a common goal — safe learning environments for our students and teachers.



BENETTA M. STANDLY

Two weeks ago, a student was assaulted by another student in a Dacula High School bathroom, and the victim was given an out-of-school suspension, even after there was reasonable information to verify self-defense. The second was an alleged assault by a student on a teacher at Lilburn Middle School.



JORGE PORTALATIN

OUR VIEW

We learned of these incidents because of the attention that they received from the media. But how many of us have our finger on what is happening with the 26,950 in-school suspensions, 11,849 out-of-school suspensions, 2,146 bus suspensions and 42,221 other actions that occurred in

goal is to inform parents, share data, discuss solutions and encourage the county and state leadership to consider policy reforms when anecdotal or hard data suggest a link to the school-to-prison pipeline. The "school-to-prison pipeline" describes an alarming trend wherein public elementary, middle and high schools are pushing youth out of classrooms and

Gwinnett schools during the 2006-07 school year?* Where is the data that validates that the alternative schools we have financed and likely enrolled thousands of students in since 2004 are working as an effective intervention?

We, the Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline, are taking our cue from good teachers: "When you see a learning opportunity, seize it."

Supported by the Gwinnett Chapter of the Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, the Gwinnett branch of the NAACP, the Georgia State Conference of the NAACP, and the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia, this coalition, beginning in March 2008, will serve to educate community leaders and parents. Our



The "school-to-prison pipeline": Students with behavior difficulties who are denied fair and effective discipline solutions from administrators risk ending up in youth detention centers such as this one in Dallas.

into the juvenile and criminal justice system. Unfortunately, children with disabilities and children of color bear the brunt of these harsh trends.

In rural and metro Georgia, parents need to challenge schools to dig deeply into their disciplinary data and existing policies. Parents and schools need to make sure that discipline actions are being monitored by subgroup categories: students with disabilities, race, ethnicity, gender and socioeconomic levels. Policies must be implemented at the local level with common sense.

The monitoring of discipline data and associated interventions must and can be made transparent to the public without breaching the right to privacy for students and teachers involved. Checks and balances — that is an important lesson in our American government class.

In Gwinnett County, the Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline is doing just

that.

We believe that recent history proves there are leaders within Gwinnett County public schools who will listen to community input, analyze data and proceed courageously with policy reforms if it will serve to enhance teaching and learning, benefit students' growth and secure a safe and orderly learning environment.

The revised disciplinary policy that has been implemented in 2007-08 strives to support the primary mission of teaching and learning and safety for every student. But we have seen some schools take action on this well-written disciplinary policy, applying it with little rationale or common sense.

It takes a great deal of effort for parents to come forward to challenge the decision of a local administrator. Unfortunately, much of what we see is a rubber-stamped approach for local-level disciplinary decisions, thereby leaving parents impotent in challenging the

assumptions or "investigation" that occurred. This is particularly disturbing if the school decision defies common sense, but it technically fits within the policy guidelines.

Try to challenge a local decision at the county level. Ask how many local discipline decisions are overturned through appeal to the county. After all, as many parents are told, "this information does not go on to your student's college," so don't worry about it.

Let's see if we can challenge all of Georgia's educational stakeholders to find effective interventions and a commitment to meaningful, one-on-one parent dialogue — one where parents are not powerless. Our goal is to find parent-school strategies and early interventions that serve to keep kids in the classroom before we push kids into a different classroom or out of school with rubber-stamped suspensions, isolation in our alternative schools, or incarceration and detention in

prison.

This guest column was submitted and signed by Gwinnett Parent Coalition to Dismantle the School-to-Prison Pipeline, which includes:

Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. (A.P.A.F.) — William Roston, director of education activities

American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia — Benetta M. Standly, statewide or public policy director

NAACP — Gwinnett County — Jorge Portalatin, president and Jennifer Falk, editor in chief.

*The statistics cited in this guest column came from a state report. According to Gwinnett County Public Schools, the total number of suspensions for 2007 was 18,833; the total of in-school suspensions was 28,594 and the total number of days for in-school suspensions was 44, numbers do not reflect number of students involved. One student may be involved in multiple actions.

Understanding & Dismantling The School To Prison Pipeline

By
Benétta M. Standly, MPA
Statewide Organizer
American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia

I. Understanding The School To Prison Pipeline

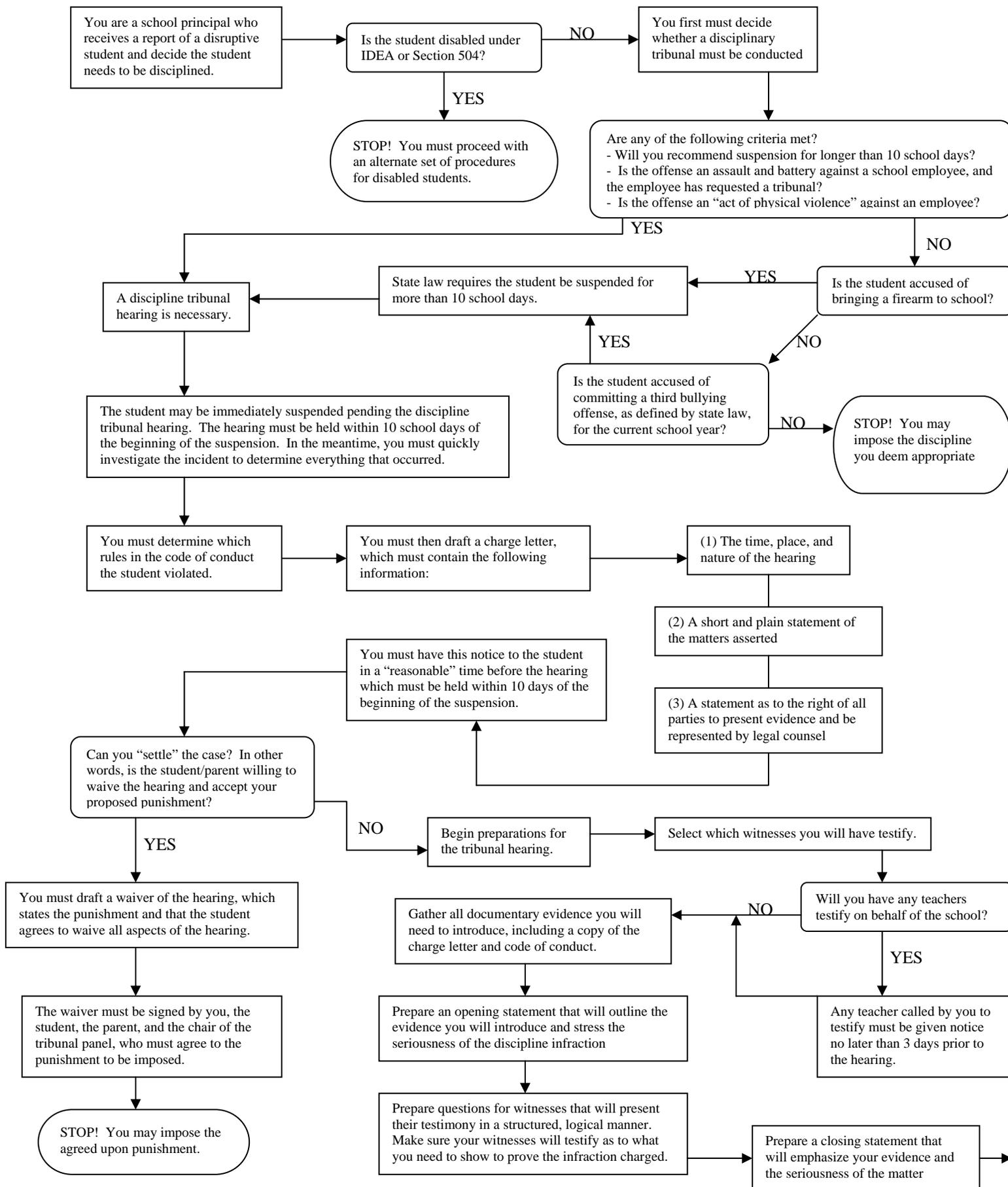
II. Institutional Bias at Work Within The Pipeline

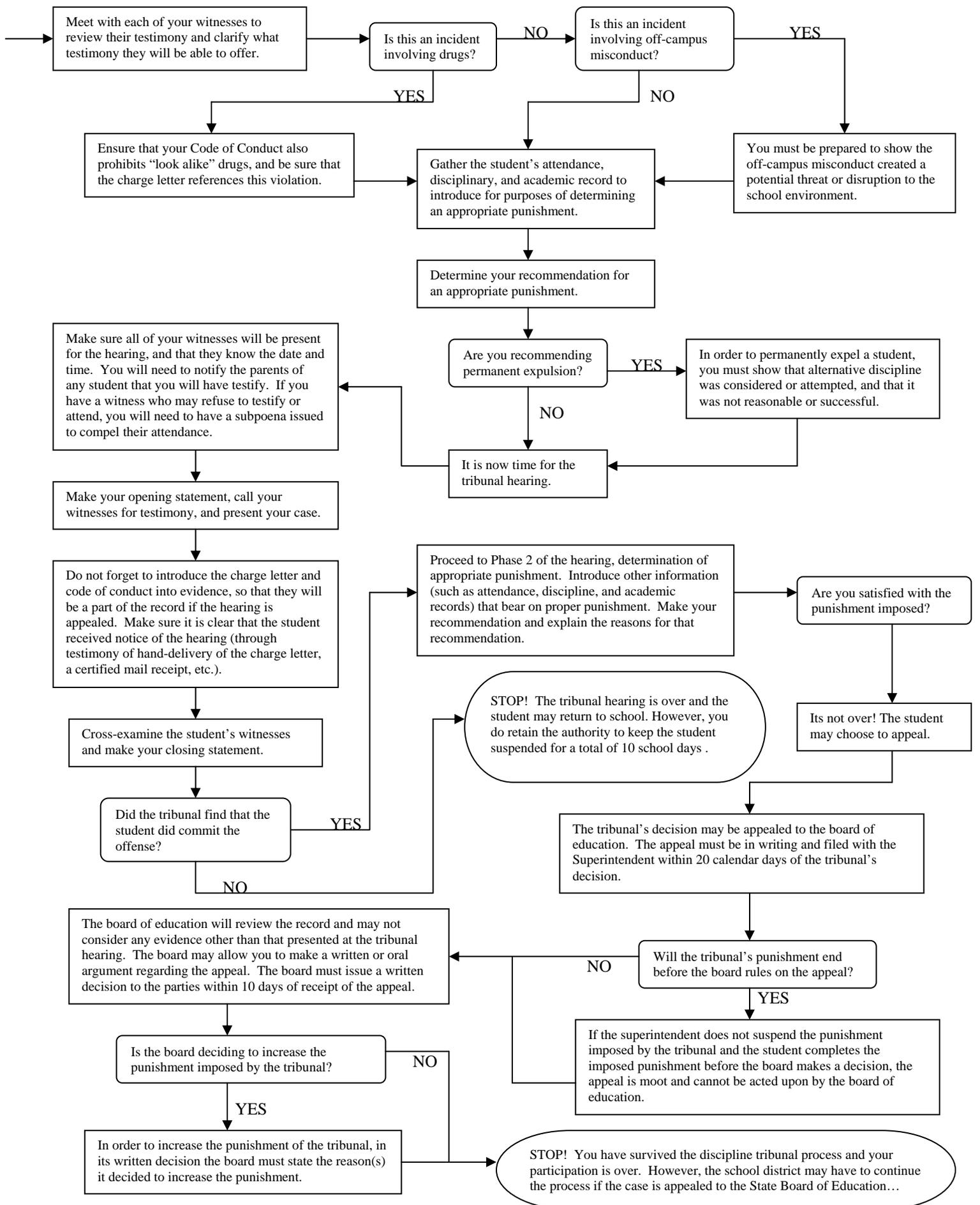
- a. Re-Segregation
- b. High Stakes Testing (No Child Left Behind Act)
- c. Zero Tolerance Policies
 - i. Teachers & Student From Different Cultures, Backgrounds, Neighborhoods, etc...
 - ii. Discipline/Sanctions
 - iii. Racially Disproportionate
- d. Criminalization of Youth
- e. Prison Industrial Complex

III. Solutions

1. Maintain Enrollment, Not Funnel Out
2. Behavior Interventions
3. Fund Education Not Incarceration
4. Repeal Punitive Provisions of No Child Left Behind Act; Culturally Biased, High Stakes Testing
5. Repeal Zero Tolerance Policies
6. Increase Parent Involvement, Education & Awareness
7. Increase Awareness of Educators, Administrators & Policy Makers
8. Reduce White Flight
9. Revise Juvenile Justice Code; Repeal SB440
10. Increase Cultural Competency in the Classroom, In School Administration, Reduce Bias
11. Educate New Cadre of Teachers on the Pipeline
12. Address Systemic Racism and Institutional Oppression

Georgia Discipline Tribunal Flowchart





THE LIMITATIONS - JUVENILE COURT

CHILD TAKEN INTO CUSTODY

PROBABLE CAUSE HEARING **WITHIN 48 HOURS**
Delinquent detained on warrantless arrest

DETENTIONAL HEARING **WITHIN 72 HOURS**
Delinquent, Unruly and Deprived 15-11-49 (c)(1) & (2)

IF DETAINED PETITION FILED
Within 72 hours on delinquent & unruly cases & 5 days on deprived cases
15-11-49 (e)

ADJUDICATORY HEARING SET
Within 10 days on delinquent, unruly & deprived cases
15-11-39 (a)

DISPOSITIONAL HEARING
No time limit but calendar priority on delinquent, unruly & deprived cases
15-11-65

IF RELEASED, PETITION FILED
Within 30 days on delinquent, unruly & deprived cases
15-11-49 (e)

ADJUDICATORY HEARING SET
Within 60 days on delinquent, unruly & deprived cases
15-11-39 (a)

DISPOSITIONAL HEARING
No time limit but calendar priority on delinquent, unruly & deprived cases
15-11-65

If child in custody between adjudicatory and disposition, court must conduct disposition within 30 days
15-11-65 (a)