



Lost Time: Foster Students' Educational Experience in New York's Big 4 School Districts and Surrounding Counties

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Appendix on Data and Methodology

Data Source

Data in this report was requested from the New York State Education Department (SED) in 2022, 2023, and 2025. According to SED staff, this data is somewhat incomplete as it does not represent an exact match with students in the foster system through the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). Instead, this data is representative of data reported by school districts and rolled up to the county and city level. Although the data may not be as comprehensive as possible, it does provide first-of-its kind insights into the attendance and discipline experiences of

foster youth in Buffalo Public Schools and Erie County, Rochester City School District and Monroe County, Syracuse City School District and Onondaga County, and Yonkers Public Schools and Westchester County.

Data was requested beginning with the 2017–18 school year and coinciding with the first school year in which the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) required collection and reporting of graduation rate and achievement test score data for students in the foster system.

Data was requested at the county level and for the Big 4 New York State school districts to avoid increased suppression of data at the district and school levels where smaller numbers of students are enrolled (See Data Notes). According to the New York State Education Department data website, only 8,637 students were in the foster system during the 2024–25 school year and more than half of those students were in New York City Public Schools with the other students dispersed throughout the rest of the state.

This report and its underlying data are limited in their scope and reach as data is aggregated and not student-level data. However, the report provides a high-level overview of attendance and discipline issues that indicate further, more in-depth analysis is required to better understand the issues facing this population.

A copy of the data is available [here](#).

Data Notes

The following notes from SED contextualize the data within this report:

Suspensions:

- In-school suspensions (ISS) are instances in which a child is temporarily removed from his or her regular classroom(s) for disciplinary purposes but remains with their school of enrollment under the direct supervision of school personnel. Direct supervision means school personnel are physically in the same location as students under their supervision. ISS does not include behavioral intervention, such as “time-out” or disciplinary detentions that are administered before or after the school day.
- Out-of-school suspensions (OSS) are instances in which a child is temporarily removed from his or her regular school for disciplinary purposes to another setting (for example, home, behavior center, alternative learning center). This includes both removals in which no IEP services are provided because the removal is ten days or less and removals

in which the child continues to receive services according to his or her IEP.

- Students who received both in-school and out-of-school suspensions are counted once in each category.
- No suspension data was collected in the 2017–18 school year.

Attendance and Suspensions:

- Attendance and suspension counts include students enrolled at any time during the school year.
- Charter schools are included in counts for Rest of Erie County, whether they are located in Buffalo or elsewhere in Erie County.

Suppression:

- When the total student count was less than five, data was suppressed. Additionally, all cells were suppressed when the total student count was less than five. Suppressed data are indicated by an s in the data linked above.

The following notes from the author further contextualize the data within this report:

While the report provides an overview of data from the 2017–18 through 2024–25 school years, it is important to note that a full data set in many geographic regions and years was unavailable. More details on the limitations of the data set are provided below:

General Notes:

- Data was unavailable for Buffalo Public Schools from the 2017–18 through 2019–20 school years.
- Data was unavailable for Syracuse City School District students in the foster system in the 2017–18 and 2018–19 school years.
- Data was unavailable for Yonkers Public Schools from the 2017–18 through 2021–22 school years.

- In-school suspension data was not reported for Yonkers Public Schools for all school years 2017–18 through 2024–25.
- Suspension data was unavailable for all Big 4 school districts and counties in the 2017–18 school year.

Notes on Racial Disaggregation:

When analyzing data by race, the author selected to look only at Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, and White students as data was most consistently available and not suppressed for those racial groups than other groups within the data sets. However, there were a few areas where data was suppressed or unavailable for those racial groups.

- Buffalo Public Schools and Erie County:
 - Disaggregated attendance data by race in Buffalo Public Schools was unavailable or suppressed for all students from the 2017–18 through 2019–20 school years.
 - Disaggregated suspension data by race in Buffalo Public Schools was unavailable or suppressed for students in the foster system from during the 2018–19 and 2019–20 school years.
 - Disaggregated attendance and suspension data by race in Buffalo Public Schools was suppressed for Hispanic or Latino students in the foster system in the 2021–22, 2022–23, and 2023–24 school years.
 - Disaggregated attendance and suspension data by race in Buffalo Public Schools was suppressed for White students in the foster system in the 2020–21 and 2023–24 school years.
- Rochester City School District and Monroe County:
 - Disaggregated attendance and suspension data by race in Rochester City School District was suppressed for Hispanic or Latino students in the foster system in the 2017–18 school years.
 - Disaggregated attendance and suspension data by race in Rochester City School District was suppressed for White students in the foster system in the 2017–18, 2019–20, 2021–22, and 2022–23 school years.
- Syracuse City School District and Onondaga County:
 - Disaggregated attendance and suspension data by race in Syracuse City School District was suppressed for Black or African American students in the foster system in the 2017–18 and 2018–19 school years and
 - Disaggregated attendance and suspension data by race in Syracuse City School District was suppressed for Black or African American students not in the foster system in the 2017–18 school year.
 - Disaggregated attendance and suspension data by race in Syracuse City School District was suppressed for Hispanic or Latino students in the foster system in the 2017–18, 2018–19, 2019–20, 2021–22, 2022–23, 2023–24, and 2024–25 school years.
 - Disaggregated attendance and suspension data by race in Syracuse City School District was suppressed for Hispanic or Latino students not in the foster system in the 2017–18 school year.
 - Disaggregated attendance and suspension data by race in Rochester City School District was suppressed for White students in the foster system in the 2017–18 and 2018–19 school years.

- Disaggregated attendance and suspension data by race in Syracuse City School District was suppressed for White students not in the foster system in the 2017–18 school year.
- Yonkers Public Schools and Westchester County:
 - Disaggregated attendance and suspensions data by race in Yonkers Public Schools was unavailable for Black or African American students in the foster system in the 2017–18 through 2021–22 school years.
 - Disaggregated attendance and suspensions data by race in Yonkers Public Schools was unavailable for Hispanic or Latino students in the foster system in the 2017–18 through 2020–21 school years.
 - Disaggregated attendance and suspensions data by race in Yonkers Public Schools was unavailable for White students in the foster system in the 2017–18 through 2024–25 school years.

Methodology

The data was analyzed cumulatively using RStudio. The author calculated an average annual attendance rate for students in the foster system and those not in the foster system by status as a student in the foster system and by status as a student in the foster system and by race within each geographic region and across all years which data were available (2017–18 through 2024–25 school years). The same approach was used for in-school and out-of-school suspensions to ascertain an average (or typical) in-school and out-of-school suspension rate across all years for which data were available.