



Issue Brief

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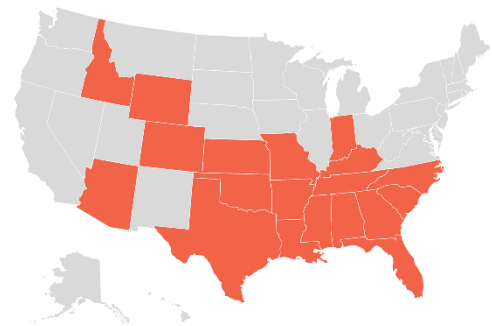
Stopping Harmful Corporal Punishment Policies in Texas

By Morgan Craven, J.D.

Texas is one of only 19 states in the United States that still allows corporal punishment in schools (including charter schools). In Texas, corporal punishment is the “**deliberate infliction of physical pain by hitting, paddling, spanking, slapping or any other physical force used as a means of discipline**” (TEC, Sec. 37.0011). A school district’s board of trustees must adopt a corporal punishment policy in order for the practice to be used in their schools.

If parents* do not want corporal punishment used against their student, they must *opt out* of their district’s policy – in writing – each school year. This requirement can present challenges for parents who do not know their district has a corporal punishment policy, do not understand the corporal punishment policy or do not fully understand what corporal punishment may actually look like for their child.

The 19 States Where Corporal Punishment is Still Legal



Corporal Punishment in Schools is Harmful

Corporal punishment harms students and prevents teachers from using research-based, effective strategies to create safe school environments for all students. Physically hurting students has been shown to have the following negative impacts.

- **Corporal punishment hurts students’ academic outcomes.** Research shows that the use of corporal punishment in schools can limit the academic achievement and success of the students being punished *and* the students who see their peers punished (Dupper & Dingus, 2008; Hyman, 1996).
- **Corporal punishment hurts students physically *and* psychologically.** Students who are hit in front of their peers may experience trauma and low self-esteem (Greydanus, et al., 2003). They can be emotionally humiliated, feel unsafe and disempowered, and struggle with life-long depression (Gershoff, 2017).

* parents, including guardians and caretakers

- **Corporal punishment policies and practices target Black students.** Like other punitive discipline strategies, including suspensions and alternative school placements that target students unfairly, corporal punishment is disproportionately used against Black students. Black students are not more likely than their peers to break school rules, yet they are more likely than their peers to be punished by teachers and administrators. While no student should experience corporal punishment, its racist and discriminatory use makes the practice even more problematic in schools.
- **Corporal punishment policies and practices target students with disabilities.** Students with disabilities experience higher rates of corporal punishment than their peers without disabilities. These violent practices hurt students and can exacerbate existing challenges that should be addressed in appropriate ways.
- **Corporal punishment teaches violence as a solution.** Schools that model violence as a way to address conflict (real or perceived) grant permission for students to use violence, as young people and later as adults. This can compromise interpersonal relationships (Terk, 2010) and perpetuate a culture where physical violence, particularly against people of color and people with disabilities, is seen as acceptable.

A number of national organizations have publicly opposed the use of corporal punishment against children, including (but not limited to):

- American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry
- American Academy of Family Physicians
- American Academy of Pediatrics
- American Bar Association
- American Civil Liberties Union
- American Medical Association
- American Psychological Association
- American Public Health Association
- American School Counselor Association
- General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church USA
- Human Rights Watch
- National Association for the Education of Young Children
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners
- National Association of School Nurses
- National Association of School Psychologists
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National Association of State Boards of Education
- National Foster Parent Association
- National Mental Health Association
- National PTA
- Prevent Child Abuse America
- United Methodist Church

Corporal Punishment in Texas Schools

For the 2017-18 school year, **1,165 Texas schools in 468 school districts reported using corporal punishment to discipline 12,754 students** (see Appendix A for a list of districts).

Of the 5.4 million students enrolled in Texas public schools during 2017-18, 483,471 (9%) were enrolled in schools that use corporal punishment as a form of discipline.

Black Students are Punished More than their Peers

Even though Black students are not more likely to break school rules than their peers, they are more likely to be punished by their teachers and school administrators. **Black students made up 10% of the student population in schools that used corporal punishment, they accounted for 17% of corporal punishment uses.** Black students also experience the highest rates of corporal punishment compared to all other racial-ethnic groups. In Texas schools using corporal punishment in 2017-18, one out of every 20 Black students was corporally punished.

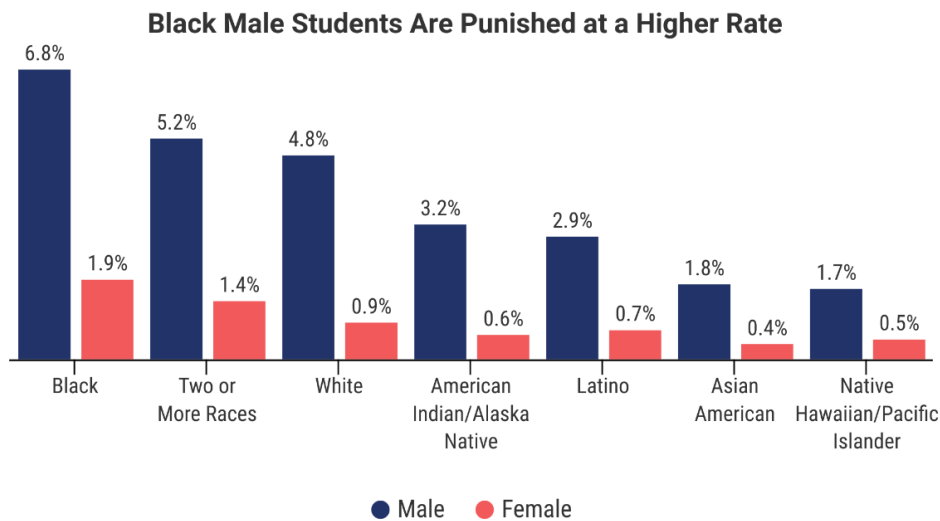
To compare: corporally punishment was inflicted upon 3.3% of students of two or more races, 3.0% of white students, 1.9% of American Indian/Alaska Native students, 1.8% of Latino students, 1.1% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students, and 1.1% of Asian American students.

Boys are Punished Most

Of the 12,754 students who experienced corporal punishment at least once during the 2017-18 school year, male students accounted for 82.4% (10,518) of all students subjected to this form of discipline.

Black Boys and Girls Experience Higher Rates of Punishment

Black male students are punished at a higher rate – 6.8% – than any other group. Black female students experience corporal punishment at a higher rate than female students of other races and at a higher rate than some male groups.



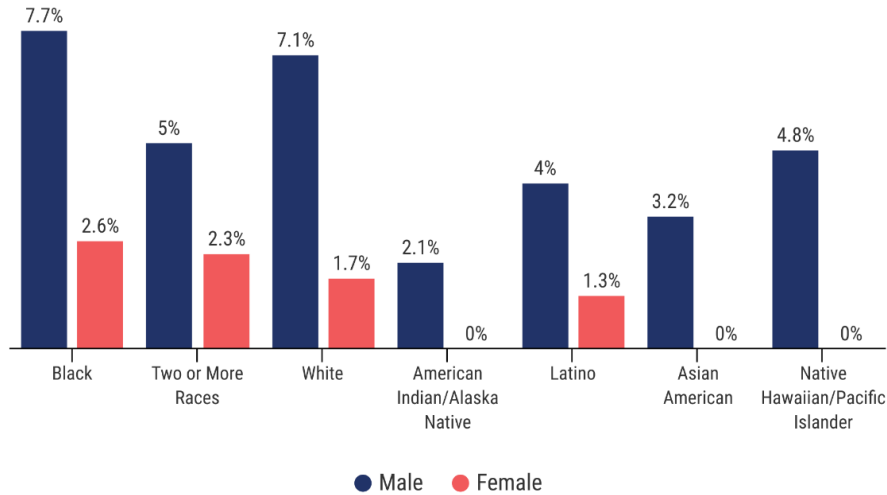
Data Source: CDRC, 2017-18

Students with Disabilities are Punished at Higher Rates

Students with disabilities face higher rates of corporal punishment in Texas than their peers. Students with disabilities are punished at nearly twice the rate compared students without a disability – 4.5% compared to 2.6%.

Those rates worsen when we consider how disability intersects with race and gender. As with other punitive discipline methods, **Black boys with disabilities and Black girls with disabilities are punished at higher rates than their peers.**

Students with Disabilities are Punished at Higher Rates



Data Source: CDCR, 2017-18

Ending Corporal Punishment in Schools

The United States Congress should pass the **Protecting our Students in Schools Act**, which would ban corporal punishment in all schools that receive federal funds and create a grant program to support research-based strategies that promote positive school climates.

Though federal legislation has been filed, state legislatures still have a responsibility to act. **All states must immediately ban corporal punishment in schools.** In Texas, the legislature has repeatedly failed to protect students from assault in schools, despite recurring legislation, like HB 3879 filed by Representative Alma Allen in 2021.

Districts and charter schools should discontinue corporal punishment policies. School district boards of trustees and charter school leaders can vote to end the use of corporal punishment in their schools and districts. These policies should be paired with policies that address other harmful punitive discipline methods, including suspensions and alternative school placements, and instead enact practices that promote positive school climates.

Schools must implement alternative practices that support student growth. All schools and districts should adopt research-based, culturally-sustaining educational practices, including:

- Restorative practices and similar research-based strategies used to build strong school communities, foster authentic and meaningful relationships, and repair harm between individuals should it occur;
- Ethnic studies courses, like Mexican American Studies, African American Studies, and many others that give all students a more complete and justice-centered picture of diverse groups of people in our communities; and
- District- and school-wide cultures that focus on the strengths and assets of all students and families and employ strategies to support student and family leadership in policies and practices.

For more information on adopting strategies that ensure safe schools for all students, see IDRA EAC-South resources and request services at www.idraeacsouth.org.

- For more information about IDRA's work to end corporal punishment in schools, contact IDRA's National Director of Policy, Advocacy and Community Engagement, Morgan Craven, J.D., at morgan.craven@idra.org.

Works Cited

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Notes

Every other year, United States public schools are required to report corporal punishment data to the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR). In October of 2020, OCR released its Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) report on the 2017-18 school year: <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/>.

The CRDC data do not present a complete picture of corporal punishment in Texas. The data are collected and published infrequently and only report the number of students that were hit in their schools, not the number of times corporal punishment was used. Some students are hit more than once, but this is not captured in the dataset. For an excellent report evaluating the last CRDC dataset and the impact of corporal punishment on students, see Southern Poverty Law Center. (2019, June 11). *The Striking Outlier: The Persistent, Painful, and Problematic Practice of Corporal Punishment in Schools*. Publication. <https://www.splcenter.org/20190611/striking-outlier-persistent-painful-and-problematic-practice-corporal-punishment-schools>.

We are grateful to Dr. Nino Rodriguez for his research and analyses in support of this brief.

The Intercultural Development Research Association is an independent, non-profit organization. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.

Appendix A

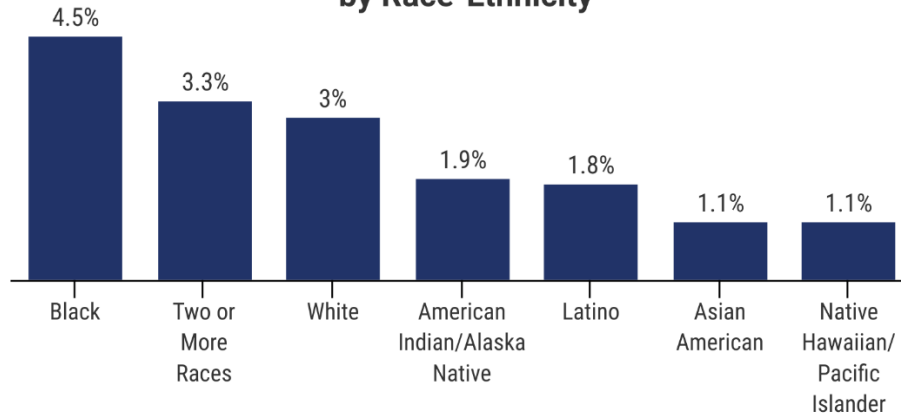
Texas School Districts & Charter Schools that Reported Using Corporal Punishment in 2017-18

Abernathy	Childress	Gordon	Kilgore	North Zulch	Snook
Albany	Chillicothe	Gorman	Kirbyville	Northside (Vernon)	Snyder
Alpine	Chilton	Graford	Klondike	O'Donnell	Somerville
Alto	Christoval	Graham	Knox City-O'Brien	Oakwood	Sonora
Alvarado	Cisco	Grandview	Kountze	Olfen	Southland
Alvord	City View	Grandview-Hopkins	Kress	Olney	Spearman
Anahuac	Claude	Granger	La Grange	Olton	Splendora
Anderson-Shiro	Cleveland	Grape Creek	La Pryor	Onalaska	Spur
Andrews	Clyde	Greenwood	Lamesa	Orange Grove	Stanton
Anson	Coahoma	Groesbeck	Lapoynor	Orangefield	Stephenville
Anton	Coldspring-Oakhurst	Hale Center	Latexo	Ore City	Sterling City
Apple Springs	Columbia-Brazoria	Hallsburg	Leary	Overton	Sudan
Aquilla	Columbus	Hamilton	Lefors	Paducah	Sulphur Springs
Aransas County	Comanche	Hamlin Collegiate	Leggett	Panhandle	Sundown
Archer City	Como-Pickton	Hamshire-Fannett	Leon	Paradise	Sunray
Arp	Connally	Hardin	Leverett's Chapel	Paris	Sweeny
Aspermont	Coolidge	Harleton	Liberty-Eylau	Pearsall	Sweetwater
Athens	Cooper	Harper	Lindsay	Pecos-Barstow-Toyah	Taft
Atlanta	Corrigan-Camden	Harrold	Lingleville	Perryton	Tahoka
Avery	Corsicana	Hart	Lipan	Petrolia	Tatum
Avinger	Crane	Hartley	Little Cypress-Mauriceville	Pettus	Teague
Azle	Crockett	Haskell	Littlefield	Pewitt	Tenaha
Bangs	Crockett County	Hawkins	Livingston	Pine Tree	Terrell County
Barbers Hill	Crosbyton	Hawley	Lohn	Plainview	Texarkana
Beckville	Cross Plains	Hearne	Lone Oak	Plemons-Stinnett-Phillips	Texas Leadership
Beeville	Cross Roads	Hemphill	Loop	Ponder	Thorndale
Bellville	Crowell	Hempstead	Loraine	Port Arthur	Three Way
Ben Bolt-Palito Blanco	Crystal City	Henderson	Louise	Post	Tidehaven
Benjamin	Cuero	Hermleigh	Lovelady	Prairiland	Timpson
Big Sandy (Dallardsville)	Cumby	Hico	Lueders-Avoca	Prairie Valley	Tom Bean
Big Spring	Cushing	Higgins	Lufkin	Priddy	Trent
Blanco	Daingerfield-Lone Star	Highland	Lumberton	Princeton	Trinidad
Blanket	Dalhart	Highland Park (Amarillo)	Madisonville	Quanah	Trinity
Bloomburg	Dawson	Hillsboro	Malakoff	Queen City	Troup
Blooming Grove	Denison	Holliday	Malta	Quinlan	Turkey-Quitaque

Blum	DeSoto	Hooks	Marshall	Rains	Union Grove
Boling	Detroit	Hubbard (DeKalb)	Mart	Ralls	Utopia
Booker	Deweyville	Hudson	Martinsville	Ranger	Van
Borden County	Diboll	Hughes Springs	Mason	Rankin	Van Vleck
Bovina	Dimmitt	Hull-Daisetta	Matagorda	Reagan County	Vega
Bowie	Dodd City	Huntington	Mathis	Red Lick	Venus
Brackett	Douglass	Ingram	Maud	Redwater	Vernon
Brazos	Dumas	Iola	May	Refugio	Victoria
Breckenridge	Early	Iowa Park	McCamey	Rio Grande City	Vidor
Brenham	East Bernard	Ira	McLean	Rio Vista	Vysehrad
Bridge City	East Chambers	Iredell	Medina	Rise Academy	Waelder
Broadus	Eastland	Irion County	Memphis	River Road	Walcott
Brock	Ector	Italy	Merkel	Rivercrest	Wall
Brookeland	Edcouch-Elsa	Itasca	Mexia	Robert Lee	Warren
Brookesmith	Edgewood	Jacksonville	Midland	Rockdale	Waskom
Brownfield	Edinburg	Jasper	Midlothian	Roosevelt	Wellington
Brownsboro	Edna	Jayton-Girard	Midway	Ropes	Wellman-Union
Brownwood	Electra	Jefferson	Milano	Roscoe Collegiate	Wells
Bryson	Ennis	Jim Ned	Miller Grove	Rosebud-Lott	West
Buckholts	Era	Joaquin	Monahans-Wickett-Pyote	Rotan	West Hardin County

Appendix B

Rates of Texas Students Receiving Corporal Punishment by Race-Ethnicity



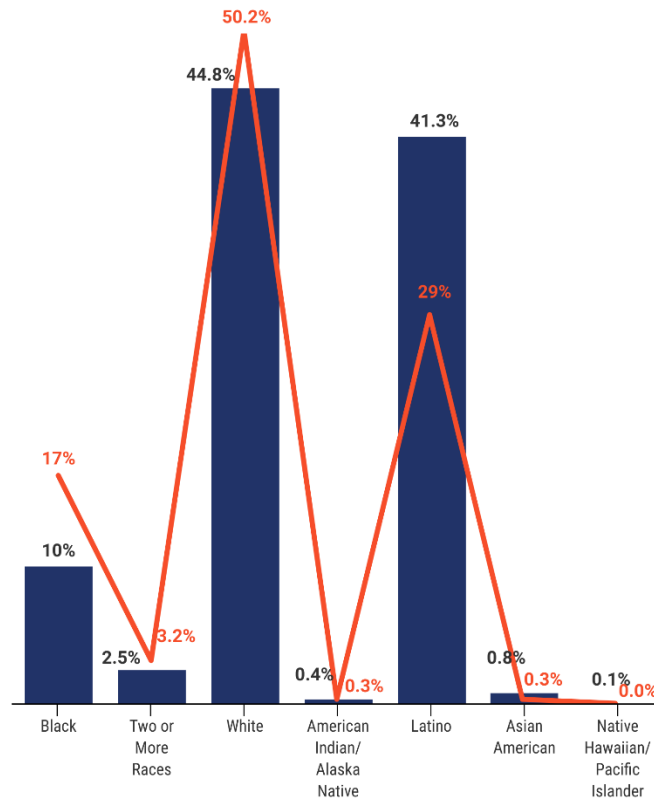
Data Source: CDRC, 2017-18

Students Receiving Corporal Punishment in Texas Schools Administering Corporal Punishment

Texas	IDEA Total Enrollment			IDEA Students Receiving Corporal Punishment			Rate of IDEA Students Receiving Corporal Punishment		
	Male	Female	Male + Females	Male	Female	Male + Females	Male	Female	Male + Females
Latino	102,656	97,111	199,767	2,983	710	3,693	2.9%	0.7%	1.8%
American Indian/Alaska Native	1,026	1,032	2,058	33	6	39	3.2%	0.6%	1.9%
Asian American	1,949	1,908	3,857	35	8	43	1.8%	0.4%	1.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	230	206	436	4	1	5	1.7%	0.5%	1.1%
Black	25,149	23,287	48,436	1,721	446	2,167	6.8%	1.9%	4.5%
White	112,500	104,313	216,813	5,422	982	6,404	4.8%	0.9%	3.0%
Two or More Races	6,112	5,992	320	320	83	403	5.2%	1.4%	3.3%
Total	249,622	223,849	483,471	1,772	2,336	12,754	5.9%	1.7%	4.5%

Data source: CDRC, 2017-18

Percentage of Total Enrollment and Percentage of Students Receiving Corporal Punishment by Race-Ethnicity in Texas



Data Source: CDRC, 2017-18

Students with Disabilities Receiving Corporal Punishment in Texas Schools Administering Corporal Punishment

Texas	IDEA Total Enrollment			IDEA Students Receiving Corporal Punishment			Rate of IDEA Students Receiving Corporal Punishment		
	Male	Female	Male + Females	Male	Female	Male + Females	Male	Female	Male + Females
Latino	11,084	5,499	16,583	447	73	520	4.0%	1.3%	3.1%
American Indian/Alaska Native	146	68	214	3	-	3	2.1%	0.0%	1.4%
Asian American	124	61	185	4	-	4	3.2%	0.0%	2.2%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	21	6	27	1	-	1	4.8%	0.0%	3.7%
Black	4,153	2,067	6,220	318	54	372	7.7%	2.6%	6.0%
White	13,586	7,126	20,712	958	124	1,082	7.1%	1.7%	5.2%
Two or More Races	814	396	1,210	41	9	50	5.0%	2.3%	4.1%
Total	29,928	15,223	45,151	1,772	260	2,032	5.9%	1.7%	4.5%

Data source: CDRC, 2017-18