

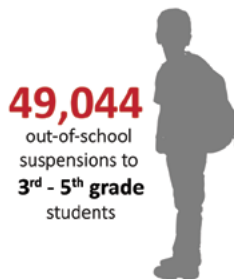
Houston ISD Ends Harsh Discipline Practice for Youngest Students

Houston ISD is leading the way in re-examining the way young students are disciplined. Last month, Houston ISD became the first district in Texas to formally end the use of suspensions for pre-K through 2nd grade students. Advocacy efforts to ban these harmful exclusionary discipline practices at HISD began last year. In a December 2015 letter to school board trustees signed by a number of advocates, we urged HISD to eliminate discretionary suspensions, expulsions, and Disciplinary Alternative Education Program (DAEP) placements for young children and limit such removals for third through fifth graders.

As the school board considered the policy change, a number of people rallied with us on behalf of Houston schoolchildren including parents, students, other advocacy organizations, legislators, fellow school board members, teachers, and principals.

Last year, Texas Appleseed accessed new data to examine how Texas' youngest students were being disciplined. We released findings about Texas' practices in our November 2015 report, *Suspended Childhood*. Findings included:

- In the 2013-2014 school year, Texas schools issued 88,310 out-of-school suspensions and 193,819 in-school suspensions to young children.
- Black students accounted for 42% of all pre-K through 5th grade out-of-school suspensions even though they make up about 13% of the elementary school population in Texas.



An Incredible 20



1996 wasn't just any year. As the world was being introduced to Oprah's Book Club and the hottest new toy—Tickle Me Elmo—for the first time something else great was getting started. Texas Appleseed was founded. We are excited to

reflect on what we have been able to achieve together over the last 20 years. We want you to help us celebrate our 20th in a big way because you have been a part of our success. Please stay tuned throughout the year for special events, fun giveaways, and treks down memory lane. We'll keep you posted via our e-updates and on social media.

- Boys accounted for 84% of all pre-K through 5th grade out-of-school suspensions even though they represent 51% of the total student population in Texas.
- Students who receive special education services accounted for 22% of all pre-K through 5th grade out-of-school suspensions even though they are 9% of the total student population in Texas.

There are a number of negative outcomes associated with removing young children from class. Young students who are expelled or suspended are as much as 10 times more likely to drop out of high school, experience academic failure and grade retention, hold negative school attitudes, and face incarceration than those who are not.

We are pleased that HISD has decided to support its students and treat them fairly, and we urge other school districts across Texas to follow the lead of HISD. For more information, visit the School-to-Prison Pipeline project page at TexasAppleseed.org.



Texas Appleseed

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More Texans Are Covered

Here's an at-a-glance look that offers the latest on the unified ordinance, which offers basic protections and affordability standards for people taking out payday and auto title loans.



Latest Cities to Adopt



9.3 Million Texans Covered



34 Texas Cities Included

As of Feb. 28, 2016

Pulling Back the Curtain

If you missed our whitepaper about the questionable ties between payday and auto title businesses and the third-party lenders that finance these loans, here's a recap. After two years of litigation in which the industry worked to keep the names of third-party lenders hidden, we were finally able to obtain records in order to analyze this business landscape. In *Pulling Back the Curtain*, we reveal that:

- Close to a quarter of the third-party lenders that finance Texas payday and auto title loans have overlapping ownership with payday and auto title companies. This calls into question their compliance with the Texas CSO Act and the state's caps on usury.

- Five third-party lenders appear to have a direct ownership connection with the payday and auto title loan companies that they finance.
- 86% of payday and auto title lenders work only with one third-party lender, with the top five third-party lenders serving 77% of all licensed payday and auto title loan locations. This debunks the industry's position that there is healthy competition in the marketplace. In fact, this complex web of ownership hinders transparency and competition, and calls into question compliance with the law.

For the report and a press release, visit this project page at TexasAppleseed.org.

THE LATEST...

PEOPLE

We have ushered in great, new talent in 2016. We are pleased to welcome six new board members: **Patrick H. Cantilo** with Cantilo & Bennett, L.L.P.; **Kent Caperton** with Ben Barnes Group; **Peter M. Kelly** with Kelly, Durham & Pittard, L.L.P.; **Gina DeBottis Metts**, former executive director, Special

Prosecution Unit; **Hon. Thomas R. Phillips** with Baker Botts LLP; and **Melissa B. Shultz** with the University of North Texas Dallas College of Law. **Elizabeth Mack** has taken the helm as board chair, and we are especially grateful to **George Butts** for his leadership as our immediate past chair. *Organizations listed for identification only.*

Education and Justice Win at the Good Apple Dinner

Texas Appleseed was pleased to recognize three remarkable honorees at our Good Apple Dinner in November. **H-E-B CEO Charles Butt** received our Good Apple Award for his leadership in promoting public education, quality schools, and literacy initiatives in Texas. Two law firms received our Pro Bono Leadership Award: **Baker & McKenzie** for its innovative guide that will help homeless youth and **DLA Piper LLP (US)** for its work on truancy reform.



Criminal Justice Reform

Texas Appleseed's work on criminal justice reform is ramping up, with a focus on reducing jail populations through both bail reform and the elimination of debtors' prisons across the state. Texas Appleseed is working to reform current pretrial detention practices so that a defendant's risk level, not income level, determines whether that person is released on bond. Almost two-thirds of the individuals in Texas county jails have not been convicted of any crime and are being detained because they cannot afford bail.

We are also working to end the unlawful practice of jailing Texans who are unable to pay traffic tickets, fines and fees in low-level criminal cases. Thousands of Texans are jailed each year for failure to pay fines and fees, even when they cannot

afford those fines and fees. Our guide (available online at our Debtors' Prison project page) helps people understand their rights with respect to court debt, warrants or arrest.

We recently authored a letter along with the UT School of Law Civil Rights Clinic, ACLU of Texas and the Texas Fair Defense Project to El Paso's City Council about their municipal court's practice of jailing El Pasoans without determining each individual's ability to pay, as required by state and federal law. The City has adopted some reforms to educate defendants about alternative sentencing options like community service and payment plans.

Texas Appleseed will continue to analyze the extent of these problems statewide with an eye toward enforcement of people's state and federal constitutional rights.

SEE INSIDE: Celebrating 20 Years / Updates on Payday Reform & HISD Suspensions / Good Apple Dinner Photos

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