

THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

Meet Sally Jones (left) and Mariah Smith (right). Sally and Mariah go to the same school in the Pittsburgh area, they are both 15 and they are both fictional characters based on real-life stories. These two teenagers are going to help us learn about how the “school to prison pipeline” works. The phrase “school to prison pipeline” describes a trend of legislation and unchallenged practices that lead to children being taken out of the classroom and placed in the juvenile justice system.



Like many teenagers in their school, Sally and Mariah both vape. Both regularly bring their vapes to school and often dip out of class to vape in the restroom. One day, a teacher catches them outside the restroom. The teacher sends them to the principal's office and confiscates the vapes. Sally is given lunch detention for the day, but Mariah is suspended for a week. When Mariah returns to school, she feels as if her teachers are targeting her. If she walks into class as the bell rings, she gets written up. She is searched every morning when she gets to school. Exactly one month later, a school police officer searches her backpack and finds a THC vape (main psychoactive ingredient in the cannabis plant). Mariah is suspended from school and faces charges for illegal possession of a controlled substance.

You may be thinking to yourself that this scenario sounds unbelievable, or you may be angry that Mariah was given harsher treatment than her peer. Unfortunately, what happened to Mariah is not uncommon. The “pipeline” was built by decades of legislation and federal initiatives that provide a legal basis for imposing severe punishment on children who need help.

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Resources

- ACLU: [What Is The School-to-Prison Pipeline](#) (5 min read) - article defining the “pipeline” and the “nuts and bolts” holding it together. While originally written in 2008, but it is still very accurate to today’s world.
- [How Does it Affect Students?](#) (3 min watch) - Kimberlé Crenshaw (law professor, expert in civil rights, critical race theory, & race and gender issues) explains how girls like Mariah ended up out of school and into the juvenile justice system.
- ACLU: [What is Zero-Tolerance?](#) (3 min read + 3 min watch) - article that defines “zero tolerance policy” and a video of a young man who experienced the pipeline and zero-tolerance policy first-hand.
- 8 Million Stories: [Zero-Tolerance Policies in Schools](#) (20 min watch) - video featuring stories from young people at risk of being sucked into the school-to-prison pipeline.
- American Bar Association: [School-to-Prison Pipeline Statistics](#) (Explore at your own pace) - list of statistics regarding zero-tolerance policies, student resource officers and law enforcement in schools, dual process on suspensions and expulsions on nonviolent offenses, and the impact on students of color, LGBTQIA+ students, and students with disabilities. Each category has several source links that provide a wealth of education about the impact of this “pipeline.”
- Education Law Center: [Stopping the School to Prison Pipeline](#) (Explore at your own pace) – guidance for reforming school policies, educational tools to ensure students’ rights, and advocacy toolkits for students facing school discipline. Whether a consumer has been expelled from preschool or is facing truancy, these resources are great professional tools for anyone on your caseload.
- [Care, Not Control](#) (Explore at your own pace) – actionable ways to help end youth incarceration in Pennsylvania.



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allegheny
children's initiative
Hope starts here

THE SCHOOL TO PRISON PIPELINE

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ARE OUR CHILDREN BEING PUSHED INTO PRISON?

THE PIPELINE TO PRISON: THE U.S. HAS THE HIGHEST INCARCERATION RATE IN THE WORLD, AND ITS PRISONS AND JAILS ARE OVERWHELMINGLY FILLED WITH AFRICAN AMERICANS AND LATINOS. THE PATHS TO PRISON FOR YOUNG AFRICAN-AMERICAN AND LATINO MEN ARE MANY, BUT THE STARTING POINTS ARE OFTEN THE SCHOOL AND FOSTER CARE SYSTEMS.

FROM SCHOOL TO PRISON


STUDENTS OF COLOR FACE HARSHER DISCIPLINE AND ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE PUSHED OUT OF SCHOOL THAN WHITES.

- 40%** OF STUDENTS **EXPELLED** FROM U.S. SCHOOLS EACH YEAR ARE BLACK.
- 70%** OF STUDENTS INVOLVED IN "IN-SCHOOL" **ARRESTS** OR REFERRED TO LAW ENFORCEMENT ARE BLACK OR LATINO.
- 3.5X** BLACK STUDENTS ARE THREE AND A HALF TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE **SUSPENDED** THAN WHITES.
- 2X** BLACK AND LATINO STUDENTS ARE TWICE AS LIKELY TO **NOT GRADUATE** HIGH SCHOOL AS WHITES.

FROM FOSTER CARE TO PRISON

YOUTH OF COLOR ARE MORE LIKELY THAN WHITES TO BE PLACED IN THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM, A BREEDING GROUND FOR THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM.

- 50%** OF CHILDREN IN THE **FOSTER CARE SYSTEM** ARE BLACK OR LATINO.
- 30%** OF FOSTER CARE YOUTH ENTERING THE **JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM** ARE PLACEMENT-RELATED BEHAVIORAL CASES (e.g. RUNNING AWAY FROM A GROUP HOME).
- 25%** OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING FOSTER CARE WILL BE **INCARCERATED** WITHIN A FEW YEARS AFTER TURNING 18.
- 50%** OF YOUNG PEOPLE LEAVING FOSTER CARE WILL BE **UNEMPLOYED** WITHIN A FEW YEARS AFTER TURNING 18.




68% OF ALL MALES IN STATE AND FEDERAL **PRISON** DO NOT HAVE A HIGH SCHOOL **DIPLOMA.**

70% OF INMATES IN CALIFORNIA **STATE PRISON** ARE FORMER **FOSTER CARE** YOUTH.

THE COLOR OF MASS INCARCERATION

BLACK OR LATINO




61%

OF INCARCERATED POPULATION


VS

BLACK OR LATINO




30%

OF U.S. POPULATION



ONE OUT OF THREE AFRICAN-AMERICAN MALES WILL BE INCARCERATED IN HIS LIFETIME



ONE OUT OF SIX LATINO MALES WILL BE INCARCERATED IN HIS LIFETIME

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Equity is
Imperative