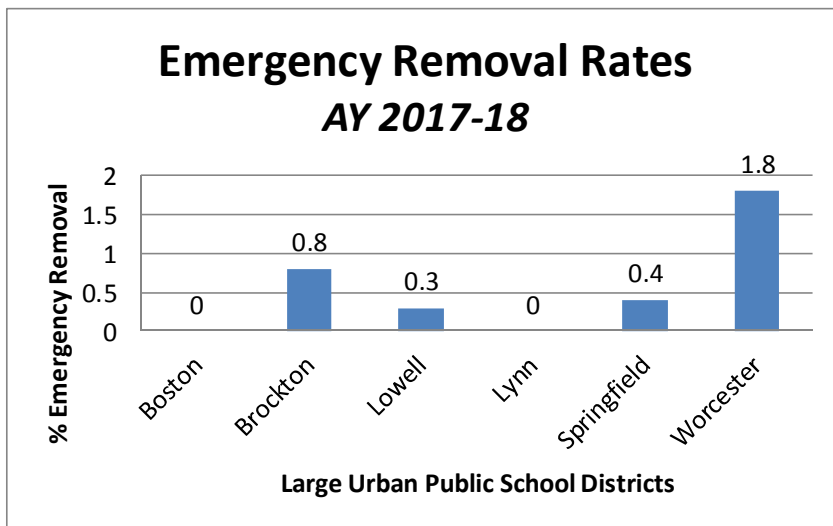


This WSU CityLab Infographic uses a simple statistic — “Removed, not Suspended” — to illustrate how continued misuse of the Emergency Removal category by WPS administration effectively creates a way to remove students from school without technically suspending them. In this way, these unresolved Emergency Removals can be seen as De Facto Suspensions. Data for this infographic comes from public data on the MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and from data released by Worcester Public Schools in 2019 as a result of a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Request.

In 2012, Massachusetts passed Ch. 222 to address discipline in public schools. In addition to creating a system of due process for students prior to their receiving suspensions, Ch. 222 also created a new category called Emergency Removals (ERs). Since their inception, the Worcester Public School system has had the highest rates of ERs among large urban school systems every year. In the most recent release of DESE student discipline data (AY 2017-18), 1.8% of WPS’ students were coded as receiving ERs while other larger and smaller urban systems had lower rates.

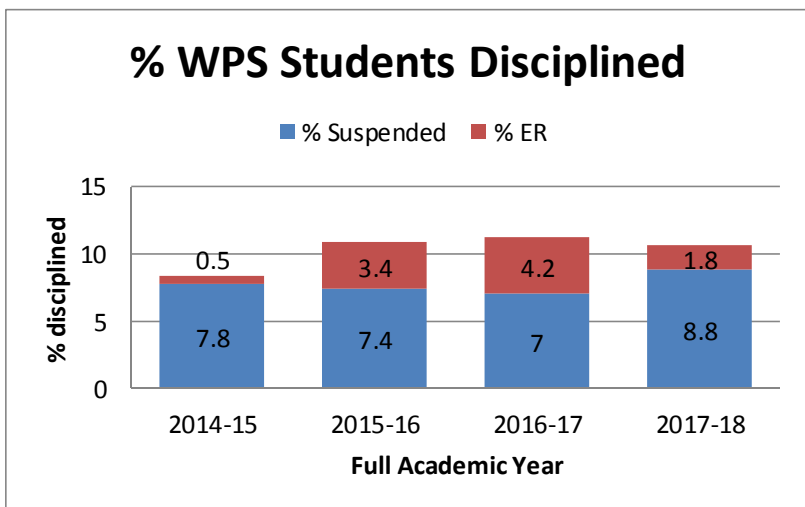


According to the law (M.G.L. c 71 §37H^{3/4}) that was also publicized by DESE, ERs allowed for the removal of a student from school without a hearing when they were: “Charged with a disciplinary offense and the continued presence of the student poses a danger to persons or property, or materially and substantially disrupts the order of the school, and, in the principal’s judgement, there is no alternative available to alleviate the danger or disruption.” DESE rules further stated that “with the exception of an emergency removal, a principal cannot remove a student from school for an offense... without first providing oral and written notice to the student and an opportunity for a hearing.”

In cases of ERs, the school must provide “the opportunity for a disciplinary hearing within two school days following the emergency removal.” This hearing is to determine if the removal was a suspendable offense, in which case it should be converted to a suspension, or if it were not a suspendable offense, in which case the day(s) would be counted as excused absences.

Applied correctly, the rate of ERs should be low, and lower than the number of suspensions. However, as WPS’ removal numbers remain high, the highest of any Massachusetts urban school system, they have been described by the WPS Superintendent as “De Facto Suspensions,” which is contrary to the intent of the law. (*Worcester Telegram*, April 17, 2019.)

WPS recognizes this, but the practice continues and the district continues to lead in this unflattering metric. In reality, disciplinary numbers move back and forth between categories with little decrease.

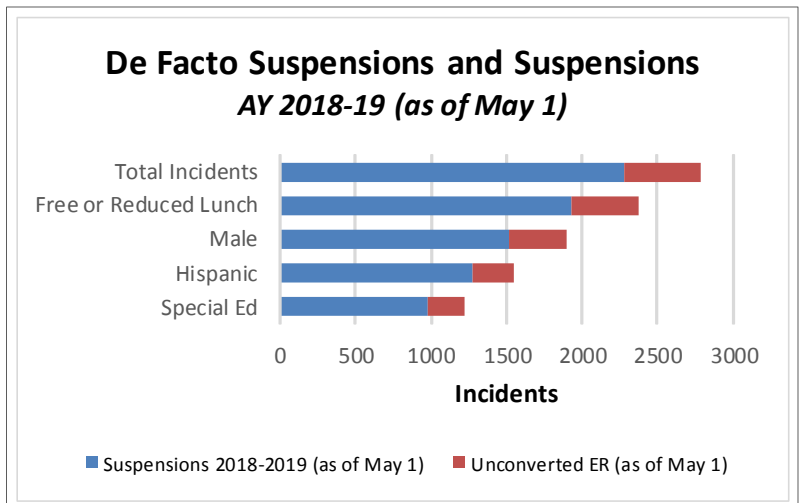


In fact, Worcester Public Schools has led the state's urban school districts in ERs for the past three years. In AY 2017-18 alone, 18 of the state's 20 schools with the highest De Facto Suspension rate were in Worcester. A Freedom of Information Act public data request that released AY 2018-19 data to May 1 suggests Worcester will remain high on that list. The tables below show different data points to illustrate the impact of this procedural misuse in Worcester Public Schools. Note that many with De Facto Suspensions are elementary schools.

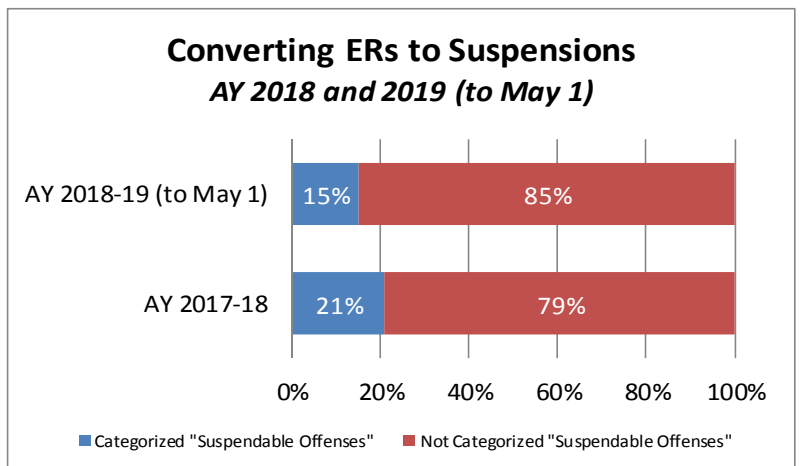
According to the FOIA data released last academic year, between Fall 2017 and May 1, 2019, WPS issued 1,443 ERs. Of those ERs, only 267 (18.5%) were deemed suspendable offenses. The two charts below left reflect the numbers of incidents by selected schools. The top-left shows those schools with the most ERs that were ultimately deemed non-suspendable infractions. While these schools appear to have followed the rules, removed students nevertheless missed classroom time for the removal period, making them De Facto suspensions. The bottom-left chart shows schools with high ER numbers where none were determined to be suspendable, effectively making them De Facto Suspensions, too.

The top-right chart shows regular and De Facto Suspensions across various WPS subgroups. The bottom-right shows the percent of ERs that were actually deemed suspendable. This metric is high when districts are using the Emergency Removal process correctly and low when districts leave students in ERs. When following the ER process correctly, schools should be converting ERs into suspensions at a high rate (ideally, 100%). Over an almost 2-year period, WPS is at 18.5%

WPS Schools with Highest Non-Suspendable Removals		
Fall 2017 - 5/1/19	Incidents	Non-Suspendable ER
Sullivan Middle	141	127
Burncoat High	158	108
Woodland Academy	106	106
Forest Grove	133	101
Belmont Community	81	79
Vernon Hill	61	59
Jacob Hiatt	52	52



WPS Schools with no Suspendable Removals	
Fall 2017 - 5/1/19	Incidents
Woodland Academy	106
Jacob Hiatt	52
Burncoat Elementary	49
Columbus Park	38
Roosevelt	9
Nelson Place	7
Quinsigamond	6
Goddard ASP	5
Lake View	5



*Min. 5 ER incidents

CityLab Infographics present public data that has been assessed and analyzed by Worcester State University's professors, statisticians, and policy experts in objectively-minded visual formats that make it more digestible and useful. CityLab also conducts independent and interdisciplinary mixed-methods research projects led by university professors and scholars. To inquire about our research agenda or to discuss new projects, contact us at CityLab@worchester.edu or the Department of Urban Studies: (508) 929-8940.