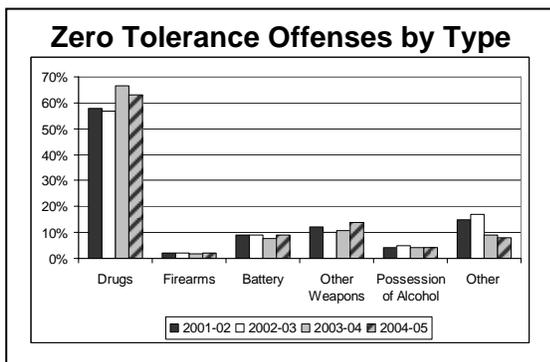
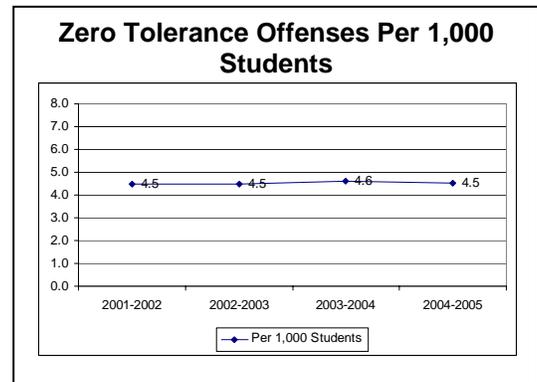


Report Preview Zero Tolerance: An Update, 2006

The percentage of students committing zero tolerance offenses has remained relatively stable for the past several years. In 2004-2005, there were 4.5 zero tolerance incidents per 1,000 students in Tennessee, down from 4.6 per 1,000 in 2003-2004.

Twenty-four school systems reported no zero tolerance offenses during 2004-2005.

Most zero tolerance offenders are male. Although males represent about 50 percent of the student population in Tennessee, they account for 73 percent of zero tolerance offenses.

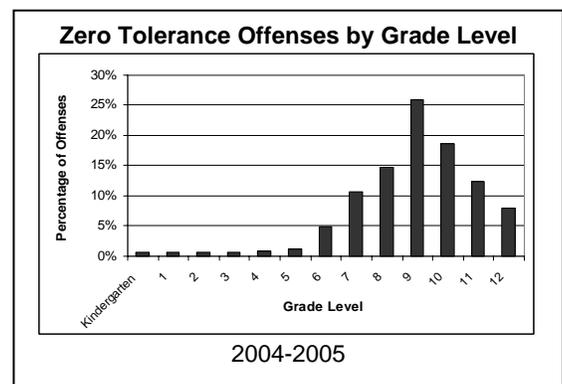


Drug offenses continue to be the largest category of zero tolerance offenses. In 2004-2005, drug offenses accounted for 63 percent of all zero tolerance offenses. Possession of firearms in school constitutes less than five percent of zero tolerance offenses.

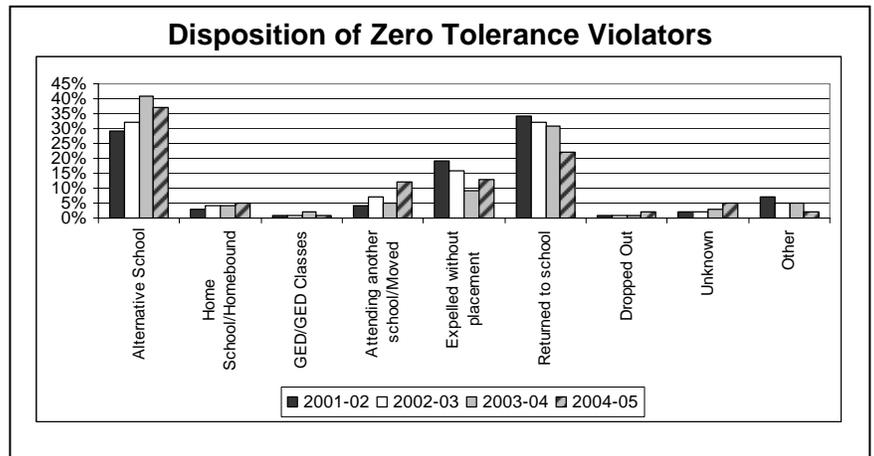
In 2003-2004, superintendents modified the penalties for 16 percent of zero tolerance offenses. Both state law and the federal Gun-Free Schools Act allow superintendents to alter the penalties for zero tolerance offenders on a case-by-case basis.

Zero tolerance violations continue to peak in the 9th grade. In 2004-2005, 1,087 violations (26 percent) occurred in the 9th grade, which is 43 percent higher than the 8th grade and 29 percent higher than the 10th grade.

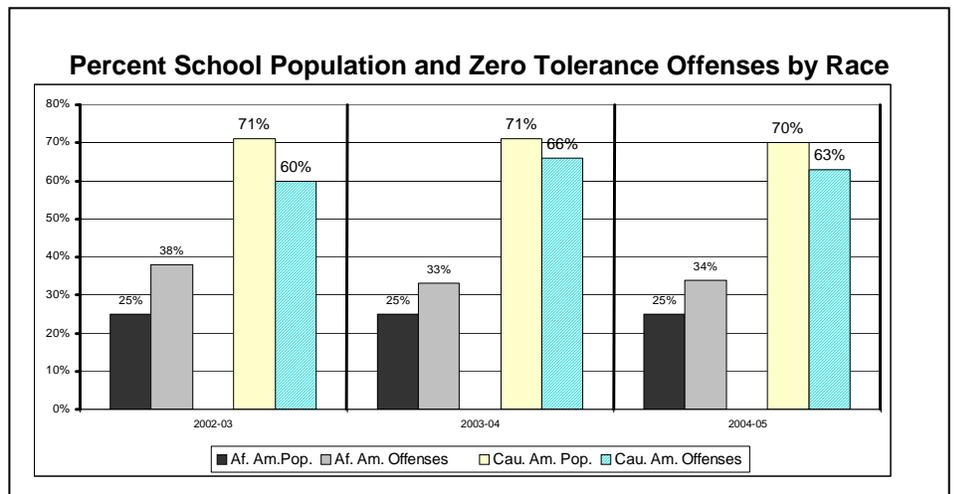
Although state statutes apply to all school districts, zero tolerance policies vary among LEAs. Some unusual violations in the 2004-2005 zero tolerance database include: toy gun, pencil, stink bombs, dress code, laser gun, and false accusations against a teacher.



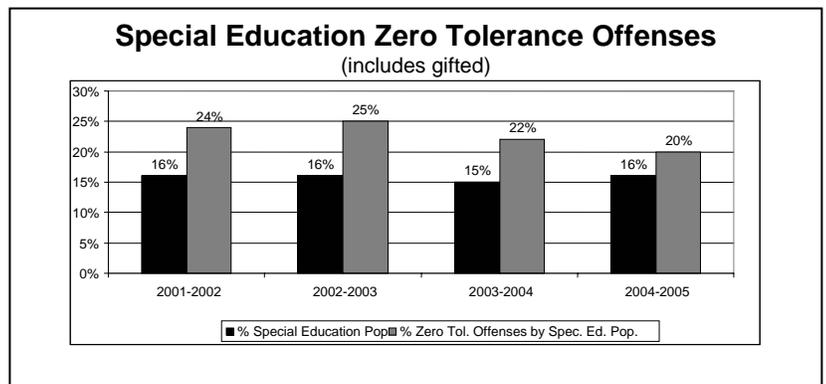
Thirteen percent of zero tolerance offenders (536 students) were expelled without placement in 2004-2005. Tennessee law requires that all LEAs establish at least one alternative school for expelled students in grades 7 through 12. Attendance at an alternative school for expelled students may be required by local school boards but is not mandatory under Tennessee law. One of the strongest predictors of dropout is prior association with school discipline.¹



African-American and special education students continue to be disproportionately represented among zero tolerance offenders. The percent of zero tolerance offenses committed by African-American students exceeds the percentage of African-Americans in the total population.



The percentage of zero tolerance offenses committed by special education students declined from 2001-2002 to 2004-2005. In 2004-2005 special education students comprised 16 percent of the student population and were responsible for 20 percent of zero tolerance offenses. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act provides that any special education student who commits an offense is entitled to a hearing to determine if the act was a manifestation of the child's disability.



¹ Russell J. Skiba, *Zero Tolerance, Zero Evidence: An Analysis of School Disciplinary Practice*, Indiana Education Policy Center, Policy Research Report #SRS2, August 2000, p. 13.

Note: Graphs prepared by OREA from Department of Education data.

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