Impacts of Suspension Bans and Reduction

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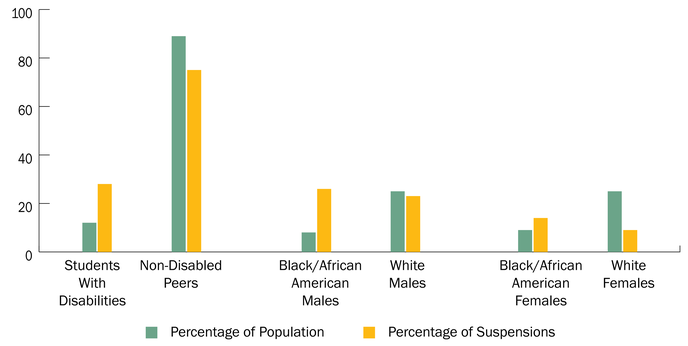
Harmful Impacts of Suspension

- Exclusionary school disciplinary measures do more harm than good. Research has shown that students who experience discipline that removes them from the classroom are more likely to:
  - Repeat a grade.
  - Drop out of school.
  - Become involved in the juvenile justice system.
  - Earn less income over their lifetime.
- High suspension rates also have significant long-term impacts on state economies. A recent study on the impacts of California's school discipline found that cutting suspension rates by one percent for the study's 10th-grade cohort would result in economic savings of $180 million (Rumberger and Losen, 2017).
- Exclusionary discipline disproportionately impacts males, students of color and students with disabilities.

National 2015–2016 School Year Suspension Data



"Suspension and expulsion do not remedy underlying causes of student misbehavior—interpersonal conflict, mental health challenges and trauma—and thus have no deterrent effect" (Cherayil, 2018).

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Federal Legislation and Guidance

1994 — Gun-Free Schools Act

The Gun-Free Schools Act federally mandates expulsion for possession of a firearm. This led to increased use of zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary discipline.

2014 — Dear Colleague Letter

The Dear Colleague Letter on the Nondiscriminatory Administration of School Discipline, released under the Obama Administration, cited the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and outlined the expectation for resolving disparate application of exclusionary discipline.

2015 — ESSA

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires school districts to develop and submit plans for reducing use of exclusionary discipline.

2018 — Dear Colleague Letter

A Dear Colleague Letter, issued under the Trump Administration in December of 2018, rescinded the Obama Administration's guidance from 2014. Decision-making authority on school discipline was transferred back to the states. Federal civil rights laws, as well as protection under IDEA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, remain in effect.

Proactive Approaches and Alternatives

- Trauma-informed practices
- De-escalation strategies
- Classroom management techniques
- Positive behavioral interventions/PBIs
- Social-emotional learning
- Restorative practices
- Behavior assessments and intervention plans
- Implicit bias awareness
- Cultural competency training

Do suspension bans result in spikes in poor behaviors and negative academic outcomes?

A recent study found that changes to suspension policies in Chicago Public Schools resulted in small increases in test scores and increased attendance. Of notable mention, "attendance increases were concentrated in schools serving predominantly Black students, where attendance increased an average of three days of school per year, per student" (Hinze-Pifer & Sartain, 2018).

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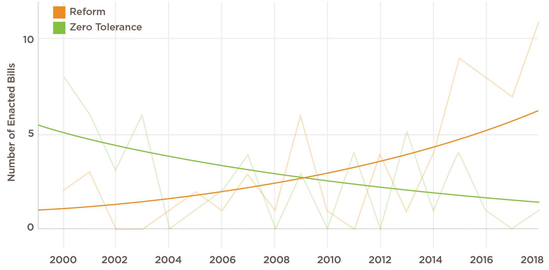
State Legislation

Between 2017 and 2019, 98 discipline-related bills were enacted in 27 states and the District of Columbia. Many of the statutes impose increased reporting requirements, which will be instrumental in informing future policy and disciplinary practices.

Zero Tolerance and Reform Bills Enacted: 2000–2018



Focus on Maryland

Recent State Legislation		
Bill Number	Year	Summary
HB 425/SB 651	2017	Public Schools – Suspension and Expulsions Bans suspension or expulsion of students in pre-K through 2nd grade, except as required by federal law, or for suspensions of up to five days for incidents involving imminent threat of harm to others. Requires provision of behavioral interventions and supports.
HB 725	2019	Public Schools – Student Discipline – Restorative Approaches Requires technical assistance, training and provision of restorative practices in lieu of exclusionary discipline.

If a local school system's discipline processes are found to have a disproportionate impact on minority students or a discrepant impact on students receiving special education services, a plan must be developed to reduce the impact within one year and eliminate it within three years. This has resulted in revision of discipline policies, establishing systems of prevention and intervention, and investing in social-emotional learning and student wholeness supports.

- Despite state and local initiatives, the overall state percentage of students in grades K–12 receiving out-of-school suspensions and expulsions has either increased or remained stable from the 2014–2015 school year through the 2017–2018 school year (Maryland State Department of Education, 2018).
- Use of suspension for discretionary offenses persists. Thirty-three percent of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions during the 2017–2018 school year were for disrespect or disruption offenses, which "are subjective and susceptible to the influence of implicit bias" (Cherayil, 2018).