

Research Base on the Negative Impacts of Early School Removal and Positive Impacts of Alternatives

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A growing body of research suggests that these type of disciplinary interventions negatively impact student achievement and increase both students' risk of dropping out and their likelihood of future involvement with the criminal justice system.ⁱ

- Evidence does not show that discipline practices that remove students from instruction—such as suspensions and expulsions—help to improve either student behavior or school climate (Skiba, Shure, Middelberg & Baker, 2011). In fact, suspensions have negative consequences: suspensions are associated with negative student outcomes such as lower academic performance, higher rates of dropout, failures to graduate on time, decreased academic engagement, and future disciplinary exclusion. (Achilles, McLaughlin, Croninger, 2007; Arcia, 2006; Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005; Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Lee, Cornell, Gregory, & Fan, 2011; Raffaele-Mendez, 2003; Rodney et al., 1999; Skiba & Peterson, 1999) Fortunately, there are effective alternatives to suspension. These include:
 - Evidence-based, multi-tiered behavioral frameworks, such as positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), can help improve overall school climate and safety (Bradshaw, C., Koth, C.W., Thornton, L.A., & Leaf, P.J., 2009).
 - Interventions, school-wide and individual, that use proactive, preventative approaches, address the underlying cause or purpose of the behavior, and reinforce positive behaviors, have been associated with increases in academic engagement, academic achievement, and reductions in suspensions and school dropouts. (American Psychological Association, 2008; Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005; Crone & Hawken, 2010; Liaupsin, Umbreit, Ferro, Urso, & Upreti, 2006; Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinberg, 2005; Putnam, Horner, & Algozzine, 2006; Skiba & Sprague, 2008; Theriot, Craun, & Dupper, 2010).ⁱⁱ
 - Research shows that when young students are suspended or expelled from school, they are several times more likely to experience disciplinary action later in their academic career; drop out or fail out of high school; report feeling disconnected from school; and be incarcerated later in life.ⁱⁱⁱ
 - The roots of these long term impacts are related to ways that exclusionary discipline foster feelings of mistrust between students and teachers,^{iv} are linked to increased social isolation of students,^v and negative impacts on parents' views of schools as safe and accepting places.^{vi} School removal, especially in the early years, produces stressful and negative experiences for children and families.^{vii}
 - Emerging research also has demonstrated that student suspension rates are having an outsized impact on reading and math achievement. In the K-12 system at large, **school suspensions account for approximately one-fifth of black-white differences in school performance.**^{viii} It is likely that the impact of these disciplinary practices early in an academic career can be even more dramatic.
 - Additionally, research from other states has highlighted the long term financial costs to society for high suspension rates. Given the long-term costs and increased probability of dropping out that is associated with suspensions and expulsions, implementing alternatives to exclusionary discipline can save society money in the long-run.^{ix}

Positive Impacts of Alternative, Non-Punitive Approaches to School Discipline

- Restorative practices and social and emotional learning foster healthy relationships in schools build on a foundation of trust, respect, and care,^x positively affect student-teacher relationships,^{xi} and increase engagement for students and families and improve two-way communication between home and school.

- These approaches replace fear, uncertainty, and punishment as motivators with belonging, connectedness, and a willingness to change. These practices reduce suspension rates, contribute to a narrowing of the racial discipline gap, and some evidence suggests they contribute to test score improvement.^{xii}
- Social and emotional learning approaches can foster more empathy, improved classroom culture and fewer behavioral problems, and engagement in schools.^{xiii}

Additional Resources

- The American Bar Association Joint Task Force on Reversing the School-to-Prison Pipeline Preliminary Report (February 2016).^{xiv} This report provides an overview of the school-to-prison pipeline problem, explores its causes, and examines the consequences for youth.
- Equal Justice Society, *Breaking the Chains: The School-to-Prison Pipeline, Implicit Bias, and Racial Trauma* (September 2016).^{xv} This policy report examines the path of the school-to-prison pipeline, discusses contributing factors, and proposes several recommendations to help teachers, administrators, and policymakers address disproportionate discipline and reduce the effects of implicit bias in school settings
- Advancement Project, American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, and the National Opportunity to Learn Campaign, *Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships and Promising Positive Discipline in Schools* (March 2014).^{xvi} This toolkit provides strategies to build healthy relationships between students and adults in educational settings.
- Thalia González, *Restorative Justice from the Margins to the Center: The Emergence of a New Norm in School Discipline* (January 2017).^{xvii} This article provides an integrated understanding of the evolution of school-based restorative justice in the United States by exploring a range of examples from various sites.

ⁱ Tony Fabelo et al., *Breaking Schools' Rules: A Statewide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement* (New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center, July 2011), https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Breaking_Schools_Rules_Report_Final.pdf.

ⁱⁱ See U.S. Department of Education: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/index.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ J.H. Lamont and others, "Out-of-school suspension and expulsion," *Pediatrics* 131 (3) (2013): 1000-1007; L. Raffaele Mendez, "Predictors of suspension and negative school outcomes: A longitudinal investigation," *New Directions for Youth Development* 99 (2003): 17-33.

^{iv} Blad E. Mistrust in school can have lasting negative effects. *Education Week*. 2017; 36(21): 1, 10-11. www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2017/02/15/whenschool-doesnt-seem-fair-students-may.htm. Steinberg MP, Allensworth E, Johnson DW. What Conditions Jeopardize and Support Safety in Urban Schools? The Influence of Community Characteristics, School Composition and School Organizational Practices on Student and Teacher Reports of Safety in Chicago. 2013. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/2mx8c60x#author>

^v Harris C, Tsui C. Restorative Justice and Health in Merced Schools: Optimizing Health Impacts through Improved Discipline Policy in Merced. 2014. https://humanimpact.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Merced-RJHIA_final-with-appendices-1.pdf.

^{vi} Gilliam W. Early Childhood Expulsions and Suspensions Undermine Our Nation's Most Promising Agent of Opportunity and Social Justice. 2016. www.rwjf.org/content/dam/farm/reports/issue_briefs/2016/rwjf431300/subassets/rwjf431300_2.

^{vii} U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education. Policy Statement of Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings. 2014. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/policy-statement-ece-expulsions-suspensions.pdf>

^{viii} Morris, Edward W. and Brea L. Perry, "The Punishment Gap: School Suspension and Racial Disparities in Achievement." *Social Problems*. January 8, 2016.

<http://socpro.oxfordjournals.org/content/early/2016/01/08/socpro.spv026>

^{ix} See Losen et al.

^x Advancement Project. *School Discipline Reform and Advocacy*. 2016.

https://media.wix.com/ugd/fb2077_99c92b353a6a4db0b1ea2a3b8f02104f.pdf

^{xi} Gregory A, Clawson K, Davis A, Gerewitz J. The Promise of Restorative Practices to Transform Teacher-Student Relationships and Achieve Equity in School Discipline. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation*. 2014; , doi: 10.1080/10474412.2014.929950. www.antonioacasella.eu/restorative/Gregory_RJ_2015.pdf.

^{xii} González T. Socializing Schools: Addressing Racial Disparities in Discipline Through Restorative Justice. In: Losen, D, ed. *Closing the School Discipline Gap: Equitable Remedies for Excessive Exclusion*. Teachers College Press; 2015.

^{xiii} Jones SM, Kahn J. The Evidence Base for How We Learn: Supporting Students' Social, Emotional, and Academic Development. Consensus Statements of Evidence from the Council of Distinguished Scientists. The Aspen Institute National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development. 2017.

https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/2017/09/SEAD-Research-Brief-9.12_updated-web.pdf;

Greenberg M, Domitrovich C, Weissberg RP, Durlak JA. Social and emotional learning as a public health approach to education. *The Future of Children*. 2017; 27(1): 13-32. www.istor.org/stable/44219019

^{xiv} <https://scholarship.law.ufl.edu/facultypub/750/>

^{xv} <https://equaljusticesociety.org/breakingthechains/>

^{xvi} <https://advancementproject.org/resources/restorative-practices-fostering-healthy-relationships-promoting-positive-discipline-in-schools/>

^{xvii} https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2901108