THE DISCIPLINARY DISPARITIES COLLABORATIVE: WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED

Presented at the NASBE Community of Practice Meeting on Discipline Disparities
Washington, DC June 27, 2014
School Data Finds Pattern of Inequality Along Racial Lines

By MOTOKO RICH    MARCH 21, 2014

Racial minorities are more likely than white students to be suspended from school, to have less access to rigorous math and science classes, and to be taught by lower-paid teachers with less experience, according to comprehensive data released Friday by the Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights.

In the first analysis in nearly 15 years of information from all of the country’s 97,000 public schools, the Education Department found a pattern of inequality on a number of fronts, with race as the dividing factor.

Black students are suspended and expelled at three times the rate of white students. A quarter of high schools with the highest percentage of black and Latino students do not offer any Algebra II courses, while a third of those schools do not have any chemistry classes. Black students are more likely to attend schools that have a high percentage of students on free or reduced-price lunch. And in 46 states, low-income students receive less instructional time than their more affluent peers.
Preschool to prison: no child too young for zero-tolerance

By Trymaine Lee

Each year, thousands of American preschoolers are suspended from public schools, a trend that disproportionately impacts black children and sends many of them on a fast track to dropping out or into the criminal justice system later in life.

A staggering new report released by the Department of Education and the Justice Department on Friday highlights a troubling pattern of zero-tolerance school discipline policies that disproportionately impact minority students in general, but also trickle down to the nation's youngest students.

Overzealous enforcement of school discipline policies and all of the negative outcomes associated with them are often framed around older children and middle and high school students, but the government's report shows just how deeply the disparities extend.
The National Context: Recent National Efforts & Federal Guidance

- U.S. DOJ/DOE (January, 2014)

- CDF/ AASA (January, 2014)
  - Partnership to Reform School Discipline Policies/Practices

- President’s My Brother’s Keeper Initiative (February, 2014)

- Discipline Disparities RTP Collaborative (March, 2014)
  - Disciplinary Disparities Briefing Paper Series

- USDOE Office for Civil Rights (March, 2014)
  - CRDC National Release

- CSG Justice Center (June, 2014)
  - The School Discipline Consensus Project Release
Components of the Federal Guidance

- **Guiding Principles Document**
  - Create positive climates and focus on prevention
  - Develop clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations and consequences to address disruptive student behaviors
  - Ensure fairness, equity, and continuous improvement.

- **Dear Colleague Letter**
  - “Guidance letter prepared describing how schools can meet their obligations under federal law to administer student discipline without discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin”

- **Directory of Federal School Climate and Discipline Resources**
- **Compendium of School Discipline Laws and Regulations**
Findings

- Racial/ethnic disparities begin in preschool
- African American disparities continue
- Also girls of color, students with disabilities, English Lang. Learners
- Also disparities in school arrests, restraint and seclusion by race and disability status
Researchers point to racial disparities in school suspension, spotlight new practices

By Donna St. George, Published: March 14  E-mail the writer

Two months after federal officials brought new attention to how students are disciplined in the nation’s schools, a group of 26 researchers, educators and advocates released findings Thursday that underscored racial disparities in suspension and pointed to promising school practices.

African Americans and students with disabilities are suspended at “hugely disproportionate rates,” said leaders of the group, called the Discipline Disparities Research-to-Practice Collaborative. They also noted higher levels of suspension among Latinos and students who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender.

"We urge policymakers to act on our findings to help bridge the gaps that contribute to disparate treatment of students based on race, disability, and sexual orientation,” said John de Jongh, executive director of the Collaborative. “These glaring inequities need to be eliminated.”
Introduction & Overview

- **Background on the Discipline Disparities Research to Practice Collaborative**
  - Funded by Atlantic Philanthropies, OSF
  - Quarterly meetings w/ stakeholder groups
  - Goal: Improved research & practice, esp. intervention

- **Activities and Accomplishments**
  - Funding new research
  - Closing Discipline Gap Conference & Book
  - Briefing Paper Series & Recommendations
Introduction & Overview

• Background on the Discipline Disparities Research to Practice Collaborative
  • Funded by Atlantic Philanthropies, OSF
  • Quarterly meetings w/ stakeholder groups
  • Goal: Improved research & practice, esp. intervention

• Activities and Accomplishments
  • Funding new research
  • Closing Discipline Gap Conference & Book
  • Briefing Paper Series & Recommendations
Discipline Disparities Series: Four Papers

1. Discipline Disparities Series: Overview


4. New & Developing Research on Disparities in Discipline

Supplementary Materials:

- Are Disparities in Discipline Due to Differences in Behavior?
- Implicit Bias: Does it Play a Role in Discipline?
- Myths and Facts About Disciplinary Disparity
New & Developing Research

- Risk continues for some (e.g., black males) and now documented for others
- Higher rates not due to poverty or more misbehavior
- The School-to-Prison Pipeline is real
- Schools can and *are* creating change
  - *Over 7000 schools in over 3000 districts < 10% suspended for all subgroups*
  - *Effective interventions are emerging*
FIGURE 1 Increasing Risk For Suspension by Race 1973, 2006

- Black: 6, 15
- White: 3.1, 4.8
- Hispanic: 2.7, 6.8
- Native American: 2.8, 7.9
- Asian/Pacific Islander: 1.1, 2.7
- All: 3.7, 6.9
Can Poverty Explain Disproportionality?

• Discipline is related to poverty
  – Poverty makes a significant, but *small and inconsistent* contribution, but...

• Effects of race remain after taking poverty into account
Do Black Students Misbehave More?

Of 32 infractions, only 8 significant differences:

- White students referred more for:
  - Smoking
  - Vandalism
  - Leaving w/o permission
  - Obscene Language

- Black students referred more for:
  - Disrespect
  - Excessive Noise
  - Threat
  - Loitering

More Than a Metaphor...

• **School Climate**: Schools w/ harsh discipline policies, higher OSS rates ≈ perceived less safe (Steinberg, et al., 2011)

• **School Engagement/Ed. Opportunity**: For African American males, more suspensions predict lower achievement and school engagement (Davis & Jordan, 1994)

• **School Dropout**: Suspended/expelled students 5 times as likely to drop out (CSG, 2011)
  - Black males 2x more likely to dropout for discipline (Stearns & Glennie, 2006)

• **Juvenile Delinquency/JJ Involvement**
  - OSS increases risk of antisocial behavior (Hemphill et al., 2006)
  - Greater contact with Juv. Justice System (CSG, 2011)
School-Based Interventions for Reducing Disparities

- **Prerequisites in schools**
  - Integrate achievement and discipline
  - Explicit equity orientation

- **Preventing discipline disparities:**
  - Supportive relationships
  - Academic rigor
  - Culturally relevant and responsive teaching
  - Bias-free classrooms and respectful school environments

- **Intervening when conflict occurs:**
  - Problem-solve rather than remove
  - Engage youth and families
  - Reintegrate students after conflict.
What Should We Do to Intervene? Emerging Research

- **Build Relationships**
  - My Teaching Partner
  - Restorative Practices

- **Restructure Disciplinary Practices**
  - Va. Threat Assessment
  - Changing Codes of Conduct
  - SWPBIS

- **Building Emotional Literacy**
  - Cleveland Metro School District: SEL, student support teams, and student-centered approaches
Policy Recommendations for Reducing Disparities

• Excessive and inequitable discipline is a huge national problem

• Excessive and inequitable discipline isn’t happening everywhere and many states and districts are making changes are emerging

• Key Policy Change Recommendations: CAST
  • Collect, use, and publicize disaggregated data
  • Align discipline policies with educational goals
  • Support and fund evidence-based alternatives
  • Training for teachers and leaders
Disciplinary Disparities Briefing Papers: Where to Find Them

- **Disciplinary Disparities Briefing Paper Series**
  - Four Briefing Papers
  - Executive Summaries
  - Supplementary Papers
  
  [http://rtpcollaborative.indiana.edu/briefing-papers](http://rtpcollaborative.indiana.edu/briefing-papers)

- **Discipline Disparities Research to Practice Collaborative**
  - Resource Digest
  - Additional Publications
  - News on Other Initiatives

  [http://rtpcollaborative.indiana.edu](http://rtpcollaborative.indiana.edu)
Other Resources

• Equity Project at Indiana University
  – ceep.indiana.edu/equity/

• Federal Guidance Package