

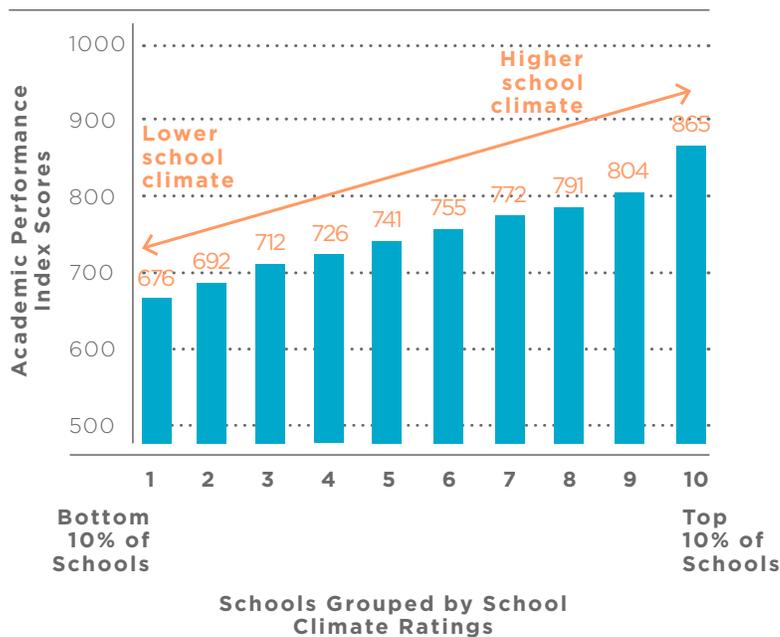


SCHOOL CLIMATE & DISCIPLINE

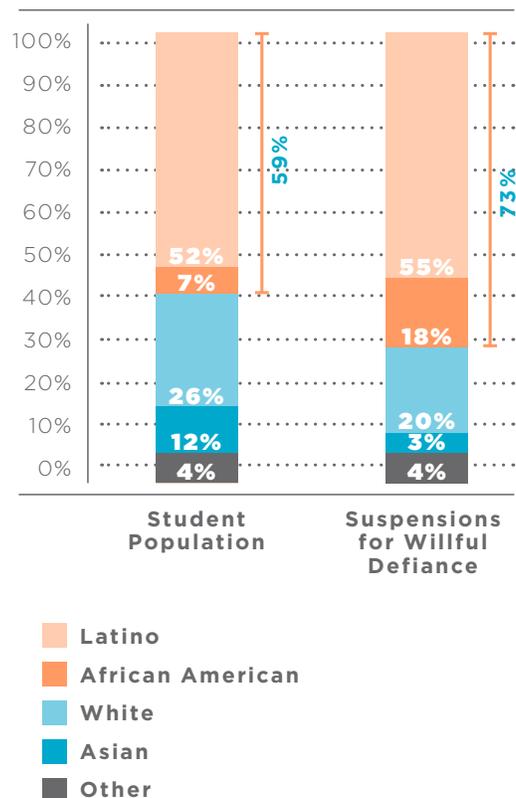


The elements of school climate include the safety and overall well-being of students, as well as students' sense of connectedness and schools' discipline practices and physical environments.

Higher student achievement is associated with safer and more supportive and engaging high schools¹



Suspensions for 'willful defiance' disproportionately impact Latino and African American students²



Data Highlights



In 2012, 48% of suspensions in California were due to ‘willful defiance,’³ an overly broad and subjective category defined as “disrupting school activities or otherwise willfully defying the valid authority of school staff,”⁴ including disruptive behavior, such as eye rolling, coming to class late or talking back to a teacher. Willful defiance as grounds for suspension and expulsion is problematic because research shows that minority students receive harsher discipline than their peers and are more likely to be suspended when the disciplinary action is subjective and not prescribed.⁵ For example, African American students are 3 times more likely to be suspended than White students,⁶ and in 9 out of 10 of California’s largest school districts, African American and Hispanic students are suspended and expelled at higher rates than other students.⁷

Suspensions take students out of the classroom, depriving them of valuable instructional time and increasing the likelihood that they will fall behind.⁸ Students who are suspended once or more are 6 times more likely to repeat a grade and 5 times more likely to drop out of school.⁹ Alternative discipline models such as Restorative Justice and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports can improve school climate, attendance and student achievement rates, and reduce out-of-school suspensions.¹⁰

Positive school climate, which includes connectedness, is associated with higher academic achievement and healthy behavioral outcomes for students.¹¹ However, only 43% of California high school students report having a high level of connectedness to their school.¹² Based upon student characteristics, schools that are outperforming expectations on state tests (i.e. “beating the odds”) also report more positive school climates.¹³

Pro-Kid® Policy Agenda



California should address inequitable suspension and expulsion policies that result in disproportionate out-of-school suspensions and missed learning time. To support districts and communities in addressing these factors, policymakers should elevate the importance of monitoring school climate, eliminate or revise statutes that result in disciplinary disparities and encourage training for administrators and teachers to improve school climate and positive discipline strategies in order to better support struggling students.

Momentum



The Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) requires districts to monitor school climate and suspension and expulsion rates through their Local Control and Accountability Plans and demonstrate how they are using LCFF funding to improve student success in 8 priority areas, including school climate.¹⁴ Statewide training around school discipline has been elevated through legislation, partnerships with the Superintendent of Public Instruction and revisions to the credential program standards for school administrators.

California law establishes over 20 offenses used to suspend and expel students.¹⁵ In 2013, the California Department of Education began releasing detailed suspension and expulsion data related to “willful defiance,”¹⁶ providing a starting point to better understand the impact of school discipline policies.^{17,18} And while the Administration continues to resist statutory changes to some of the most problematic statutes, local efforts to implement Restorative Justice and/or Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports have been successful in places such as Los Angeles,¹⁹ Richmond and Oakland.²⁰

- 1 The School Climate Index (SCI) provides a state normed, school-level description of several non-academic factors that are known to influence learning success in schools, including (1) Supports and Engagement, (2) Violence, Victimization, and Substance Use at School, and (3) Truancy Incidents. WestEd, “School Climate & Academic Performance Across California High Schools,” 2012, http://californias3.wested.org/resources/S3factsheet3_API_20120716.pdf, accessed September 2013.
- 2 Asian includes any respondent who identifies as Asian American, Asian, Filipino or Pacific Islander. Other includes any respondent who identifies as Native American, multi-racial or declined to state her/his race/ethnicity. ‘Willful Defiance’ defined as: disrupting school activities or otherwise willfully defying the valid authority of school staff. Children Now analysis based on the percentages of students suspended for ‘willful defiance,’ by race/ethnicity and the percentages of students enrolled by race/ethnicity. Data on suspensions is from California Department of Education, “Suspension, Expulsion, and Truancy Report for 2011-12, 48900(k) Defiance Suspension and Expulsion, Statewide,” <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/SuspExp/defbyscheth.aspx?cYear=2011-12&cType=ALL&cCDS=00000000000000&cName=Statewide&cLevel=State&cChoice=DefByEth>, accessed September 2013. Data on enrollment is from California Department of Education, “Statewide Enrollment By Ethnicity For 2011-12,” <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/EnrollEthState.asp?Level=State&TheYear=2011-12&cChoice=EnrollEth1&p=2>, accessed September 2013.
- 3 Children Now Analysis of California Department of Education, “Suspension, Expulsion, and Truancy Report for 2011-12, 48900(k) Defiance Suspension and Expulsion, Statewide,” <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/SuspExp/defbyscheth.aspx?cYear=2011-12&cType=ALL&cCDS=00000000000000&cName=Statewide&cLevel=State&cChoice=DefByEth>, accessed September 2013.
- 4 FindLaw, “California Education Code Section 48900,” <http://codes.lp.findlaw.com/cacode/EDC/2/d4/27/6/1/s48900>, accessed September 2013.
- 5 Amber Evenson et al., “Zero Tolerance Policies and the Public Schools: When Suspension is No Longer Effective,” NASP Communique, February 2009, <http://www.nasponline.org/publications/cq/mocq375zerotolerance.aspx>, accessed September 2013.
- 6 Daniel Losen et al., “Suspended Education in California,” The Civil Rights Project, 2012, <http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-discipline/suspended-education-in-california/SuspendedEd-final3.pdf>, accessed September 2013.
- 7 Kathryn Baron, “Racial Disparities in School Discipline,” Silicon Valley Education Foundation, March 2012, <http://toped.svefoundation.org/2012/03/07/racial-disparity-in-ca-school-discipline/>, accessed September 2013.
- 8 Daniel Losen et al., “Suspended Education in California,” The Civil Rights Project, 2012, <http://civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/research/k-12-education/school-discipline/suspended-education-in-california/SuspendedEd-final3.pdf>, accessed September 2013.
- 9 Ibid.
- 10 Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, “Improving School Climate Through Race to the Top,” http://www.pbis.org/arra/race_to_the_top_funds.aspx, accessed September 2013. Human Impact Partners, “Health Impact Assessment of School Discipline Policies: A Health Impact Assessment of Status-Quo Discipline, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and Restorative Justice Policies in Three California School Districts.” 2012, <http://www.humanimpact.org/component/jdownloads/finish/7/167/0>, accessed August 2013.
- 11 National School Climate Council, “The School Climate Challenge,” 2007, <http://www.ecs.org/html/projectsPartners/nclc/docs/school-climate-challenge-web.pdf>, accessed September 2013.
- 12 Kids Data, “School Connectedness, by Grade Level 2008-2010,” http://www.kidsdata.org/data/topic/table/school_connectedness-grade.aspx#notes, accessed September 2013.
- 13 Adam Voight et al., “A Climate for Academic Success,” California Comprehensive Center, 2013, http://www.wested.org/online_pubs/hd-13-01.pdf, accessed September 2013.
- 14 California School Boards Association, “CSBA focuses on Local Control Funding Formula: Member training, regulatory advocacy under way,” August 2013, www.csba.org/Newsroom/CSBANewsletters/2013/August/InPrint/2013_AugCSN_LCFF.aspx, accessed September 2013.
- 15 FindLaw, “California Education Code Section 48900,” <http://codes.lp.findlaw.com/cacode/EDC/2/d4/27/6/1/s48900>, accessed September 2013.
- 16 California Department of Education Dataquest, Suspension, Expulsion, & Truancy Report for 2011-12, 48900(k) Defiance Suspension and Expulsion, Statewide, <http://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/SuspExp/defbyscheth.aspx?cYear=2011-12&cType=ALL&cCDS=00000000000000&cName=Statewide&cLevel=State&cChoice=DefByEth>, accessed September 2013.
- 17 California Department of Education, “State Schools Chief Tom Torlakson Releases First Detailed Data on Student Suspension and Expulsion Rates,” April, 2013, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/nr/ne/yr13/yr13rel48.asp>, accessed October 2013.
- 18 Louis Freedberg, “More than half of suspensions are for ‘willful defiance’ of school authorities,” Ed Source, April, 2013, <http://edsources.org/today/2013/more-than-half-of-suspensions-are-for-willful-defiance-of-school-authorities/30375#.UnqayFOzJl0>, accessed October 2013.
- 19 Erica Ohillips, “L.A. Schools Rethink Suspensions,” Wall Street Journal, May 2013, http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB100014241278873239820457848535139641538?mod=googlenews_wsj, accessed October 2013.
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