In the News
Suspension, Race, and Disability in Maryland

By Michael Krezmien and Peter Leone

During the past 10 years, public school disciplinary policies have been changed to respond to concerns about school safety. High profile school shootings and media coverage of those incidents have created the perception that many schools are unsafe.\(^1\)

The passage of the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994\(^2\) and discretionary federal grants to schools to improve safety have created an expectation that school administrators and school boards will respond more forcefully to serious acts of misbehavior by students. While the impact of changes in school disciplinary policy continues to be debated, evidence suggests that policies have had a disproportionate impact on minority students and students with disabilities. Disciplinary practices impact all students. However, these practices are of particular concern for African American students who continue to be disproportionately suspended, expelled, detained, and incarcerated.\(^3\)

Additionally, students with disabilities are at greater risk for disciplinary procedures than their peers without disabilities.\(^4\)

Disciplinary provisions under The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (1997)\(^5\) and accompanying regulations were intended to protect students with disabilities from disproportionate suspensions. As a result, there is a perception that students with disabilities are less likely to be suspended than their peers without disabilities. However, the belief that schools are unable to equitably discipline students with disabilities is not supported by national suspension data.

In 2001, the U.S. General Accounting Office reported that students with disabilities engaged in three times as many serious misconducts than their peers without disabilities, and that these students were disciplined in a similar manner by school administrators.\(^6\) About 60 to 65 percent of those students were suspended, and less than half of those students received educational (Article continues)

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About EDJJ
EDJJ is a technical assistance, training, research, and dissemination center designed to develop more effective responses to the needs of youth with disabilities in the juvenile justice system and those at-risk for involvement with the juvenile justice system. The center is a collaborative project of the University of Maryland, University of Kentucky, Arizona State University, American Institutes for Research, and The Pacer Center.
services during suspensions. Given the concerns of disproportionate suspension of minority youth and youth with disabilities, the current research focused on identifying public school suspensions trends within Maryland based on: (a) race; (b) special education classification; and (c) combined race and disability classification.

Methods
The data analyzed for this study were drawn from Maryland reported records of enrollment, suspensions, and special education services from 1995 to 2003. In 2003, 50.4% of the students in Maryland were classified as Caucasian, 37.9% were African American, 6.4% were Hispanic, and 6% were Asian American. Other racial categories represented less than 1% of the population. Eighty-eight percent of the population was in general education, while 12% received special education services.

Suspensions by race data were available from 1995 to 2003 and suspensions by disability data were available from 2001 to 2003. Risk Indices and Relative Risk Indices were calculated to understand disproportionality of suspension practices by race, disability, and the combination of race and disability. Risk Index (RI) refers to the percentage of a specific racial group who were suspended. RI was calculated by dividing the number of students from a specific race who were suspended by the total number of students in that specific population. Relative Risk Index (RRI) represents the degree to which one group was more or less likely to be subjected to suspension than the majority group. The RRI is a ratio of the RI of a specific group to the RI of the majority group.

Results
Suspension and Race
Risk and Relative Risk Indices were calculated for African-American, Hispanic, and Caucasian students to assess disproportionality by race. The RI for Caucasian students was relatively stable over time and indicated that approximately 6% of Caucasian students were suspended each year. Similarly, the RI for Hispanic students was relatively stable and indicated that approximately 5% - 6% of Hispanic students were suspended each year. The RI for African American student suspensions increased over time, from 8.5% in 1995 to 13.5% in 2003. The RRI for Hispanic students indicated Hispanic students were approximately 0.9 times as likely to be suspended as Caucasian students. The RRI for African American students indicated they were 1.5 times as likely to be suspended in 1995 and 2.2 times as likely in 2003.

Suspension and Disability
Risk Indices and Relative Risk Indices were also calculated to evaluate differences in rates of suspension by disability. Students with disabilities were between 1.7 and 2.2 times as likely to be suspended as students without disabilities.

Suspension and the Combination of Race and Disability
Risk indices and RRIs for suspensions by the combination of race and disability were calculated from 2001 to 2003. The Relative Risk Index for each group is the ratio of the RI for each specific group to the RI for non-disabled Caucasian students (the majority of the population). The RRIs for students with disabilities varied over the three year period and increased sharply in 2003. The data indicated that African American students with no disabilities were 2.33 times as likely to be suspended as Caucasian students without disabilities in 2003. During this same year, students with disabilities were 2.17 times more likely to be suspended than students without disabilities, and African American students with disabilities were 4.78 times as likely to be suspended as Caucasian students without disabilities. All
students with disabilities regardless of race were more likely to be suspended in 2003 than in 2001.

Conclusion

The Maryland suspension data indicated that African American students and students with disabilities in Maryland were disproportionately suspended. African Americans with disabilities had the highest risk for suspensions in Maryland.

Recent research\(^7\) suggests these students are more vulnerable to academic failure, delinquency, and future court involvement. However, the findings of this study are correlational and our analyses did not allow us to determine a causal relationship between race, disability, and risk for suspension.

The findings suggest the need for future investigations of the relationship between school exclusions and involvement in the juvenile justice system. Additionally, there is a need to more closely track and analyze suspension practices in this state. We suggest a data collection system that monitors suspensions of individuals by a variety of individual student characteristics. Such a system will allow for policies that respond to disciplinary concerns equitably, regardless of race or disability status.

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Establishing and Maintaining Quality Education Programs in Juvenile Corrections

By Lucky Mason

A high quality education program is essential for the rehabilitation of incarcerated youth and their successful return to the community. Identifying dilemmas facing administrators and teachers within juvenile correctional facilities is not difficult. The real challenge is developing and maintaining high quality programs.

At the 27\(^{th}\) Annual Conference of Teacher Educators of Children and Youth with Severe Behavior Disorders in Tempe, Arizona (November 2003), a panel of distinguished professionals working in juvenile corrections addressed the challenges facing administrators and staff and described how they promoted and maintained quality education programs. The group included Dr. Kathleen Karol\(^1\), Superintendent of Education for Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections; Dianne Gadow\(^2\), Superintendent of The Ferris School in Wilmington, Delaware; and Dr. Edna O’Connor, Director of Education at the Oak Hill Academy in Laurel, Maryland. These administrators work in systems that have experienced court-approved settlement agreements designed to improve conditions.
of confinement and ensure that quality
education services are available for youth.

Each panelist briefly described the system
within which they work and the major
initiatives they have underway. Dr. Karol
noted that the Arizona Department of
Juvenile Corrections (ADJC) operates five
secure care schools, housing between 650
and 700 students. Approximately 48% of the
population is Latino. ADJC provides a GED
track, a high school track, and a middle
school instructional track. The schools also
provide Opportunity Classrooms for
students who finish their term mid-semester.
To assure high standards at her facilities, Dr.
Karol expects her administrators and
teachers to use the Arizona curriculum to
guide instruction. Previously, teachers did
not rely on the AZ curriculum. Dr. Karol
also described her efforts to establish
common procedures throughout the ADJC
schools

A second panelist, Ms. Dianne Gadow is
Superintendent at The Ferris School in
Delaware. This maximum secure care
facility houses approximately 80 boys,
nearly 90% of whom are African American.
Ms. Gadow reported that she and her staff
have transformed The School into a, “total
learning environment” through the
development a shared vision among staff
and on-going collaboration and support from
community groups. The school also supports
a six-week transition program in a less-
secure living unit called Mowlds Cottage.

Ms. Gadow also noted two key features of
her program. First, she has worked to create
norms within the Ferris School that held
staff accountable. Second, she has
welcomed volunteer mentors into the
facility.

The third panelist, Dr. Edna O’Connor of
the Oak Hill Academy, directs a school for
adjudicated youth from Washington, DC.
Oak Hill is a public school within a juvenile
correction facility that serves both male and
female students. Although the average daily
attendance is about 180 students, over 1000
students attend the school each year, ninety-
five percent of whom are African American.
The school has been monitored by the courts
for 17 years.

During her four years at Oak Hill, Dr.
O’Connor has viewed the involvement of
the DC Superior Court as a source of
support for the education program. She has
worked to promote equity and provide
opportunities for her students. She began
with a strategic plan to guide the changes in
the school program. An initial step involved
assuring that qualified and certified teachers
taught within the content area in which they
were certified. She also established an
intensive staff development program that
was consistent with the standards for the
District of Columbia public schools.

Dr. O’Connor also worked to clean-up the
environment at the school. Her approach
involved purchasing new furniture and
opening a state-of-the-art library for the
students. Also, students began wearing
khaki pants and polo shirts instead of the
sweat suits often seen in juvenile facilities.
She credits the improved conditions in the
school and the school uniforms for students
as having a positive effect on how children
and teachers view learning and their time in
the classroom.

After initial descriptions of their facilities
and some of the challenges they’ve faced,
each panelist commented on the relationship
between the secure care staff and the
educational staff. Ms. Gadow acknowledged
the common division between these groups
and the importance of mutual respect for
each other’s roles. She further emphasized
that both groups are essential to the
operation of the facility.

Ms. Gadow acknowledged that much of
her staff experienced a paradigm shift with
the increased emphasis on education. For
example, teachers and the line staff were
expected to be aware of students’ Individual Education Plans. Also, disruptive behavior by a few students would no longer be a reason for canceling classes for the school day. Rather to address behavioral issues, common expectations of students were established throughout the facility. Further, teachers were expected to handle behavior problems within the classroom; the line staff became a part of an intervention only when necessary. A major change at the Ferris School that supported these changes involved raising the qualifications of line staff. The Ferris School now requires college degrees as a condition of employment for all employees including custody staff.

Dr. Karol has promoted collaboration between educators and custody staff by requiring teachers to arrive at school in time to meet with direct care staff. Teachers are also encouraged to work with the custody staff during transitions throughout the school day. Dr. O’Connor added that she holds weekly meetings with the officers to discuss school operations and listen to the custody staff. She also provides the officers with occasional breakfasts to thank them for their efforts in supporting the school. Clearly, for Dr. O’Connor, Dr. Karol, and Ms. Gadow, the success of the students at their facility is the responsibility of all educational and correctional staff.

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1 Kathleen Karol is now a consultant and is no longer working for the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections.
2 Dianne Gadow is now the Deputy Director of the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections.
professionals, educators, human service professionals).

The National ALLIANCE TA Center is located at PACER Center in Minneapolis www.taalliance.org Toll-free 1-888-248-0822
In addition, there are six other regions:
Region 1 TAC SPAN in Newark NJ www.spannj.org Toll-free 1-866-637-8221 
Region 2 TAC ECAC in Davidson NC www.ecac-parentcenter.org Toll-free 1-800-962-6817 (NC only) 
Region 3 TAC FNDF in Clearwater, FLA www.fndfl.org 727-523-8687 
Region 4 TAC OCECD, Marian OH www.oceed.org 740-382-5452 
Region 5 TAC PEAK in Colorado Springs, Colorado www.peakparent.org Toll-free 1-800-284-0251 
Region 6 TAC Matrix in Novato CA www.matrixparents.org Toll-free 1-800-578-2592

We encourage professionals with questions about disabilities, special education law, parent involvement, transition planning and any other relevant issues to contact these Centers. The staff is knowledgeable and will provide you with excellent resources.

Research to Practice
Research-Based Practices

Recent legislation, such as the No Child Left Behind Act (2001)¹ promotes the use of research-based practices for teaching students. Also, mandates within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997)² require that students with disabilities be provided access to the general education curriculum. One way to enhance this access is to use research-based practices.

However, teachers in juvenile corrections may have difficulty finding research-based practices that focus specifically on the juvenile correctional school setting. As a result, teachers must rely on practices that are proven effective within inclusionary, resource room, and self-contained classes in public schools.

There are several Internet resources for teachers that provide examples of research-based practices.

This is the website for the U.S. Department of Education. On the left, click the link that says, Proven Methods.

http://www.cast.org/ncac/index.cfm?id=1942
This website is by The National Center on Accessing the General Education Curriculum.

http://www.ku-crl.org/iei/sim/index.html
This is an excellent website by The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning: Institute for Effective Instruction.

http://www.academicaccess.org/index.html
This is another good resource from the Institute for Academic Success.

Comprehensive and ongoing professional development is the most effective approach for providing teachers with information on effective instructional practices. However, the noted websites can provide additional ideas that will ensure students with and without disabilities in juvenile corrections have appropriate support and access to the general education curriculum.

From Youth
In Corrections

Time Ticks Away!!!
By Monty

Staring at the sky, cold and
Gray,
You don’t realize how much time ticks
Away,
I take a short walk and begin to think of
You,
And try to trace the time, where our love was so
True.
Pacing my time, not wanting to
Stay,
But thinking of you makes time tick
Away.
In bed at night, tossing and
Turning,
Without you beside me, my heart keeps
Burning.
Waking a new day with no picture in
Frame,
You really don’t realize how much
Time Ticks Away.

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and Delinquency Prevention Policy (OJJDP). No
endorsement of the Office of Special Education
Programs, the U.S. Department
of Education, or OJJDP should be inferred.

2 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, P.L.
105.17 (1997).
We invite you to join your colleagues at this unique, solutions-focused national conference featuring “what works” to achieve better outcomes for youth involved with the juvenile courts or at-risk for delinquency. The conference will feature the most relevant evidence-based approaches, innovative programs & practical strategies for:

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EDJJ welcomes practitioners, researchers, administrators and advocates from multiple youth-serving agencies and professional disciplines including education and special education, juvenile justice and corrections, courts and law enforcement, delinquency prevention, mental health, family organizations, transition/aftercare, probation & parole. The conference is designed to maximize networking for participants.