



Report: The Continuing Need To Rethink Discipline

Executive Office of the President
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THE CONTINUING NEED TO RETHINK DISCIPLINE

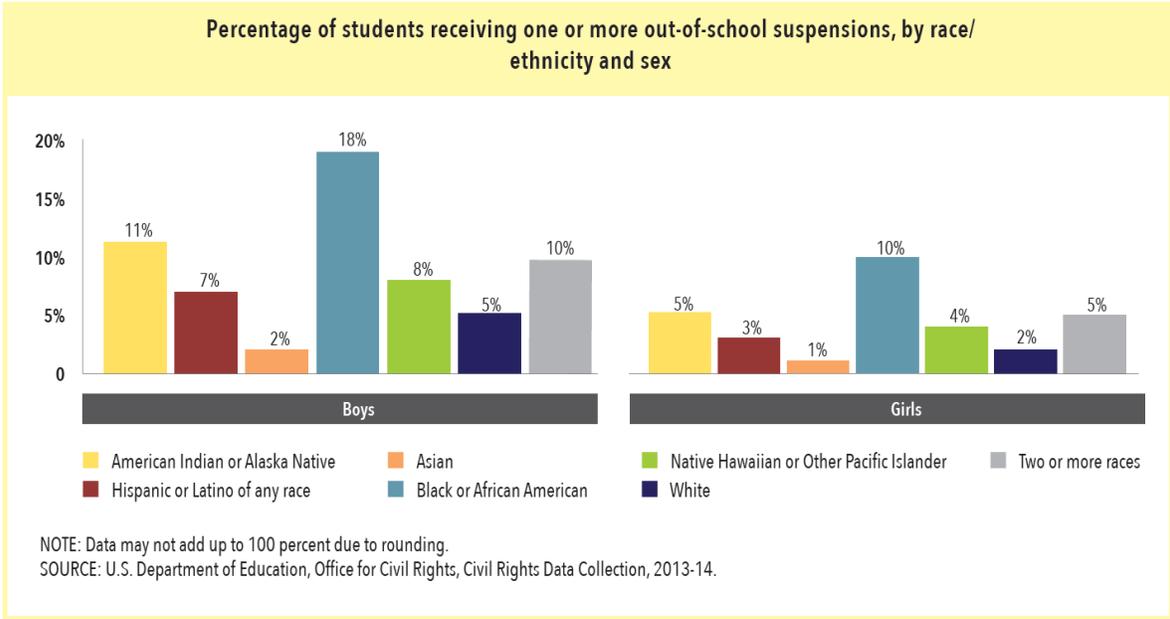
While we have progressed as a nation over the last eight years in how we think about and implement discipline policies and practices in our schools, serious work remains in order to address the overuse of exclusionary discipline practices. Schools should be safe, nurturing, and welcoming environments for all students. But too frequently, exclusionary school discipline practices, which remove students from the classroom - even for minor infractions of school rules - through suspension or expulsion, prevent students from participating fully in their education. Suspensions, expulsions and other exclusionary discipline policies and practices can be detrimental for not only school climate, but can also negatively impact student learning and success as well as social and emotional development.

Data from the Department of Education's [Civil Rights Data Collection](#) (CRDC) shows that there are disparities along racial, sex, disability, and other student characteristics in the administration of student discipline (suspension or expulsion). The Obama Administration has consistently focused on helping schools proactively redesign school discipline policies and practices to more effectively foster safe and supportive school climates and has marshalled the resources and expertise of several cabinet agencies to combat the inappropriate use of exclusionary school discipline practices from early childhood settings through high school. Ensuring equal access to education is essential for ensuring all students are college and career ready. In order to fully realize this goal, we as a nation must continue to rethink and reform how we approach school discipline.

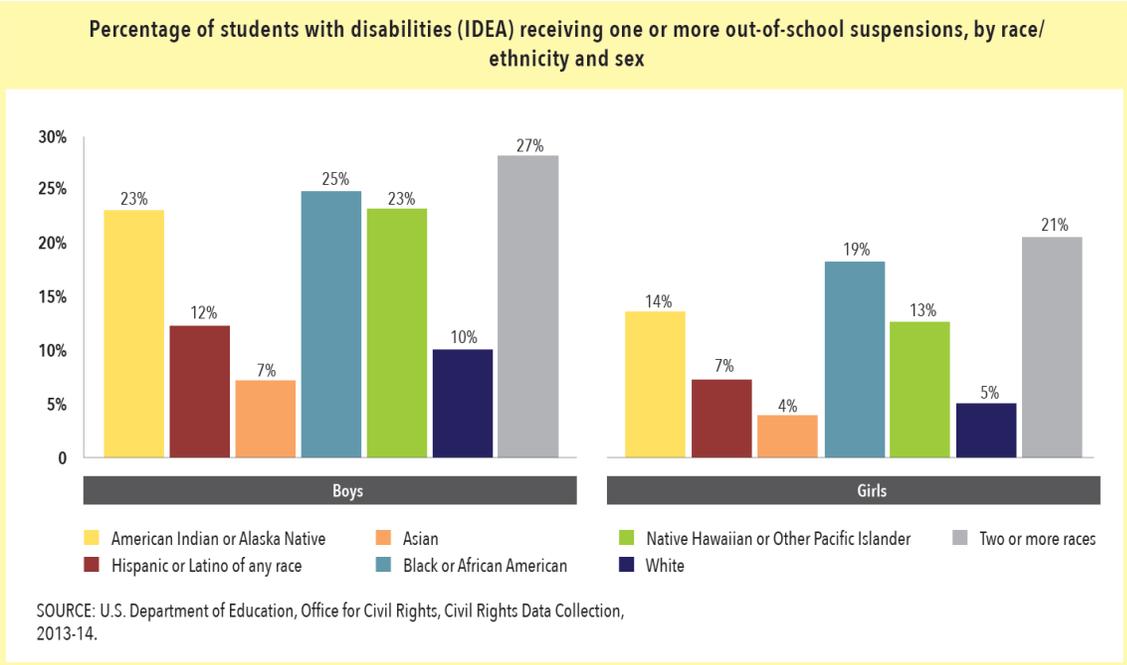
The Scope of Exclusionary Discipline Practices

Far too many schools employ discipline policies that unnecessarily remove students from classrooms, are inappropriately enforced by non-administrative staff, and are disproportionately applied to students of color and those with disabilities, particularly in low-income and urban communities. While progress is being made, more still needs to be done. The 2013-14 CRDC data reveals that out-of-school suspensions decreased by nearly 20 percent compared to the 2011-12 school year. However, the [2.8 million students](#) who received out-of-school suspensions in school year 2013-14, represented approximately 6 percent of all students enrolled in elementary and secondary schools.

The application of exclusionary discipline practices is especially significant for specific student subgroups. In general, students of color and students with disabilities are disciplined more often than their classmates. As stated in the Department of Education's First Look brief about 2013-14 CRDC data, in preschool, black children are 3.6 times more likely to be suspended than white children. In K-12, black students are 3.8 times more likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions compared to white students. [Other boys of color](#) (American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Latino and two or more races are also disproportionately suspended from school, representing 15 percent of K-12 students but 19 percent of K-12 students receiving one or more out-of-school suspensions. This disproportionality exists by sex also. Even when accounting for differences in suspension rates between boys and girls, disparities in suspension rates by race/ethnicity remain. In particular, suspension rates for all racial/ethnic groups, except Asian students, are above corresponding percentages for white boys and girls. Of those students receiving out-of-school suspensions, 18 percent are black boys and another 10 percent are black girls. This is the highest percentage of all subgroups aggregated by race/ethnicity and sex.

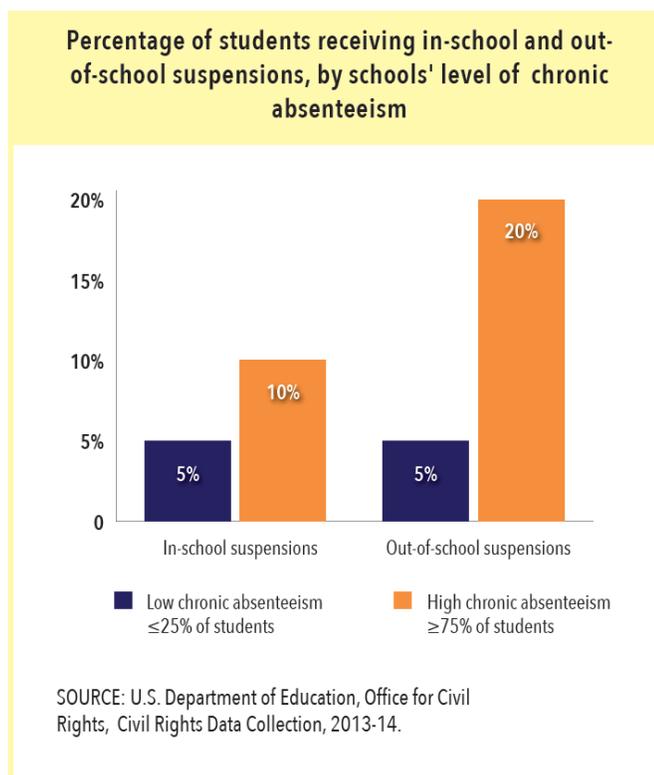


Students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions as students without disabilities; and students with disabilities served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) represented 12 percent of the overall school population, yet accounted for 25 percent of the students with one or more out-of-school suspensions; whereas students without disabilities and not served by IDEA made up 88 percent of the overall enrollment though they accounted for 75 percent of the out-of-school suspensions. Additionally, students of color with disabilities are particularly disproportionately suspended. One out of five boys of color (American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, black and multiracial) with disabilities received one or more out-of-school suspensions, compared to a rate of one of ten for white boys with disabilities. More than one in five girls with disabilities who are two or more races received one or more out-of-school suspensions, compared to a rate of one in twenty for white girls served by IDEA. These disparities are troubling and harmful to students of color and students with disabilities.



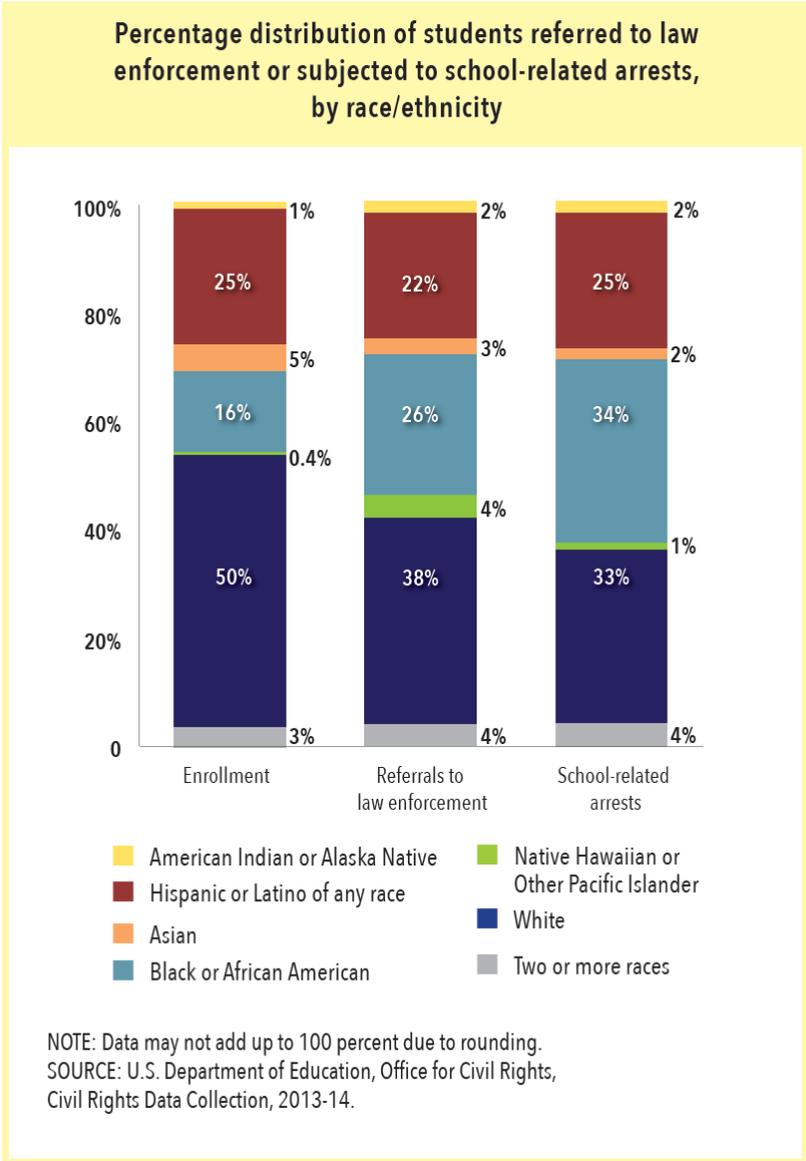
Chronic Absenteeism and Discipline

Further, for the first time in the 2013-14 collection, the CRDC collected information about student chronic absenteeism, identifying students who were absent (excused or unexcused) 15 or more days during the school year; and across the nation, 13 percent of all students – over 6.5 million students – were chronically absent. Only 5 percent of students in schools with low rates of chronic absenteeism received an in-school suspension, compared to 10 percent of students in schools with high chronic absenteeism. Similarly, only 5 percent of students in schools with low rates of chronic absenteeism received out-of-school suspensions, while 20 percent received out-of-school suspensions in schools where chronic absenteeism was more pervasive. There appears to be a positive association between the degree of chronic absenteeism at a school and the percentage of out-of-school suspensions imposed. The data also suggests a relationship between in-school suspensions and chronic absenteeism.



Referrals to Law Enforcement and School-Related Arrests

According to the 2013-14 CRDC, More than 220,000 students were referred to law enforcement and 70,000 were subject to a school-related arrest in 2013-14. Disparities exist by race and ethnicity in the rates of referrals of students to law enforcement and school-related arrests. In addition to being suspended more often, black students account for a disproportionate number of referrals to law enforcement and school-related arrests. Black students make up 16 percent of the student population but are 26 percent of the students referred to law enforcement and 34 percent of students subject to school-related arrests. In contrast, white students, who make up 50 percent of the student population, are 33 percent of students subject to school-related arrests.



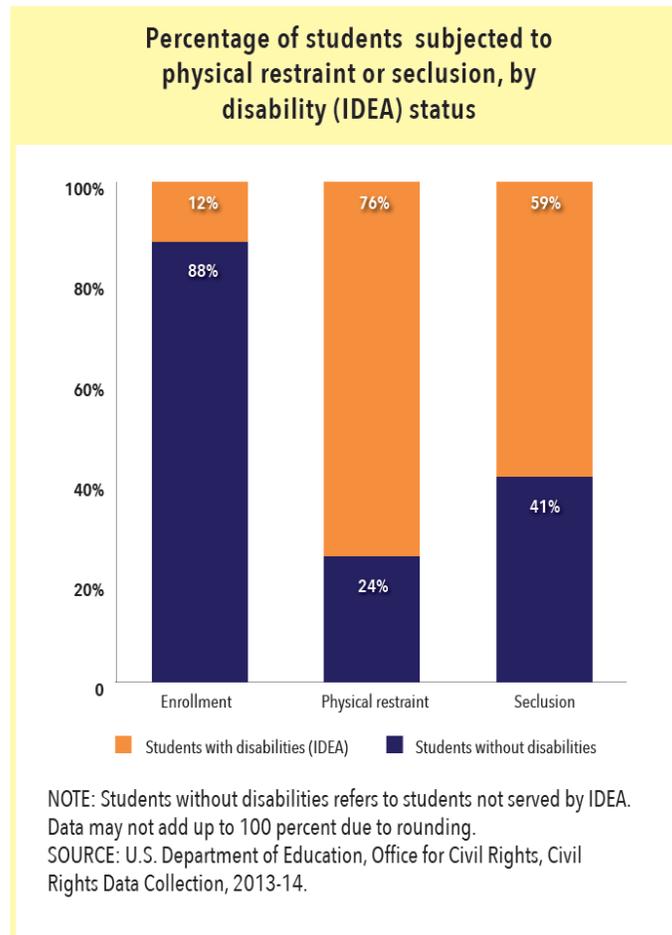
Restraint and Seclusion Practices¹

The 2013-14 CRDC collected the following information about restraint and seclusion practices. Of the students restrained or secluded, a disproportionate share was black students—while composing only 16 percent of student enrollment, black students represented 25 percent of students who are physically restrained, 34 percent of students who are mechanically restrained, and 22 percent of the students who are secluded. Latino students—25 percent of student enrollment—were disproportionately represented among those students who are mechanically restrained (28 percent), but not among those physically restrained (13 percent) or secluded (10 percent). American Indian or Alaska Native students—1 percent of student enrollment—were disproportionately represented, as well, among those mechanically restrained and secluded (2 percent in each category); and multiracial students—about 3 percent of student enrollment—experienced disproportionate rates of physical restraint and seclusion (5 percent in each category). White students—50 percent of student

¹ Such practices are not considered “discipline.” As the Department of Education [has previously stated](#), restraint or seclusion should never be used as punishment or discipline; and should only be used for limited periods of time and should cease immediately when the imminent danger of serious physical harm to self or others has dissipated.

enrollment—were overrepresented in the percentage of students subjected to physical restraint and seclusion (54 and 59 percent, respectively).

The majority of public school students subjected to restraint and seclusion were students with disabilities served under IDEA. Such students—12 percent of student enrollment—accounted for 76 percent students subjected to physical restraint, and 59 percent of those students who are subject to seclusion. Whereas students without disabilities not served by IDEA—88 percent of total enrollment—accounted for 24 percent of those physically restrained and 41 percent of those students placed in seclusion.



The Impact of Exclusionary Discipline Practices

The reliance on exclusionary discipline practices in our schools has significant negative consequences for student learning and success. As reported in a [joint ED/HHS Policy Statement](#), suspension and expulsion can contribute to a number of adverse outcomes for childhood development in areas such as personal health, interactions with the [criminal justice system](#), and education.

Expulsion and suspension practices may delay or interfere with the process of identifying and addressing the root cause of the behavior problem, including diagnosed or undiagnosed disabilities or mental health issues. Some children may have not been identified as having disabilities, but rash use of exclusionary discipline can mean these students may not be evaluated to determine the appropriate special education or related aids and services they may require in order to address their educational needs and receive a free and appropriate public education.. For example, the source of challenging behavior may be communication and language difficulties, which can be improved through prompt evaluation and receipt of audiology or speech-language pathology services. In these cases, appropriate evaluation and provision of necessary services for eligible students with disabilities are critical, but less likely if the child becomes subjected to exclusionary discipline decisions.

Reliance on exclusionary discipline has also contributed to the development of the school-to-prison pipeline. Students who are suspended from school have [an increased likelihood](#) to have contact with the criminal justice system and are more likely to face incarceration in their lifetime. The heavy use of exclusionary discipline may also affect the allocation of funds in schools. While [21 percent of high schools](#) nationwide do not provide access to the social-emotional support provided by a school counselor, [1.6 million students attend a school that has a sworn law enforcement officer but not a counselor](#). In the top ten largest districts in the nation, where more children of color attend school, there are, on average, [more police and school-based resource officers in place than school counselors](#). Across the nation, over 27,600 schools have sworn law enforcement officers (SLEO), including school resource officers (SRO), assigned to the school. Of the elementary schools (grades K-6, excluding justice facilities) 24 percent (about 16,900) have SLEOs. Of the high schools (grades 9-12, excluding justice facilities), 42 percent (about 10,700) have SLEOs. Over 9,500 high schools with SLEOs/SROs also have high black and Latino student enrollments (more than 75 percent of the student enrollment is black and Latino). And although black students represent 15 percent of overall enrollment, they represent 26 percent of those referred to law enforcement and 34 percent of those subjected to school-related arrests.

Given these troubling realities, the Obama Administration has sought to improve discipline practices by helping to ensure better educational experiences for students and providing a roadmap to states, districts, and schools for how to use alternatives to exclusionary school discipline practices.

The Obama Administration's Efforts to Rethink Discipline

Over the past several years, the Administration has led a steady effort to build consensus around the need for alternative strategies to the use of exclusionary discipline.

Taking Steps to Eliminate the Use of Suspension and Expulsions in Early Childhood Settings

Although early childhood settings differ in context from K-12 settings, the same guiding principles are applicable to both in areas such as developing and communicating clear behavioral expectations, and ensuring fairness, equity, and continuous improvement for all students. In 2014, ED and HHS released a [policy statement](#) expressing the Obama Administration's opposition to the use of suspension and expulsion in preschool settings and offered guidance on how parents, educators, and providers could take steps to significantly reduce and eventually eliminate the use of exclusionary school discipline in preschool settings.

In addition to this policy statement, HHS and ED worked together to raise awareness of the issue, encourage State and local development of policies to address the use of suspension and expulsion in preschools and identify alternatives, invest in professional development for the early childhood workforce, disseminate resources to support families, programs, and States, and enforce Federal civil rights law that prohibits the use of discriminatory discipline practices. This work has sought to ensure that all children's social-emotional and behavioral health are fostered in an appropriate high-quality early learning program, with the goal of eventually eliminating expulsion and suspension practices across early learning settings.

In the fall of 2016, HHS released two regulations to effect changes in its two largest early childhood education programs: [Head Start](#) and the [Child Care & Development Fund](#) (CCDF). The federal investment in these two programs is more than twice the amount of combined spending by all 50 states on high-quality preschool programs. Head Start and CCDF provide services to nearly two million children under the age of five.

The Head Start regulation provided for the comprehensive revision of the program's performance standards. The performance standards describe the policies and practices that all Head Start programs must follow and in this most recent revision, HHS clarified a longstanding prohibition around expelling or un-enrolling children from Head Start because of a child's behavior. Additionally, in November, HHS released [an informational memorandum](#) to Head Start programs providing guidance on how to comply with the new requirements in the performance standards, including a free resources in the form of guidance and toolkits that programs can use to assist in the elimination of suspensions and expulsions in early childhood settings.

The CCDF regulation provides guidance and clarity to states as they implement the Child Care & Development Block Grant Act (CCDBG) of 2014, a law that President Obama signed to improve health, safety, and quality measures within federally subsidized child care settings. The CCDBG Act of 2014 included provisions relevant to reducing expulsions and suspensions and promoting children's social-emotional and behavioral health. In particular, the law requires states to provide certain information to families, the general public, and, where applicable, child care providers as part of consumer and provider education. The CCDBG Act of 2014 also enables states to use quality improvement funds for professional development, including training in positive behavior intervention and support models that promote positive social and emotional development and reduce challenging behaviors in order to reduce expulsions of preschool-aged children for such behaviors. Similar to the Head Start regulation, HHS released an [informational memoranda](#) to states reinforcing the provisions in the law and providing guidance on actions states can take to significantly reduce, and eventually eliminate, the use of suspension and expulsion in early childhood settings.

Policy Review and Reform in K-12

Alternatives to Suspension & Expulsion: In 2014, the Department of Education (ED) and the Department of Justice (DOJ) jointly released a [School Discipline Guidance Package](#) to clarify schools' civil rights obligation not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin in the administration of school discipline, and provide a set of principles to help schools improve school climate and discipline practices. ED and DOJ engaged with various philanthropies and other key stakeholders to commission a School Discipline Consensus Project. Led by the Council of State Governments, this brought together practitioners from the fields of education, juvenile justice, behavioral health, and law enforcement to develop recommendations to address the school-to-prison pipeline, including recommendations for strengthening services to youth in confinement.

Rethink School Discipline - Resource Guide for Superintendent Action: In 2014, as a part of Rethink Discipline, the Department of Education developed a [resource guide](#) with a set of potential action items to help school leaders implement safe, supportive school climates and discipline practices by engaging stakeholders,

assessing the results and history of existing school climate and discipline systems and practices, implementing reform, and monitoring progress.

Addressing the Appropriate Use of School Resource Officers: In 2016, ED and DOJ's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office) provided tools and resources to State Chief School Officers and Higher Education Administrators that outlined best practices for incorporating school resource officers (SROs) responsibly into the learning environment with an emphasis that, if utilized appropriately, SROs can positively impact the lives of our nation's students. These materials reinforced the responsibility of school Administrators to create a safe, healthy and nurturing climate for all students, stressing that interactions with SROs should be a positive experience for young people. Further, it highlighted that routine school discipline issues are better and more appropriately handled by trained educators, not by law enforcement officers.

The package included the [Safe, School-based Enforcement through Collaboration, Understanding, and Respect](#) (SECURE) Rubrics, which are designed to assist state and local education and law enforcement agencies in reviewing and, if necessary, revising SRO-related policies. The goal of the rubrics is to provide state and local policymakers with common-sense action steps that can lead to improved school safety and better outcomes for students while safeguarding their civil rights.

Corporal Punishment: In 2016, ED issued a [Dear Colleague Letter](#) to strongly encourage policymakers to eliminate the use of corporal punishment in the classroom. The letter noted the harmful impact that corporal punishment can have on students and their development and encouraged the 22 states where corporal punishment in schools remains permissible to change their policy. The letter also encouraged states that have banned corporal punishment to properly enforce their laws and prevent the use of corporal punishment in schools.

Fostering Safe and Supportive Learning Environments: In 2016, the Department of Education released the [ED School Climate Surveys](#) and the [Quick Guide on Making School Climate Improvements](#) to help foster and sustain safe and more nurturing environments that are conducive to learning for all students.

Providing Guidance to Schools on Ensuring Equity and Providing Behavioral Supports to Students with Disabilities: In 2016, the Department of Education [released](#) a [Dear Colleague Letter](#), which emphasized the requirement that schools provide positive behavioral supports to students with disabilities who need them. It also clarified that the repeated use of disciplinary actions may suggest that many children with disabilities may not be receiving appropriate behavioral interventions and supports. The letter noted that including evidence-based behavioral supports in individualized education programs (IEPs), and implementing those with fidelity, is an effective alternative to unnecessary disciplinary removals. Reducing disciplinary removals results in increased participation in instruction and may reduce the need for restrictive placements.

Equity in IDEA: In 2016, ED proposed a rule to improve equity in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). Under Part B of the IDEA, states are required to determine whether significant disproportionality, based on race and ethnicity, is occurring in the State and districts with respect to the identification, placement, and discipline of students with disabilities. When school districts are so identified, they must set-aside 15 percent of their Part B funds to provide comprehensive coordinated early intervening services to help stem the overrepresentation of particular racial or ethnic groups receiving special education services. The proposed rule comes in response to evidence from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) that the discretion that States have in defining significant disproportionality has resulted in a wide range of definitions that provides no assurance that the problem is being appropriately identified across the nation. Further, the GAO found that "the way some states defined overrepresentation made it unlikely that any districts would be identified and thus required to provide early intervening services." The proposed rule would require States, for the first time, to implement a standard approach to compare racial and ethnic groups, with reasonable

thresholds for determining when disparities have become significant. ED is in the process of reviewing and incorporating feedback received during the public comment period.

Charter Schools: In 2016 ED joined a Steering Committee of practitioners, advocacy groups and philanthropists to Rethink Discipline in charter schools. As part of this initiative, ED supported the creation of a [suite of resources](#) by the National Charter Schools Resource Center to help charter school leaders as they rethink discipline practices. These resources include a [toolkit for practitioners](#), [examples](#) of policies and school climates, a set of [case studies](#) that chronicle many of choices and implementation dynamics experienced by charter school leaders, a [webinar](#) on using data to create positive school climates, and a compendium of [professional development tools](#).

Data Transparency and Technical Assistance

The Administration has been committed to making information about school discipline accessible to the public. In the past year, ED has designed new data portals that make it easier for communities to learn about school discipline rates. Public awareness of disproportionate rates of school discipline, combined with access to data that is disaggregated by race, gender, disability and student characteristics or demographic variables, enables communities to identify challenges and collaboratively engage with relevant stakeholders to identify root causes of disparities in the application of exclusionary discipline and to implement solutions.

In addition to releasing these tools, ED has funded a \$1 million data initiative that disaggregates K-12 data on school discipline, and other metrics, broken down by gender, ethnicity, and race. In addition, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which was signed into law by the President in December of 2015, codifies many of the elements of the CRDC, including requiring states and districts to provide disaggregated data on incidences of suspension and expulsion in K-12 settings.

Since 2012, ED has funded the Supportive School Discipline Communities of Practice (SSDCoP), a project of the [National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children who Are Neglected, Delinquent and At-Risk](#) (NDTAC) in support of the [Supportive School Discipline Initiative](#). SSDCoP was developed as a follow up activity to the March 2012 [National School-Justice Partnership Summit \(link is external\)](#) in New York City and is designed to help the education and justice system leaders continue their work by sharing information, discussing common issues, and considering ideas in a collaborative manner to ultimately keep kids in school and out of court.

Beginning in 2014, ED supported the School Climate Transformation Grant—Local Educational Agency Program, which provides competitive grants to school districts to develop, enhance, or expand systems of support for, and technical assistance to, schools implementing an evidence-based multi-tiered behavioral framework for improving behavioral outcomes and learning conditions for all students.

In July 2015, DOJ also launched the National Resource Center for School Justice Partnerships. This training and technical assistance portal is designed to assist juvenile courts, schools, law enforcement agencies, and others to support school discipline reform efforts at the local level and address disparities in discipline among students.

In 2016, the ED and the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) [announced a new investment of \\$1 million](#) in the [Pyramid Equity Project](#) to establish national models for addressing issues of implicit bias and discipline disparities, including expulsions and suspensions, in early learning programs.

State and Local Action

To build on the progress undertaken by a number of state and local communities, the Administration has worked to engage as many stakeholders as possible to provide them with a platform to discuss and build on best practices, as well as providing the tools and resources needed to move the work of rethinking disciplinary practices forward. Since ED and HHS released the policy statement on expulsion and suspension in early learning settings, state and local communities around the country have begun to take action. [Numerous states and districts across the country are](#) working with urgency to address this difficult issue by closely examining both policies and the supports offered to early educators in their child care and state preschool programs.

Building on the work of the President's [My Brother's Keeper Initiative](#) and the [White House Council on Women and Girls](#), in July 2015 the White House and ED partnered to launch the #RethinkDiscipline campaign to help school districts reform their disciplinary practices. This campaign included story maps on "The Hidden Cost of Suspension" that disaggregate school discipline data by race, gender, and disability status. The story maps permit users to explore out-of-school suspension rates in individual school districts across the United States, and make discipline data comprehensible and easily accessible for decision makers and the public.

As a part of the launch, the White House invited the leadership of 40 school districts – including teams of superintendents, school resource officers, and educators – to a convening, sparking a national dialogue around providing targeted supports and moving away from school discipline practices that exclude students from classroom instruction. Each of the participating districts made commitments of further action to create safe, supportive, and productive learning environments. Since the convening, gains have been made in a number of districts, including 13 districts highlighted in this report and appendix.

The changes implemented in these districts alone over the last few years represent a move toward improved learning environments for nearly 1.8 million students across the nation:

Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD - CA) implemented the Discipline Foundation Policy in 2007 to provide an overarching umbrella policy for student discipline. Over the years, LAUSD has made significant strides to address concerns regarding disproportionate suspension rates, staff training, and instructional days lost as a result of suspension. In 2013, the LAUSD Board of Education adopted the School Discipline Policy and School Climate Bill of Rights. As part of the adopted resolution, LAUSD established a consistent framework for implementing and developing a culture of discipline grounded in positive behavior interventions, moving away from punitive approaches that infringe on instructional time through the trainings and practices of restorative justice.

LAUSD had reported that it is committed to utilizing alternatives to suspension in a consistent and age-appropriate manner for any misconduct for which suspension is not required by state law. In addition to the restorative justice practices, LAUSD is working collaboratively with various District units and outside organizations to implement programs that are supported by proven practices that ensure staff is properly serving students as they work to achieve improved academic outcomes. To support these efforts, LAUSD has worked to increase restorative justice programming by hiring additional teacher advisers to expand the program to middle and elementary schools. Other efforts have included increasing supports for the foster youth achievement program and the development of a homeless youth support program. As a result of the District's efforts over the past seven years, instructional days lost to suspension have declined from over 75,000 per year to 5,221 days per year.

Houston Independent School District (HISD - TX) - In the past, HISD discipline policy and practices have led to a disproportionately higher rate of suspension for African American students than for all other student populations in the district, particularly in the early grades of pre-kindergarten through

second grade. For instance, in the 2014-2015 school year, 70 percent of students who were removed from the school setting in pre-kindergarten through second grade were African American, even though African American students accounted for only 25 percent of the District's student population.

This sort of data spurred HISD to evaluate discipline practices after participating in the 2015 White House Rethink Discipline convening. In the year prior to the #RethinkDiscipline event, HISD had suspended 1,400 students in pre-kindergarten through second grade. This fact, paired with increased attention on the critical nature of fostering children's development in the early years and the detriments to children's trajectories that can result from suspensions and expulsions, prompted the District to begin working on a new policy to ban suspensions for the pre-kindergarten through 2nd grade years. In 2016, the HISD's School Board passed a policy that eliminated expulsions and suspensions for children in pre-K through second grade, and limited it for children in third through fifth grade. The new policy states that all school-based faculty and staff shall be trained annually in methods to foster a positive school climate, prevent crises, and de-escalate disciplinary challenges. School-based faculty and staff must also be trained periodically on issues of equity based on factors like age, race, national origin, gender, and disability status, as applied to the population served at that school.

To support this effort, HISD committed approximately \$1,000,000 to create a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) Department and added ten more behavioral interventionists in the District. The new SEL department has enabled the District to train approximately 5,000 teachers from 68 campuses in Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports. In addition, the district's Code of Student Conduct was revised for the 2016-2017 school year to reflect the district's changes in policy and practice. The changes included added support for strategies that teach appropriate behavior rather than relying on exclusionary consequences, and limits to the number of days older students can be suspended or placed in alternative settings. Schools are now also required to consider mitigating factors when making decisions about suspension and placements in alternative settings, including factors like intent, disciplinary history, and the child's developmental capacity to appreciate the wrongfulness of the conduct.

Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS - FL) - During the 2014-2015 school year, 22,889 students in Miami-Dade County Public Schools received out-of-school suspension. In response, M-DCPS embarked on a bold effort to "Rethink Discipline" in 2015-2016. The District eliminated traditional out-of-school suspensions and launched the Values Matter Miami Campaign to raise awareness of its nine core values: citizenship, cooperation, fairness, honesty, integrity, kindness, pursuit of excellence, respect, and responsibility. Simultaneously, M-DCPS rebranded the Division of Educational Opportunity and Access and embraced a holistic approach to progressive discipline, addressing the causes of negative student behavior by assisting with the emotional, social, health, personal, and career development needs of all students.

In schools, the New Picture of School Center for Special Instruction (SCSI) Implementation Model shifted the paradigm around discipline from application of punishment to providing an opportunity for student skill-building and behavioral changes. M-DCPS has also implemented the Creating Community Change: Youth Engagement Program as an innovative option for off-track, high-promise middle school students that once exhibited high rates of suspension to engage in hands-on service learning and youth engagement through a unique Civic Engagement through Service Learning elective course. In addition, ten Student Success Centers provide technology-rich educational settings and safe havens for referred students (ages 11 and older) that have exhibited specific behavioral infractions of the *M-DCPS Code of Student Conduct*. These centers implement effective discipline practices without depriving students of valuable instructional time.

Finally, to ensure that students are afforded a second chance, M-DCPS, the Juvenile Justice System, and community agencies partnered to assist over 700 adjudicated students in their transition back to traditional educational settings. At one centralized location, students released from adjudication are referred to a one-stop Educational and Community Service Center to receive wrap-around services. These efforts have demonstrated great promise, and programs are continuing to evolve. Values Matter Miami has expanded in 2016-2017, and over 80 percent of the District's counselors have been trained to use a values education framework and interactive digital classroom lessons to ensure students in all grade levels are accessing the curriculum.

Bridgeport Public School District (BPS – CT)- BPS has developed Restorative Justice Plan aimed at eliminating out-of-school suspensions for all non-violent behaviors. In the past year, BPS has continued to improve the climate and culture throughout the district by supporting students in making positive choices in their behavior. BPS has committed to supporting students and families by helping students better understand their behaviors and working with them on making better choices and decisions. As a result of this approach, the number of out-of-school suspensions in the District declined by 549 between the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years.

BPS has partnered with Yale University on the implementation of the RULER program, a socio-emotional program based upon *Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing, and Regulating* Emotions. In the 2015-2016 school year, the roll out of RULER was expanded to include each Bridgeport high school. This work is being driven by a district level out-of-school suspension (OSS) Task Force that is focused on trying to eliminate OSS in the District. Each of the four schools' has received training in Restorative Practices, both at the state level and in collaboration with Suffolk University located in Boston, Massachusetts. In an effort to address student behaviors at the elementary school level, BPS has provided each school with a regularly scheduled in-school-suspension (ISS) paraprofessional. Schools now have another mechanism to keep students in school and address their behaviors in a positive manner, and BPS has experienced a significant decline in OSS at the elementary level during the current school year.

Woodland Hills School District (PA) - In 2013, administrators and teachers at the Woodland Hills School District in suburban Pittsburgh learned that their district was one of the top ten school districts across the nation for suspending elementary age students. In response, the District assembled a team of administrators, teachers and support staff members with assistance from an external group, the Consortium for Public Education in McKeesport PA. The team examined their Code of Student Conduct and the many local Board policies that form the basis for administering discipline in the highly diverse and predominately low income district. At the beginning of the 2014-15 school year, a decision was made to completely scrap the existing thirty-year-old Code of Conduct and replace it with a new Code that incorporated the key principles of Trauma Informed Care, Positive Behavior Supports and Restorative Justice into all steps of the discipline process. There was also an increased emphasis placed on mental health supports for students at the elementary level. This included increased professional development as well as a partnership with the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center that brought a full behavioral health treatment center into one of the District's elementary schools.

Progress in the area of student discipline has been steady and sustained and is now accelerating. Following the adoption of the new Code at the end of the 2014-15 school year there was a marked decrease in suspensions of students at all levels. During the 2015-16 school year total suspensions dropped by more than 10 percent on average and by more than 20 percent at the elementary grade levels. Through the first quarter of the 2016-17 school year suspensions at the K-6 level are down by almost 40 percent. Suspensions at the secondary level are down by almost 30 percent. Expulsions have dropped

dramatically with only one by Thanksgiving 2016 compared to over twenty at the same point in the prior school year.

Broward County Public Schools (FL) - In 2012, the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice Delinquency in Schools Report identified Broward County Public Schools (BCPS) as having the highest number of school-related arrests of any county in the state of Florida. BCPS engaged in a comprehensive review of disciplinary policies and practices and partnered with a number of community organizations to invest heavily in prevention and intervention programs as well as wraparound services for youth who are at risk and those already engaged in delinquent and criminal behaviors.

BCPS assembled a collaborative group of community partners to form the *Committee for Eliminating the School-House to Jail-House Pipeline*, which was formalized by the signing of a Collaborative Agreement on School Discipline for Broward County youth. Membership includes: the Division of Juvenile Justice, NAACP, The Advancement Project, Public Defenders Office, State Attorney's Office, State Representatives, Law Enforcement, Juvenile Court System, Broward Teachers Union, Children's Services Council, local universities, district and school leaders, parent affiliate groups, district advisory groups, and others. The Committee has undertaken efforts such as the design and implementation of an intervention program called PROMISE (Preventing Recidivism through Opportunities, Mentoring, Interventions, Supports & Education) to address non-violent misdemeanor behaviors that might result in student contact with law enforcement and the juvenile justice system. Students received the PROMISE intervention in lieu of arrest. In addition, school personnel and School Resource Officers now receive ongoing training around age-appropriate disciplinary practices and the provision of culturally responsive, social-emotional behavior supports to students. A data comparison of school year 2011-12 and school year 2015-16 shows that the District had a 37.1 percent decline in out-of-school suspensions and a 17 percent reduction in expulsions. More specifically, for the incidents that qualify for the PROMISE Program, there has been a reduction of 53.2 percent over the same period of time. Furthermore, Broward County is currently ranked 61st out of the 67 counties in Florida for school-related arrests.

Denver Public Schools (DPS - CO) – DPS's use of expulsion remains stable after several years of decline, despite being one of the fastest growing urban school districts nationally. Compared to the 2014-2015 school year, in 2015-2016 DPS had a 9 percent decline in the number of out-of-school suspensions and a 6 percent decline for in-school suspensions. The District has committed \$11 million for whole child supports in schools, including supports for social emotional intelligence and for direct services including restorative practice coordinators and other supports that interrupt the school-to-jail track.

DPS has also worked with community partners to rethink discipline practices. In collaboration with the University of Denver, DPS completed a Stoplight on Success project to highlight what schools with successful discipline reform strategies in place were doing and to provide concrete next steps for other schools to scale up programs and practices. DPS has also worked with *Padres y Jovenes Unidos*, Denver Classroom Teachers Association and the National Education Association to develop Restorative Practices Demonstration Sites.

DC Public Schools (DCPS) – In the 2015-2016 school year, DCPS opted to take a more proactive and preventive approach to discipline and launched its first ever **School Climate Initiative (SCI)**. Through SCI, schools are supported in developing a school climate plan that promotes high student achievement, a proactive and positive approach to discipline, and an emphasis on supporting the social and emotional needs of students. The foundation of SCI lies in the newly created DCPS School Climate Guide that highlights 6 components outlining the DCPS way towards developing and maintaining a positive school

climate. The components include: (1) leadership, (2) educational environment, (3) routines and procedures, (4) student recognition, (5) teaching and learning, (6) and interpersonal relationships. Schools are supported from the central office level with creating an individualized school climate plan and increasing implementation fidelity through weekly site visits focused on building capacity among the staff. Monitoring of the initiative occurs through the use of quarterly walkthroughs, student and staff surveys, and student focus groups.

A group of 20 schools, which represented 50 percent of all DCPS suspensions during the previous year, were selected to participate in the initiative the first year. In just one school year, the initial cohort of 20 schools saw improved and stabilized environments, increased positive relationships between adults and students, significant drops in student infractions and an overall increase in student satisfaction. By the end of year, the SCI schools accomplished a 44 percent drop in total suspensions, which accounted for 80 percent of the district's overall suspension reduction.

For the 2016-2017 school year, the School Climate Initiative welcomed an additional 24 schools and DCPS is committed to expanding this approach to all schools within the next few years. The climate work will continue to lay the necessary groundwork for a transformative teaching and learning environment which maximizes student connectedness and engagement, increases their sense of school safety, and supports academic achievement.

Syracuse City School District (SCSD- NY)- SCSD has worked in recent years to address disproportionalities and disparities in the use of exclusionary discipline practices. During the 2011-12 school year, almost 44 percent of black students in Syracuse received at least one teacher referral, while the figure for white students was only 26 percent. Nearly 27 percent of black students received at least one in-school suspension, while only 15 percent of white students received such a suspension, and data showed similar disparities in the use of out-of-school suspension. Black students were recommended for Superintendent's hearings at twice the rate as white students. However, since the 2013-2014 school year, rates for all forms of suspension have declined across all grade levels for all student groups. Between 2013-2014 and 2015-2016, the percent of K-2 students receiving a suspension declined by 75 percent, suspensions in grades 3-5 declined by 62 percent, middle school rates dropped by 22 percent, and high school suspensions declined by 25 percent.

To achieve these gains, SCSD has engaged in difficult and challenging work, including revising the Code of Conduct, Character, and Support to reflect a significant change in the way student discipline is administered. The new code outlines a greater emphasis on accountable and restorative interventions; promotion of positive social behaviors and prevention of discipline problems; differentiated responses to behaviors which become a concern for students in grades Pre-K-2, 3-5 and 6-12; more precise descriptions of behavior concerns and violations aligned to levels of specific interventions and consequences; and out-of-school suspensions only for the more serious and violent violations. In addition, Syracuse is providing all district employees with training and professional development so to better understand the culture and background of their students. By using Culturally Responsive Education training from NYU's Technical Assistance Center for Disproportionality, the district is helping all staff members to recognize unconscious bias and providing them with tools to alter that mindset and ultimately change their behavior. Each school is using the Guardians of Equity Data Protocol to analyze their own data in order to develop action plans to address disproportionality. A priority for the district has been strengthening the student support infrastructure through partnership with community agencies, and this has resulted in nearly 180 additional support staff in buildings providing direct support to students.

Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS- IN)- For the 2013-2014 school year, IPS recorded 7863 out-of-school suspensions, 273 expulsions, and 461 school-based arrests. In response, ISP made the choice to regularly disaggregate discipline data during the 2014-2015 school year, especially for out of school suspensions and expulsions, with a focus on achieving a 20 percent reduction in suspensions. The District used data to guide the development of school-based plans to reduce the use of the exclusionary practices through the study of root cause analysis. Concurrently a community/school stakeholder group reviewed and revised the student code of conduct to support a reduction in the use of exclusionary practices and increase use of corrective and preventive practices. This initial work provided the foundation for efforts to increase equity in discipline practices and the capacity of school communities to support discipline reforms.

The revised student code of conduct has been an anchor for the District's work in "Rethinking Discipline". At the district level, professional development activities, integrated planning, and community collaborations have supported school leaders as they increase their capacity to build school climates that promote appropriate behavior and social emotional learning that supports academic achievement. This includes expanding the implementation of PBIS (Positive Interventions in Schools), MTSS (Multi-tiered Systems of Support) and restorative practices. In addition, corrective and supportive programming has been developed as alternatives to suspension and expulsion. For example, students referred for expulsion for possessing a weapon other than a live gun on school grounds must attend an eight-hour weapon education program and follow a behavioral contract while remaining in school. Students referred for expulsion for possession of an illegal substance are referred to an after-school community-based substance education and counseling program for a mandatory period while they remain in school. The development and implementation of corrective alternatives to suspension and expulsion has had a measurable impact on the use of exclusionary practices across the district. At the end of the 2015-16 school year, 46 of 61 schools reduced the use of out-of-school suspension by rates ranging from 20 percent to 60 percent. Expulsions were reduced by 80 percent and school-based arrests by 67 percent. The District is now working to reduce disproportionalities in the application of exclusionary discipline practices in response to data analysis that showed the rate of discipline referrals for African American males to be double their representation in the population.

Oakland Unified School District (OUSD- CA) - In recent years, OUSD has made significant strides in changing the prevailing paradigm of punishment and exclusion in response to real or perceived student misconduct. Compared to six years ago, suspension rates across the District are down by 57 percent, and rates for African-American students have declined by 53 percent over the same period. Furthermore, during the past five years OUSD schools registered a 75 percent decrease in suspensions for defiance. To build on that trend, OUSD has eliminated defiance as a reason for suspension for the 2016-2017 school year.

These gains reflect deep structural changes at both the district and school site level resulting from more positive, restorative, and trauma-informed responses to student behavior, and a commitment to equity and inclusion. The district has dedicated substantial resources and time in building schools' capacity to employ evidence-based practices, including Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS), Social Emotional Learning and Leadership (SEL), Trauma-Informed Practices, and Restorative Justice Practices. The District has also implemented innovative equity-focused initiatives including our nationally recognized African American Male Achievement's Manhood Development Program (MDP), our Latino Men and Boys Initiative, and our new leadership program for African-American Girls and Young Women. Currently, among OUSD's 86 school sites, 66 are implementing PBIS, 35 are implementing Restorative Justice, 21 have MDP classes, and all six comprehensive high schools are becoming fully trauma-informed with technical assistance and training from the University of California

at San Francisco. In 2015-16, OUSD replaced weekly and monthly PDF discipline reports with interactive data dashboards that are refreshed on a nightly basis and can be disaggregated by focal student groups to address equity and disproportionality.

For 2016-17, OUSD has launched a district-wide initiative around multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS). Through this framework, students identified as needing support receive tiered interventions along a continuum of supports, from universal prevention to intensive individualized services. School personnel, including law enforcement and security personnel, are trained to hold restorative conversations and employ trauma informed de-escalation strategies as an alternative to verbal or physical confrontations. All OUSD teachers are also receiving training in cultural responsiveness and dismantling implicit bias.

Vallejo City Unified School District (VCUSD)- During the 2011 school year, VCUSD issued over 74,000 student referrals, more than 7,000 student suspensions and over 90 student expulsions. Five years later, the District has seen a significant reduction in exclusionary discipline use, as data for the 2016 school year included 7,742 referrals, 2,498 suspensions and 36 expulsions. In addition to reducing suspensions and expulsions, the District is also focused on eliminating disproportionality in the application of student disciplinary actions.

VCUSD has experienced these gains over the past five years through implementation of several different programs. In the past year, VCUSD has dedicated increased staffing to Full Service Community School efforts in high schools, as well as the addition of mental health clinicians and psychologists to provide services on K-12 campuses. Professional development for Positive Behavior Intervention Support has been expanded to include all support staff responsible for interacting with students including office managers, bus drivers, afterschool coordinators, and campus site safety officers. Local funds have been used to develop and provide student incentives for positive behavior. Professional development offerings have been expanded to include a focus on Culturally Responsive Teaching and Implicit Bias. All members of site leadership teams have participated in this professional development and efforts are underway to ensure the participation of all teachers.

Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD- WI)- MMSD has worked to close the gaps in opportunity that lead to disparities in achievement by creating nurturing safe, supportive learning environments in all schools. The Behavior Education Plan (BEP), approved and implemented in 2014, represents a shift in district philosophy and practice with respect to behavior and discipline. It moves away from a zero-tolerance Code of Conduct and exclusionary practices toward proactive approaches that focus on building student and staff skills and competencies. The implementation of the Behavior Education Plan has been driven by an analysis of District data, primarily for behavior incidents and out-of-school suspensions. To facilitate more accurate, robust and comprehensive data, clear documentation parameters were written into the Behavior Education Plan policy, whereas guidance was absent in the Code of Conduct policy. Additionally, MMSD adopted a more reliable data management system.

Since the implementation of the BEP there has been a 20 percent overall decrease in discipline incidents, with a proportional decrease for African-American students. Out-of-school suspensions have declined by 34 percent when comparing first quarter 2013 to first quarter 2016. Elementary and high schools have seen the largest decreases, with a 67 percent decline at the elementary level and a 40 percent drop for high schools.

Conclusion

President Obama and his Administration have been committed to rethinking exclusionary discipline practices because schools that are safe, nurturing, and engaging environments are where students will succeed socio-emotionally and academically. Rethinking discipline has also been a cornerstone of the work of the President's My Brother's Keeper initiative, the White House Council on Women and Girls, as well as an Agency priority within the Departments of Education, Justice, and Health & Human Services.

The work of the past several years highlighted in this report should serve to empower advocacy groups, communities, parents, and educators to shine a bright light on inequities and disparities with respect to school discipline and work within communities to address them. This information also highlights actionable steps states and districts can take in order to decrease use of exclusionary discipline practices in order to make our schools better places to promote student learning and growth. But We celebrate the progress made thus far while we recognize that yet far more must be done to improve school discipline practices from preschool through high school, and doing so will require capable and insightful leadership from individuals at every level of school governance. Our children deserve nothing less.