

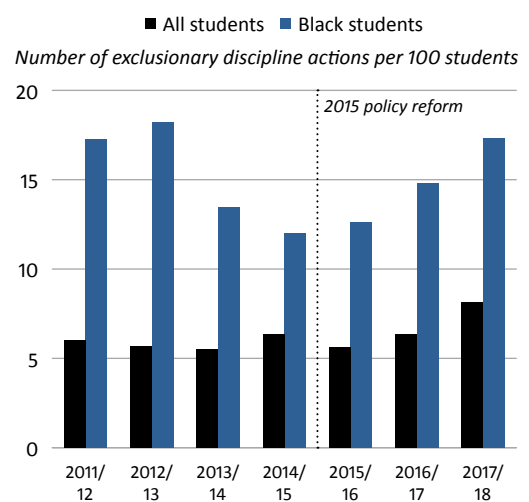
Changes in Exclusionary and Nonexclusionary Discipline in Grades K–5 Following State Policy Reform in Oregon

In 2015 Oregon enacted a school discipline policy reform for students in grades K–5 to limit exclusionary discipline actions (suspensions or expulsions that remove students from classroom instruction) to situations that threaten the safety of other students and adults. The reform built on a 2013 policy that directed districts to shift from a zero-tolerance school discipline approach that imposed predetermined exclusionary disciplinary consequences on students in grades K–12 to one that emphasizes nonexclusionary discipline or other approaches to behavior problems that do not result in the loss of classroom instruction. This study examined office discipline referrals that resulted in exclusionary or nonexclusionary discipline in a voluntary sample of 401 Oregon elementary schools to determine whether the 2015 policy reform was associated with differences in exclusionary discipline and non-exclusionary discipline among students overall and across by student racial/ethnic groups.

Key findings

- For all student racial/ethnic groups, but especially for Black students, the numbers of exclusionary and of nonexclusionary discipline actions per 100 students increased after the 2015 policy reform.
- During the post-policy years Black students experienced the largest increase in exclusionary discipline actions per 100 students. Black students were twice as likely as students overall to experience exclusionary discipline.
- For most student racial/ethnic groups in grades K–5, after pre-policy trends and other factors were controlled for, office discipline referrals issued after the 2015 policy reform became less likely to result in exclusionary discipline, and therefore more likely to result in nonexclusionary discipline, than before the reform. However, for Black students the opposite was true. Office discipline referrals issued to Black students after the 2015 policy reform became more likely to result in exclusionary discipline, and therefore less likely to result in nonexclusionary discipline, than before the reform.
- For most student racial/ethnic groups, the 2015 policy reform was associated with a shift from exclusionary to nonexclusionary discipline among office discipline referrals for minor, disruptive, and aggressive behavioral infractions that were not a school safety concern, after other factors were controlled for. However, for Black and Hispanic students the policy reform was associated with a shift toward exclusionary discipline for some of these behavioral infractions.

The number of exclusionary discipline actions per 100 students trended upward after the 2015 state policy reform for K–5 students overall, especially for Black students



Source: Authors' analysis of University of Oregon School-wide Information System data for 2011/12–2017/18.