Reading Between the Lines:
The Hidden Messages in Student Discipline Data

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“Suspension numbers can be an important clue, but high numbers can show a place spinning out of control, or one getting its house in order. Low numbers can mean an orderly school – or one that’s hiding problems.”
Office of Safe Schools - Annual District Data Summaries

What we look for:

- Significant changes from prior years
- Ratio of SESIR to OSS
- Ratio of ISS to OSS
- Schools that report no SESIR/discipline
- SESIR/discipline per 1,000 students
- Discipline rates by race and gender

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Disproportionality
In Florida:

• Black male students are disciplined at twice the rate of white male students (31% vs. 15%)

• Black female students are disciplined at three times the rate of white female students (18% vs. 6%)
Research shows that...

• Black students, economically disadvantaged students, and special education students experience out-of-school suspensions at disproportionate rates.

• Suspensions are significantly and negatively correlated to academic outcomes such as high school graduation and post-secondary enrollment.

(Balfanz, Byrnes & Fox, 2014)
OCR recommends regular review of discipline reports to assess whether students with different personal characteristics are disproportionately disciplined.

https://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/school-discipline/fedefforts.html#guidance
Code of Conduct

• Using subjective descriptors (defiant, inappropriate, disrespect, etc.) contributes to disproportionality. (Losen and Orfield 2002, Morgan et al 2014, Staats 2014)

• Reserve out-of-school suspension for incidents that threaten campus safety.

• Are your discipline policies supported by research?
Trauma-Informed Schools
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study

- Abuse, neglect and exposure to traumatic stressors can be associated with a multitude of health and social problems later in life

- ACES is used to assess the total amount of stress during childhood

- As the ACE score increases, so do the risks for many health-related behaviors and outcomes, including:
  - alcoholism and alcohol abuse
  - early initiation of smoking
  - sexual activity
  - illicit drug use
  - risk for intimate partner violence
  - adolescent pregnancies
  - suicide attempts

http://www.cdec.gov/nccdphp/ACE/findings.htm

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Understanding Child Trauma

Signs of Traumatic Stress:

Elementary School Children
- Become anxious or fearful
- Feel guilty or shame
- Have a hard time concentrating
- Have difficulty sleeping

Middle and High School Children
- Feel depressed or alone
- Begin abusing alcohol or drugs
- Become involved in risky sexual behavior
- Develop eating disorders or self-harming behaviors

Impact of Trauma:
- Learning problems, including lower grades and more suspensions and expulsions
- Increased use of health and mental health services
- Increased involvement with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems
- Long-term health problems (e.g., diabetes and heart disease)

www.samhsa.gov/child-trauma

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The Power of Being Seen

Research shows that students who don’t form meaningful connections at school are at a higher risk for behavior problems, dropping out and even committing suicide.

“Every Child, by Name and Face, to Graduation”

In the five years since adopting the Social Emotional Learning (SEL)-oriented approach, Washoe County (Nevada) schools have seen:

• Higher rates of attendance
• Higher scores on state reading and math tests
• Fewer disciplinary infractions and suspensions
• An 18% point increase for graduation rates

https://www.edutopia.org/article/power-being-seen

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Using Climate to Guide Decision-Making

When school climate improves, students are more engaged in curriculum, develop positive relationships and demonstrate positive behaviors.

School climate surveys are critical in understanding perceptions of students, staff and parents.

This is just part of the picture . . .

https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/edscls

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Data to Support School Climate

• Incident data – SESIR data, disciplinary actions, disaggregated by grade, gender, race, ethnicity, etc.

• Attendance data – rates of absenteeism and days in school for students

• Graduation rates

• Other discipline referrals – tracking minor referrals by type of infraction, referring teachers, student type, location on campus, etc.

Quick Guide on Making School Climate Improvements
Other Data to Support School Climate

• Focus Groups – engaging parents/guardians, staff and students in the conversation over data

• Interviews – one-on-one dialogue with parents/guardians, staff and students using more detailed questions

Quick Guide on Making School Climate Improvements


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20 Tips to Help De-escalate Interactions With Anxious or Defiant Students

KQED Mind/Shift

Analyzing student-level disciplinary data

Advancing School Discipline Reform

RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

A Multi-Year Disproportionality Analysis by State, Analysis Category, and Race/Ethnicity

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Data Analysis Tools

• Analyzing student-level disciplinary data: A guide for districts (REL 2017)
• The School Discipline Consensus Report: Data Collection (COSG 2014)
• A Model Code on Education and Dignity: Data, Monitoring and Accountability (Dignity in Schools 2013)
What’s working in Florida districts...

- Additional social workers/school psychologists in high-need elementary schools
- District review of serious disciplinary referrals
- Restorative Practices
- Top-down prioritization of building relationships with every student
- More PBIS, more engaging lessons, less “down time”
Questions?

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Resources

Discipline Data
- Florida Incident/Discipline Data
- Analyzing Student-Level Disciplinary Data (Webinar)
- US ED: School Climate and Discipline

Disproportionality
- Discipline Disparities Research-to-Practice Collaborative
- Addressing the Root Causes of Disparities in Discipline
- The Civil Rights Project
- PBIS Disproportionality Data Guidebook

Trauma
- Resources for School Personnel
- Trauma-Informed Schools
- Trauma-Informed Classrooms
- Addressing Race and Trauma in the Classroom
- Massachusetts Turnaround

General
- Federal Climate and Discipline Resources
- AIR - Education
- KQED Mind/Shift
- NCSSLE

Code of Conduct
- Guide to Responsive Discipline
- A Model Code

Restorative Practices
- Minnesota Department of Education – Restorative Practices
- International Institute of Restorative Practices (IIRP)
- Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (RJOY)
- Restorative Discipline in Schools - The Institute for Restorative Justice and Restorative Dialogue
- National Association of Community and Restorative Justice (NACRJ)
- Illinois - Implementing restorative justice: A guide for schools
- Restorative Justice – A Working Guide for our Schools

Toolkits
- School Discipline Consensus Report
- US ED Guiding Principles
- Implementation Checklist: Keep Students Engaged in School

School Climate
- School Climate Improvement Resource Package
- US ED School Climate Surveys
- National School Climate Center
- School Climate and Safety
- Examining Your School’s Climate
- Character Education Partnership
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- Quick Guide on Making School Climate Improvements

Discipline Reform
- Advancing School Discipline Reform
- Realizing the Full Vision of Discipline Reform
- Resource Guide for Superintendent Action
- School Discipline Reform
- From Reaction to Prevention

Discipline Research
- High Cost of Harsh Discipline
- Out of School and Off Track
- Breaking School Rules
- Sent Home and Put Off-Track
- The Promise of Restorative Practices

Discipline
- US ED Guidance
- National Clearinghouse on Supportive School Discipline
- Safe Supportive Learning - Discipline
- American Institutes for Research
  - School Discipline
- Positive Behavior Support
- Multi-Tiered System of Supports