Rethink School Discipline: School District Leader Summit on Improving School Climate and Discipline

Resource Guide for Superintendent Action

July 2015

U.S. Department of Education

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on Improving School Climate and Discipline

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Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

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U.S. Department of Education
Arne Duncan
Secretary

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
Ann Whalen
Senior Advisor to the Secretary Delegated the Duties of Assistant Secretary

July 2015

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Progress toward our nation's goal of preparing all students for college, careers, and civic life is possible when we create safe and supportive school environments where all students benefit from a quality education. A good school — a place that ultimately prepares all of its students for success in the next steps of their lives — is, first, a safe school. A good school is also a supportive school, where students and staff are empowered to demonstrate positive, caring, and restorative approaches to improving school climate and discipline. Put another way, a good school is one of the best places for students to learn from both the triumphs and shortcomings they experience at school.

The task of creating and sustaining safe, supportive schools is challenging, complex, and absolutely essential to improving students' connection to school and their overall achievement, as well as to ensuring the meaningful engagement of families in their children's education. This *Resource Guide for Superintendent Action* is intended to support superintendents and their leadership teams in their strategic efforts to engage stakeholders, assess the results and history of existing school climate and discipline systems and practices, implement reform, and monitor progress toward a more consistently equitable and rewarding future for all our nation's schoolchildren.

> The stakes are clear. And these stakes are high: At the end of the day, what kind of society do we want to have? What kind of country do we want to be? It's not enough to celebrate the ideals that we're built on — liberty for all, and justice for all and equality for all. Those can't just be words on paper. The work of every generation is to make those ideals mean something concrete in the lives of our children — all of our children.
>
> **President Barack Obama**
>
> *Remarks by the President at Launch of the My Brother's Keeper Alliance*
>
> May 4, 2015
>
> **Source:** https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2015/05/04/remarks-president-launch-my-brothers-keeper-alliance

Purpose of This Resource Guide

1. To highlight the important role that superintendents and school leaders play as ambassadors for and implementers of safe and supportive school climate and discipline within their school districts and local communities.
2. To offer possible district- and school-level action steps for initiating and enhancing local efforts to create safe and supportive school climate and discipline systems and practices.
3. To share promising practices and useful resources for implementing and sustaining safe and supportive school climate and discipline in collaboration with local stakeholders.

Know the Facts About School Climate and Discipline:

The Challenge and the Opportunity

Although national rates of school violence have decreased overall,[1] many schools struggle to create and sustain the nurturing, positive, safe, and equitable learning environments that we know are needed to improve student outcomes. Research clearly shows that discipline policies and practices that remove students from engaging instruction — such as suspensions, expulsions, and inappropriate referrals to law enforcement — generally fail to help students improve their behavior and fail to improve school safety. Suspended students are less likely to graduate on time and more likely to repeat a grade, drop out of school, and become involved in the juvenile justice system.[2] Data from the 2011–12 Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC)[3] show that students of certain racial or ethnic groups tend to be disciplined more than their peers.[4]

For example, consider the following:

- ✔ African-American students are three times more likely than their white peers to be expelled or suspended.
- ✔ Although African-American students represent 16 percent of the public school student population, they make up 33 percent of students suspended once, 42 percent of those suspended more than once, and 34 percent of students expelled.
- ✔ African-American and Latino students make up 40 percent of the student population but over 50 percent of the students referred to law enforcement or involved in school-related arrests.
- ✔ Black girls are suspended at higher rates (12 percent) than girls of any other race or ethnicity and most boys; American Indian and Alaska Native girls are suspended at higher rates (7 percent) than white boys (6 percent) or girls (2 percent).
- ✔ Racial disparities in out-of-school suspensions also start early; black children represent 18 percent of preschool enrollment but 48 percent of the preschool children suspended more than once.
- ✔ Although students served under the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (*IDEA*) represent 12 percent of students in the country, they are more than twice as likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions as non-*IDEA* students (13 percent versus 6 percent), and they make up 25 percent of students referred to law enforcement and 25 percent of students who are the subject of a school-related arrest.
- ✔ Students with disabilities (under the *IDEA*) represent 12 percent of students but nearly 75 percent of the students who are physically restrained in their schools.
- ✔ Additionally, research has found that the overwhelming majority of suspensions are determined at the discretion of local school officials and not mandated by state law or policy.[5]

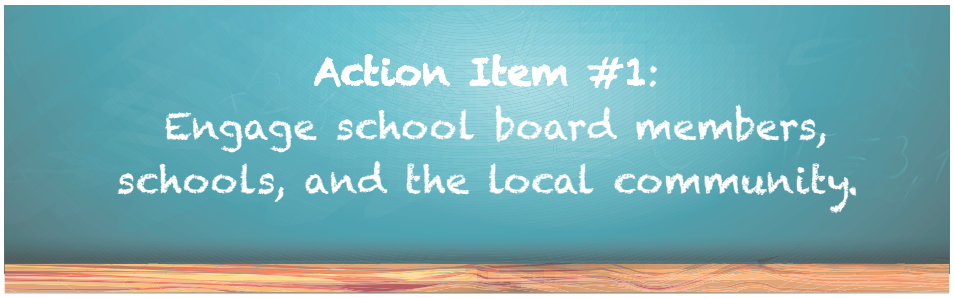
Alternatively, research and experience strongly suggest that different outcomes are possible for our schools and our students. Safe, supportive school climate and discipline are associated with the following improved outcomes:[6]

- ✔ Few incidences of school violence as well as increased staff and student feelings of safety;[7]
- ✔ High academic achievement, including improved grades and test scores;[8]
- ✔ Strong student attendance,[9] which, in turn, has been associated with improved academic performance and graduation rates;[10]
- ✔ Minimal engagement in risky behaviors, including substance abuse;[11]
- ✔ High levels of student engagement and self-discipline, due in part to the emphasis on cooperative learning and respectful interaction that help promote good behaviors[12] (with less likelihood of being referred to the office for disciplinary reasons or to receive a formal disciplinary action[13]);
- ✔ Strong attachment to school and positive student relationships with adults and peers,[14] which are associated with student engagement and satisfaction; and [15]
- ✔ High levels of staff satisfaction, involvement, and investment.[16]

> Schools play a critical role in developing the academic, social, and emotional skills that help children learn to interact in a respectful manner, resolve conflict peacefully, and mature into contributing members of their communities. To effectively develop these competencies, however, students must feel supported, connected to their teachers and staff, encouraged to do well, and physically and emotionally safe—all part of the conditions necessary for learning.
>
> *The School Discipline Consensus Report: Strategies from the Field to Keep Students Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System*, p. 26

Turning Ideas Into Reality: *Strategies for Taking Action*

The following strategies for taking action offer a potential guide for superintendents. These action items draw on federal guidance and guiding principles laid out in the *U.S. Departments of Education and Justice's School Discipline Guidance Package*[17] and research from the field. This includes the Council of State Governments Justice Center's *The School Discipline Consensus Report: Strategies from the Field to Keep Students Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System.*[18] To take action, superintendents and their leadership teams will prioritize investments in time and resources based on local assets and needs, and in partnership with schools, students, families, and community stakeholders.



As superintendent, you are uniquely positioned to convene a diverse coalition of stakeholders across your district — including local elected officials, educators, families, students, business leaders, philanthropies, and community organizations, who feel a sense of ownership in the success of area youths and a sense of empowerment to help lead the effort. Engage key stakeholders early in the process in order to mobilize leadership in a community-wide discussion of the results and history of existing school climate and discipline systems and practices. By engaging stakeholders at all levels, you and your leadership team can build a healthy, collaborative, and solution-oriented dialogue. Below are some ideas on how to get started.

- ✔ Engage stakeholders — especially school board members, principals, teachers, students, and families — in a discussion about safe and supportive school climate and discipline as an alternative to exclusionary discipline to generate enthusiasm for and commitment to reforming current systems and practices.
- ✔ Create and distribute engaging informational materials that publicize opportunities for stakeholder engagement in the district's school climate and discipline reform process (see the *Sample Postcard for Educators* and the *Sample Postcard for Parents and Families* in the "Federal Guidance and Related Resources" section at the end of this guide).
- ✔ Host community town-hall meetings to engage the broader public in discussions of the district's new vision for schools as it relates to school climate and discipline.

Action Item #2:
Collect, analyze, and make transparent school climate and discipline data.

Engage and challenge leadership teams to assess the results of their district's school climate and discipline systems and practices by collecting and analyzing both quantitative and qualitative data to determine the results and root causes of negative school climate and discipline outcomes. Work to engage whole school communities in both data collection and root cause analyses in order to build understanding, generate buy-in, and foster a collaborative spirit. Below are some ideas on how to get started.

✔ Engage in deliberate efforts to make school climate and discipline data comprehensible and accessible to families and community stakeholders, including a review of your district's CRDC data as a starting place and template for your own analyses:

- CRDC data can be found at http://ocrdata.ed.gov/.
- Engage stakeholders in data analysis (i.e., disaggregation of data by gender, race, disability, etc.).
- Host community meetings to share the findings from the data.

✔ Assess the extent to which school climate and discipline policies are clear, easy to understand, and available in a language-accessible manner, and ensure that all members of a school's community, including parents and families, have access to high-quality training on local school climate and discipline policies.

✔ Disseminate to schools the U.S. Department of Education's new school climate and discipline root cause analysis resource — *Addressing the Root Causes of Disciplinary Disparities: An Educator's Action Planning Guide* (See "Federal Guidance and Related Resources" at the end of this guide) — to help them determine the root causes of why certain infractions occur at significantly higher rates than others and what may be causing this high frequency.

✔ Conduct a school climate survey and engage stakeholders in regular reviews of quantitative and qualitative school climate and discipline data.

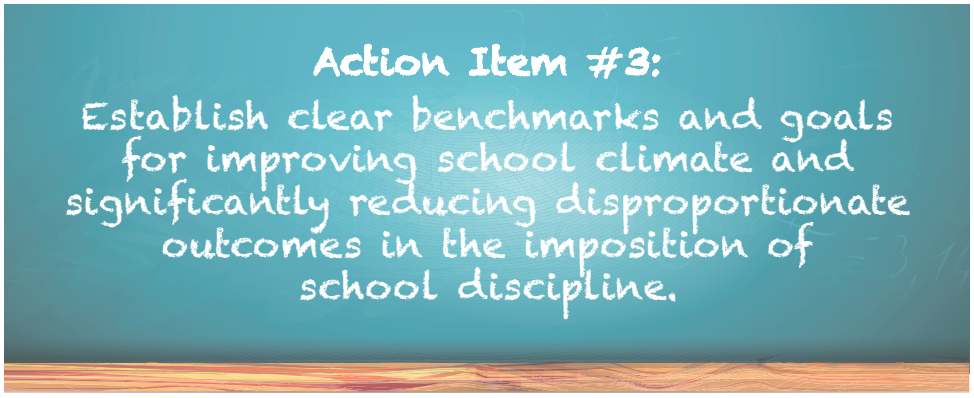
PROMISING PRACTICE FROM *The School Discipline Consensus Report*

Selecting a School Climate Survey Instrument

When selecting or creating a survey instrument to assess school climate, schools and districts should ensure that the survey

- ✔ includes questions related to disciplinary policies, student support and engagement, educator support, integration of prosocial skills into the school day, prevalence of bullying and harassment, and student and teacher victimization;
- ✔ solicits student, family, and school personnel responses;
- ✔ will yield reliable information (schools can draw from previously tested surveys as a starting point); and
- ✔ can be completed quickly (ideally in less than 20 minutes).

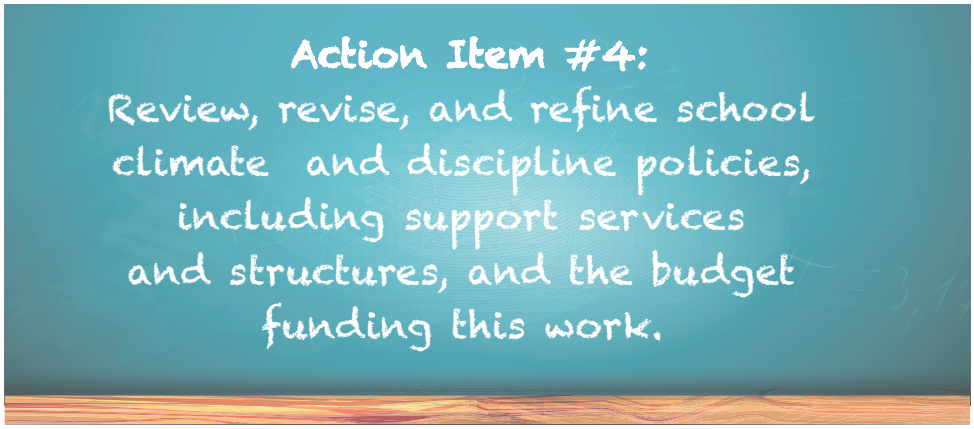
The School Discipline Consensus Report:Strategies from the Field to Keep Students Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System, p. 37



While every school's context and challenges are different, it should be supported to view itself as a part of a larger mission. Lead the establishment of clear, aggressive, yet practical benchmarks and goals for improving climate at every school while also significantly reducing the assignment of disproportionate, discriminatory discipline between groups of students. Moreover, you and your leadership team should work with schools to help them establish school-specific benchmarks that contribute to overall district improvement goals. Throughout this process, you should prioritize communication between the district and schools. Moreover, take care to allot sufficient time and resources to set meaningful outcome goals and drive better communication and sharing of promising practices among district and school-based staff. Below are some ideas on how to get started.

- ✔ Review the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice's January 2014 guidance on implementing safe and supportive school climate and discipline, including information on districts' and schools' legal responsibility to ensure nondiscriminatory implementation of school discipline policies.

- ✔ Engage community stakeholders in establishing short- and long-term district-wide goals to improve school climate and significantly reduce the assignment of disproportionate, discriminatory discipline between groups of students.
- ✔ In setting new benchmarks and goals, prioritize the use of evidence-based prevention strategies, such as tiered supports that promote positive student behavior, to build on existing efforts and past successes to help inspire confidence and improve efficacy among stakeholders.
- ✔ Incorporate the perspectives and wisdom of principals, teachers, other school staff, students, and families in the goal-setting process.



It is critically important that you and your leadership team work closely with school board members and school leaders to create and sustain effective school climate and discipline systems and practices based on district- and school-wide goals. This may necessitate the review, revision, and refinement of existing school climate and discipline policies. Stakeholders at every level of the system should be intimately involved in this process, and you should ensure that the process is inclusive and representative of the diversity of perspectives and experiences within the district and at individual schools. Below are some ideas on how to get started.

- ✔ Set high expectations for staff and student behavior, and adopt supportive, instructional, and therapeutic approaches to school climate and discipline that do not hinge on exclusionary discipline.
- ✔ Involve families, students, and school personnel in the development and implementation of school climate and discipline policies — especially codes of conduct — and communicate those policies regularly and clearly.
- ✔ Provide sufficient and consistent funding across the district and within every school to ensure the proper development, implementation, and improvement of school climate and discipline policies and practices.
- ✔ Create policies that include appropriate procedures for students with disabilities and due process for all students.
- ✔ Ensure that all policies are communicated in a language-accessible manner.

PROMISING PRACTICE FROM *The School Discipline Consensus Report*

Welcome Team: Rainier Beach High School,

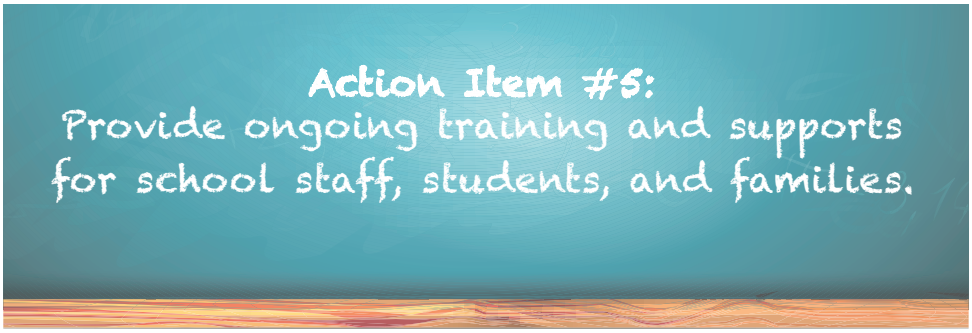
Seattle, WA

Each day, a handful of staff at Rainier Beach High School, a Title I school of approximately 400 students, spends the first period at the front entrance of the school greeting students who are tardy and helps them develop a plan for prompt arrival the next day. When students arrive late, a member of the team leads them through a short reflection exercise and discusses how to be on time regularly. Rather than being a punitive measure, the welcome team's response provides an opportunity for students to talk about the reasons for being late, particularly when it happens frequently, and to underscore for them the importance of punctuality. In addition to serving as a dropout prevention strategy, the process allows the welcome team to form positive relationships with students and can provide the first level of intervention if a student is experiencing problems, such as difficulties at home or on the way to school. The welcome team can help connect students with the services and supports they need.

Students spend an average of three to five minutes with the welcome team. After speaking with the student, welcome team members log the tardy and telephone parents or family members to let them know about the student's late arrival. If a student is chronically late five times within a two-week period, school administrators hold an in-depth conference with the student, welcome team members, and the parents/guardians. This often opens up communication and may help schools identify families in distress that could use additional school and social service supports.

Implemented for the first time in the 2012–13 school year, the program helped Rainier High School reduce tardiness. The school also gained valuable information about barriers to students arriving at school on time, such as public transportation cost and scheduling. The school even set up an automatic wake-up call for several students who said their morning alarms did not work.

The School Discipline Consensus Report:Strategies from the Field to Keep Students Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System, p. 48



Properly train and support central office staff, school staff, students, and families so they are successful in implementing and sustaining school climate and discipline reform. Your staff and school communities need time to learn and practice new policies, with ample opportunities to experience quick wins, reflect and learn from failure, and create sustainable progress. You can help ensure such community-wide improvement only through consistent and collaborative structures that bring people together for a common cause and elevate individual aspirations for a better future. You and your leadership team are responsible for establishing the district-wide conditions that will allow such structures to take root and flourish at individual schools. Below are some ideas on how to get started.

- ✔ Assess the effectiveness of existing training on school climate and discipline issues for administrators, teachers, staff, students, and families.
- ✔ Ensure regular training and supports for all school personnel — including teachers, principals, support staff, and school-based law enforcement officers — on how to engage students and support positive, productive behaviors.
- ✔ Ensure that school leaders are properly trained and supported to communicate and implement new school climate and discipline policies within their school communities in a collaborative manner.
- ✔ Ensure that any school-based law enforcement officers' roles focus on improving school safety and reducing inappropriate referrals to law enforcement.
- ✔ Collaborate with local mental health, child welfare, law enforcement, public housing, and juvenile justice agencies and other stakeholders to align resources, prevention strategies, and intervention services.

STATE-LEVEL SPOTLIGHT FROM *The School Discipline Consensus Report*

Connecticut School Climate Training

Connecticut has a history of prioritizing and providing school climate support to educators. In 2004, through the Connecticut Accountability for Learning Initiative, the state offered to educators in all districts free training related to several key priorities, including school climate improvement, providing culturally responsive education, and differentiated instruction for English Language Learners (ELLs). Currently, the Connecticut State Department of Education provides extensive statewide school climate training at no cost for educators and principals, with priority given to those working in schools with the greatest need. The seven days of training consist of the following three components:

1. **Two-day basic training seminar** focused on what school climate is, and why it is important, and strength-based models and effective strategies to establish a positive and respectful school climate.

2. **Three-day advanced certification training** to build the knowledge and skills of educators. This train-the-trainer model helps develop the capacity of educators to go back to their home schools and provide basic training and on-site technical assistance to other school staff.

3. **Two-day training for school climate committees.** As part of Connecticut's anti-bullying law, each school is required to establish a "safe school climate committee." This training helps committee members understand their roles and responsibilities, as well as providing them with examples of how to use school climate data to inform their improvement efforts.

For more information see
http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/cwp/view.asp?a=2618&q=321794.

The School Discipline Consensus Report:Strategies from the Field to Keep Students Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System, p. 94

Action Item #6:
Pilot reforms among early adopters, and then leverage lessons learned to inform and implement district-wide reforms.

Your capacity to implement sustainable practices at the district and school levels is key to ensuring improvements in school climate and discipline. It may be advantageous for you and your leadership team to pilot reforms among early adopters — school sites that demonstrate sufficient capacity and enthusiasm to test new policies and practices — whose experience can then be leveraged to inform broader implementation. Moreover, early adopters can serve as the ambassadors and mentors that your district will need to maintain momentum amidst challenging work. Learn from effective practitioners on the ground about what works best and what is sustainable. Below are some ideas on how to get started.

- ✔ Identify and engage early adopters in the development of school-based implementation plans and feedback loops that can inform district-wide reform efforts.
- ✔ Celebrate the successes and acknowledge the specific challenges among early adopters to lower the stakes for smart risk-taking that can drive sustainable improvements.
- ✔ Engage local research institutions, institutions of higher education, and philanthropies to support the investigation and analysis of the impact of early school climate and discipline reforms.
- ✔ Engage early adopters to support other schools and colleagues before, during, and after district-wide implementation efforts.

STATE-LEVEL SPOTLIGHT FROM *The School Discipline Consensus Report*

Restorative Practices in California

San Francisco Unified School District

In 2009, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) adopted district-wide policies to train and provide continuing professional development to staff on carrying out restorative practices. SFUSD has developed an implementation guide and supports school site leaders through a monthly professional learning community. Following the application of restorative practices, the district reported a reduction in suspensions from 3,098 suspensions issued in the 2009–10 school year to 1,921 in the 2012–13 school year.

Demonstrating its commitment to the approach, the local teachers union (United Educators of San Francisco) included restorative practices as part of its contract. In addition to stipulating that each school year start with a discussion about how restorative strategies can be used in the classroom, the contract also states that when a teacher recommends a student for suspension, the teacher and the school administrator have the option of discussing alternative responses that reflect a restorative approach.

Oakland Unified School District

In 2010, after a three-year pilot of restorative practices at an Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) middle school, the school board passed a resolution to adopt a district-wide policy of restorative practices in an effort to move away from punitive, zero-tolerance policies and eliminate racially disproportionate disciplinary outcomes. Through the restorative process, OUSD is working to integrate positive behavioral supports and social and emotional learning at participating sites. It also has been strengthening family engagement in issues related to school climate and discipline. The district reported a 46 percent decrease in out-of-school suspensions at one high school, and a nearly 50 percent decline in suspensions at a second high school, both for the 2011–12 school year during which they implemented restorative practices.

Fresno School District

In 2013, the Fresno Unified School Board voted to implement restorative practices in several schools and authorized $500,000 to expand the use of restorative practices in the district. Fresno Unified students, who created a youth advocacy group, Students United to Create a Climate of Engagement, Support and Safety (SUCCESS), are working with the district to develop the specifics of the plan, which will emphasize interactions among students and educators to repair relationships and help students learn from their mistakes.

The School Discipline Consensus Report:Strategies from the Field to Keep Students Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System, p. 83

Your leadership in improving school climate and discipline outcomes is essential to ensuring the success of American public education in the 21st century. This requires that you and your leadership team choose to engage school communities in an inclusive, democratic reform process that values the perspective and experience of every individual. Your district's commitment to transparency, communication, and continuous improvement signals respect for people and their values and aspirations for the future, without which sustainable change and improvement are not possible. Below are some ideas on how to get started.

- ✔ Gather input from families, students, teachers, and school personnel to continue to improve school climate and prevent, identify, reduce, and eliminate discriminatory discipline and negative unintended consequences.
- ✔ Incorporate the public reporting of school climate and discipline data into district improvement plans and ensure a regular place for discussion of these issues at school board meetings and community town halls.
- ✔ Communicate deliberately and consistently with schools, students, and families about progress and challenges to meeting district-wide benchmarks and goals for improving school climate and discipline.

Federal Guidance and Related Resources

The following information is provided as background on federal guidance and related resources that are available to support local school climate and discipline reform and improvement efforts. It can be utilized to help develop the capacity of individual school districts to manage this challenging but hugely important work.

U.S. Department of Education School Climate and Discipline Web Page

www.ed.gov/school-discipline

This Web page includes information related to

- expulsion and suspension practices in early learning settings
- ED-DOJ School Discipline Guidance Package
- school climate and discipline tools and technical assistance, including ED's new school climate and discipline root cause analysis resource — *Addressing the Root Causes of Disciplinary Disparities: An Educator's Action Planning Guide*
- Supportive School Discipline Webinar Series

U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection Web Page

The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) collects data on key education and civil rights issues in our nation's public schools for use by the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) in its enforcement and monitoring efforts regarding schools' and districts' obligation to provide equal educational opportunity. The CRDC database, with hundreds of data elements, is fully accessible to the public. All data presented are self-reported by school districts.

- CRDC 2009–10 and 2011–12 District or School Reports
  http://ocrdata.ed.gov/DistrictSchoolSearch
- Civil Rights Data Collection: Data Snapshot (School Discipline), March 2014
  http://ocrdata.ed.gov/Downloads/CRDC-School-Discipline-Snapshot.pdf
- For more information about the CRDC, please visit http://ocrdata.ed.gov

School Discipline Consensus Report, Council of State Governments Justice Center

The School Discipline Consensus Report: Strategies from the Field to Keep Students Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System presents a comprehensive set of consensus-based and field-driven recommendations to improve conditions for learning for all students and educators, better support students with behavioral needs, improve police-school partnerships, and keep students out of the juvenile justice system for minor offenses. More than 100 advisors representing policymakers, school administrators, teachers, behavioral health professionals, police, court leaders, probation officials, juvenile correctional leaders, parents, and youths from across the country helped develop more than two dozen policies and 60 recommendations to keep more students in productive classrooms and out of courtrooms.

- *The School Discipline Consensus Report*
  http://csgjusticecenter.org/youth/school-discipline-consensus-report/

LEA or School Logo

LEA or School Name

Creating safe, supportive environments where all students can engage in learning is a shared responsibility, and we need your help.

As an educator, you should know that positive school climate is associated with better outcomes for students, including limited incidences of school violence; increased feelings of safety by students, faculty, and staff; high academic achievement; minimal engagement in risky behavior, including alcohol and substance abuse; high levels of student engagement and self-discipline; strong attachment to school and positive student relationships with adults and peers; and higher levels of staff satisfaction, involvement, and investment.

The following is a brief list of possible actions you can to take to help improve school climate and discipline:

- **Model appropriate behavior.** All children can exhibit appropriate behavior if expectations, rules, and routines are positively stated, easy to remember, and appropriate for the environment.
- **Intervene early**. Intervene before challenging behaviors occur to make them more manageable and less likely to escalate.
- **Differentiate your approach**. Just as it is good practice to differentiate instruction to meet the individual needs of students, so too is it important to use a diverse range of supportive strategies with students.
- **Use research- and evidence-based interventions proven to be effective**. When teachers incorporate research- and evidence-based interventions that have been validated for the purpose and population for which they will be used, teachers are more successful.
- **Data should drive decision making**. Use existing data collection systems to monitor students' engagement and behavior so that interventions can be developed and deployed efficaciously. Student progress should be monitored frequently and adjustments made to maximize the impact of supportive interventions to improve climate and discipline.
- **Regularly engage the student's family.** Parent and family engagement, participation, and partnership are essential components of ensuring positive outcomes for all students.

How to Contact Your District's School Climate and Discipline Improvement Team

Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Website:

Know the facts about school climate and discipline.

Research clearly shows that discipline policies and practices that remove students from engaging in instruction — such as suspensions, expulsions, and inappropriate referrals to law enforcement — generally fail to help students to improve their behavior and fail to improve school safety. Data from the U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) show the following:

- African-American students are three times more likely than their white peers to be expelled or suspended.
- Although African-American students represent 16 percent of the public school student population, they make up 33 percent of students suspended once, 42 percent of those suspended more than once, and 34 percent of students expelled.
- African-American and Latino students make up 40 percent of the student population, but over 50 percent of the students referred to law enforcement or involved in school-related arrests.
- Black girls are suspended at higher rates (12 percent) than girls of any other race or ethnicity and most boys; American Indian and Alaska Native girls are suspended at higher rates (7 percent) than white boys (6 percent) or girls (2 percent).
- Racial disparities in out-of-school suspensions also start early; black children represent 18 percent of preschool enrollment but 48 percent of the preschool children suspended more than once.
- Although students served by the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* (*IDEA*) represent 12 percent of students in the country, they are more than twice as likely to receive one or more out-of-school suspensions as non-*IDEA* students (13 percent versus 6 percent), and they make up 25 percent of students referred to law enforcement and 25 percent of students who are the subject of a school-related arrest.
- Students with disabilities (under the *IDEA*) represent 12 percent of students but nearly 75 percent of the students who are physically restrained in their schools.

Additionally, research has found that the overwhelming majority of suspensions are determined at the discretion of local school officials and not mandated by state law or policy.

Creating and sustaining schools with a safe, supportive school climate and discipline are challenging, complex, and absolutely essential to improving students' connection to school and helping them to achieve

- higher academic achievement and graduation rates;
- better school attendance;
- increased motivation and better self-esteem;
- lower rates of suspension;
- decreased use of drugs and alcohol; and
- fewer instances of violent behavior.

Learn more about the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice Resources on Improving School Climate and Discipline at

www.ed.gov/school-discipline

LEA or School Logo

LEA or School Name

Creating safe, supportive environments where all students can engage in learning is a shared responsibility, and we need your help.

As a parent or family member of our school community, you should know that positive school climate is associated with better outcomes for students, including limited incidences of school violence; increased feelings of safety by students, faculty, and staff; high academic achievement; minimal engagement in risky behaviors, including alcohol and substance abuse; high levels of student engagement and self-discipline; strong attachment to school; and positive student relationships with adults and peers. **Your engagement, participation, and partnership are essential components of ensuring positive outcomes for your child in school.**

The following is a brief list of what you can do to help your child's school ensure a positive school climate and discipline:

- Make sure you and your child read and understand the school's code of conduct and student and family handbook.
- Communicate the high expectations you have, both academically and behaviorally, to your child and to his or her school principal, teachers, and staff.
- Contact your school's climate and discipline improvement team and seek ways to get involved in your child's school. Your engagement will help the school build a safer and more supportive school climate for your child.
- Become aware of school counselors, parent-school liaisons, or others who might be able to help you resolve any discipline matters concerning your child.

How to Contact Your District's School Climate and Discipline Improvement Team

Contact:

Phone:

Email:

Website:

The Impact of Parent and Family Engagement on Student Success

You are part of your child's school community!

Decades of research and experience show that when parents are involved in their children's education, students have

- higher academic achievement and graduation rates;
- better school attendance;
- increased motivation and better self-esteem;
- lower rates of suspension;
- decreased use of drugs and alcohol; and
- fewer instances of violent behavior.

When parents engage their children's school regularly, it reinforces the view in the child's mind that school and home are connected, and that school is an integral part of the whole family's life. Get involved today!

Include a photo of, for example. a parent-teacher-student conference.

Learn more about the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice Resources on Improving School Climate and Discipline at

www.ed.gov/school-discipline

Endnotes

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