

**The Impact of Suspensions
of Minority Students and the
Effect on the
College Career Readiness
Performance Index**

***What Are Leaders To Do
About Disproportionality?***



Investigations of student behavior, race, and discipline have consistently failed to find evidence of differences in either the frequency or intensity of African American students' school behavior sufficient to account for differences in rates of school discipline (Donovan & Cross, 2002).

[A Brief Overview of the Presenting Problem](#)

For over 25 years in national-level, state-level, district-level, and building-level data, students of color have been found to be suspended at rates two and three times that of other students, and similarly overrepresented in office referrals, corporal punishment, and school expulsion (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002). Not only is this a glaring disparity, but these students of color are often suspended for trivial infractions. Skiba et al. (2002) compared the types of infractions for which African American and White middle school students in a large urban district were referred to the office and found no obvious differences in the severity of behavior. In fact, African American

students tended to be referred to the office more often for ambiguous offenses, such as *disrespect* or *loitering*. This special report will address the impact that these disproportionate suspension rates have on the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI), the new accountability system that incentivizes student performance across a number of academic and behavioral areas.

A Longstanding History of Inequitable Treatment

The Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown vs. The Board of Education* in 1954 set the nation on a trajectory toward equalizing educational opportunities for all children (Skiba, 2009). Although it would be ideal to factually assert that both educational opportunities and disciplinary actions have been equalized across gender, race, and socioeconomic status as a result of this ruling, this is not necessarily the case.

Through the 1960s, corporal punishment was the most prevalent form of intervention in schools across the country and African American students

were frequently subjected to these harsh disciplinary measures even when less obtrusive alternatives were made available (Gregory, 1996). However, physical punishments began to lose favor with the general public and out of school suspension eventually became the most common administrative response to student disciplinary infractions (Skiba, Eckes, & Brown, 2009).



The Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown vs. The Board of Education* in 1954 set the nation on a trajectory toward equalizing educational opportunities for all children (Skiba, 2009). Nearly 60 years later, we are still striving to achieve this goal.



In one of the earliest investigations of school disciplinary practices, the Children's Defense Fund (1975) found that suspension rates for African American students were between two and three times higher than those for White students.

Racial disproportionality in school suspensions increased significantly as schools first became desegregated and it is suggested that this inequity within disciplinary actions occurred as a result of the mounting conflict within newly integrated schools (Larkin, 1979; Thornton & Trent, 1988). In one of the earliest investigations of school disciplinary practices, the Children's Defense Fund (1975) found that suspension rates

for African American students were between two and three times higher than those for White students. Similarly disturbing are the findings of Taylor and Foster (1986) who reported a consistent ordering in the likelihood of suspension from most to least: black males, white males, black females, white females at both the junior and senior high school levels. Press fast forward to travel through the decades and one will discover over 30 years of additional research that documents racial and socioeconomic disparities in the use of out of school suspensions and expulsions (Skiba, 2011).

Causes for Racial Disproportionality Among Disciplinary Practices and Implications for the CCRPI

Given the consistency of the findings of minority overrepresentation across a number of measures of school discipline, it is surprising that relatively few research studies have sought to provide explanations for this disparity (Skiba, 2000).

Although some experts might surmise that disproportionality in discipline among students of color may in fact be a response to greater disruptive behavior among those students (Skiba,

2000), investigations of student behavior, race, and discipline have consistently failed to find evidence of differences in either the frequency or intensity of African American students' school behavior sufficient to account for differences in rates of school discipline (Donovan & Cross, 2002). However, these same investigations have revealed that not only is there an overrepresentation of African American males in school disciplinary sanctions, but a cultural mismatch exists in many schools due to a teaching force in most school districts in this nation that is primarily comprised of White females (Zumwalt & Craig, 2005).

What are some of the problems that can arise as a result of a cultural mismatch? Townsend (2000) suggested that the unfamiliarity of White teachers with the interactional patterns that characterize many African American males may cause these teachers to mistakenly interpret impassioned or emotive interactions as combative and/or argumentative. The combination of their behavioral misinterpretations coupled with their inclination to rate African American males as having more extensive behavior problems (Pigott



& Cowen, 2000) often compels White teachers to recommend that African American males be subjected to harsher disciplinary practices, despite the fact that more appropriate alternatives are often available.

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However, teachers and administrators are strongly encouraged to consider appropriate alternatives to out of school suspension for these African American males to avoid negatively impacting their school's performance on the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI).



If a school's student body consists of a significant percentage of African American males and those males are suspended at disproportionately higher rates than their White classmates, these African American males miss a considerable amount of valuable instructional time and suspended students just fall farther behind in academic work (Barge, 2013).

The College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) is the new accountability system that has replaced the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) measurement. It measures schools and school districts on an easy-to-understand 100-point scale and it is designed to help parents and stakeholders thoroughly understand how schools are performing in a more

comprehensive manner than the pass/fail system previously in place under AYP. In 2013-2014, schools will receive ratings based on their school climate (which is directly affected by disciplinary practices within the school) and favorable ratings will be essential. Schools are preparing for the transition to Common Core, the CCRPI and other standards and assessments, but it will be virtually impossible to realize significant gains in scores and ratings without addressing student needs and improving conditions for learning.

If a school's student body consists of a significant percentage of African American males and those males are suspended at disproportionately higher rates than their White classmates, these African American males miss a considerable amount of valuable instructional time and suspended students just fall farther behind in academic work (Barge, 2013); thus, endangering their scores on end-of-course tests.

These end-of-course tests not only affect the CCRPI, but these tests also affect the graduation rate, another critical component of the CCRPI. Unfortunately, since schools with the highest

suspension rates also have the lowest graduation rates (Barge, 2013), it would behoove teachers and administrators to consider alternatives to the traditional option of out of school suspension for African American males in an effort to improve the quality of the education they receive while ensuring that the school's CCRPI score truly reflects the school's performance across the categories. Although there is a clear consensus that schools have a responsibility to use all effective strategies to promote safety and an effective instructional environment, research has

consistently failed to find that suspension and expulsion are among those effective strategies (Skiba, 2009).

If a school's administrative team is in need of effective alternatives to out of school suspensions, particularly for the African American males within the student body, The Education Company is equipped to provide the training and the solutions necessary for solving even the most pressing discipline concerns.



How The Education Company Can Help

The Education Company, a company founded over 27 years ago by school administrators who were searching for solutions within their own schools, provides professional development for school teachers and administrators. The company is comprised of professionals who are dedicated to helping other administrators find, implement, and maintain successful solutions to their school's most pressing challenges and concerns. For the administrators who would like to bridge the "discipline gap", which is defined as the disproportionate representation of African American students for school discipline – specifically in the area of suspensions, expulsions, and office referrals (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010), The Education Company is prepared to provide professional development specifically in the areas of classroom management and school discipline to reduce office referrals by as much as 85%.

The Education Company's workshop topics such as "Teacher Responses" and "Communicating with Students" through role play can help the teachers who may misinterpret the African American male student's culturally specific behavior in an effort to ultimately reduce and eventually eliminate the need for incessant office referrals. Our consultants are also equipped and experienced in many areas of instructional leadership and school improvement.

The Education Company's team of consultants works with over 100 large and small ethnically diversified schools annually in urban, suburban and rural areas. Since the inception, they have had the privilege of working with over 2,352 schools in rural, urban, and suburban districts. The Education Company will work diligently to help to create a systematic approach to disciplinary procedures in order to ensure that consequences are the same for every student's infractions, regardless of their race, gender, or socioeconomic status; thus, creating a school climate that is conducive to academic achievement.

The Education Company

For more information, visit: www.educationcompany.com

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