

Newsletter

A

Program of the Lawyers'
Committee for Civil
Rights Under Law



SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

RAISING QUESTIONS ON DISCRIMINATION

In the past two decades, we have witnessed a widespread reliance on suspensions and expulsions for students' disruptive classroom behavior. Findings indicate that exclusionary school disciplinary policies can negatively affect the outcomes for students involved in disciplinary procedures. According to the U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection for the 2015-16 school year, Black students and students with disabilities were disproportionately disciplined in K-12 public schools. For instance, while Black students accounted for 15.5% of all public school students they represented about 39% of students suspended from school. Similarly, 26% of students with disabilities (under IDEA) received one or more out-of-school suspensions. However, they only accounted for 12% of overall student enrollment. These disparities were widespread and persisted regardless of the type of disciplinary action, level of school poverty, or type of public school attended.

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CONSEQUENCES

Students who are suspended and/or expelled, especially those who are repeatedly disciplined, are more likely to repeat a grade or drop out of school compared to students not involved in the disciplinary system. Students expelled or suspended also have a significantly higher likelihood of being involved in the juvenile justice system. Moreover, students who are repeatedly referred to out-of-school suspension lose a significant amount of instructional time. This places students who are already likely to be disengaged from school, at higher risk for falling behind in school. Consequently, this results in the students' decreased earning potential and adds costs to society, such as incarceration and lost tax revenue.





CONSIDERING NEW APPROACHES

The life and future careers of Black students and students with disabilities are further diminished by what should be a system that focuses on their educational success. Given these findings, we encourage parents, teachers, and stakeholders to invest in action-based approaches. For example, implementing restorative practices such as narrative therapy. The narrative therapy approach separates the individual from the behavior, allowing the student to analyze and understand their actions as external

attributes rather than unchangeable characteristics of their personality or identity. Students are able to develop patience and the ability to reflect on their thoughts, actions and feelings.

In considering new approaches for school discipline, school districts described a range of issues, such as the effects of poverty and mental health issues. School officials have described a growing trend of behavioral challenges related to mental health and trauma. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution for the issues that influence student behavior, in 2014, the Obama administration Department of Education and Justice announced the release of a school discipline guidance package to address inequities in school discipline. Furthermore, school districts are implementing alternatives to disciplinary actions that remove children from the classroom, such as initiatives that promote positive behavioral expectations for students.



Often, students who are not engaged in learning or who are falling behind their peers in school mask their academic or social needs through their challenging behavior. The approach helps teachers assess the source of the students' problems which can include learning difficulties, and environmental such as home life, bullying, etc. Restorative practices can strengthen student-teacher and student-parent relationships which can help keep students out of trouble and ultimately out of the juvenile justice system.



HERE'S WHAT PREP CAN DO FOR YOU!

Do you have questions your child's school discipline, special education, English language learners, and bullying or discrimination related issues?

Sign up to speak with a volunteer attorney:



DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS



NATASHA QUIROGA
PREP DIRECTOR & SENIOR COUNSEL
EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES
PROJECT

When considering school discipline, the educational opportunities of many children are at stake. PREP is committed to improving education outcomes for all students and ensuring that parents are informed about their child's educational rights. School discipline and special education are significantly important to PREP. Serious racial inequities persist in schools, thus, an urgent need to address discrimination that has deep and often overlooked historical roots. The same goes for students with disabilities, who receive a lot more support and services when they are in school. However, they lose out on such resources when they miss school due to suspension.

We encourage parents and teacher to extend a hand in helping motivate students at school and to continue advocating for educational equity. In addition, we do our best to help parents advocate for their child's education by providing advice and useful resources, like helping parents learn more about their state's discipline policies. Our resources range from online webinars/tutorials to our e-clinic, where volunteer attorneys offer parents advice. Regardless of the way students learn or the circumstances that affect their behavior, students deserve equitable educational opportunities and PREP is here to help!



PREP RESOURCES

NOW PLAYING...

VIDEO TUTORIALS

- ▶ Parent Advocacy
- ▶ Navigating the School System
- ▶ Special Education
- ▶ English Learners

SUBSCRIBE:

www.youtube.com/prepparents

STATE-SPECIFIC PARENT GUIDES

- ▶ On education law and policies

www.prepparents.org/resources/for-parents/

RECORDED WEBINARS

- ▶ Parent Advocacy
- ▶ Mobilization
- ▶ Special Education Process
- ▶ School Discipline
- ▶ Bullying

www.prepparents.org/webinar

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BASICS OF SCHOOL BOARD ADVOCACY
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