

Suspended Progress: The Harms of Suspension & Expulsion

This Appendix provides additional information about the harms of suspension and expulsion in the form of quotes from a variety of organizations that represent a variety of perspectives and interests.

Federal Government

“Studies have suggested a correlation between exclusionary discipline policies and practices and an array of serious educational, economic, and social problems.” – U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, *Dear Colleague Letter on the Nondiscriminatory Administration of School Discipline* (Jan. 8, 2014)

“High rates of suspensions in schools have been related to lower school-wide academic achievement and standardized test scores. In addition, schools and communities bear the increased direct and indirect costs associated with grade retention and dropouts.” – U.S. Department of Education, *Guiding Principles: A Resource for Improving School Climate and Discipline* (Jan. 2014)

“Suspension and expulsion can influence a number of adverse outcomes across development, health, and education. Young students who are expelled or suspended are as much as 10 times more likely to drop out of high school, experience academic failure and grade retention, hold negative school attitudes, and face incarceration than those who are not. While much of this research has focused on expulsion and suspension in elementary, middle, and high school settings, there is evidence that expulsion or suspension early in a child’s education is associated with expulsion or suspension in later school grades. Not only do these practices have the potential to hinder social-emotional and behavioral development, they also remove children from early learning environments and the corresponding cognitively enriching experiences that contribute to healthy development and academic success later in life. Expulsion and suspension practices may also delay or interfere with the process of identifying and addressing underlying issues, which may include disabilities or mental health issues. Some of these children may have undiagnosed disabilities or behavioral health issues and may be eligible for additional services, but in simply being expelled, they may not receive the evaluations or referrals they need to obtain services. For example, the source of challenging behavior may be communication and language difficulties, skills that can be improved through early assessment and intervention services. In these cases, appropriate evaluation and follow-up services are critical, but less likely if the child is expelled from the system. Finally, expulsions may contribute to increased family stress and burden. In many cases, families of children who are expelled do not receive assistance in identifying an alternative placement, leaving the burden of finding another program entirely to the family. There may be challenges accessing another program, particularly an affordable high-quality program. Even in cases where assistance is offered, often there is a lapse in service which leaves families, especially working families, in difficult situations.” – U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and U.S. Department of Education, *Policy Statement on Expulsion and Suspension Policies in Early Childhood Settings* (Dec. 10, 2014)

“School suspension and expulsion can influence a number of outcomes across developmental domains, health and education. For example, students who are expelled or suspended are up to 10 times more likely to drop out of high school.” – My Brother’s Keeper Task Force, *Report to the President* (May 2014)

“We’ve seen time and again that school districts with high out-of-school suspension rates also tend to have lower-than-average graduation rates. We’ve seen that severe discipline policies often increase the numbers of suspensions and expulsions without effectively making schools safer or creating better learning environments. And we’ve seen that the impacts of exclusionary policies are not felt equally in every segment of the population – with students of color and those with disabilities often receiving different and more severe punishments than their peers.” – Eric Holder, now former U.S. Attorney General, *Remarks at the U.S. Department of Justice and U.S. Department of Education School Discipline Guidance Rollout at Frederick Douglass High School in Baltimore, Maryland* (Jan. 8, 2014)

“The need to rethink and redesign school discipline practices is frankly long overdue.” – Arne Duncan, now former U.S. Secretary of Education, *Holder, Duncan Announce National Guidelines on School Discipline*, The Washington Post (Jan. 8, 2014)

Virginia Department of Education

“Today, principals and other school personnel recognize that traditional disciplinary practices often do not result in the desired outcome, especially for students with more challenging behavior problems. Indeed, there is mounting evidence that imposing negative consequences for unacceptable behavior can increase antisocial acts, school vandalism, tardiness and truancy, and the dropout rate, all of which school officials are working hard to eliminate. For example, the common practice of suspension provides little more than a brief respite from the immediacy of a student’s academic or behavior problems. As most principals can attest, a student rarely returns to school with a more positive attitude or increased enthusiasm toward learning. In fact, with each suspension, the probability increases that the student will fall further behind academically, which only serves to trigger more misbehavior to escape further classroom frustration or failure. It follows that there must be a better way to deal with students who behave inappropriately.” – *An Introduction to Effective Schoolwide Discipline in Virginia* (2009)

“Research indicates that excessive use of exclusionary discipline has a negative impact on the learning environment, student achievement, graduation rates, and rates of juvenile crime and delinquency.” – Steven Staples, Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Superintendent’s Memo #277-15* (Nov. 13, 2015)

American Academy of Pediatrics

“[S]chools with higher rates of out-of-school suspension and expulsion are not safer for students or faculty ... [R]esearch indicates a negative relationship between the use of suspension and expulsion and school-wide academic achievement, even when controlling for demographics such as socioeconomic status. In other words, aggressive out-of-school suspension and expulsion policies may not only hurt those against whom they are applied but may also paradoxically hurt those students the policies were supposedly designed to protect and help ... [O]ut-of-school suspension and expulsion that are used too readily are ineffective deterrents to inappropriate behavior and are harmful and counterproductive to the student, the family, the school district, and the community as a whole, both short- and long-term.” – *Policy Statement: Out-of-School Suspension and Expulsion* (Mar. 2013)

American Psychological Association

“[S]chools with higher rates of school suspension and expulsion appear to have less satisfactory ratings of school climate, to have less satisfactory school governance structures, and to spend a disproportionate amount of time on disciplinary matters. Perhaps more important, recent research indicates a negative relationship between the use of school suspension and expulsion and school-wide academic achievement, even when controlling for demographics such as socioeconomic status[.]” – *Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in Schools?: An Evidentiary Review and Recommendations* (Dec. 2008)

National Education Association

“A suspension can be life altering. It is the number-one predictor – more than poverty – of whether children will drop out of school, and walk down a road that includes greater likelihood of unemployment, reliance on social-welfare programs, and imprisonment.” – *The School-to-Prison Pipeline: Time to Shut It Down*, neaToday (Jan. 5, 2015)

“Far too many of our most vulnerable students are excluded from class for minor, non-violent behavior, which puts them at great risk for academic failure, dropping out, and an unnecessary journey down the school to prison pipeline.” – Dennis Van Roekel, former President, *Let's Stop the School-to-Prison Pipeline* (Mar. 13, 2014)

American Federation of Teachers

“Often students return even further behind than they were, and they have little or no support to catch up. Also, during a removal from school, students often engage in even more negative behavior, which results in contact with law enforcement and the juvenile justice system. Once a youth has had contact with law enforcement or has been placed into a juvenile justice facility, the stigma cannot be erased; this sets the trajectory for ongoing negative and disruptive contact with school personnel, law enforcement, peers and families. Suspensions are also a predictor of students’ risk for dropping out. New research has shown that even a single suspension increases the likelihood of low achievement and of dropping out of school altogether.” – [Reclaiming the Promise: A New Path Forward on School Discipline Practices](#)

National School Boards Association

“Suspensions are also a predictor of a student’s risk for dropping out. As such, beyond the moral consequences of these policies, we must also consider the economic consequences ... The number of students missing instructional time highlights an urgent need to significantly decrease, if not eliminate, the use of out-of-school suspensions.” – [Addressing the Out-of-School Suspension Crisis: A Policy Guide for School Board Members \(Apr. 2013\)](#)

National Parent Teacher Association

“National PTA supports positive school discipline policies that keep children in school and learning over exclusionary discipline policies (suspension and expulsion) that tends to exacerbate a child’s behavior problems by pushing students out of the place (school) created to support them and keep them safe ... National PTA believes that exclusionary discipline practices should only be used in schools as a last resort effort to preserve the safety of students and staff ... Overly punitive discipline policies ... are not effective in addressing or improving student behavior. Rather, recent research has revealed that such policies contribute to a host of negative consequences including an increase in problem behavior and engagement in risky and dangerous behavior, a less positive school climate, decreased academic achievement, increased risk of dropout and involvement in the juvenile justice system.” – [Position Statement: Positive School Discipline \(Jan. 21, 2016\)](#)

American Association of School Administrators/School Superintendents Association

“Suspensions and expulsions often disengage and disconnect students from school, feed students into the juvenile system and criminalize children at increasingly younger ages: instigating a Cradle to Prison Pipeline. Harsh and punitive policies, including zero tolerance and the overuse of suspension and expulsion, can devastate the lives of children.” – [School Discipline: Dismantle the Pre-K to Prison Pipeline](#)

National Association of School Psychologists

“Suspension and expulsion may set individuals who already display antisocial behavior on an accelerated course to delinquency by putting them in a situation in which there is a lack of parental supervision and a greater opportunity to socialize with other deviant peers. Further, expulsion results in the denial of educational services, presenting specific legal as well as ethical dilemmas for student with disabilities. Finally, there is no evidence that removing students from school makes a positive contribution to school safety.” – [Zero Tolerance and Alternative Strategies: A Fact Sheet for Educators and Policymakers \(2001\)](#)