

## **Alternative to Suspension Fact Sheet: Outcomes of Out-of School Suspension**

### **The Myth of Effectiveness**

Evidence from many studies suggests that out-of-school suspension is not effective in deterring behavior problems and is linked to harmful effects on schools and youth. Data shows that students who are suspended are more likely to engage in misbehavior in the future (Raffaele-Mendez, 2003; Tobin, Sugai, and Colvin, 1996). Suspending students who engage in problem behaviors does not identify or address the students' underlying problems; instead, it prevents the student from receiving instruction and obtaining school support services (Townsend, 2000).

### ***Negative outcomes for youth who are suspended***

- Higher rates of misbehavior (Raffaele-Mendez, 2003; Tobin, et al., 1996).
- Lower academic achievement (APA, 2008).
- Drop-out and school failure (Brooks, Schiraldi, and Ziegenberg, 2000).
- Restricted access to school services such as counseling (Townsend, 2000).
- Increased likelihood to smoke and use alcohol and drugs (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1994)
- Feeling unwelcome at school (Civil Rights Project, 2000).
- Harm to healthy adult relationships (APA, 2008).
- Unsupervised time and increased opportunity for delinquency (Advancement Project, 2005).

### ***Negative outcomes for schools***

- Lower academic achievement (APA, 2008).
- Lower scores on standardized assessments, regardless of economic level and student demographics (Skiba and Rausch, 2006).
- Diminished relationships with families and communities (DeRidder, 1991).
- Loss of average daily attendance (ADA) funding (Skiba and Knesting, 2001).
- Lower ratings of school governance (Skiba and Rausch, 2006).

### **Suspension Use in Minnesota Public Schools**

In 2012-2013, 84 percent of all disciplinary actions taken by school administrators in Minnesota public schools were out-of-school suspensions, resulting in 45,964 suspensions and 109,495 missed instructional days. The majority of suspensions were for behaviors that did not endanger others, with less than three percent involving weapons and only 33 percent involving a victim. The top suspension incident type was disruptive/disorderly conduct/insubordination. Of the 54,312 reported offenders, 869 were kindergarteners. Attendance was the reason for 1,953 suspensions, likely exacerbating the problem of poor attendance. Proponents of out-of-school suspensions believe that suspending a student from school will deter future behavior problems. Research evidence contradicts these beliefs.

### **Minnesota Demographic Data on Students Who are Suspended**

In Minnesota, 50 percent of students who were suspended during the 2012-2013 school year had an Individualized Education Program (IEP) when only 15 percent of students have an IEP. State data continues to show disproportionate minority representation in disciplinary incidents for American Indian, Black, and Hispanic students. This is consistent with research that shows

that suspension is often used with students who least can afford to miss school. Students who are more likely to be suspended are:

- Black, Non-Hispanic; American Indian; and Hispanic.
- Male.
- Low-achieving (Arcia, 2006).
- Identified as having a disability.
- From low socioeconomic status (SES) families.

Disparities by race are not entirely due to economic status (Skiba, 2002). There is no evidence that African American students engage in higher rates of misbehavior (Skiba, 2002). Rather, African American students may be disciplined more severely for less serious or more subjective reasons (Skiba, 2002). Inadequate teacher training in classroom management and in culturally competent practices may be a factor in the disproportionality of discipline (APA, 2008).

### **How can we decrease out-of-school suspensions while maintaining a safe learning environment?**

Decreasing suspensions requires a proactive, preventative, multi-tiered approach to supporting student behavior. One framework with evidence of effectiveness is Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). [See the Alternatives-to-Suspension Fact Sheets on the Minnesota Department of Education website](#) for more information.

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