

REALIZING THE FULL VISION OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE REFORM: A FRAMEWORK FOR STATEWIDE CHANGE

Introduction

A national movement has developed in recent years to reduce the high rates at which students are suspended and expelled from school. The origins of this movement can be traced to intensive grassroots efforts led by students and parents. Groundbreaking studies such as [*Breaking Schools' Rules: A Statewide Study on How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement*](#)¹ and analysis of the [U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Data Collection](#)² have added the support of rigorous research to these voices. These reports, among others, confirmed that significant numbers of students—particularly youth of color—were being removed from school for disciplinary reasons, and that these removals were having long-lasting negative impacts on student outcomes, including increasing the likelihood that a student drops out of school or becomes involved in the juvenile justice system.

As a result, states and school districts have started to rethink their approaches to school discipline. In just the past five years, more than half of states in the U.S. have introduced or passed legislation to limit the use of suspensions and expulsions, and hundreds of individual schools and districts have implemented strategies that provide alternatives to disciplinary removals from the classroom. As a result of these collective efforts, rates of disciplinary removal have started to decline, most notably with respect to out-of-school suspensions, which dropped nearly 20 percent nationally between the 2011–12 and 2013–14 school years.³ In select states these reductions have been even more dramatic.

Despite this progress, challenges remain. Few, if any, states have been able to reduce persistent disparities in disciplinary removals for certain populations, particularly youth of color and students with disabilities. At the same time, teachers and parents increasingly argue that efforts to limit suspensions have led to more disruptions in the classroom, undermining teachers' ability to teach and students' ability to learn. These challenges demonstrate that states have yet to realize what is widely accepted to be the full vision of school discipline reform—where reductions in suspensions are accompanied by welcoming and engaging learning environments that lead to successful student outcomes.

In 2017, The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center convened policymakers and education leaders from five states—California, Connecticut, Illinois, North Carolina, and Tennessee—that have seen success in reducing suspensions and expulsions to identify the strategies they used to achieve these successes, and to determine how similar approaches could be adopted in other states seeking to achieve comprehensive school discipline reform.

The five states convened by the CSG Justice Center and highlighted in this report represent a diverse cross-section of regions of the country, varying student population sizes and compositions, and unique education system structures, and are at different stages of reform. As such, the strategies they used to facilitate these reforms are instructive both for states looking to advance further reforms and for states that have just started their reform efforts.

This report first describes the framework that all five featured states used to advance their statewide school discipline reform efforts, and provides corresponding examples of state-specific strategies that have been successful in limiting the use of out-of-school suspension. The second section of the report provides recommendations to help all states apply this framework further in order to realize the full vision of school discipline reform.

Out-of-School Suspension Trends in Five Leading States

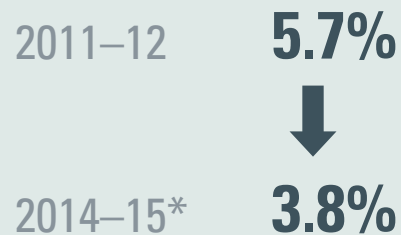
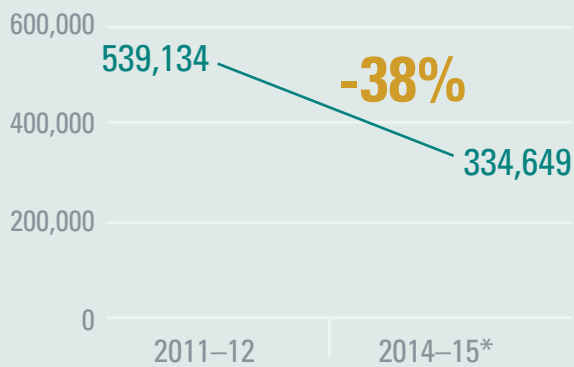
Total Out-of-School Suspensions by State

(Unduplicated number of out-of-school suspensions for all students in a given school year)

Change in Suspension Rate

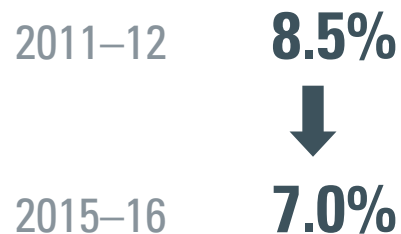
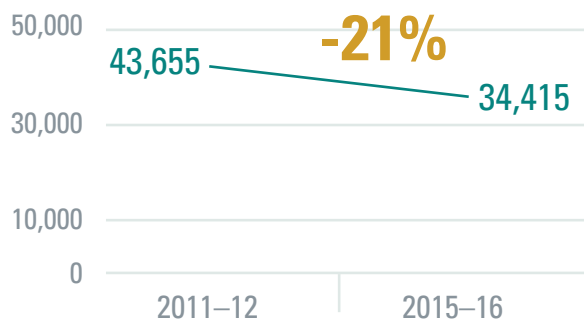
(Proportion of students suspended one or more times compared to overall student enrollment)

CALIFORNIA

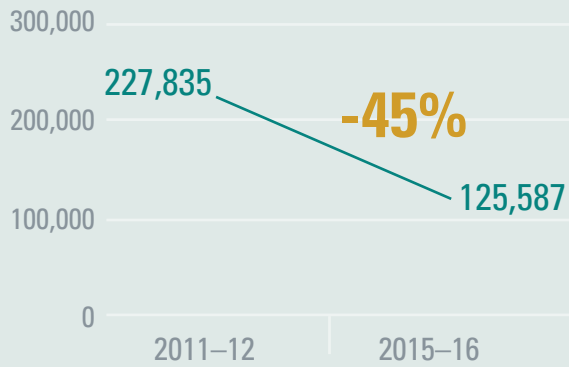


*Data for the 2015-16 school year is not yet available.

CONNECTICUT



ILLINOIS



2011-12

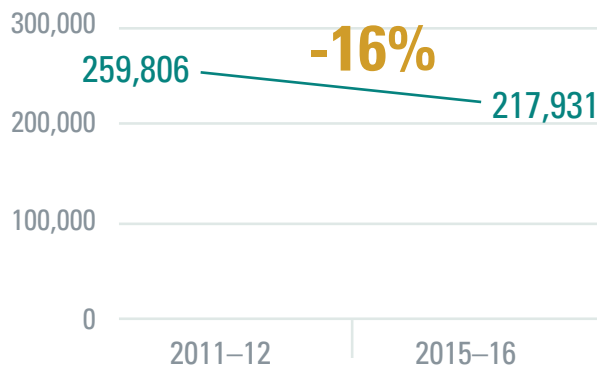
6.1%



2015-16

3.4%

NORTH CAROLINA



2011-12

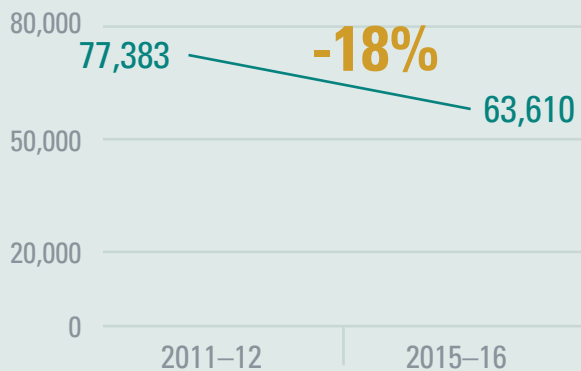
17.8%



2015-16

14.5%

TENNESSEE



2011-12

8.3%



2015-16

6.4%

Identifying a Framework for Reducing the Use of Suspensions Statewide

Each of the five states pursued a distinct combination of approaches to reduce the use of suspensions, with three common strategies at the core of their success:

- 1 Collect and analyze comprehensive school discipline data to document and understand the impact of school discipline policies and practices.
- 2 Share school discipline metrics regularly with policymakers, state and local educational leaders, parents, students, and the public.
- 3 Use data to inform and shape legislative and administrative improvements.

These strategies are not exhaustive of the range of approaches that states have taken or may take to improve school discipline systems, nor are the examples highlighted in the report. In these and other states, efforts at the local level—including the work of students, parents, and other advocates—have played a critical role in driving reform. Across these and other states that have effectively implemented reforms, however, the strategies highlighted below were fundamental to the considerable reductions in suspensions they achieved.

1 Collect and analyze comprehensive school discipline data to document and understand the impact of school discipline policies and practices.

Leaders from states that have embarked upon reforms realized that in order to assess whether school discipline policies were working, they first needed to have a more complete understanding of disciplinary trends in local districts and schools. In response, state education agencies took steps to collect comprehensive school discipline data from schools and districts and to analyze the data in multiple ways to better understand which students were being suspended, for what reasons, and the impact that these removals were having on other student outcomes, such as attendance and academic achievement. Their enhanced data-collection strategies included:

Establishing common definitions of discipline terminology

Leaders from the five states observed that there was great variation in how discipline data was being collected and interpreted across their states due to differing definitions of offenses and disciplinary actions. For example, within a given state, some schools might define an out-of-school suspension as a disciplinary removal lasting more than one day; in other schools, it could be defined as a removal lasting more than a week. To enable accurate and useful comparisons of discipline data across districts and schools, some states have established common definitions of terminology related to discipline. The **Tennessee** Department of Education, for example, established statewide definitions for offense types as well as sanctions, including in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, expulsion, and placement in an alternative education program. Similarly, the **Connecticut** State Department of Education provides descriptions of all disciplinary data on its website and shares these descriptions directly with district and school administrators. This information includes directions for entering student identifiers, codes for incident types, length of sanctions, and other information to standardize the data that is collected and reported to the state.

Strengthening data collection tools and processes

Several leaders from the five states featured herein found that schools and districts often did not report complete school discipline data because there was no systematized method for doing so. To fill this gap, some states have formalized data collection requirements and facilitated processes for districts and schools to regularly submit discipline data to the state education agency. Other states have chosen to integrate school discipline data—including the number of disciplinary actions and the demographics of students who received these sanctions—into existing data collection mechanisms that districts were already using to submit student achievement and attendance data to the state. The **Connecticut** State Department of Education collects school discipline data through its existing secure data portal, where all districts and schools report student data on attendance, performance, and other measures. This enables the state education agency to regularly track progress in disciplinary measures.

Conducting in-depth data analysis to identify specific problem areas

To better understand why and how students experience disciplinary actions, states have also started to track and analyze data on a more robust set of variables, including:

- Number of suspensions and suspension rate (i.e., the percentage of the student population that has experienced one or more suspensions)
- Offense type
- Length of suspension
- Proportion of students receiving multiple suspensions
- Suspensions by grade and grade range (i.e., elementary, middle, high school)
- Suspensions by type of school or district
- School-based arrests

States have also started to look across different student populations when analyzing school discipline data. While most states collect and publicly report discipline data by student demographics, including gender, race/ethnicity, grade level, disability, and English language learner status, several states have started to disaggregate data by additional student subgroups to better understand which students are most impacted by suspensions. The **Tennessee** Department of Education, for example, examines suspension data by low-income status, which is determined by students' eligibility for free or reduced-price meals. A **California** statute requires the state Department of Social Services to share with the Department of Education which students are foster youth, in accordance with student privacy mandates. This information is then shared at the district level so that schools can provide foster youth with appropriate services. This cross-agency information sharing also enables the Department of Education to calculate a suspension rate specifically for foster youth.

Gathering qualitative data from schools and districts

In addition to quantitative data on suspension trends, state leaders have also sought to understand from district and school officials themselves how school discipline reforms were implemented on the local level and the impact they were having on students. The **California** Department of Education

invited staff from school districts in northern and southern California to regional conferences to discuss promising approaches to reducing suspensions. The **Tennessee** Department of Education and **Connecticut** State Department of Education brought together school administrators, educators, support staff, parents, and students from districts with high suspension rates to discuss what was contributing to those trends, what impact disciplinary removals were having on student outcomes, and what alternatives to suspension had been effective.

2

Share school discipline metrics regularly with policymakers, state and local educational leaders, parents, students, and the public.

To increase transparency around school discipline data and raise awareness of related trends, states have begun to share more complete data on school discipline trends with policymakers, school and district leaders, and the general public. Sharing discipline data in this manner has pushed districts and schools to address problem areas. Specific approaches states have taken include:

Making data publicly available in a compelling, user-friendly format

Several states have made discipline information publicly available on their education agency websites. While this data is often presented in the form of unwieldy spreadsheets, many states have gone a step further to integrate discipline data into education data dashboards that allow users to examine data across an array of dimensions. These dashboards not only provide access to aggregate state data but also enable users to drill down to the district and school levels, which is critical to both identify places that need more support and pinpoint successes. The public-facing [California School Dashboard](#) provides data on district and school performance, including data on suspension rates disaggregated by student subgroup.

In addition to publicly displaying data on state education agency websites and through data dashboards, some states have improved how data is displayed to make it more user-friendly for policymakers and other audiences who might be less familiar with the information. For example, in addition to aggregate data, several states display graphs showing discipline trends over multiple school years. The **Connecticut** State Department of Education's [EdSight](#) data portal provides public information on measures of school performance that are part of Connecticut's accountability system⁴ as well as several other topics, including school discipline. Data are available on discipline sanctions, offenses, and suspension rates by year, as well as trend data for these variables over the past five years, disaggregated by student subgroups. Visitors to the interactive EdSight portal can generate school-level reports outlining enrollment, fiscal, and performance data, including expulsions and school-based arrests. Information can be sorted, filtered, and compared across schools and districts as well as across student groups.

Releasing publications geared toward policymakers, advocates, and the public to highlight trends and identify priority areas for improvement

To help raise broader awareness of school discipline trends, states have taken steps to distill school discipline information in publications that are especially accessible to audiences who may be less familiar with school discipline issues—including policymakers, advocates, and the general public. The

Connecticut State Department of Education prepares an annual report for policymakers that provides an in-depth analysis of key discipline data trends and their implications, spotlights areas of particular concern, and shares steps the state education agency is taking to reduce disciplinary removals. Similarly, the **North Carolina** Department of Public Instruction produces an annual report to the North Carolina General Assembly that details data on school crime, suspensions, and dropouts, with the goal of providing new insights by reporting and analyzing these data together. Some states conduct focused analyses to identify districts and schools with high suspension rates and share this data with local leaders to drive school improvement efforts. In **Tennessee**, school districts receive a summary of school discipline data trends and a report comparing their own discipline data to districts of similar size and demographics. That data is also shared with advocates and the public at large to ground their reform efforts. The **California** Department of Education regularly issues press releases with school discipline data trends, highlighting innovative practices from districts and schools across the state. These press releases have been a critical tool for motivating local districts to advance reforms.

3

Use data to inform and drive legislative and administrative improvements.

It is not enough to collect, analyze, and share discipline data; states must also act in response to this information. Drawing on the data and analyses described above, states have sought to reduce the use of suspensions through legislation as well as administrative policy changes in the state education agency. Specific policy changes include:

Eliminating broad, subjective categories of offenses

In **California**, data revealed that the most common behavior that led to suspensions and expulsions—particularly for students of color—was “willful defiance,” a subjective, catchall behavior category used to describe anything from wearing a hat in class to shouting at the teacher. In 2012, 43 percent of all suspensions were for willful defiance. This trend helped spur a statewide campaign to eliminate willful defiance as a disciplinary offense category. In 2014, the California legislature passed a bill that prohibited willful defiance as a reason to suspend students in kindergarten through third grade. Further, under the bill, no student may be expelled for willful defiance. As a result, from the 2013–14 to the 2014–15 school year, overall suspensions for willful defiance were down nearly 33 percent.

Prohibiting suspensions for the most vulnerable students

In **Connecticut**, an analysis of discipline data by the state education agency showed that in the 2013–14 school year, students in kindergarten through second grade made up more than 6 percent (~2,400 suspensions) of all suspensions that year. Racial and gender disparities were particularly prevalent among these young students who were suspended. In response to this data, growing public awareness, and advocacy efforts, in 2015, the Connecticut legislature passed a law prohibiting the use of out-of-school suspension for all students in pre-kindergarten and only allowing suspensions for students in kindergarten through second grade in the rare cases when a child exhibits violent or sexual conduct that endangers others. The legislation has led to nearly a 30-percent reduction in the number of pre-kindergarten through second grade students who received at least one in-school or out-of-school suspension, and the Connecticut State Department of Education continues to focus

on supporting local efforts to ensure that administrators and teachers apply classroom management practices and alternative approaches to exclusionary discipline for young students.

Limiting the length of out-of-school suspensions and making disciplinary removals a last resort

In **Illinois**, examination of out-of-school suspension data showed a lack of consistency in the length of out-of-school suspensions across the state. Suspended students could be out of school for a few days or up to a number of weeks. Awareness of this data and intensive grassroots advocacy led to the passage of comprehensive school discipline legislation in 2016. The new law limits out-of-school suspensions to no more than three days, except in cases where other appropriate and available behavioral and disciplinary interventions have been exhausted and the student's continued presence in the school either poses a threat to students, teachers, or staff, or would substantially disrupt, impede, or interfere with the operation of the school.⁵

Establishing a task force to examine school discipline trends and identify strategies for improvement

In September 2016, the **North Carolina** State Board of Education established an Education Interagency Advisory Committee (IAC), comprising representatives from state and local youth-serving agencies, including the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction; higher education institutions; and district- and school-level leaders to develop a comprehensive plan for improving school discipline policies and practices. As a first step, the IAC is examining available data from the State Board of Education and meeting with state and local education leaders, school staff, parents, and students to examine barriers to school success, including excessively punitive disciplinary policies and practices. Following its review of the data, the IAC will develop recommendations for cross-agency efforts to ensure that all students receive the support they need to succeed.

Creating tools to help make data actionable at the local level

The **Connecticut** State Department of Education is developing an electronic early-indication tool to promptly identify students who are at risk of not meeting educational benchmarks, using indicators such as chronic absenteeism, disciplinary incidents (i.e., in-school and out-of-school suspensions), and student mobility⁶—all of which are known to contribute to lower rates of educational achievement. The tool will be piloted in the 2017–18 school year, with full implementation beginning in fall 2018. Through PowerSchool, an online education data collection platform, the **North Carolina** Department of Public Instruction provides school administrators with real-time data on academic performance, attendance, and behavior. PowerSchool enables administrators to examine discipline data trends and intervene as necessary.

Ensuring that local funding strategies account for school discipline and climate

In **California**, under the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) approved by the state legislature in 2013, each district receives a “base grant” for each student, plus additional grants for specific groups of students who are low income, foster youth, homeless, or English language learners. School districts are required to develop, adopt, and annually update a three-year Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) that specifies goals in eight state priority areas and how LCFF funds will be used to meet those goals. The eight priority areas include student engagement—measured by a statewide chronic

absenteeism indicator that is currently in development—and school climate, measured by a statewide suspension rate indicator. The statewide indicators are displayed annually on the California School Dashboard.

Integrating school discipline measures into the state accountability system

Accountability systems are the policies and practices that enable states to measure how schools and students are performing. These systems allow states to recognize schools and districts that are improving outcomes for students, while targeting improvement efforts toward struggling schools and districts. Through their state plans submitted under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the **Illinois** State Board of Education and the **Tennessee** Department of Education identified indicators related to school discipline for inclusion in their state accountability systems and annual school and district report cards.⁷ In addition to other school quality indicators, Illinois will include data from annual school climate surveys and Tennessee will include data on out-of-school suspensions in their respective accountability systems.

Applying the Framework to Realize the Full Vision of School Discipline Reform

While reducing the overuse of suspensions is an important advancement, realizing the full vision of school discipline reform requires states to adopt an approach that effectively limits disciplinary removals for all students while also ensuring orderly classrooms and welcoming learning environments that keep all students engaged and improve student outcomes.

States have faced two primary challenges to achieving this goal: (1) certain student subgroups, particularly youth of color and students with disabilities, continue to have higher suspension rates than others, and (2) school discipline initiatives have been implemented largely in isolation, neglecting the fundamental connection between school discipline and other critical student outcomes, such as attendance, engagement, and achievement. CSG Justice Center staff consulted with leaders from the five states highlighted above, as well as researchers and education experts across the country, to determine how the framework could be applied to help states address these challenges. While proven strategies are limited, the questions that follow are intended to help state leaders take stock of existing efforts to improve school discipline and better understand whether these efforts are also helping to reduce disparities in suspension rates for youth of color, students with disabilities, and other student subgroups; foster positive learning environments; and ultimately improve student outcomes. The questions below are accompanied by initial steps that states should consider taking to move toward a more holistic approach to school discipline reform, along with state-specific examples of concrete measures taken to reduce disparities and improve overall school climate.

Reducing disparities in school discipline

Even in states that have recently experienced dramatic reductions in overall suspensions and expulsions, disparate impacts remain for certain student subpopulations, particularly youth of color and students with disabilities. To begin addressing discipline disparities—where students in specific subgroups face disciplinary actions at a higher rate than students in other subgroups—state policymakers and education system leaders should ask themselves:

1 *Does our state comprehensively collect and analyze data to understand discipline disparities?*

Approaches to consider:

- Establishing clear definitions for offense types and disciplinary sanctions to ensure consistent data collection across the state
- Creating or expanding existing tools or templates to help schools and districts track data that reveal disparities in school discipline
- Requiring districts and schools to collect school discipline data at least annually and (1) disaggregating all data—at a minimum—by gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic, English language learner, and special education status; and (2) examining how these subpopulations intersect (e.g., how often black female students are suspended)
- Comparing the suspension rates of each student subpopulation to their proportion of the overall student body within each school and district, and identifying subpopulations with the highest and lowest rates of disproportionality
- Examining disparities in school discipline rates across similar districts and schools
- Gathering qualitative information about school discipline trends from school and district administrators, staff, and students
- Exploring new ways of looking at data to identify trends in discipline disparities and areas for further examination

2 *Does our state regularly and publicly report data that reveal disparities in school discipline?*

Approaches to consider:

- Publishing data on state-, district-, and school-level discipline trends—disaggregated by student subgroups—on the state education agency website
- Releasing an annual report that highlights school discipline trends and presents data on school discipline disparities for individual districts and schools
- Developing a communication strategy to help the general public understand trends in discipline disparities for student subgroups in the state, as well as strategies that are being implemented to address those disparities

3 *Does our state use data that reveal disparities in school discipline to drive improvement efforts?*

Approaches to consider:

- Establishing a new, or designating an existing, interagency task force to examine discipline disparities and identify and share promising approaches to address them
- Convening leaders from districts with varying levels of disparity in discipline rates to share challenges and promising approaches to reducing disparities

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- Creating regular opportunities for state and local education leaders to meet with students, families, and advocates to share data, discuss trends, and identify potential strategies for addressing disparities
 - Directing resources for training, professional development, and other educator supports to districts and schools with higher rates of discipline disparity
 - Considering data on discipline disparities in annual reviews of district and school performance

North Carolina's Disparities in Discipline Task Force

A state legislator, the former superintendent of public instruction, and the deputy commissioner of juvenile justice at the Department of Public Safety in North Carolina spearheaded the establishment of a task force to examine disparities in school discipline across the state. The task force is developing recommendations on tools for more effective data collection, measures that schools and districts can track to better understand and address discipline disparities, and clearer definitions for subjective offenses. The task force is examining behavioral interventions that can serve as alternatives to suspension and developing an awareness-building strategy to increase the public's understanding of the impacts of long-term suspensions on student outcomes.

Illinois's Plan to Examine Equity in Low-Performing Schools

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) established IL-EMPOWER, an organizational structure that is designed to help develop capacity for low-performing schools to improve student outcomes. Beginning in the 2018–19 school year, the lowest-performing schools in the IL-EMPOWER network will partner with at least one professional learning provider to identify and implement effective practices for reducing disparities and achieving learning success for every student. Schools will be required to set targets and identify opportunities for growth in one or more of the following areas: governance and management, curriculum and instruction, and climate and culture. Through the climate and culture component of the process, schools will be asked to examine current policies, practices, and data related to student discipline, fair treatment of students, and the quality of relationships between students and staff. Based on this examination and incorporating any existing school improvement efforts, each school will create an improvement plan and provide ISBE with quarterly progress updates using outcome data.

Ensuring that school discipline reform initiatives also improve learning environments and student outcomes

States should expand the scope of school discipline reforms beyond simply reducing disciplinary removals and adopt a more integrated approach that includes efforts to improve learning environments, student engagement, and student outcomes. To move toward a more comprehensive approach to school discipline reform, state leaders should ask themselves:

1 *Does our state collect and analyze school discipline data alongside other measures of school and student success?*

Approaches to consider:

- Establishing a shared definition of success for school discipline reform that extends beyond solely reducing suspensions
- Developing a statewide school climate survey and methods for gathering qualitative data on learning conditions, such as through focus groups, specialized interview protocols, and classroom observations
- Providing districts and schools with a standard tool or template to collect and report data on an array of school and student success indicators
- Conducting analyses on the relationship among suspension, school climate, and student outcome data

Comprehensive Data Collection in Illinois, Tennessee, and Connecticut

Recognizing that disciplinary removals can influence other student outcomes, several states have started to examine this relationship through the collection of additional data, including the following measures:

Perceptions of school climate

The University of Chicago's 5Essentials Survey is administered in **Illinois** to assess student and staff perceptions of five dimensions of school culture and climate: effective leaders, collaborative teachers, supportive environments, high-quality instruction, and involved families. Survey results organized at the state, district, and school level are publicly available on the Illinois State Board of Education's website.

Lost instructional time

Acknowledging that time missed from school for any reason negatively impacts a student's academic performance and likelihood of graduating on time, the **Tennessee** Department of Education started to collect data on the amount of instructional time lost due to suspensions. Annual data collected by the

state education agency revealed that, on an average school day, approximately 5,000 students were absent from their classrooms due to a disciplinary action, and that students missed an average of more than three days of instructional time for each out-of-school suspension.

Student performance

The **Connecticut** State Department of Education examines the correlation between the number and type of disciplinary actions students receive and overall performance and assessment data in math and English Language Arts at the individual student level.

2 *Does our state share data on school discipline and other measures of school and student success with policymakers, state and local educational leaders, parents, students, and the public?*

Approaches to consider:

- Presenting school discipline data alongside other student and school success indicators on the state education agency website, including state-, district-, and school-level data
- Releasing an annual school discipline report, including a section that examines the relationship between school discipline and other school and student success measures
- Creating regular opportunities for state and local education agency leaders to meet with students, families, and advocates to hear the community’s concerns about current discipline approaches and share data on student outcomes and learning environment quality alongside suspension trends
- Developing a media strategy to help the public understand the state’s school discipline reform efforts and highlight districts and schools that have seen success in reducing disciplinary removals while also creating productive learning environments and improving student outcomes

3 *Does our state use data on school discipline and other measures of student and school success to drive school improvement efforts?*

Approaches to consider:

- Including staff who oversee school discipline on the state education agency leadership team to ensure that school discipline initiatives are integrated with other school improvement efforts, review relevant data, and identify areas for improvement
- Assessing funding for school discipline and other school improvement initiatives—including those focused on behavior, climate, attendance, and engagement—to identify opportunities to maximize resources

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- Using school discipline data trends to identify opportunities for professional development that is focused on behavior management and creating classroom environments that foster engagement and learning
 - Including indicators related to school discipline, conditions for learning, and other student outcome data on school and district report cards

Connecticut Integrated Systems of Support

To better integrate its array of initiatives focused on student behavior and support, the **Connecticut** State Department of Education is developing a statewide framework that includes approaches related to restorative practices, social-emotional learning, and positive school environments. All districts will receive support to foster positive, inclusive learning environments that address challenging behavior before it escalates, in an effort to remove barriers to student success and maximize student learning potential. Districts with higher suspension and expulsion rates, specifically in the younger grades, will receive more targeted and intensive supports. These districts will be required to participate in webinars and trainings held by the state education agency, and develop corrective action plans.

Illinois and North Carolina Whole Child Initiatives

Both the **Illinois** State Board of Education and the **North Carolina** Department of Public Instruction have launched Whole Child initiatives that focus not only on supporting students' academic growth but also promoting their physical, social, and emotional well-being. Built on the Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child model developed by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development and the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, these initiatives engage the entire school community, including students, families, educators, and community members in ensuring that all students have access to the tools they need to succeed.⁸ Supportive school discipline and positive school climate are central to Illinois and North Carolina's Whole Child approaches, which recognize that academic achievement and long-term success are closely tied to engaging instruction, positive connections with teachers and other school staff, and inclusive learning environments. As part of these initiatives, the state education agencies are working to identify metrics of success beyond academic performance, including behavior management, student-teacher connections, school climate, and engaging instruction, which will be used to track progress in local schools and districts and target additional supports.

Conclusion

The achievements that states have made in reducing the use of suspension over the past five years are truly remarkable. Rarely has there been such a widespread and immediate response to a problem in the field of education. At the same time, challenges remain to realizing the full vision of school discipline reform—that is, ensuring that efforts to limit disciplinary removals also foster supportive learning environments that keep all students engaged in school and improve student outcomes.

Drawing on the experience and accomplishments of several states, this report is a first step in guiding policymakers and education leaders toward a comprehensive vision of school discipline reform. Ultimately, making this vision a reality will require committed leadership among state and local officials—working in close partnership with education practitioners—to take a hard look at the impact of current policies and practices, identify areas of need, and make improvements accordingly. Fully integrating school discipline reform measures into comprehensive, statewide school improvement efforts will help states make more efficient use of resources and better support all students to stay engaged in school and reach their full potential.

Notes

1. Tony Fabelo, Michael D. Thompson, Martha Plotkin, Dottie Carmichael, Miner P. Marchbanks, III, Eric A. Booth, *Breaking Schools' Rules: A Statewide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement* (New York: The Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2011), https://csgjusticecenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/08/Breaking_Schools_Rules_Report_Final.pdf.
2. "Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) for the 2013–14 School Year," Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Department of Education, accessed September 25, 2017, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/crdc-2013-14.html>.
3. Ibid. National data beyond the 2013–14 school year is not yet publicly available.
4. Accountability systems are designed to help states assess school and district performance. In December 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was signed into law following congressional approval with bipartisan support. ESSA replaced No Child Left Behind as the federal education law in the United States, and represents a significant shift of educational control back to states. The new law gives states more autonomy to design and build their state accountability systems and determine what supports and interventions are necessary for schools and districts that fail to demonstrate progress.
5. The impact of this recent legislation is now being reviewed and a comprehensive evaluation of its effectiveness is forthcoming.
6. Student mobility generally refers to students changing schools during a school year. This change in schools may be voluntary—such as when a student changes schools to participate in a new program—or involuntary, such when a student is expelled.
7. Under ESSA, every state and district receiving Title I, Part A, funds will be required to produce an annual report card that provides information to the public about student and school performance.
8. "Whole Child," ASCD, accessed August 10, 2017, <http://www.ascd.org/whole-child.aspx>.

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