

Discipline Targets Girls of Color Disproportionately

Many districts nationwide overuse exclusionary disciplinary practices, according to “And They Cared: How to Create Better Learning Environments for Girls of Color,” a new report from The Education Trust and the National Women’s Law Center. And suspensions and expulsions that result in lost class time are often dispensed inequitably against girls of color.

About 3 percent of girls enrolled in public schools are suspended each year, according to U.S. Department of Education data, but Black, Latina, and

Native girls are suspended at higher rates than white girls. Studies indicate that these differences are not the result of any disparities in behavior, but instead are the result of personal and institutional biases. In other words, while girls of color are not more likely to misbehave, they are more likely to be disciplined.

Black girls accounted for 14 percent of all students suspended from school at least once in the 2015–2016 school year, although they accounted for only 8 percent of total student enrollment.

And during preschool, the 20 percent of girls enrolled who are Black were the recipients of 53 percent of exclusionary suspensions.

A few districts have begun to target reductions in exclusionary discipline, seeing its short- and long-term effects. The Oakland (California) and Chicago school districts have taken steps to emphasize restorative justice, counseling, mental health services, and other evidence-based approaches over out-of-school suspensions for minor offenses, and Massachusetts has sought steady reductions in such suspensions since a new policy went into effect in 2014.

“These places are reducing exclusionary discipline practices without compromising school safety or positive learning environments,” “And They Cared” says. “In fact, the students and educators we heard from confirm research that shows well-executed policies make classrooms safer and more conducive to learning.”

The report includes a checklist administrators can use to assess existing disciplinary systems and make changes to build a more positive school climate. To download it, visit bit.ly/2H9Sp0Y.



5X

In 2015–2016, Black girls were five times more likely than white girls to be suspended from school at least once.

Source: U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, Civil Rights Data Collection, 2015–2016

Summer, Afterschool Programs Are Suffering

Afterschool providers are worried about their programs' long-term sustainability in the ongoing pandemic environment, according to "Preparing for Back to School and Navigating Summer in the Time of COVID-19," a survey brief released in September 2020 by the Afterschool Alliance.

The brief says that almost 9 out of 10 providers report that they are concerned about long-term funding, and almost two-thirds are worried they will have to shut down. Only 5 percent of summer programs closed completely during summer 2020, with nearly half (49 percent) reporting being physically open in some capacity and 34 percent offering virtual programming.

Asked about staffing concerns, more than three-quarters (76 percent) of program providers said they are worried about staffing shortages, and 71 percent were worried about having to lay off or furlough staff. Last summer, 28 percent of programs laid off or furloughed staff, and 44 percent slashed hiring.

Disparities in access to afterschool and summer programs grew during the first summer of the pandemic, with programs that serve mostly children from higher-income families almost twice as likely to be physically "open" as those serving mostly children from low-income families. Only 38 percent of 21st Century Community Learning Center programs remained open last summer.

Parents had misgivings about sending their children to an afterschool program in person, the survey says. Nearly half (48 percent) were uncomfortable with the idea of sending a child to an afterschool program in person in the fall, with parents in lower-income households (52 percent), Black parents (55 percent), and Latinx parents (60 percent) expressing discomfort more often than white parents (44 percent) and higher-income parents (40 percent).

To read the full report, visit bit.ly/3nKail3. ●



Integrated SEL Shows Promise, Wallace Says

Children benefit when schools and out-of-school time (OST) programs collaborate to foster social-emotional learning (SEL) throughout the day, according to The Wallace Foundation's Partnerships for Social and Emotional Learning Initiative (PSELI).

Six communities are participating in PSELI by implementing practices to support children's social and emotional development with an integrated approach. Boston; Dallas; Denver; Palm Beach County, Florida; Tacoma, Washington; and Tulsa, Oklahoma, joined Phase 1 of the initiative in the 2017–2018 school year with Wallace grant funding.

Each of the PSELI communities launched and developed a whole-campus approach to SEL in five to seven elementary schools and with OST program partners. While the communities have deployed a variety of SEL strategies, initial findings include the following:

- Being committed to SEL and making time for personnel to meet are important starting points for district/OST partnerships.
- Schools and OST programs need to develop shared norms, language, and trust for SEL instruction to succeed, as well as new structures to support collaboration.
- While joint PD is often difficult to schedule, teaching SEL rituals and following a reliable curriculum can help OST and school staff create continuity in programming.

Site leaders must make it a priority for staff to deliver the intended SEL instruction, the report adds, and coaches can provide support to school and OST staff implementing new SEL programs and practices.

Phase 2 of PSELI is now underway, expanding the initiative to a second set of 38 elementary schools and OST program partners. Visit bit.ly/3enhSkp to access the full report. ●

Teachers Might Be Skipping the Standards, Survey Says

Curricula that align well to state standards can help teachers deliver instruction that leads to student mastery. The big variable lies in teacher instruction, results from the RAND American Instructional Resources Survey (AIRS) say, because curriculum alone is not likely to change classroom practice.

Focusing on curriculum and instructional materials used by K–12 teachers in ELA, math, and science, the survey found that teachers use curricula in a variety of ways. Those who reported receiving more evaluative feedback and helpful professional learning on a curriculum reported engagement in more standards-aligned classroom practices among all or nearly all students.

A few key findings:

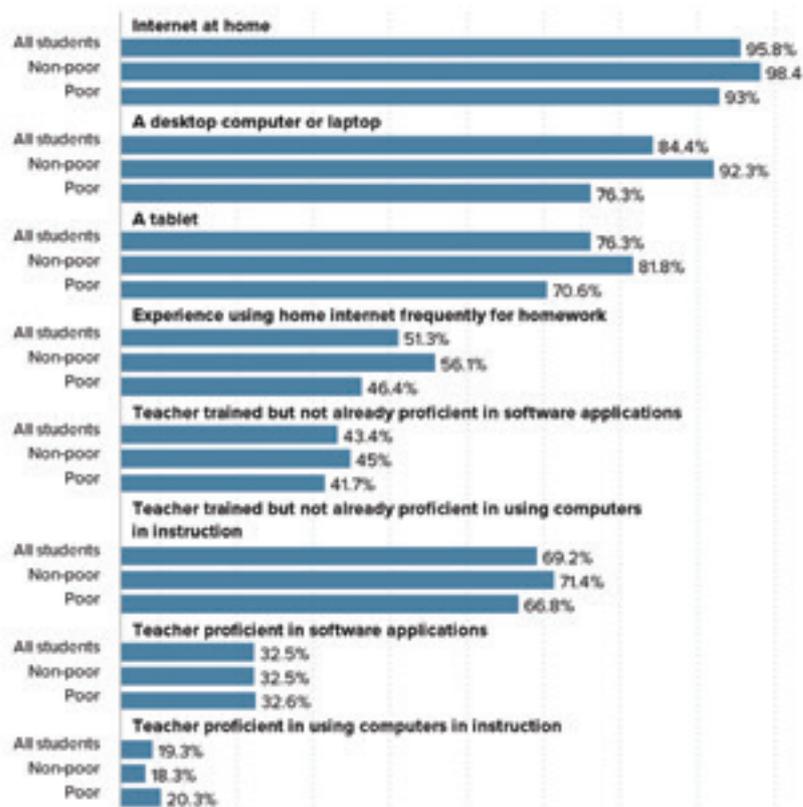
- Teachers reported using and modifying curriculum in a wide variety of ways.
- Evaluative feedback and professional learning correlated to how teachers reported using their curriculum.
- Teachers who reported receiving more curriculum-focused evaluative feedback were more likely to report using a single curriculum with fewer modifications, and less likely to rely mostly on a curriculum they created.
- State context and school poverty level correlated to teachers' curriculum use and supports.

RAND advises states, districts, and schools to consider how they might provide clear signals to teachers regarding curriculum use through evaluative feedback and professional learning, taking into account which teachers regard as most helpful. Teachers in high-poverty schools likely need much more support and guidance in using standards-aligned curricula, the survey says.

To read more, visit bit.ly/2GY8tD4.

Eighth-Grade Access

Share of eighth-graders with access to online learning by income level and tool, 2017



Source: 2017 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), U.S. Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics; Economic Policy Institute.