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## FACT SHEET: School Discipline and The Pushout Problem

Children have a fundamental human right to a quality education and to be treated with dignity, as recognized in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet, schools are pushing children out of school by placing harmful policies and practices before children's education.

### Rates of suspension and expulsion

- Schools are suspending and expelling students at a rate more than double that of 1974. In 2006, more than 3.3 million students were suspended out-of-school at least once and 102,000 were expelled.<sup>1</sup>
- Students of color and students with disabilities are more likely to be suspended and expelled than their peers for the same behavior.<sup>2</sup>
  - In OCR's 2006 data collection for the 2005-2006 school year, African-American students were nearly three times as likely to be suspended and 3.5 times as likely to be expelled than their white peers.<sup>3</sup>
  - Students with disabilities are suspended and expelled at a rate roughly twice that of their non-disabled peers.<sup>4</sup>
- The majority of suspensions are for minor misbehavior, including "disruptive behavior," "insubordination," or school fights, which can be interpreted in subjective and biased ways (even unintentional).<sup>5</sup>

### Impact on the Human Right to Education

- In its 2006 review of exclusionary and zero-tolerance disciplinary policies, the American Psychological Association found no evidence that the use of suspension, expulsion, or zero-tolerance policies has resulted in improvements in student behavior or increases in school safety.<sup>6</sup> They found that suspensions and expulsions are linked to an increased likelihood of future behavior problems, academic difficulty, detachment and dropout.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> National Center for Education Statistics (2009). Contexts of Elementary and Secondary Education. <http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/2009/section4/indicator28.asp>

<sup>2</sup> Russell Skiba et al. (2006). "Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools? An Evidentiary Review and Recommendations," American Psychological Association (APA) Zero Tolerance Task Force.

<sup>3</sup> US Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, 2006 Data Collection (2008), at [ocrdata.ed.gov/ocr2006rv30/](http://ocrdata.ed.gov/ocr2006rv30/) (charts on file with author).

<sup>4</sup> RUSSELL SKIBA ET AL, ARE ZERO TOLERANCE POLICIES EFFECTIVE IN THE SCHOOLS? A REPORT BY THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION TASK FORCE 63 (2006).

<sup>5</sup> M. K. Rausch and R. Skiba. (2004). "Unplanned Outcomes: Suspensions and Expulsions in Indiana." Education Policy Briefs, 2 (2).

<sup>6</sup> RUSSELL SKIBA ET AL, ARE ZERO TOLERANCE POLICIES EFFECTIVE IN THE SCHOOLS? A REPORT BY THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION TASK FORCE (2006).

<sup>7</sup> Russell Skiba et al. (2006).

- Schools with high suspension rates score lower on state accountability tests, even when adjusting for demographic differences.<sup>8</sup>
- A state's suspension ranking was negatively related to their National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) achievement ranking in mathematics, writing, and reading.<sup>9</sup>

### Impact on the Right to Dignity and Positive School Climates

- Research shows that overreliance on suspension and arbitrary punishment systems damage the bonds with adults which students need to form for health and success.<sup>10</sup>
- According to surveys of students and school personnel, principals in schools with low suspension rates were perceived to be more visible and concerned with school climate and human relations than principals in schools with high suspension rates.<sup>11</sup>
- Teachers are also negatively affected by school climate issues. A 2005 survey found that 44% of teachers exiting the profession cited discipline as a reason for leaving.

### Discipline, Dropout and Incarceration

- Each year approximately 1.3 million young people drop out of school.<sup>12</sup> Students who have dropped out or been involved in the juvenile justice system are more likely to have been suspended or expelled than their peers.<sup>13</sup>
- Students that dropout are three times more likely to be incarcerated.<sup>14</sup> The Centers for Disease Control found that “out of school” youth are significantly more likely than “in school” youth to become involved in physical fights, carry a weapon, smoke, use alcohol, marijuana and other drugs, and engage in sexual intercourse.<sup>15</sup>
- Economists estimate that raising high school graduation rates would decrease violent crime by 20% and property crime by 10%.<sup>16</sup> The same economists find that each additional high school graduate would yield an average of \$36,500 in lifetime cost savings to the public.

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<sup>8</sup> Skiba, R. & Rausch, M., *Zero Tolerance, Suspension and Expulsion: Questions of Equity and Effectiveness*, in C.M. Everston & C.S. Weinstein (Eds.), *HANDBOOK OF CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: RESEARCH, PRACTICES, AND CONTEMPORARY ISSUES* (2005).

<sup>9</sup> Russell Skiba et al, *Consistent Removal: Contributions of School Discipline to the School-Prison Pipeline* (2003) Paper presented at the Harvard Civil Rights Project School-to-Prison Pipeline Conference, Cambridge, MA.

<sup>10</sup> HARVARD CIVIL RIGHTS PROJECT, ADVANCEMENT PROJECT, *OPPORTUNITIES SUSPENDED: THE DEVASTATING CONSEQUENCES OF ZERO TOLERANCE AND SCHOOL DISCIPLINE POLICIES*, 10-12 (2000) *citing* JAMES COMER, *RAISING BLACK CHILDREN*, 197-198 (1992).

<sup>11</sup> RUSSELL SKIBA ET AL, *ARE ZERO TOLERANCE POLICIES EFFECTIVE IN THE SCHOOLS? A REPORT BY THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION TASK FORCE* 44-45 (2006) *citing* Bickel F. & Qualls, R., *The Impact of School Climate on Suspension Rates in Jefferson County Public Schools*, 12 *URBAN REVIEW* 79 (1980).

<sup>12</sup> Alliance for Excellent Education (2009). *The High Cost of High School Dropout*. <http://www.all4ed.org/files/HighCost.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> RUSSELL SKIBA ET AL, *ARE ZERO TOLERANCE POLICIES EFFECTIVE IN THE SCHOOLS? A REPORT BY THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION TASK FORCE* 49 (2006).

<sup>14</sup> L. Lochner and E. Moretti. (2004). “The Effect of Education on Crime: Evidence from Prison Inmates, Arrests, and Self Reports.” *The American Economic Review*, 94 (1), 155-189. Freeman, R. (1996). “Why Do So Many Young American Men Commit Crimes and What Might We Do About It?” *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 10(1), 25 - 42.

<sup>15</sup> Centers for Disease Control, *Health Risk Behaviors among Adolescents Who Do and Do Not Attend School – United States, 1992*, 43 *MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY WEEKLY REPORT*, Mar. 4, 1994 at 129.

<sup>16</sup> Henry Levin and Clive Belfield. (2007). “The Cost and Benefits of An Excellent Education.” Available online at [http://www.cbcse.org/modules/download\\_gallery/dl.php?file=35](http://www.cbcse.org/modules/download_gallery/dl.php?file=35).