



## What the Research Tells Us About Disproportionality

### Disproportionality Starts in Preschool

Boys are expelled at a rate more than 4.5 times that of girls<sup>1</sup>

Black children account for almost 50% of public preschool suspensions but represent less than one-fifth of all preschoolers <sup>2</sup>

Students most likely expelled from preschool include being black, being male and looking older than their classmates<sup>3</sup>

Black children are also estimated to be 2 times as likely to be expelled as Latino and White children and more than 5 times as likely to be expelled as Asian-American children <sup>4</sup>

Externalizing behavior patterns in young children (e.g., physical and verbal aggression) are also risk factors for increased involvement in exclusionary disciplinary practices in school and in the criminal justice system <sup>5</sup>

### Disproportionality in Middle School and High School

Black students, students who are economically disadvantaged, and special education students are three demographics subgroups that are disproportionately suspended, both in the frequency of suspensions and the duration in number of school days lost in 9<sup>th</sup> grade <sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> OCR, 2016, Gilliam, 2005

<sup>2</sup> OCR, 2016, Gilliam, 2005

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<sup>4</sup>Gilliam, 2005

<sup>5</sup> Barnes, & Boutwell, 2012

<sup>6</sup> Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox 2014

A single suspension in the 9th grade considerably lowers the odds that a student will graduate from high school or enroll in college<sup>7</sup>

Being suspended even once in 9th grade is associated with a two-fold increase in the risk for dropping out<sup>8</sup>

Studies have suggested that White students are suspended more for observable behaviors such as smoking and cutting class and Black students are suspended more for subjective actions such as disrespect suggesting racial bias<sup>9</sup>

Approximately 34% of Black high school students experiencing a suspension/expulsion in any year, in contrast to 13% of White high school students<sup>10</sup>

### **Students with Disabilities Face Disproportionality**

Black students with disabilities are almost three times as likely to experience out-of-school suspension or expulsion as their White counterparts<sup>11</sup>

Black students with disabilities are twice as likely to experience in-school suspension or expulsion<sup>12</sup>

Factors that may contribute to higher suspension rates of students with disabilities include having less developed social skills, impulsive decision making, or simply being less adept at avoiding detection compared with their peers without disabilities<sup>13</sup>

### **Disproportionality Impacts Education**

Black students spend less time in the classroom due to discipline, which further hinders their access to a quality education<sup>14</sup>

Black students are nearly two times as likely to be suspended without educational services as white students<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2014

<sup>8</sup> Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2014

<sup>9</sup> Skiba et al., 2002

<sup>10</sup> Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox 2014

<sup>11</sup> NCLD, 2014; Zhang, Katsiyannis & Herbst, 2004

<sup>12</sup> Gilliam, 2005

<sup>13</sup> Zhang, Katsiyannis, & Herbst, 2004

<sup>14</sup> Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2014

<sup>15</sup> Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2014

Black students were more likely to be referred to the principal's office. This action led to Black students being suspended more than their non-Black peers<sup>16</sup>

Exclusionary school punishment hinders academic growth and contributes to racial disparities in achievement – achievement gap<sup>17</sup>

### **Gender and Disproportionality**

Black boys face higher rates of school discipline than anyone else<sup>18</sup>

Black girls are six times as likely to be suspended as White girls, while Black boys are three times as likely to be suspended as White boys<sup>19</sup>

### **Disproportionality is Complex**

Black and White student differences in suspension rates have been found in virtually every published study across school districts regardless of the methodological and analytic strategies used<sup>20</sup>

Research has largely concluded that disparities in suspensions and expulsions are not explained by differences in misbehavior<sup>21</sup>

Racial disparities in discipline can occur even when the behavior of the students is the same<sup>22</sup>

Large schools have higher suspension rates for Blacks than small schools.<sup>23</sup>

Schools with more students qualifying for free and reduced-price meals, a proxy for poverty, have higher African-American suspension rates than schools in wealthier communities<sup>24</sup>

Schools enrolling a greater percentage of Black students exhibit higher suspension rates for Black students than schools with fewer Black students<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2014

<sup>17</sup> Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2014

<sup>18</sup> Adamu & Hogan, 2015

<sup>19</sup> Crenshaw, et al, 2015

<sup>20</sup> Wright, et al, 2014

<sup>21</sup> Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2014

<sup>22</sup> Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015

<sup>23</sup> Tefera, Siegel-Hawley, & Levy, 2017

<sup>24</sup> Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2014

<sup>25</sup> Tefera, Siegel-Hawley, & Levy, 2017

Research has shown evidence of systematic bias in teacher expectations for African American students and non-Black teachers were found to have lower expectations of Black students than Black teachers<sup>26</sup>

Only 10 percent of public-school principals were black, compared to 80 percent white. Eighty-two percent of public-school educators are White, compared to 18 percent teachers of color<sup>27</sup>

Black male teachers only constitute two percent of the teaching workforce<sup>28</sup>

Research revealed that the more experienced a teacher was, the less the likelihood that they would recommend the suspension of students <sup>29</sup>

Findings in a multilevel analysis also indicated that administrator perspectives on discipline may be a stronger predictor of suspension disparities than students' behaviors or sociodemographic characteristics <sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Tefera, Siegel-Hawley, & Levy, 2017, Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015

<sup>27</sup> US DOE, 2016

<sup>28</sup> US DOE, 2016

<sup>29</sup> US DOE, 2016

<sup>30</sup> Skiba, et al., 2012

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