EDJJ NOTES

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In the News

Suspension, Race, and Disability in Maryland

By Michael Krezmien and Peter Leone

During the past 10 years, public school disciplinary policies have been changed to respond to concerns about school safety. High profile school shootings and media coverage of those incidents have created the perception that many schools are unsafe.[1] The passage of the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994[2] and discretionary federal grants to schools to improve safety have created an expectation that school administrators and school boards will respond more forcefully to serious acts of misbehavior by students. While the impact of changes in school disciplinary policy continues to be debated, evidence suggests that policies have had a disproportionate impact on minority students and students with disabilities. Disciplinary practices impact all students. However, these practices are of particular concern for African American students who continue to be disproportionately suspended, expelled, detained, and incarcerated.[3]

Additionally, students with disabilities are at greater risk for disciplinary procedures than their peers without disabilities.[4] Disciplinary provisions under The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (1997)[5] and accompanying regulations were intended to protect students with disabilities from disproportionate suspensions. As a result, there is a perception that students with disabilities are less likely to be suspended than their peers without disabilities. However, the belief that schools are unable to equitably discipline students with disabilities is not supported by national suspension data.

In 2001, the U.S. General Accounting Office reported that students with disabilities engaged in three times as many serious misconducts than their peers without disabilities, and that these students were disciplined in a similar manner by school administrators.[6] About 60 to 65 percent of those students were suspended, and less than half of those students received educational

(*Article continues*)

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About EDJJ

EDJJ is a technical assistance, training, research, and dissemination center designed to develop more effective responses to the needs of youth with disabilities in the juvenile justice system and those at-risk for involvement with the juvenile justice system.

The center is a collaborative project of the University of Maryland, University of Kentucky, Arizona State University, American Institutes for Research, and The Pacer Center.

services during suspensions.

Given the concerns of disproportionate suspension of minority youth and youth with disabilities, the current research focused on identifying public school suspensions trends within Maryland based on: (a) race; (b) special education classification; and (c) combined race and disability classification.

Methods

The data analyzed for this study were drawn from Maryland reported records of enrollment, suspensions, and special education services from 1995 to 2003. In 2003, 50.4% of the students in Maryland were classified as Caucasian, 37.9% were African American, 6.4% were Hispanic, and 6% were Asian American. Other racial categories represented less than 1% of the population. Eighty-eight percent of the population was in general education, while 12% received special education services.

Suspensions by race data were available from 1995 to 2003 and suspensions by disability data were available from 2001 to 2003. Risk Indices and Relative Risk Indices were calculated to understand disproportionality of suspension practices by race, disability, and the combination of race and disability. Risk Index (RI) refers to the percentage of a specific racial group who were suspended. RI was calculated by dividing the number of students from a specific race who were suspended by the total number of students in that specific population. Relative Risk Index (RRI) represents the degree to which one group was more or less likely to be subjected to suspension than the majority group. The RRI is a ratio of the RI of a specific group to the RI of the majority group.

Results

Suspension and Race

Risk and Relative Risk Indices were calculated for African-American, Hispanic, and Caucasian students to assess disproportionality by race. The RI for Caucasian students was relatively stable over time and indicated that approximately 6% of Caucasian students were suspended each year. Similarly, the RI for Hispanic students was relatively stable and indicated that approximately 5% - 6% of Hispanic students were suspended each year. The RI for African American student suspensions increased over time, from 8.5% in 1995 to 13.5% in 2003. The RRI for Hispanic students indicated Hispanic students were approximately 0.9 times as likely to be suspended as Caucasian students. The RRI for African American students indicated they were 1.5 times as likely to be suspended in 1995 and 2.2 times as likely in 2003.

Suspension and Disability

Risk Indices and Relative Risk Indices were also calculated to evaluate differences in rates of suspension by disability. Students with disabilities were between 1.7 and 2.2 times as likely to be suspended as students without disabilities.

Suspension and the Combination of Race and Disability

Risk indices and RRIs for suspensions by the combination of race and disability were calculated from 2001 to 2003. The Relative Risk Index for each group is the ratio of the RI for each specific group to the RI for non-disabled Caucasian students (the majority of the population). The RRIs for students with disabilities varied over the three year period and increased sharply in 2003. The data indicated that African American students with no disabilities were 2.33 times as likely to be suspended as Caucasian students with no disabilities in 2003. During this same year, students with disabilities were 2.17 times more likely to be suspended than students without disabilities, and African American students with disabilities were 4.78 times as likely to be suspended as Caucasian students without disabilities. All

students with disabilities regardless of race were more likely to be suspended in 2003 than in 2001.

Conclusion

The Maryland suspension data indicated that African American students and students with disabilities in Maryland were disproportionately suspended. African Americans with disabilities had the highest risk for suspensions in Maryland.

Recent research[7] suggests these students are more vulnerable to academic failure, delinquency, and future court involvement. However, the findings of this study are correlational and our analyses did not allow us to determine a causal relationship between race, disability, and risk for suspension.

The findings suggest the need for future investigations of the relationship between school exclusions and involvement in the juvenile justice system. Additionally, there is a need to more closely track and analyze suspension practices in this state. We suggest a data collection system that monitors suspensions of individuals by a variety of individual student characteristics. Such a system will allow for policies that respond to disciplinary concerns equitably, regardless of race or disability status.

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[1] Gagnon, J. C., & Leone, P. (2001, Winter). Alternative strategies for school violence prevention. *New Directions for Youth Development: Theory, Practice, and Research, 92,* 101-126.

[2] Gun Free Schools Act of 1994, Public Law 103-382, 108 Statute 3907, Title 14.

[3] Skiba, R. J., Michael, R. S., Nardo, A. C., Peterson, R. L. (2002). The color of discipline: Sources of racial and gender disproportionality in school punishment. *Urban Review, 34*(4), 317-343; Skiba, R. J., Peterson, R. L., & Williams, T. (1997). Office referrals and suspension: Disciplinary intervention in middle schools. *Education & Treatment of Children, 20*(3), 295-316.; Townsend, B.L. (2000). The disproportionate discipline of African American learners: Reducing school suspensions and expulsions. *Exceptional Children, 66*(3). 381-392.

[5] Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, P.L. 105.17 (1997).

[4, 6] General Accounting Office (2001). *Student discipline: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act: Report to the Committees on Appropriations, U. S. Senate and House of Representatives*. Washington, DC: Author.

[7] Drakeford, W. & Garfinkel, L. (2000). Differential Treatment of African American Youth. *Reclaiming Youth. 9*(1), 51-52; Leone, P. E., Christle, C. A., Nelson, C. M., Skiba, R., Frey, A., & Jolivette, K. (2003). *School failure, race, and disability: Promoting positive outcomes, decreasing vulnerability for involvement with the juvenile delinquency system.* College Park, Maryland: National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice (EDJJ).

Establishing and Maintaining Quality Education Programs in Juvenile Corrections

By Lucky Mason

A high quality education program is essential for the rehabilitation of incarcerated youth and their successful return to the community. Identifying dilemmas facing administrators and teachers within juvenile correctional facilities is not difficult. The real challenge is developing and maintaining high quality programs.

At the 27th Annual Conference of Teacher Educators of Children and Youth with Severe Behavior Disorders in Tempe, Arizona (November 2003), a panel of distinguished professionals working in juvenile corrections addressed the challenges facing administrators and staff and described how they promoted and maintained quality education programs. The group included Dr. Kathleen Karol[1], Superintendent of Education for Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections; Dianne Gadow[2], Superintendent of The Ferris School in Wilmington, Delaware; and Dr. Edna O'Connor, Director of Education at the Oak Hill Academy in Laurel, Maryland. These administrators work in systems that have experienced court-approved settlement agreements designed to improve conditions

of confinement and ensure that quality education services are available for youth.

Each panelist briefly described the system within which they work and the major initiatives they have underway. Dr. Karol noted that the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections (ADJC) operates five secure care schools, housing between 650 and 700 students. Approximately 48% of the population is Latino. ADJC provides a GED track, a high school track, and a middle school instructional track. The schools also provide Opportunity Classrooms for students who finish their term mid-semester. To assure high standards at her facilities, Dr. Karol expects her administrators and teachers to use the Arizona curriculum to guide instruction. Previously, teachers did not rely on the AZ curriculum. Dr. Karol also described her efforts to establish common procedures throughout the ADJC schools

A second panelist, Ms. Dianne Gadow is Superintendent at The Ferris School in Delaware. This maximum secure care facility houses approximately 80 boys, nearly 90% of whom are African American. Ms. Gadow reported that she and her staff have transformed The School into a, "total learning environment" through the development a shared vision among staff and on-going collaboration and support from community groups. The school also supports a six-week transition program in a less-secure living unit called Mowlds Cottage.

Ms. Gadow also noted two key features of her program. First, she has worked to create norms within the Ferris School that held staff accountable. Second, she has welcomed volunteer mentors into the facility.

The third panelist, Dr. Edna O'Connor of the Oak Hill Academy, directs a school for adjudicated youth from Washington, DC. Oak Hill is a public school within a juvenile correction facility that serves both male and female students. Although the average daily attendance is about 180 students, over 1000 students attend the school each year, ninety-five percent of whom are African American. The school has been monitored by the courts for 17 years.

During her four years at Oak Hill, Dr. O'Connor has viewed the involvement of the DC Superior Court as a source of support for the education program. She has worked to promote equity and provide opportunities for her students. She began with a strategic plan to guide the changes in the school program. An initial step involved assuring that qualified and certified teachers taught within the content area in which they were certified. She also established an intensive staff development program that was consistent with the standards for the District of Columbia public schools.

Dr. O'Connor also worked to clean-up the environment at the school. Her approach involved purchasing new furniture and opening a state-of-the-art library for the students. Also, students began wearing khaki pants and polo shirts instead of the sweat suits often seen in juvenile facilities. She credits the improved conditions in the school and the school uniforms for students as having a positive effect on how children and teachers view learning and their time in the classroom

After initial descriptions of their facilities and some of the challenges they've faced, each panelist commented on the relationship between the secure care staff and the educational staff. Ms. Gadow acknowledged the common division between these groups and the importance of mutual respect for each other's roles. She further emphasized that both groups are essential to the operation of the facility.

Ms. Gadow acknowledged that much of her staff experienced a paradigm shift with the increased emphasis on education. For example, teachers and the line staff were

expected to be aware of students' Individual Education Plans. Also, disruptive behavior by a few students would no longer be a reason for canceling classes for the school day. Rather to address behavioral issues, common expectations of students were established throughout the facility. Further, teachers were expected to handle behavior problems within the classroom; the line staff became a part of an intervention only when necessary. A major change at the Ferris School that supported these changes involved raising the qualifications of line staff. The Ferris School now requires college degrees as a condition of employment for all employees including custody staff.

Dr. Karol has promoted collaboration between educators and custody staff by requiring teachers to arrive at school in time to meet with direct care staff. Teachers are also encouraged to work with the custody staff during transitions throughout the school day. Dr. O'Connor added that she holds weekly meetings with the officers to discuss school operations and listen to the custody staff. She also provides the officers with occasional breakfasts to thank them for their efforts in supporting the school. Clearly, for Dr. O'Connor, Dr. Karol, and Ms. Gadow, the success of the students at their facility is the responsibility of all educational and correctional staff.

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[1] Kathleen Karol is now a consultant and is no longer working for the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections.

[2] Dianne Gadow is now the Deputy Director of the Arizona Department of Juvenile Corrections.

Star Students in Juvenile Corrections

The Arizona Daily Star reported that a 17-year-old boy at Pima County's Juvenile Detention Center earned the highest GED score in Arizona and one of the highest in the nation.

The student had been on the honor roll, was involved in sports, and held a part time job. After developing alcohol and drug problems, the boy was convicted as a minor in possession of alcohol, entered a rehabilitation program, and was placed in detention for 48 days for failing to attend various court-mandated meetings.

The student said, "I really wanted to be a student in college. I thought the GED would be my best bet." The teenager plans to work this coming summer, attend Pima Community College for two years, and earn his bachelor's degree at the University of Arizona.

Resources for Parents

The Technical Assistance Alliance

By
Lili Garfinkel

The ALLIANCE is an innovative project that supports a unified technical assistance (TA) system for the purpose of developing, assisting, and coordinating Parent Training and Information Centers (PTI's) in each state and 30 Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRC's). Staff provide information and assistance to parents of children with disabilities, as well as professionals who work with children (e.g., corrections

professionals, educators, human service professionals).

The National ALLIANCE TA Center is located at PACER Center in Minneapolis
www.taalliance.org
Toll-free 1-888-248-0822

In addition, there are six other regions:

Region 1 TAC SPAN in Newark NJ
www.spannj.org
Toll-free 1-866-637-8221

Region 2 TAC ECAC in Davidson NC
www.ecac-parentcenter.org
Toll-free 1-800-962- 6817 (NC only)

Region 3 TAC FNDF in Clearwater, FLA
www.fndfl.org
727-523-8687

Region 4 TAC OCECD, Marian OH
www.ocecd.org
740-382-5452

Region 5 TAC PEAK in Colorado Springs, Colorado
www.peakparent.org
Toll-free 1-800-284-0251

Region 6 TAC Matrix in Novato CA
www.matrixparents.org
Toll-free 1-800-578-2592

We encourage professionals with questions about disabilities, special education law, parent involvement, transition planning and any other relevant issues to contact these Centers. The staff is knowledgeable and will provide you with excellent resources.

Research to Practice

Research-Based Practices

Recent legislation, such as the No Child Left Behind Act (2001)[1] promotes the use of research-based practices for teaching students. Also, mandates within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997)[2] require that students with disabilities be provided access to the general education curriculum. One way to enhance this access is to use research-based practices.

However, teachers in juvenile corrections may have difficulty finding research-based practices that focus specifically on the juvenile correctional school setting. As a result, teachers must rely on practices that are proven effective within inclusionary, resource room, and self-contained classes in public schools.

There are several Internet resources for teachers that provide examples of research-based practices.

http://www.ed.gov/nclb/landing.jhtml?src=pb
This is the website for the U.S. Department of Education. On the left, click the link that says, *Proven Methods*.

http://www.cast.org/ncac/index.cfm?i=1942
This website is by The National Center on Accessing the General Education Curriculum.

http://www.ku-crl.org/iei/sim/index.html
This is an excellent website by The University of Kansas Center for Research on Learning: Institute for Effective Instruction.

http://www.academicaccess.org/index.html
This is another good resource from the Institute for Academic Success.

Comprehensive and ongoing professional development is the most effective approach for providing teachers with information on effective instructional practices. However, the noted websites can provide additional ideas that will ensure students with and without disabilities in juvenile corrections have appropriate support and access to the general education curriculum.

[1] *No Child Left Behind Act. Reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act*. Pub. L. 107 110 §2102(4) (2001).

[2] Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, P.L. 105.17 (1997).

From Youth In Corrections

Time Ticks Away!!!
By Monty

Staring at the sky, cold and
Gray,
You don't realize how much time ticks
Away,
I take a short walk and begin to think of
You,
And try to trace the time, where our love was so
True.
Pacing my time, not wanting to
Stay,
But thinking of you makes time tick
Away.
In bed at night, tossing and
Turning,
Without you beside me, my heart keeps
Burning.
Waking a new day with no picture in
Frame,
You really don't realize how much
Time Ticks Away.

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EDJJ

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