
CHILDREN LEFT BEHIND POLICY BRIEFS
SUPPLEMENTARY ANALYSIS 2-A

DISPROPORTIONALITY IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AMONG MINORITY STUDENTS
IN INDIANA: DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

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Disproportionality in School Discipline Among Minority Students in Indiana: Description and Analysis

There is no question that schools have the right and responsibility to apply methods that preserve school safety and produce a climate conducive to learning. At the same time, schools have the responsibility to maximize student opportunity to learn, and to ensure that any educational interventions do not disproportionately create negative outcomes for students based on background characteristics. Previous research on school discipline suggests that school removal is not equally distributed and systematically varies by characteristics of the school, the school's leadership, and the student body.¹

Many of Indiana's minority groups, especially the African American and Hispanic communities, were found to experience out-of-school suspension and expulsion at rates disproportionately higher than other racial groups. Specifically, out-of-school suspension and expulsion incident rates for African Americans was by far the highest of any ethnic group, with a suspension rate four times higher than Whites and an expulsion rate two and one-half times higher. The Hispanic population was also found to be disproportionately higher, with suspensions and expulsions being two times greater than Whites.²

The present analysis disaggregated race by school characteristics in order to understand how disciplinary rates by racial category vary within school contexts. Specifically, it describes out-of-school suspension and expulsion³ usage for Indiana's three largest racial groups, (i.e., African Americans, Hispanics, and Whites)⁴, for the 2002-2003 school year in the following areas: (1) a school's urban, suburban, town, or rural locale designation⁵ (2) type of infraction⁶, (3) school level (e.g. elementary, middle, or high school), and (4) school achievement as measured by ISTEP.⁷

Racial Differences by Locale

Figure 1 illustrates that out-of-school suspension rates vary by locale for different racial groups in Indiana. Specifically, this figure shows that the incident rate for African Americans is higher in all four locales compared to other racial groups, but the highest in suburban schools at a rate of 52.39 per 100 African American students. The incident rate for Whites is the highest in urban schools, with a rate of almost 17 incidents per 100 White students. The rate for Hispanics is roughly equal in urban and suburban schools at around 19 incidents per 100 students. In suburban schools, African Americans were 5 times as likely and Hispanics almost 2 times as likely to experience out-of-school suspension when compared to Whites.

Figure 2 illustrates similar for expulsion. The expulsion incident rate for African Americans and Hispanics is the highest in suburban schools. Nearly one and one-half out of 100 African Americans and close to 1 out of 100 Hispanics were expelled from suburban schools during this school year. Suburban schools were also found to be the location where disproportionality in expulsion is the greatest. When compared to Whites,

African Americans were 2.5 times as likely and Hispanics 1.67 times as likely to be expelled in suburban schools.

Racial Differences by Type of Infraction

Table 1 shows the incident rate for each type of disciplinary infraction, disaggregated by racial group. It shows that there is an extremely low incident rate for each racial group in the categories of Alcohol, Drugs, Weapons and Tobacco.⁸ This is consistent with information presented in briefing paper two⁹ that showed a relatively low percentage, 5%, of Indiana's students are suspended out of school for these infractions. The table also shows that the greatest disparities in out-of-school suspension by race occurs in the categories of Disruptive Behavior and Other. Specifically, African Americans are almost 4 times as likely to experience out-of-school suspension for Disruptive Behavior and nearly 5 times as likely for Other compared to Whites. Hispanics are nearly 2 times as likely to be suspended in these two categories compared to Whites.

Table 2 shows that the categories of Drugs, Disruptive Behavior, and Other all have expulsion incident rates for each racial group above 1 incident for every 1000 students.¹⁰ Disproportionality is the greatest in the categories of Disruptive Behavior and Other with African Americans being 3.38 and 2.27 times as likely as Whites to be expelled in these categories respectively. Hispanic students were 1.76 times as likely as White students to be expelled for Disruptive Behavior and 1.59 times as likely as Whites to be expelled under the category Other. African Americans are also overrepresented for Drugs (1.4 times as likely), and Hispanics are underrepresented in this category compared to Whites.

Racial Differences by School Level

At each of the three school level designations, the African American and Hispanic incident rates are higher than the White incident rate for out-of-school suspensions (Figure 3). Incident rates are significantly higher for all racial groups at the secondary level (middle and high school) compared to the elementary school level. The highest out-of-school suspension rates for both African Americans and Hispanics are at the high school level, but the highest rate for Whites is at the middle school level.

Both African Americans and Hispanics are overrepresented in out-of-school suspension at all levels. Disproportionality by school level shows that the greatest African American overrepresentation is at the elementary school level (see Figure 4). At the elementary school level, African Americans are 6 times as likely as Whites to be subject to out-of-school suspension. The highest rate of disproportionality in suspension among Hispanics is at the high school level.

Figure 5 shows that expulsion rates increase from elementary to high school for all racial groups. African Americans and Hispanics have a significantly higher expulsion rate, especially at the middle and high school levels.¹¹ When compared to the White rate, expulsion disproportionality is the highest for African Americans and Hispanics in high school.

Racial Differences in the Discipline and Achievement Relationship

In briefing paper two, we reported a negative relationship between the rates of school achievement and disciplinary use. To what extent does this trend hold for different racial/ethnic groups? Table 3 illustrates that, for all racial categories, out-of-school suspension and expulsion rates are significantly related to achievement outcomes (percent of students passing ISTEP). This relationship is significant for out-of-school suspension for all groups, and significant for expulsion for all categories but Hispanic. In particular, the strength of the relationship is greatest for African Americans with correlation coefficients being $-.381$ and $-.272$ for out-of-school suspension and expulsion respectively.

Summary

This analysis has described and analyzed disproportionality among Indiana's minority students. Specifically, it has shown that:

- Indiana's two largest minority groups are overrepresented in all four locale designations, with the greatest disproportionality occurring in suburban schools for both out-of-school suspension and expulsion.
- Disproportionality is the greatest for both minority groups in the disciplinary categories of Disruptive Behavior and Other for out-of-school suspension and expulsion.
- The highest rates of out-of-school suspension occur at the secondary school level for all racial categories
- Disproportionality in out-of-school suspension is the highest in elementary schools for African Americans and in high schools for Hispanics.
- The rate of, and disproportionality in expulsion for both African Americans and Hispanics is the highest at the high school level.
- The relationship between disciplinary use and achievement holds for racial groups independently, and is strongest for African Americans.

The finding that two of Indiana's minority groups are more likely to be suspended out of school and expelled at higher rates in urban, suburban, town, and rural schools is consistent with previous research in the area of racial disparities in school discipline.¹² The fact that the greatest disproportionality by locale is within suburban schools is noteworthy. While previous analyses¹³ found the highest overall out-of-school suspension rate was in urban schools, the results of this analysis suggest that racial differences in use are the greatest in suburban areas, especially for African Americans. Since suburban schools have among the lowest rates of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch¹⁴, these results cast doubt on the notion that disproportionality in the administration of school discipline is primarily due to poverty.

African Americans and Hispanics were also found to be overrepresented in out-of-school suspensions and expulsions at all school levels. The largest disparities in discipline between African Americans and Whites are found at the elementary school level, with African Americans in elementary school being subject to out-of-school suspension at a rate 6 times higher than Whites in elementary school. This suggests that involvement with a school's disciplinary removal system begins earlier for African American students. Further, the expulsion incident rate rises significantly for all groups from elementary to high school. At all levels, the rate of expulsions for African Americans are the highest with a rate that is 3 times that of white students by high school. Thus, not only do African Americans begin contact with school discipline earlier, but are expelled at greater proportions by the time they reach high school.

The disciplinary categories of Disruptive Behavior and Other were found to have the highest incident rates for all racial groups. Further, these are the two categories where disproportionality for African Americans and Hispanics are the greatest. This does suggest, however, that African American and Hispanic students are at a heightened risk for school removal in categories that may include both serious and more minor offenses. Indiana's current data disciplinary data collection method limits the conclusions that can be drawn from this information. Previous analyses, however, have found no evidence that minority students are suspended or expelled more frequently due to engaging in more disruptive behavior.¹⁵

Out-of-school suspension and expulsion rates were negatively related to the percent of students passing ISTEP for all racial groups. Further, the strength of the achievement-discipline relationship is strongest for African Americans. This suggests that school removal may have a particularly negative effect on achievement levels for African Americans. This finding has heightened importance for schools in this era, as federal and state policies mandate that schools show achievement gains for many different student subgroups, including racial subgroups, each year.

In sum then, Indiana's minority populations are at higher risk for experiencing out-of-school suspension and expulsion. Many negative academic and social risks are associated with school removal, including grade retention, drop-out, school disengagement, arrest and incarceration.¹⁶ These data show that African Americans are much more likely to experience the negative outcomes of removal than students in other racial categories. As Indiana's educators and lawmakers work to develop school discipline systems that keep schools safe and maximize student learning, attention must be devoted to ensuring that these systems do indeed produce their intended outcomes for *all* of Indiana's students.

End Notes

¹ Advancement Project/Civil Rights Project (2000, February). *Opportunities suspended: The devastating consequences of zero tolerance and school discipline*. Cambridge, MA: Author; Raffaele Mendez, L.M. & Knoff, H.M. (2003). Who gets suspended from school and why: A demographic analysis of schools and disciplinary infractions in a large school district. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 26, 30-51; Skiba, R.J., Michael, R.S., Nardo, A.C., & Peterson, R. (2002). The color of discipline. *Urban Review*, 34, 317-

342; Wu, S.C., Pink, W.T., Crain, R.L., & Moles, O. (1982). Student suspensions: A critical reappraisal. *Urban Review*, 14, 245-303

² For descriptive results of out-of-school suspension and expulsion in Indiana, see *Unplanned Outcomes: Suspensions and Expulsions in Indiana* (Rausch & Skiba, 2004) available online at <http://ceep.indiana.edu/ChildrenLeftBehind>

³ Indiana collects suspension and expulsion data by incident and thus reflects the duplicated count of incidents. Therefore, the data reflect the incident rate in the student population, not the rate of students suspended or expelled, which limits the conclusions that can be drawn. The incident rate per 100 students in the population, however, has been used in previous research and does provide a good index of the amount of suspensions or expulsions that are occurring within a given population. Incident rates are calculated by dividing the total number of incidents in a population with that population's student enrollment, then multiplying by 100, yielding a standardized and comparable index; Raffaele Mendez & Knoff (2003)

⁴ These groups were selected due to their high population proportions and due to evidence of significant disproportionality in this state (Rausch & Skiba, 2004)

⁵ Schools are assigned one of eight locale classifications by the United States Department of the Census. These locales were collapsed by population and location yielding four primary locale designations (i.e., urban, suburban, town, and rural)

⁶ The disciplinary infractions students in Indiana can be suspended out-of-school for are alcohol, drugs, weapons, tobacco, disruptive behavior, and other. For expulsion infractions, the categories are alcohol, drugs, weapons, deadly weapons, rifle/shotgun, loaded rifle/shotgun, disruptive behavior, legal settlement, and other. For the present analysis, the expulsion categories of weapons, deadly weapons, rifle/shotgun and loaded rifle/shotgun were collapsed yielding one overall weapon category. Legal settlement expulsions were not included in the analysis due to the low number of incidents (14) in the state.

⁷ ISTEP is Indiana's state accountability assessment administered to students in grades 3, 6, 8 and 10 for the year of analysis (2002-2003). A school's percentage of students passing ISTEP was used as a measure of achievement. It was calculated by dividing the total number of students who passed both the Math and English/Language Arts sections by the total number of students tested in that school

⁸ Further analyses were not conducted for the categories of Alcohol, Drugs, Weapons or Tobacco due to their extremely low incident rate per 100 students for each racial group

⁹ Rausch & Skiba (2004)

¹⁰ Further analyses were not conducted for the categories of Alcohol, Weapons or Tobacco due to their extremely low incident rate per 100 students for each racial group

¹¹ Due to the extremely low expulsion occurrences at the elementary school level for all racial groups, no further analyses were conducted

¹² Advancement Project/Civil Rights Project (2000, February); Skiba et al. (2002)

¹³ Rausch & Skiba (2004)

¹⁴ The highest to lowest average percentages of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch are as follows: Rural schools (25.00%), Suburban schools (28.53%), Town schools (36.87%), and Urban schools (55.51%)

¹⁵ Skiba (2002).

¹⁶ Brooks, K., Schiraldi, V., & Ziedenberg, J. (1999). *School house type: Two years later*. Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice. Online. Available at www.cjcj.org; *Facts about prisons and prisoners* (Briefing Fact Sheet 1035). Washington, D.C.: Sentencing Project; Nichols, J.D., Ludwin, W.G., & Iadicola, P. (1999). A darker shade of gray: A year-end analysis of discipline and suspension data. *Equity and Excellence in Education*, 32, 43-55.

Figure 1. Out-of-School Suspension Incident Rates by Race and Locale

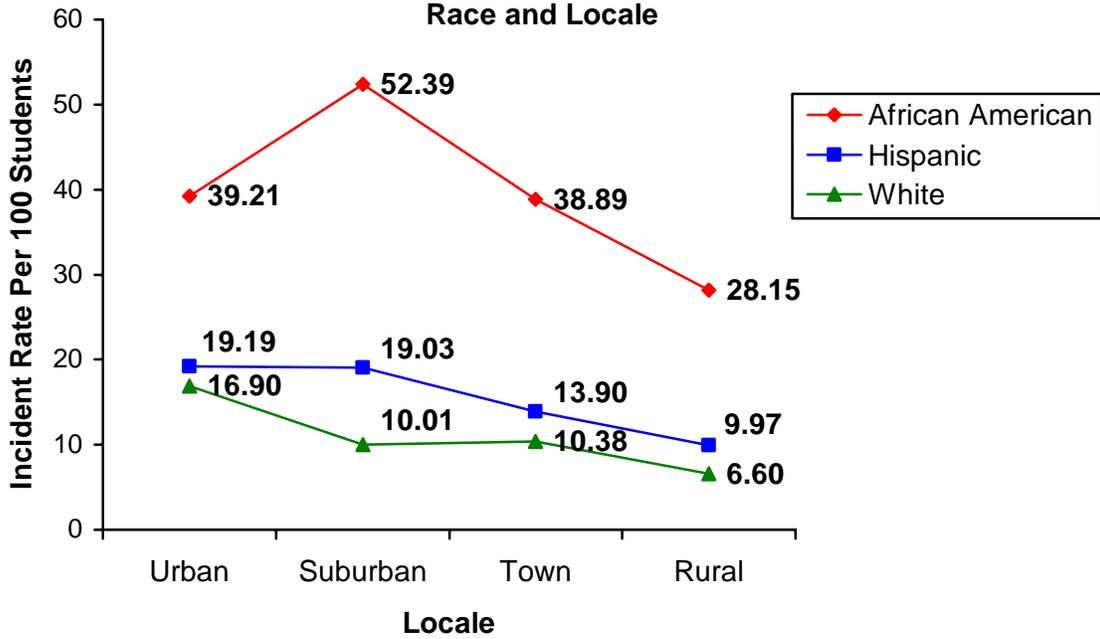


Figure 2. Expulsion Incident Rates by Race and Locale

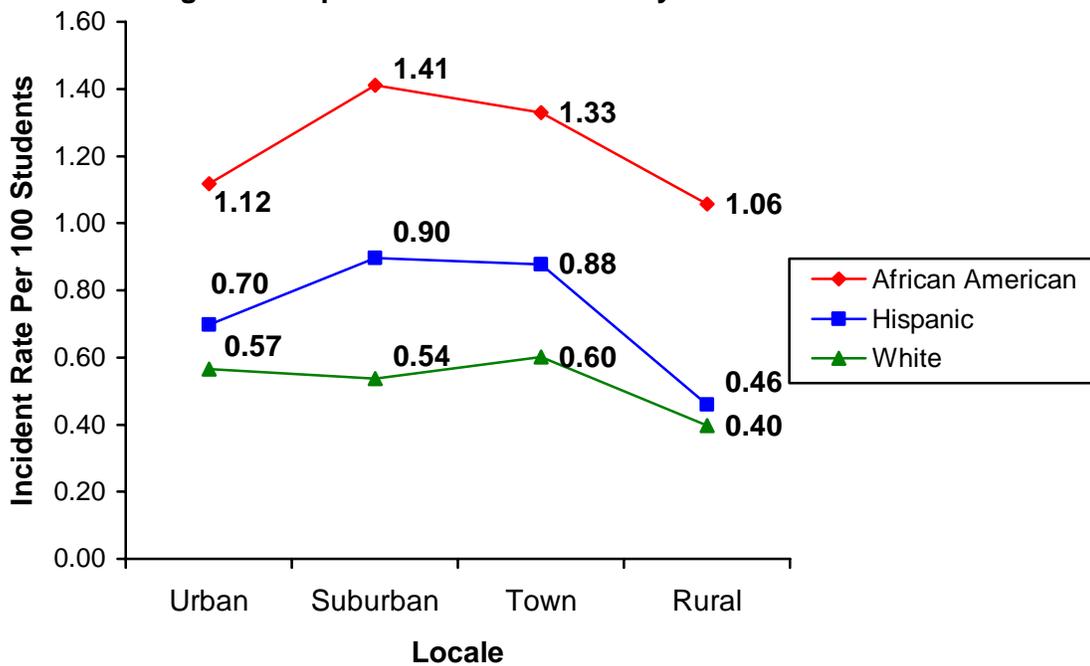


Table 1.

Out-of-School Suspension Incident Rate by Disciplinary Category and Race^a

Disciplinary Category	White	<u>Racial Classification</u>	
		African American	Hispanic
Alcohol	0.07	0.05	0.05
Drugs	0.26	0.25	0.22
Weapons	0.10	0.22	0.15
Tobacco	0.32	0.18	0.12
Disruptive Behavior	5.22	19.97	9.39
Other	4.14	19.81	8.83

^a Incident Rates were calculated by summing the total number of incidents in a particular disciplinary category by race and dividing by that racial category's total enrollment in the population, then multiplying by 100 yielding a comparable index

Table 2.

Expulsion Incident Rate by Disciplinary Category and Race^a

Disciplinary Category	White	<u>Racial Classification</u>	
		African American	Hispanic
Alcohol	0.02	0.01	0.02
Drugs	0.12	0.17	0.11
Weapons ^b	0.02	0.05	0.04
Tobacco	0.01	0.00	0.00
Disruptive Behavior	0.16	0.53	0.28
Other	0.18	0.40	0.28

^a Incident Rates were calculated by summing the total number of incidents in a particular disciplinary category by racial category and dividing by that racial category's total enrollment in the population, then multiplying by 100 yielding a comparable index

^b The category of Weapons combines expulsion incidents for deadly weapons, weapons, loaded rifle/shotgun, and rifle/shotgun

Figure 3. Out-of-School Suspension Incident Rates by Race and School Level

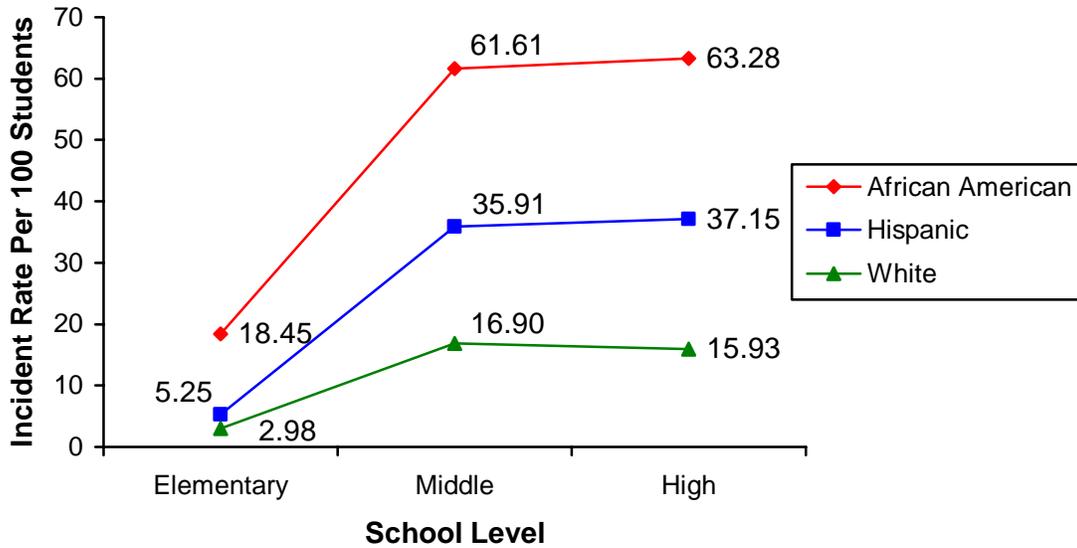


Figure 4. Out-of-School Suspension Relative Risk Ratios by Race and School Level

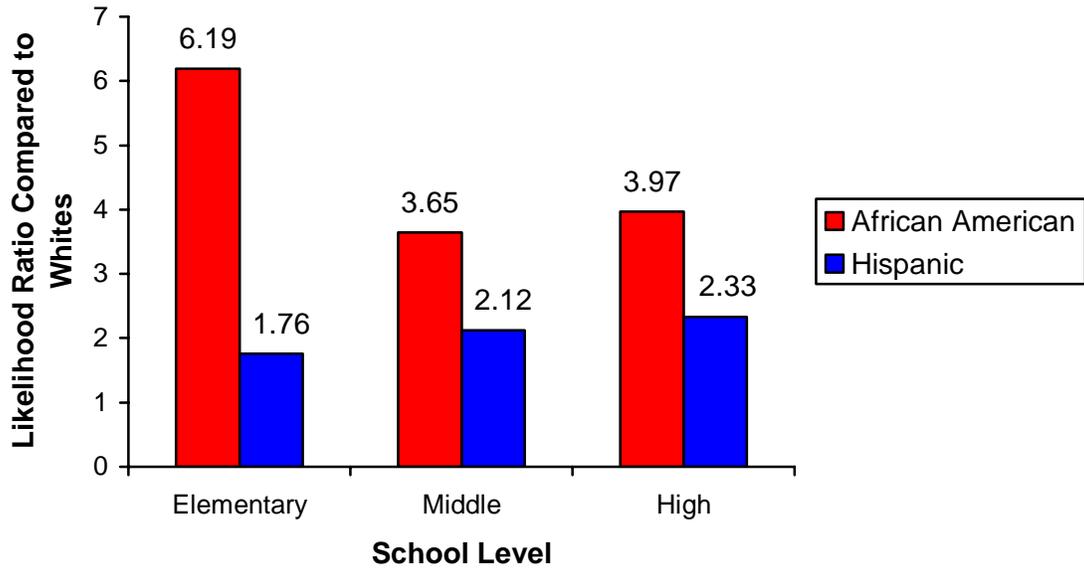


Figure 5. Expulsion Incident Rates by Race and School Level

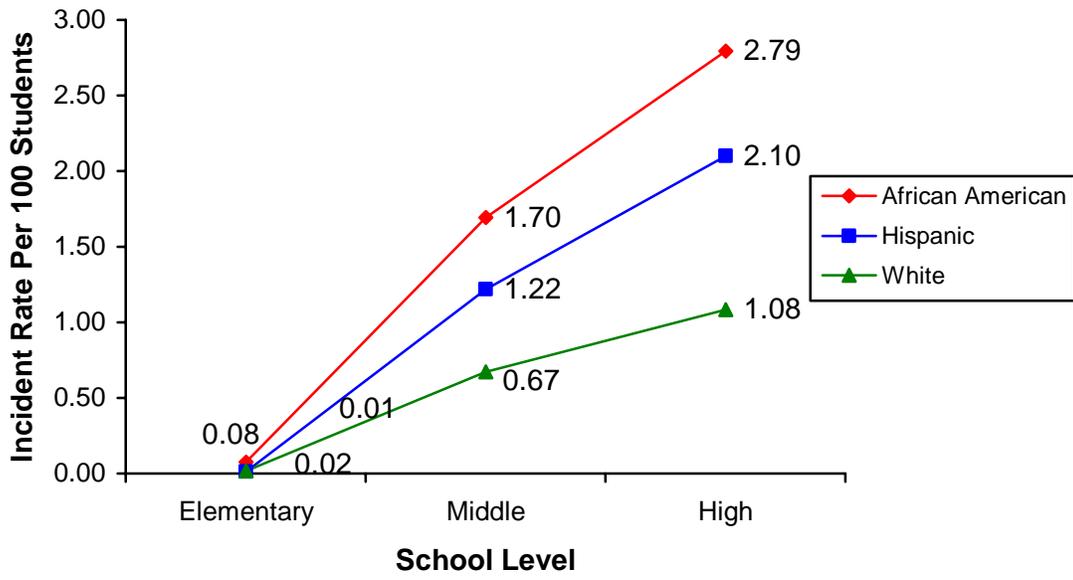


Table 3.

Bivariate Correlations Between Disciplinary Classification and Percent of Students Passing ISTEP^a by Race

Disciplinary Classification	<u>Racial Category</u>		
	White	African American	Hispanic
Out-of-School Suspension Incident Rate ^b	-.349**	-.381**	-.128*
Expulsion Incident Rate ^c	-.154**	-.272**	-.035 ^{ns}

Note: ** denotes significance at the $p < .01$ level. * denotes significance at the $p < .05$ level. ^{ns} denotes not significant.

^a Percent of students passing ISTEP was calculated by dividing the number of students who passed both the Math and English/Language Arts sections by the total number of students tested in that school for each racial group independently

^b The out-of-school suspension rate was calculated by summing the out-of-school suspension incidents by the total school enrollment for each racial group independently

^c The expulsion incident rate was calculated by summing the expulsion incident by the total school enrollment for each racial group independently