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Understanding Student Discipline Practices in Charter Schools: A Research Agenda

September 2015

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About This Report

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ABOUT THE CENTER ON REINVENTING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Through research and policy analysis, CRPE seeks ways to make public education more effective, especially for America's disadvantaged students. We help redesign governance, oversight, and dynamic education delivery systems to make it possible for great educators to do their best work with students and to create a wide range of high-quality public school options for families. Our work emphasizes evidence over posture and confronts hard truths. We search outside the traditional boundaries of public education to find pragmatic, equitable, and promising approaches to address the complex challenges facing public education. Our goal is to create new possibilities for the parents, educators, and public officials who strive to improve America's schools. CRPE is a nonpartisan, self-sustaining organization affiliated with the University of Washington Bothell. Our work is funded through private philanthropic dollars, federal grants, and contracts.

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Fair use of exclusionary discipline is a rising concern in public schools. At issue is whether this type of discipline is disproportionately applied to certain groups of students and whether some charter schools use it more frequently. For the first time, data compiled by the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights capture discipline practices from *all* public schools, allowing for comparison between the traditional public and charter sectors. However, because they are reported at the school level, not at the individual student level, these data paint an incomplete picture.

To truly understand discipline practices between and within school sectors, a panel of experts recommends a more comprehensive approach to capturing discipline data and to evaluating and comparing school discipline practices. A robust research agenda on school discipline might include the reasons why different approaches to discipline policy are developed, how schools define and conceptualize discipline practices, the impact of discipline practices on teacher supply and turnover, the interplay between school culture and discipline and the effects of exclusionary discipline on the affected students and their peers and teachers.

Introduction

Though many debates rage about how well public schools in the United States serve students from increasingly diverse backgrounds, one debate gaining particular steam revolves around exclusionary discipline practices. How often are students suspended or expelled? Are certain populations—for instance, those coming from disadvantaged backgrounds, minorities, and students receiving special education—disproportionately represented among those sent home for the day, the week, or weeks at a time? Are certain types of schools, in particular, charter schools, more likely to rely on suspension or expulsion as a way of keeping order and maintaining their institutional mission?

Indeed, media outlets, policymakers, civil rights groups, and charter critics across the country are reporting on these and other questions—including those about the differences between charter and district schools—and they will rely on researchers to provide them with good analyses.[1] Sound sector comparisons are always difficult to make and require researchers to pay careful attention to the data and methods they employ.

To this end, in April 2015, the Center on Reinventing Public Education convened a group of experts to discuss approaches to examining the use of exclusionary discipline in charter schools. In this brief, we draw from these conversations to outline the kinds of methods and data that will allow for useful sector comparisons, as well as other things we can learn from and about charter schools on the topic of discipline in schools.

Why We Should Be Concerned About Exclusionary Discipline

Certainly, disciplinary systems—which include exclusionary practices—serve a useful and crucial purpose: they exist to create a safe and productive learning environment.[2] At the same time, there are at least three reasons for concern about the high use of exclusionary practices.

First, students who are not in school are missing out on learning opportunities. Exclusionary practices deny students access to teaching and learning, and prior research makes clear that there is a strong positive relationship between the number of days that students spend in the classroom and their academic achievement.[3] Second, the disparate application of exclusionary practices across student groups raises civil rights concerns. Students of color, students with disabilities, students from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds, and students of other traditionally marginalized groups receive a disproportionate number of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions, even when committing the same infractions for which their peers do not receive exclusionary discipline.[4] Third, the effects of exclusionary practices can be long lasting in students' lives. Students who are expelled or suspended are more likely to disengage from or drop out of school, and come into contact with the criminal justice system.[5] Relatedly, we know relatively less about how exclusionary practices impact shorter-term outcomes of excluded students and their peers.[6] The fact that little research has investigated how suspension and expulsion affect, for instance, students' engagement in school or their perceptions of whether their school provides a caring and supportive environment further substantiates calls for caution about relying so heavily on these disciplinary practices.

Why We Should Be Concerned About Exclusionary Discipline in the Charter Sector

Disciplinary practices in charter schools have raised particular concern among researchers, policymakers, and the media.[7] Two broad questions emerge. First, do charter schools suspend or expel students at higher rates than district-run public schools, controlling for differences in student populations? Critics of charter schools charge that these schools—especially those with a "no excuses" approach—rely greatly on exclusionary discipline, thereby returning the most challenging students to district schools.[8] Second, how open are charter schools to accepting and serving students who have had disciplinary problems at other schools? Charter schools and charter management organizations (CMO) may not have the same kind of obligation to serve expelled students as districts and district-run schools. If a student is expelled from a charter school, there is no requirement that the student be accepted into any other charter school or into another school in the same CMO or network. Districts, on the other hand, are typically obligated to move an expelled student—whether from a district or charter school—to another school within the district.[9] In these ways, questions about the charter sector's application of exclusionary disciplinary practices are linked to broader charges levied against the sector for "creaming" or "counseling out" in order to boost test scores and craft cohorts of students who fit the particular school's mold.

As a result, it is natural—and important—for sector comparisons to surface. And given that the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR) recently changed its data collection strategy by requiring *all* public schools, including charter schools, to provide the same data, these comparisons are likely to happen sooner rather than later. As discussed later in this brief, cross-sector comparative analyses must be done with great care, using sophisticated techniques so that findings are defensible and informative. Rather than trying to determine "which sector is better," in terms of over- or under-utilizing exclusionary discipline practices, we can learn much from carefully designed analyses that frame questions around common issues about discipline facing both sectors, that take advantage of the variation both *between* and *within* sectors, and that account for differences in student population and institutional characteristics across schools and sectors. Our panel of experts discussed the limitations of currently available discipline data and recommended key questions, methods, and data that could provide constructive information about sector differences in using exclusionary policy.

Looking Across and Within Public School Sectors

When our panel of experts talked about posing and answering meaningful, interesting, and policy-relevant questions, two particular issues arose. First, what information do we have at our disposal with which to conduct within- and between-sector analyses? Second, how do we go about leveraging that information to draw sound conclusions? In other words, what available data and methodological approaches can best help us understand cross-sector differences and within-sector variation in the application of exclusionary discipline practices?

The Data

The largest national database about exclusionary disciplinary practices in schools is collected by the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) housed in the U.S. Department of Education. OCR collects its data biennially from local education agencies.[10] The most recent release in March of 2014 captures data from the 2011-2012 school year.[11] These are broad, national data on the use of exclusionary discipline in both the district-run and charter public school sectors, collected at the school-level and disaggregated by student group (race/ethnicity, sex, disability, and Limited English Proficiency status). As such, these data provide useful descriptive snapshots of the characteristics of students who are being suspended or expelled, and by which schools or districts. To the extent that policymakers, Congress, and the media appreciate being able to speak about national data and trends, federal data like those collected by the OCR offer an important resource to researchers.

At the same time, the OCR data are not going to provide us answers to deeper, and arguably more important, questions about discipline in schools and across sectors. A significant limitation of both the publicly available and restricted-use data is that they are reported at the school-level, not at the individual student-level.[12] These data do not allow researchers to follow individual students, and thus cannot provide detailed information about either the pathway to an exclusionary discipline event or a student's background. While the OCR's national data do include both the total number of suspensions and the number of unique students suspended (thereby offering, for instance, an indication of whether a small group of students are responsible for the majority of a school's suspensions), the data tell us little

about what led to those students being disciplined. Relatedly, the OCR disaggregates suspension rates by certain student subgroup (e.g., by race/ethnicity and disability status), but does not disaggregate rates in other ways, such as by eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch, grade level, and classroom or teacher characteristics. Additionally, *all* public schools—including charter schools—have only recently been required to report their discipline rates to the OCR, rendering it difficult to examine time trends.

These challenges mean that researchers will need to get creative in how they use, analyze, and interpret discipline data and how they look for new sources of data. If the goal of the research is not to make nationally representative claims about suspension and expulsion but rather to provide a deeper and more nuanced dive into the determinants of exclusionary discipline for students in a particular place, researchers would do well to better capitalize on other sources of data. Indeed, some bright spots exist at the state and local level where the discipline data are more robust. For example, West Virginia recently developed a system to better track student disciplinary referrals.[13] And the Texas Education Agency collects detailed student-level information on the type of disciplinary action taken and uses a 75-category offense classification to indicate the reason a student was disciplined.[14]

Additionally, even when data on disciplinary actions are included in longitudinal datasets that allow researchers to follow individual students over time, we sometimes don't have previous measures of discipline or behavior (unlike achievement data, which are regularly compiled for all students in certain grades and for certain subjects and can be used to establish a baseline or control for unobserved factors related to a student's ability or achievement) because many students who are suspended have not been suspended before. Students' records leading up to their first exclusionary event can only tell us that a student hasn't previously been suspended or expelled. However, this kind of information does exist and could be better utilized by researchers. In particular, the panel felt that indicators that may be routinely collected for all students, such as attendance records or surveys of students' attitudes or experiences, could produce more fine-grained measures of behavior or other student experiences prior to the measurement of suspension or expulsion.[15]

In these ways, data collected by cities, districts, charter networks, and schools hold tremendous promise for posing and answering key questions on the use of exclusionary discipline. To the degree that these entities have and are willing to share data with researchers, particularly longitudinal and individual-level data, they are among the best options for accessing data that can answer the most critical questions on use of exclusionary discipline.

The Data Exist, But Not Always the Access

Even when states and districts collect the kind of student-level, longitudinal data on discipline and behavior that would be helpful in comparing suspension and expulsion rates across schools and sectors and in assessing trends over time, many are hesitant to share these data with researchers because of privacy concerns. This has been a growing issue with achievement data, and it is likely even more problematic with behavior data. Thus, researchers should invest in developing better mechanisms for keeping data secure, and more clearly communicating those mechanisms with schools and districts. Certainly, most researchers are already very attuned to the need for data security, but they may need to take extra steps to gain trust and buy-in from those providing the data.

The panel also recommended the collection of new kinds of data. For instance, researchers could field original surveys of students, teachers, principals, and parents.[16] These data could include experiences with a school's disciplinary system as well as perceptions about the application of disciplinary practices. Researchers could also work with the growing number of districts that are administering surveys gauging students' socio-emotional skills and their school and classroom experiences.[17]

The Methods

The panel discussed a number of methods that can produce the most defensible, valid, and useful information on cross-sector and within-sector differences in the application of exclusionary discipline practices. Researchers need to pay particular attention to issues of external and internal validity as well as to peer and neighborhood effects. While such contextual effects matter to academic outcomes, the social environment in which a student lives and learns—and the extent to which those are incongruous—likely carry particular weight in the case of socio-behavioral outcomes like whether a student is suspended or expelled.[18] In this section, we highlight some important issues researchers should account for in designing their research.

Use longitudinal student-level data. Whereas the OCR data are collected at the school level, the panel noted the particular utility of student-level information. Under ideal circumstances, student-level data would include a consistent identifier allowing researchers to follow individual students across years, classrooms, schools, and even districts within a state, and to link students' test scores with their discipline, enrollment, and other background information. Without student-level data, all we would be able to do with school-level data would be multivariate analyses that controlled for some basic school demographics. This would necessarily be a descriptive exercise. Longitudinal student-level data, by contrast, would allow researchers to more precisely isolate the factors leading to suspension or expulsion and to follow an individual student to better understand their trajectory through a school's discipline system. These data would also allow researchers to observe students who transition from one sector (or school) to another, which would help us distinguish the effects of a school's disciplinary policies and practices from the effects of students' behavior on their likelihood of being suspended or expelled. In this way, we could

also assess whether students with previous discipline problems are being admitted to schools in either the traditional or charter public sector.

Focus on lottery studies. The panel also generally agreed that, at this point, studies relying on randomized admissions lotteries have to be our focus if we are interested in measuring the causal effects of charter schools on discipline rates. Since suspension and expulsion do not happen to everyone, there is even more concern about non-experimental methods (even if we had high quality student-level longitudinal data) in studies of discipline than in studies in which test scores are the outcomes of interest. With lottery studies, we approach experimental conditions by relying on the fact that students are admitted to oversubscribed schools at random. We can thus compare the outcomes of all the students who wanted to go to school A, but may have ended up (by chance) at schools A, B, or C. This makes lottery studies useful for both cross-sector and within-sector analyses: students who wanted to go to charter schools but instead were assigned by lottery to district schools form a more valid control group in cross-sector comparisons than simply looking at all students in both sectors, and lottery "losers" who enroll in other charter schools can help isolate within-sector causal impacts.

At the same time, lottery studies have limited generalizability for both the schools and the students to which their findings would apply. On the school side, we can only study schools of choice that are oversubscribed. This means that our estimates of a sector's effect on exclusionary discipline rates—or of a school's effect within a sector—only reflect the use of exclusionary discipline in high-demand schools. On the student side, not all parents actively choose schools for their children, and findings from lottery studies only reflect the experiences of a select group of students whose parents express intentionality in their school choices. Further, those that do participate in school choice and select an oversubscribed school may choose that school in part because of its approach to discipline.[19] It is not immediately clear, though, which way the latter point would bias results since parents may be selecting schools with particular approaches to discipline for one of a couple reasons: parents might want to send their student to a school with a "no excuses" discipline approach either because they know their student needs additional structure to keep them in line or because they want their child surrounded by an environment and peers that match their own discipline approach. In short, lottery studies tend not to include the average school or the average student.[20]

However, new ways in which some cities are setting up their school choice systems have the potential to alleviate these issues of limited generalizability. While many lottery studies focus on the "winners" and "losers" of an individual charter school or a disparate set of charters, common enrollment systems—like those currently in place in New Orleans and Denver—could increase the opportunities to employ lotteries to evaluate the effects of a wider range of schools in two ways.[21] First, common enrollment systems boost the number of students that participate in lotteries by centralizing the process and making choice easier and more transparent for families. Second, these systems apply the same lottery mechanism to all oversubscribed public schools—both charter *and* district-run. One might imagine, for example, a study looking at the impact on students in one school (or a set of schools) compared to students who applied for the same school but got into their second or

third choice. Of course, such a study would require more complex inferences than the simple treatment *v.* control approach of traditional lottery studies, which typically pool all non-lottery-winners into a single control group. In this case, lottery winners and losers exist in both sectors.

Other multivariate analyses can be helpful. The panel also deemed other multivariate regression methods potentially useful. However, to help account for the selection bias that is common in studies of charter school effects, multivariate analyses should control for as many factors as possible that are not influenced by the school or its policies but are hypothesized to influence whether a student would be suspended or expelled.[22] For example, a multivariate analysis should include controls for students' educational and demographic background, home environment, and discipline record prior to entering the school. This would help increase the likelihood that cross-sector and within-sector differences cannot be explained by those factors (see box for an example). At this time, however, many datasets contain only limited information about a student's demographic background, home life, and academic achievement, all of which might influence whether they are suspended or expelled.

Taking Student Characteristics into Account in Discipline Studies

A recent study finds that in Texas schools, black students and students with disabilities were disproportionately suspended and subsequently more likely to be held back a grade, to drop out, or to become involved in the juvenile justice system. While not a lottery study, and one that does not attempt to draw sector comparisons, this study does impressive work to control for a variety of exogenous factors. Drawing on a longitudinal student-level dataset, Fabelo and colleagues (2011) incorporate in their models a robust set of individual characteristics that are theoretically relevant to whether or not a student is disciplined. These include students' race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, attendance, academic performance, whether a female student was ever pregnant, whether students attend a majority white/non-white school, and whether a student's own race matches the majority of the students or teachers at their school. The researchers also control for a host of campus-level variables (including whether the school is a charter, the student-to-teacher ratio, teachers' average salaries, and average attendance rate) as well as county-level measures (such as the per capita income, the percentage of single-parent families, and the percentage of homes that are rented).

Source: Tony Fabelo et al., *Breaking School's Rules: A Statewide Study of How School Discipline Relates to Students' Success and Juvenile Justice Involvement*, 2011.

Studies that use student fixed effects could help in this regard by controlling for the unobservable factors other than school-level characteristics that impact a student's likelihood to be disciplined. Fixed-effects studies estimate the differences between charter and district schools by observing how a student's outcomes change when they move from one sector to the other. At the same time, these come with their own host of limitations, most crucially the fact that they rely on students' changing schools. Student transitions are not random or neutral events: disadvantaged students are more likely than advantaged students to change schools, students who have struggled socially in school and are at high risk for suspension or expulsion are also more likely to change schools, and such changes

constitute a disruption in and of themselves, which could lead to further encounters with disciplinary practices. If anything about a student's behavior, motivation, or home life changes over time, we could falsely attribute later disciplinary outcomes for this student with their school change, when it really was the change in behavior that prompted both the change in school and the change in the probability that the student was disciplined. Further, student fixed-effects studies have fallen out of favor as a means of measuring achievement impacts, and the relative infrequency of suspensions or expulsions make these studies even less well-suited to discipline outcomes.

Qualitative studies can add richness. Finally, the panel expressed enthusiasm for the lessons that could be gleaned from qualitative work. For instance, what does "no excuses" really mean, what variation exists between schools espousing that model, and are schools taking this approach solely or more commonly represented in the charter sector? If we consider disciplinary practices to be a tool, how do schools and staff members differ in their utilization of that tool? What are the messages that school staff members are receiving from the leadership at the school, district, or CMO? How are those messages interpreted and put into action by principals, teachers, and other staff? How do staff, students, and parents perceive the use of discipline at their school? Further, qualitative studies could prove useful for gathering evidence about the implementation of alternative approaches to exclusionary discipline, such as restorative justice practices.

Setting a Research Agenda

Charter schools also create new analytic opportunities. In addition to cross-sector comparisons, the operational autonomy of charter schools introduces a great deal of school-to-school variation, not just in their approach to discipline policies but also in their organizational structure and cultural or academic mission. As a result, we can observe the relationship between different organizational, cultural, and curriculum arrangements, discipline policies, and outcomes for students. Underexplored yet important topics and research agendas abound, including useful exploratory and descriptive as well as causal studies. Key issues for a research agenda include the following.

Different approaches to discipline policy. The charter sector is characterized by school-level autonomy and this autonomy allows us to explore what schools do when they have the opportunity to construct their own approach to discipline. Do charter networks or charter schools still develop formal policies about what it takes to get a student suspended or expelled? How systematic, objective, and formalized are these policies and in what ways (if at all) do they allow for principal or educator leeway in executing these policies? Do more systematic and formalized policies yield higher or lower discipline incidences? Do they lead to more or less consistency in the application of suspensions and expulsion?

The pathway into and out of discipline. Schools see and students experience the pathway into and out of a suspension or expulsion differently. To understand the impact of discipline on students, we need to better understand how schools conceptualize the discipline process. Some schools see suspension as something

they might do just once with a student as a way of sending a swift and strong message about the school's code of conduct. Others see suspension as a last resort for repeated infractions. Do students' subsequent educational experiences and academic outcomes differ in these different experiences? How do schools help students "come back" from a suspension or expulsion? In cases of expulsion, what support do the schools receiving expelled students need to effectively transition the student to their new school? In what ways is the application of discipline—especially practices like suspension and expulsion—an extreme and ultimate form of "counseling out?" Where, then, do students go once they are expelled from charter schools?

The relationship between teaching staff and discipline incidences. How is the use of exclusionary discipline related to teacher supply and turnover? For instance, do schools with a core of experienced teachers approach discipline differently than schools with a less experienced teaching staff? To what extent do teachers develop effective classroom management strategies that mitigate the need for exclusionary discipline? What are effective approaches for training teachers in these management strategies? Additionally, there has been a push recently for schools and educators to use students' real-time achievement and, increasingly, behavioral data to make decisions about curriculum delivery and instruction.[23] Researchers could examine whether and how such data are used to inform disciplinary decisions, and how teachers are trained in the use of such data.

The interplay between culture and discipline. Charter schools are known to be "mission-driven" organizations that often establish their academic programs arm in arm with their school culture. What is the relationship between different cultural models and the exercise of exclusionary discipline? In what ways do these schools weave in their discipline policies? Do some cultural models consistently yield exceptionally high or low suspensions and expulsions? Are the observed relationships between specific cultural models and discipline models necessary, or do we see notable standouts defying trends? For example, are there highly disciplined schools that have very few suspensions or expulsions? What can we learn from these standout cases? The "no excuses" model stands out in discipline discussions because these schools tend to establish high expectations for student conduct and academic progress. But charter schools that espouse this model vary in how often and for how long students are removed from schools. How do different "no excuses" schools approach the suspension and expulsion of students?

Discipline policy and the organizational lifecycle. Researchers might also be interested in questions about how the lifecycle of a charter school or network plays into its disciplinary approach and outcomes. For instance, is there a period during the start-up or reconstituting of a school when discipline is more important to establishing order and the mission and values of a school? Does this vary by CMO, student population, specific mission, or other organizational features of the school?

Implications of discipline policy. What does it mean to teachers, students, and student learning when disruptive students are removed from the classroom? For those who are removed, is the impact on achievement or future discipline related to how long they are out of the classroom or to the specific type of alternative arrangement that is provided for them? By measuring exclusionary discipline in terms of the length of time spent out of school, or based on the school that expelled students move to, our methodological approach and the questions we are able to ask can be much more sophisticated than a simple dichotomous conceptualization of discipline (i.e., a student was or was not suspended).

Conclusion

The attention being paid to discipline practices needs to be a call for the collection of more reliable and systematic data and for careful consideration among researchers about the methods they employ to better understand between- and within-sector dynamics. Issues about data quality and availability, as well as simplistic analyses of exclusionary discipline, limit the extent to which the field can arrive at valid and defensible answers to the between- and within-sector questions we have posed. Enterprising researchers—and interested foundations to support those researchers—need to commit to rigorous methods of data analysis so we have confidence in findings that are produced, as well as collecting new information on schools' exclusionary discipline practices. Creating school disciplinary systems that enhance safe, productive, and equitable learning environments will in large part be dependent on the quality of research evidence produced—and that is why we must demand and only accept quantitative and qualitative research of the highest methodological rigor.

Endnotes

1 See, e.g., coverage by the New York Times, Seattle Times, Times-Picayune, Dropout Nation, Denver Post, Chalkbeat New York, and Pacific Standard. Additionally, the U.S. Department of Education recently launched a new campaign called "Rethinking Discipline" that aims to engage administrators, teachers, parents, students, and community members in thinking about alternatives to suspension and expulsion.

2 Exclusionary discipline describes any type of school disciplinary action that removes or excludes a student from his or her usual educational setting. Two of the most common exclusionary discipline practices at schools include suspension and expulsion. Typically used to punish undesired behaviors, deter similar behavior by other students, and promote more appropriate behavior, studies have shown that such practices may result in adverse outcomes for the student and community including increasing student risk for involvement in the justice system. See also Skiba, Russell J., and M. Karega Rausch. 2006. Zero tolerance, suspension, and expulsion: Questions of equity and effectiveness. Pp. 1063-1089 in *Handbook of Classroom Management: Research, Practice, and Contemporary Issues*, C.M. Evertson and C.S. Weinstein (eds.). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; Noguera, Pedro A. 2003. Schools, prisons, and social implications of punishment: Rethinking disciplinary practices. *Theory into Practice* 42 (4): 341-350.

3 See, e.g., Gottfried, Michael A. 2010. Evaluating the relationship between student attendance and achievement in urban elementary and middle schools: An instrumental variables approach. *American Educational Research Journal* 47(2): 434-465; Noltemeyer, Amity L., Rose Marie Ward, and Caven Mcloughlin. 2015. Relationship between school suspension and student outcomes: A meta-analysis. *School Psychology Review* 44(2): 224-240.

4 See, e.g., U.S. Department of Education. 2014. *Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education; Himmelstein, Kathryn E.W., and Hannah Bruckner. 2011. Criminal-justice and school sanctions against nonheterosexual youth: A national longitudinal study. *Pediatrics* 127: 49-57; Rocque, Michael, and Raymond Paternoster. 2011. Understanding the antecedents of the "school-to-jail" link: The relationship between race and school discipline. *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 101(2): 633-666; Cregor, Matt, and Damon Hewitt. 2011. Dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline: A survey from the field. *Race and Poverty* 20(1): 5-7; Skiba, Russell J., Robert H. Horner, Choong-Geun Chung, M. Karega Rausch, Seth L. May, and Tary Tobin. 2011. Race is not neutral: A national investigation of African American and Latino Disproportionality in School Discipline. *School Psychology Review* 40(1): 85-107; Fenning, Pamela, and Jennifer Rose. 2007. Overrepresentation of African American Students in Exclusionary Discipline: The role of school policy. *Urban Education* 42(6): 536-559; Achilles, Georgianna M., Margaret J. McLaughlin, and Robert G. Croninger. 2007. Sociocultural correlates of exclusion among students with emotional, behavioral, and learning disabilities in the SEELS national dataset. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders* 15(1): 33-45.

5 See, e.g., Perry, Brea L., and Edward R. Morris. 2014. Suspending progress: Collateral consequences of exclusionary punishment in public schools. *American Sociological Review* 79(6): 1067-1087; Skiba, Russell J., Mariella I. Arredondo, and Natasha T. Williams. 2014. More than a metaphor: The contribution of exclusionary discipline to a school-to-prison pipeline. *Equity and Excellence in Education* 47(4): 546-564; Cregor and Hewitt 2011; Nicholson-Crotty, Sean, Zachary Birchmeier, and David Valentine. 2009. Exploring the impact of school discipline on racial disproportion in the juvenile justice system. *Social Science Quarterly* 90(4): 1003-1018; Gregory, Anne, Russell J. Skiba, and Pedro A. Noguera. 2010. The achievement gap and the discipline gap: Two sides of the same coin? *Educational Researcher* 39(1): 59-68; Arcia, Emily. 2006. Achievement and enrollment status of suspended students: Outcomes in a large, multicultural school district. *Education and Urban Society* 38(3): 359-369. These studies employ a variety of methods, including descriptive or correlational analyses (Cregor and Hewitt 2011; Nicolson-Crotty, Birchmeier, and Valentine 2009; Arcia 2006) as well as quasi-experimental approaches (Perry and Morris 2014).

6 We thank a panel member and reviewer for pointing out this gap in the research on exclusionary discipline practices. For one exception, see Brown, Tara M. 2007. Lost and turned out: Academic, social, and emotional experiences of students excluded from school. *Urban Education* 42(5): 432-455. Brown provides some evidence on the negative relationship between exclusion and short-term outcomes, finding that suspended students are less likely to report having good relationships with adults at their school and more likely to say that school adults are not concerned with their well being; however, this analysis is based on a survey fielded to 37 students in one school.

7 See, e.g., Golann, Joanne W. 2015. The paradox of success at a no-excuses school. *Sociology of Education* 88(2): 103-119; Garen, John. 2014. School choice and school discipline: Why we should expect the former to improve the latter. *Journal of School Choice* 8(4); Lustick, Hilary. 2015, April 21. What Eva Moskowitz gets wrong about restorative discipline. *Chalkbeat New York*; Zubrzycki, Jaclyn, Sean Cavanagh, and Michele McNeil. 2013, February 20. Charter schools' discipline policies face scrutiny. *Education Week.*

8 See, e.g., Taylor, Joanna, Matt Cregor, and Priya Lane. 2014. *Not Measuring Up: The State of School Discipline in Massachusetts*. Boston, MA: Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights and Economic Justice.

9 There are exceptions. For example, in Indiana, current law asserts that a suspended or expelled student is not in violation of statutes relating to compulsory school attendance (see here, IC 20-33-8-31). As a result, districts are not currently obligated to find that student a new school. A bill introduced during the 2015 legislative session (Senate Bill 494), however, seeks to change this; if the bill is passed, an expelled student would be required to attend another school, an alternative school, or an alternative education program, as is common in most other states.

10 Local education agencies refer to public school districts as well as charter management organizations and independent charter schools.

11 See here for more details about the OCR data. As noted in this brief, the OCR changed its sampling strategy for the most recently available data (on the 2011-12 school year) so that, for the first time since 2000, *all* public schools—traditional and charter—were asked to respond to its questionnaire.

12 OCR provides public and restricted-use versions of the same set of data. The public data suppress data when too few students fall into a category to be publicly reported. The restricted data, which requires a special license from the Department of Education, does not suppress data for low counts.

13 See Columbi, Greta, and David Osher. 2015. Advancing school discipline reform. *Education Leaders Report* 1(2). Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Boards of Education.

14 See Fabelo, Tony, Michael D. Thompson, Martha Plotkin, Dottie Carmichael, Miner P. Marchbanks III, and Eric A. Booth. 2011. Breaking school's rules: A statewide study of how school discipline relates to students' success and juvenile justice involvement. New York, NY: Council of State Governments Justice Center; for their report, Fabelo and colleagues were also given access to matching records for public school students who came into contact with Texas's juvenile justice system.

15 As one panel member brought up, another possibility is behavior and citizenship grades that students' report cards represent. However, while some districts like San Diego Unified collect such information for their district-run public school students, charter schools do not use the same format for its report cards.

16 As a reviewer pointed out, however, privacy concerns may make districts wary or unwilling to give researchers the access necessary to carry out such surveys.

17 See, e.g., Blad, Evie. 2015, June 9. Urban districts embrace socio-emotional learning. *Education Week*.

18 Gregory et al. 2010.

19 Schneider, Mark, Melissa Marschall, Paul Teske, and Christine Roch. 1998. School choice and culture wars in the classroom: What difference parents seek from education. *Social Science Quarterly* 79: 489-501; Weiher, Gregory R., and Kent L. Tedin. 2002. Does choice lead to racially distinctive schools? Charter schools and household preferences. *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management* 21(1): 79-92.

20 In lottery studies, it is possible that a student who "lost" the lottery for their first choice school had to "win" a lottery for their second choice. In this case, researchers will want to be careful about identifying the control group or counterfactual. These students—who enrolled via lottery in another oversubscribed school—are likely different than the other students in the control group who "lost" the lottery and enrolled in their default, neighborhood-zoned school.

21 Gross, Betheny, Michael DeArmond, and Patrick Denice. 2015. *Common Enrollment, Parents, and School Choice: Early Evidence from Denver and New Orleans.* Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education.

22 Denice, Patrick, Robin Lake, and Betheny Gross. 2013. Assessing the Outcomes of Charter School Students With Special Needs: Research Design Brief. Seattle, WA: Center on Reinventing Public Education.

23 See, e.g., Marsh, Julie A., John F. Pane, and Laura S. Hamilton. 2006. Making sense of data-driven decision making in education: Evidence from recent RAND research. Occasional Paper No. OP-170-EDU. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation; Marsh, Julie A. 2012. Interventions promoting educators' use of data: Research insights and gaps. *Teachers College Record* 114: 1-48; Hamilton, Laura S., R. Halverson, S. Jackson, E. Mandinach, J. Supovitz, and J. Wayman. 2009. Using student achievement data to support instructional decision making. NCEE No. 2009-4067. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education; Means, B., C. Padilla, and L. Gallagher. 2010. Use of education data at the local level: From accountability to instructional improvement. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development, U.S. Department of Education; Mandianch, Ellen B. 2012. A perfect time for data use: Using data-driven decision making to inform practice. *Educational Psychologist* 47(2): 71-85.