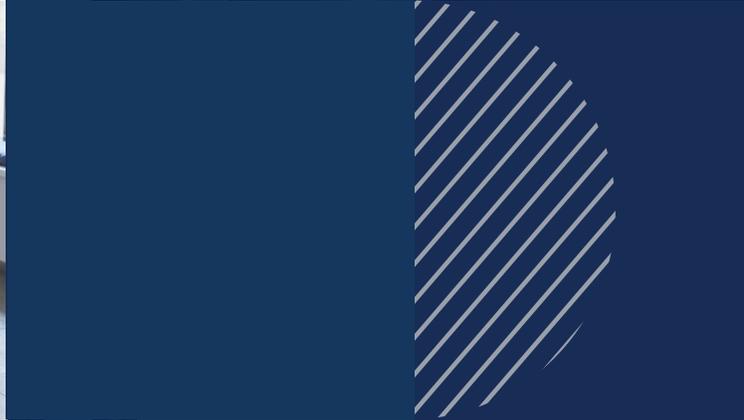
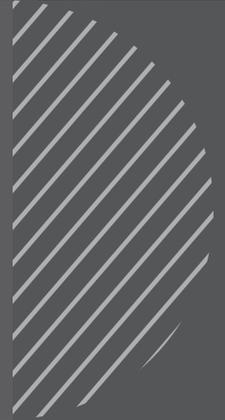


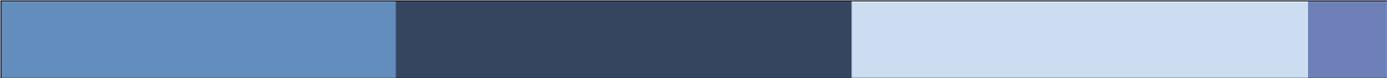
# Forum Guide to Discipline Data





# Forum Guide to Discipline Data





# National Cooperative Education Statistics System

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) established the National Cooperative Education Statistics System (Cooperative System) to assist in producing and maintaining comparable and uniform information and data on early childhood, elementary, and secondary education. These data are intended to be useful for policymaking at the federal, state, and local levels.

The National Forum on Education Statistics (Forum) is an entity of the Cooperative System and, among its other activities, proposes principles of good practice to assist state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) in meeting this purpose. The Cooperative System and the Forum are supported in these endeavors by resources from NCES.

Publications of the Forum do not undergo the same formal review required for products of NCES. The information and opinions published here are those of the Forum and do not represent the policy or views of NCES, the Institute of Education Sciences (IES), or the U.S. Department of Education (ED).

## August 2023

This publication and other publications of the Forum may be found at the websites listed below.

The NCES Home Page address is <http://nces.ed.gov>

The NCES Publications and Products address is <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch>

The Forum Home Page address is <http://nces.ed.gov/forum>

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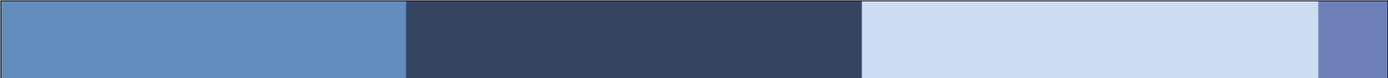
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## Foreword

The Forum is pleased to present the *Forum Guide to Discipline Data*. This guide is designed for use by school, district, and state education agency staff to improve the effectiveness of efforts to collect and use discipline data, including reporting accurate and timely data to the federal government. It explains the importance of collecting discipline data, identifies key considerations for agencies implementing and managing a discipline data system, and discusses how discipline data can be used and reported effectively. Case studies provide examples of successful practices used in LEAs and SEAs.

One goal of the Forum is to improve the quality of education data gathered for use by policymakers and program decision makers. An approach to furthering this goal has been to pool the collective experiences of Forum members to produce “best practice” guides in areas of high interest to those who collect, maintain, and use data about elementary and secondary education. The accurate, consistent, and timely collection and reporting of discipline data by schools, districts, and SEAs is one of those high-interest areas.

This guide reflects the judgment of experienced data managers. There is no mandate to follow these principles. The authors hope that the contents are a useful reference to others in their work.

### Publication Objectives

The purpose of this document is to help education agencies collect, manage, report, and use high-quality, timely data about discipline. This document is created to

- discuss the importance of discipline data and how these data have changed over time;
- present strategies for tracking discipline data, including best practices for managing and maintaining data and providing effective staff training;
- discuss how these data can be reported and used; and
- highlight case studies from SEAs and LEAs that have implemented effective data practices.

### Intended Audience

The primary audience for this publication includes school, district, and SEA staff involved in collecting and using discipline data to

- improve student outcomes;
- promote positive and productive learning environments; and
- ensure equity in education.

This audience includes staff responsible for reporting accurate and timely data to the federal government. This publication also may be of interest to other education stakeholders, including parents and caregivers, researchers, and policymakers.

### Organization of This Resource

This resource includes the following chapters and appendices:

- **Chapter 1** Introduction
- **Chapter 2** Key Considerations for Tracking Discipline Data
- **Chapter 3** Using and Reporting Discipline Data
- **Chapter 4** Case Studies From SEAs and LEAs

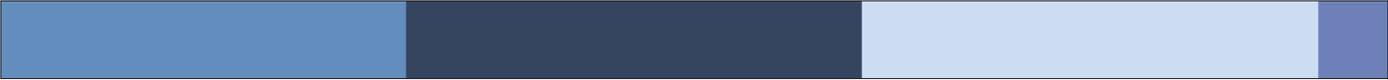


## **National Forum on Education Statistics**

The work of the Forum is a key aspect of the Cooperative System. The Cooperative System was established to produce and maintain, with the cooperation of the states, comparable and uniform education information and data that are useful for policymaking at the federal, state, and local levels. To assist in meeting this goal, NCES within IES—a part of ED—established the Forum to improve the collection, reporting, and use of elementary and secondary education statistics. The Forum includes approximately 120 representatives from state and local education agencies, the federal government, and other organizations with an interest in education data. The Forum deals with issues in education data policy, sponsors innovations in data collection and reporting, and provides technical assistance to improve state and local data systems.

### **Development of Forum Products**

Members of the Forum establish working groups to develop guides in data-related areas of interest to federal, state, and local education agencies. They are assisted in this work by NCES, but the content comes from the collective experience of working group members who review all products iteratively throughout the development process. After the working group completes the content and reviews a document a final time, publications are subject to examination by members of the Forum standing committee that sponsors the project. Finally, Forum members review and formally vote to approve all documents before publication. NCES provides final review and approval before online publication. The information and opinions published in Forum products do not represent the policies or views of ED, IES, or NCES. Readers may modify, customize, or reproduce any or all parts of this document.



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This online publication was developed through the Cooperative System and funded by NCES within IES—a part of ED. The Discipline Data Working Group of the Forum is responsible for the content.

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## Glossary

**Bullying.** An offense or series of offenses in which one person willfully harms or intimidates another by teasing, taunting, threatening, or otherwise causing them emotional distress. Bullying may include physical harm, but this is not required.

**Cyberbullying.** Willful and repeated harm inflicted using computers, cell phones, or other electronic devices.<sup>1</sup>

**Data dictionary.** An agreed-upon set of clearly and consistently defined elements, definitions, and attributes.

**Data governance.** A formal and comprehensive set of policies and practices designed to ensure the effective management of data within an organization—encouraging robust data security, definition, collection, access, quality, and disposal.

**Data suppression.** The various methods or restrictions that are applied to estimates to limit the disclosure of information about individual respondents and to reduce the number of estimates with unacceptable levels of statistical reliability.<sup>2</sup>

**Early warning system (EWS).** A system that identifies students who are at risk of dropping out of school. This type of system applies predictive analytics to student data to determine student risk level in relation to predefined indicators and thresholds. By identifying students who are at risk, an EWS provides targeted data that may be used to develop student interventions that are designed to avoid negative student outcomes.

**Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).** A federal law that affords parents the right to have access to their children’s education records, the right to seek to have the records amended, and the right to have some control over the disclosure of personally identifiable information from the education records. When a student turns 18 years old or enters a postsecondary institution at any age, the rights under FERPA transfer from the parents to the student (“eligible student”). The FERPA statute is found at 20 U.S.C. § 1232g, and the FERPA regulations are found at 34 CFR Part 99.<sup>3</sup>

**Harassment.** Conduct that is unwelcome and denies or limits a student’s ability to participate in or benefit from a school’s education program. All students can be victims of harassment, and the harasser can share the same characteristics as the victim. The conduct can be verbal, nonverbal, or physical. It can take many forms, including verbal acts and name-calling, as well as non-verbal conduct such as graphic and written statements or conduct that is physically threatening, harmful, or humiliating.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Padgett, Z., Jackson, M., Correa, S., Kemp, J., Giliary, A., Meier, A., Gbondo-Tugbawa, K., and McClure, T. (2020). *2017-18 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) Public-Use Data File User’s Manual* (NCES 2020-054). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved July 11, 2023, from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2020054>.

2 United States Census Bureau. (2016). *Data Suppression*. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/data-suppression.html>.

3 U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *What is FERPA?* Retrieved October 25, 2022, from <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/faq/what-ferpa>.

4 Padgett, Z., Jackson, M., Correa, S., Kemp, J., Giliary, A., Meier, A., Gbondo-Tugbawa, K., and McClure, T. (2020). *2017-18 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) Public-Use Data File User’s Manual* (NCES 2020-054). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved July 11, 2023, from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2020054>.



**Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA).** A federal law that required the creation of national standards to protect sensitive patient health information from being disclosed without the patient’s consent or knowledge. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) issued the HIPAA Privacy Rule to implement the requirements of HIPAA. The HIPAA Security Rule protects a subset of information covered by the Privacy Rule.<sup>5</sup>

**Implicit biases.** The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.<sup>6</sup>

**Incident.** An event that constitutes a conflict with an established code of conduct, policies, rules, or law.

**Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).** A law that makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children. The IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 7.5 million (as of school year 2020-21) eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.<sup>7</sup>

**Intervention.** An educational program, product, practice, or policy aimed at positively influencing student outcomes.

**Intimidation.** Intentional behavior by a student or group of students that places another student or group of students in fear of harm of person or property. Intimidation can be manifested emotionally or physically, either directly or indirectly, and by use of social media.<sup>8</sup>

**Multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS).** A framework that supports the early identification of students with learning and behavioral challenges and then provides different tiers, or intensities, of support.<sup>9</sup>

**Perpetrator.** An individual involved in an incident as an offender (the person who committed the infraction constituting the incident).

**Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS).** An “evidence-based three-tiered framework to improve and integrate all of the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes every day.”<sup>10</sup>

**Restorative justice.** An “approach to conflict that emphasizes mitigating harm; attending to root causes of conflict; and fostering relationships, empathic dialogue, and community accountability.”<sup>11</sup>

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5 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (n.d.). *Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA)*. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://www.cdc.gov/phlp/publications/topic/hipaa.html>.

6 Staats, C. (2015-2016, Winter). Understanding Implicit Bias: What Educators Should Know. *American Educator*. Retrieved May 8, 2022, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1086492.pdf>.

7 U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*. Retrieved March 26, 2023, from <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/about-idea/>.

8 Dysart Schools. (n.d.). *Bullying, Harassment, or Intimidation*. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://www.dysart.org/mainsite/pages/student-services/1242/bullying-harassment-or-intimidation>.

9 Schiller, E., Chow, K., Thayer, S., Nakamura, J., Wilkerson, S. B., and Puma, M. (2020). *What tools have states developed or adapted to assess schools’ implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports/response to intervention framework?* (REL 2020-017). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED603782.pdf>.

10 Center on PBIS. (2022). *What Is PBIS?* Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://www.PBIS.org>.

11 Sandwick, T., Hahn, J. W., and Hassoun Ayoub, L. (2019). *Fostering Community, Sharing Power: Lessons for Building Restorative Justice School Cultures*. *Education Policy Analysis Archives*, 27(145). Retrieved July 12, 2023 from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1235090.pdf>.



**School climate.** The quality and character of school life, which includes the norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe.<sup>12</sup>

**School resource officer.** A career sworn law enforcement officer with arrest authority who has specialized training and is assigned to work in collaboration with school organizations.<sup>13</sup>

**Student information system.** A secure information management system designed to support all aspects of a student's educational experience.

**Victim.** An individual who suffers injury or harm that directly results from an incident.

**Witness.** An individual who witnessed an incident and can give a firsthand account of what was seen, heard, or experienced.

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<sup>12</sup> Cohen, J., McCabe, E. M., Michelli, N. M., and Pickeral, T. (2009). School Climate: Research, Policy, Practice, and Teacher Education. *Teachers College Record*, 111(1), 180-213. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ826002>.

<sup>13</sup> Padgett, Z., Jackson, M., Correa, S., Kemp, J., Gilary, A., Meier, A., Gbondo-Tugbawa, K., and McClure, T. (2020). *2017-18 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) Public-Use Data File User's Manual* (NCES 2020-054). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved July 11, 2023, from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubinfo.asp?pubid=2020054>.

# Chapter 1:

## Introduction

### Why Collect Discipline Data?

Detailed and accurate discipline data have many uses at the national, state, local, and school levels. At the federal level, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) collects and uses discipline data in several ways. The Office for Civil Rights collects discipline data directly from local education agencies (LEAs) as a part of the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC). Through the *EDFacts* collection system from state education agencies (SEAs), the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services collects Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) discipline data, and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education collects Gun-Free Schools Act data.

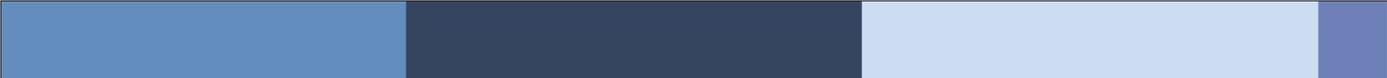
The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) and the Bureau of Justice Statistics release an annual *Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety*. The report uses a wide variety of data, including the School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS) that includes data on school practices and programs, parent and community involvement, school security staff, school mental health services, incidents, and disciplinary problems and actions.<sup>14</sup> The annual report provides summary statistics on a range of topics such as bullying, drug and alcohol use, violence, and student perceptions of personal safety.

At the state and local levels, education agencies use discipline data to examine the effectiveness of their discipline policies and procedures. At the school level, educators use discipline data to understand the context of student behavior, plan responses to support students, and prevent future incidents. Properly collecting, analyzing, and using discipline data can provide educators with insight into both individual student needs and overall areas for improvement in school climate and safety. Information drawn from discipline data, including the nature of incidents, participant information, staff responses, and consequences to students, can help educators develop and measure the impact of prevention and intervention plans.

#### Examples of the U.S. Department of Education's Use of Discipline Data

- Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) Discipline Report Tool  
<https://ocrdata.ed.gov/specialreports/disciplinereport>
- *Discipline Practices in Preschool* (CRDC)  
<https://ocrdata.ed.gov/assets/downloads/crdc-DOE-Discipline-Practices-in-Preschool-part1.pdf>
- Annual Report to Congress on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)  
<https://sites.ed.gov/idea/annual-reports-to-congress>
- *Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2021*  
<https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2022092>

14 Irwin, V., Wang, K., Cui, J., and Thompson, A. (2022). *Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2021* (NCES 2022-092/NCJ 304625). National Center for Education Statistics, U.S. Department of Education, and Bureau of Justice Statistics, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Washington, DC. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2022092>.



Discipline data are important to a wide array of stakeholders, including parents, caregivers, community groups, researchers, legislators, and others. For example,

- a parent or caregiver might be interested in data that help them understand school climate and safety;
- a community group might be interested in data to inform the development and implementation of school-based programs;
- a researcher might be interested in data that illustrate what environments and learning methods improve behavior; and
- legislators might use data to determine the need for additional school resources or to verify that students with disabilities are not suspended excessively.

This document focuses on the collection, management, use, and reporting of discipline data at the SEA and LEA levels to create positive, productive, safe, and supportive learning environments for all students. Robust data about discipline can help SEAs, LEAs, and schools make informed decisions about programs, ensure equity in disciplinary responses, and allocate resources.

### **Using Data to Support Students and Improve the Learning Environment**

Discipline data include a wide range of data elements that can provide information about what incidents are occurring, by whom, to whom, when, and how. Discipline data also include information on how agencies respond to incidents. Educators need discipline data to help them decide how best to create a learning environment and address student needs, including promoting a positive school climate, preventing incidents when possible, and developing effective interventions. Depending on the data collected, some agencies can determine why incidents occur. Accurate and timely data enable policymakers and practitioners to effectively meet the needs of students and to implement interventions aimed at improving school climate and learning conditions for students.

Discipline data can help educators address the following types of questions:

- How many students were involved in incidents in the past week, month, or year?
- What was the nature of these incidents? (For example, did they include behaviors such as insubordination; fighting; bullying, harassment, and intimidation; or assault?)
- What consequences were administered to students involved in incidents?
- What types of support were offered to students involved in incidents (including instigators and witnesses)?
- Where are these incidents occurring? (For example, do they occur on the playground, in the cafeteria building, or in a particular teacher's class?)
- When are these incidents occurring? (For example, do they occur on the way to school, during lunch, or transitioning between classes?)
- Why are these incidents occurring? (For example, does the school lack resources to implement a positive behavior support system, or do students lack access to behavioral health staff within their school?)
- Have prevention or intervention programs influenced the number or type of incidents occurring?
- How do reductions or increases in incidents impact academic achievement and conditions for learning measures?

LEAs, SEAs, and policymakers need consistently collected and clearly defined data that allow them to compare schools, policies, prevention efforts, and intervention practices. This



information becomes more valuable in the form of longitudinal data that support analysis over time. When understood in the proper context, discipline data can be used to inform decisions about planning, staff support, and resource use. Data that are comparable within and across states and districts are of great value to governing agencies, policymakers, researchers, and the public. Collection and use of school discipline data help to

- promote optimal conditions for learning that foster achievement and promote a positive school climate;
- focus resources, including staff time, on developing effective prevention and intervention plans;
- evaluate program effectiveness;
- identify and assess disparities in disciplinary actions by student demographic groups;
- identify who is referring students to the office (this may help identify staff that need support in classroom management or understanding intervention strategies, policies, and procedures); and
- publish and report timely and relevant information on discipline and school climate to the public and other key stakeholders (for example, via school “report cards”).

### Using Behavior Data to Improve School Climate

SEAs and LEAs focus on promoting a positive school climate—the quality and character of school life that includes the norms, values, and expectations that support people feeling socially, emotionally, and physically safe<sup>15</sup>—to foster student success, reduce exclusionary discipline, and ensure equity. Discipline data are part of this larger category of data about school climate and culture, and some LEAs collect and use positive behavior data in addition to discipline data. This shift to collecting data about all types of behavior helps to create a more complete understanding of learning environments and individual students by highlighting effective schoolwide practices and student-level interventions. These practices and interventions include restorative practices, positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS), and multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS).

Some agencies have adopted the use of restorative practices to promote a positive school climate. Restorative practices “combine high behavioral expectations and accountability with a range of preventative, conflict resolution, and rehabilitative strategies to promote positive behavior and engaged student learning.”<sup>16</sup> For example, Wake County Public School System (NC) partners with Campbell University’s Restorative Justice Clinic to offer restorative justice practices that use dialogue to “foster collaborative healing, rather than specifically seeking punishment.”<sup>17</sup> Agencies are beginning to see measurable impacts of restorative approaches, including repairing harm caused by conflict, reducing risk-taking behaviors and violence, and building community.<sup>18</sup> These practices are designed to identify and address the reasons for behaviors to prevent recurrence without resorting to exclusionary discipline such as suspensions and expulsions.

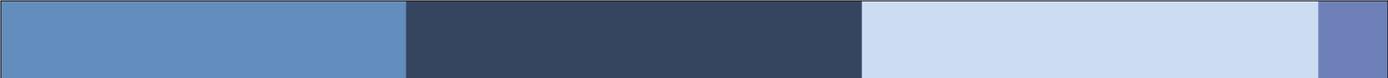
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15 Cohen, J., McCabe, E. M., Michelli, N. M., and Pickeral, T. (2009). School climate: Research, policy, practice, and teacher education. *Teachers College Record*, 111(1), 180–213. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from <http://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ826002>.

16 Maryland Commission on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and Restorative Practices. (2018). *Final Report and Collaborative Action Plan*. Retrieved July 5, 2022, from <https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/speccol/sc5300/sc5339/000113/023600/023694/20190078e.pdf>.

17 Campbell University Norman Adrian Wiggins School of Law. (n.d.). *The Restorative Justice Clinic*. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://law.campbell.edu/advocate/clinical-programs/the-restorative-justice-clinic/>.

18 Oakland Unified School District. (2014). *Restorative Justice in Oakland Schools Implementation and Impacts*. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from <https://www.ousd.org/cms/lib/CA01001176/Centricity/Domain/134/OUUSD-RJ%20Report%20revised%20Final.pdf>.



Agencies also are adopting preventative approaches to discipline and are collecting data to inform and evaluate these approaches. Preventative approaches to discipline shift educator responses from punishing students to identifying the supports and skills they need to be engaged. Many LEAs have implemented PBIS, an “evidence-based, three-tiered framework to improve and integrate all of the data, systems, and practices affecting student outcomes every day.”<sup>19</sup> San Bernardino City Unified School District (CA) implemented PBIS as part of a comprehensive plan to address student behaviors and reduce suspensions. As a result, the LEA began collecting data on and raising awareness of disciplinary issues before the issues escalated into policy violations requiring suspensions. These changes in data collection and use contributed to reductions in suspensions, improved student attendance, increased test scores, and improved graduation rates.

Others have implemented MTSS to assist individual students. MTSS is a framework that supports the early identification of students with learning and behavioral challenges and then provides different tiers, or intensities, of support.<sup>20</sup> MTSS often includes documented plans for behavior that are based on student needs. These plans are regularly monitored, and student progress is reviewed and documented. PBIS, MTSS, and similar programs use behavior data to identify the supports that students need and to help students make better choices.

Data on restorative justice programs and positive intervention systems help agencies understand how often these programs are implemented and their effectiveness. For example, a review of an urban school district with 4 years of experience using PBIS found that exclusionary discipline rates dropped and, given the flexibility to respond to student needs, administrators reported better relationships with students and parents.<sup>21</sup> However, reducing disparities in discipline remained a challenge for the district. As agencies gather and analyze data on new approaches to discipline, this information will help other education agencies decide whether and how to implement these approaches.

## Changing Dimensions of Discipline Data

Changes in education policies and practices, class sizes, instructional methods, school climate, and other aspects of education have resulted in changes to discipline data. Schools, LEAs, and SEAs have adapted their disciplinary policies and data collection to address changes to the school environment and reporting requirements. Many agencies are implementing new approaches to discipline to ensure that their policies align with current practices, such as the integration of technology into teaching and learning. Agencies also are increasingly focused on reducing disparities in discipline and ensuring that new approaches are evidence based.

Disciplinary policies related to technology use, off-campus behavior, and online behavior show how changes in the school environment have affected discipline data over time.

- *Technology policies.* Changes in technology have led to changes in discipline policies. For example, in many agencies, policies around bringing cell phones to school changed drastically over a short time. In the past, using a cell phone during class would have been an infraction. However, many students now access their schoolwork via smartphones. At the same time, new technological infractions have emerged, such as prohibited uses of social media.

19 Center on PBIS. (2022). *What is PBIS?* Retrieved September 12, 2022, from [www.PBIS.org](http://www.PBIS.org).

20 Schiller, E., Chow, K., Thayer, S., Nakamura, J., Wilkerson, S. B., and Puma, M. (2020). *What tools have states developed or adapted to assess schools' implementation of a multi-tiered system of supports/response to intervention framework?* (REL 2020-017). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Appalachia. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED603782.pdf>.

21 Robert, C. (2020). Implementing Discipline Reform: One District's Experience with PBIS. *School Leadership Review*, 15(1): Art. 22. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/slr/vol15/iss1/22>.

- *Online behavior policies.* The expansion of remote online learning, in which students attend classes, interact with classmates and teachers, and complete coursework from their homes or other locations, has challenged agencies to determine how to address disruptions and other incidents that occur in virtual spaces. Agencies also are developing policies to address other types of online incident behaviors, such as online bullying, harassment, and intimidation.
- *Off-campus behavior policies.* Historically, discipline data focused on incidents that occurred on a school campus, such as a fight in the hallway or a student speaking disrespectfully to a teacher. Agencies now face the challenge of determining when a school has jurisdiction to dispense discipline for incidents that happen off school grounds, such as crimes committed in the community by students.<sup>22</sup>

School environments also are changing as agencies adopt different approaches to addressing disciplinary issues, reducing disparities in discipline, and promoting positive behaviors. For example, legislation in Oregon required districts across the state to replace “zero tolerance” disciplinary policies—defined as consistently enforced suspension and expulsion policies in response to weapons, drugs, and violent acts in the school setting—with policies aimed to keep students in the learning environment.<sup>23</sup> One concern with zero-tolerance policies is that they may mandate specific punishments that do not always account for the severity of infractions. For example, zero-tolerance policies around drugs may require a school to suspend a student found in possession of a drug regardless of whether it is an illegal drug or a widely available pain reliever, such as ibuprofen. Another concern is the academic impacts on students who are removed from the learning environment through suspensions and expulsions. A review of literature surrounding the effectiveness of zero-tolerance practices in increasing school safety found no conclusive evidence that zero-tolerance practices support the assumptions for its use, such as that removing disruptive students from the learning environment will deter others from causing disruptions and improve the climate for students who remain in the classroom.<sup>24</sup>

The goal of removing inequities in school discipline has led education agencies to examine the use of exclusionary discipline practices and implement changes to discipline policies.<sup>25, 26, 27</sup> School suspensions, a form of exclusionary discipline, are associated with poor academic achievement

22 Elko, A. H. (n.d.). *It Didn't Happen In School... But Can We Discipline?* New Jersey School Boards Association. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from <https://www.njsba.org/news-publications/school-leader/november-december-2019-vol-50-no-3/it-didnt-happen-in-school-but-can-we-discipline/>.

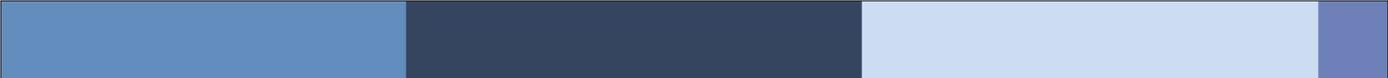
23 Nishioka, V., Stevens, D., Deutschlander, D., Burke, A., Merrill, B., and Aylward, A. (2020). *Are state policy reforms in Oregon associated with fewer school suspensions and expulsions?* (REL 2020-036). U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. Retrieved July 11, 2023, from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Region/northwest/Publication/3987>.

24 American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force. (2008). Are Zero Tolerance Policies Effective in the Schools? An Evidentiary Review and Recommendations. *American Psychologist*, 63(9): 852-862. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from <https://www.apa.org/pubs/reports/zero-tolerance.pdf>.

25 Nishioka, V., Merrill, B., and Hanson, H. (2021). *Changes in exclusionary and nonexclusionary discipline in grades K-5 following state policy reform in Oregon.* (REL 2021-061). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Region/northwest/Publication/4044>.

26 Porowski, A., O’Conner, R., and Passa, A. (2014). *Disproportionality in school discipline: An assessment of trends in Maryland, 2009-12.* (REL 2014-017). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED544770>.

27 Robert, C. (2020). Implementing Discipline Reform: One District’s Experience with PBIS. *School Leadership Review*, 15(1): Art. 22. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from <https://scholarworks.sfasu.edu/slr/vol15/iss1/22>.



and increased risk of dropping out.<sup>28</sup> Research using discipline data from public schools in Arkansas and Maryland found that schools used exclusionary discipline disproportionately.<sup>29</sup> <sup>30</sup> In Maryland, research showed that even when exclusionary discipline rates declined for student subgroups, Black students and students with disabilities continued to be suspended and expelled at more than twice the rate of other students.<sup>31</sup> In Arkansas, data from 2010 to 2013 showed that Black students received longer punishments for similar infractions compared to their White peers.<sup>32</sup>

## The Importance of Reviewing Data in Context

Assessments of school climate, student behavior, safety, and student support need to be interpreted within the context of a body of data and the policies and procedures that directly affect the data collection and reporting process. Each data element imparts a piece of the puzzle within the broader context of the education systems in which discipline data are collected and reported. When a robust body of data is developed, the result is a well-integrated, multidimensional data system that contributes to a thorough understanding of school climate in broad terms, as well as a focus on specific aspects of student needs and safety concerns.

Suspension rate data provide an example of the importance of contextual information for understanding discipline data. For example, policymakers, school leaders, researchers, and other stakeholders often look for information on a school's suspension rate. However, many agencies collect different rates related to suspensions, and each rate is designed to answer different questions:

1. Many agencies report a **Suspension Incident Rate**, which is defined as the number of suspensions divided by the number of students served.
2. Agencies also use a **Student Suspension Rate**, which is the unique number of students suspended divided by the number of students served.
3. Some agencies also collect a **Loss of Instruction Rate**, which is the total number of days suspended divided by the number of students served.

It is crucial that stakeholders know which suspension rate they are using before drawing conclusions from the data.

Additional data can help to further clarify the suspension rate. For example, if a stakeholder is using an agency's Suspension Incident Rate, they also may need answers to the following questions:

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28 Noltemeyer, A., Ward, R.M., and Mcloughlin, C. (2015). Relationship Between School Suspension and Student Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis. *School Psychology Review*, 44(2): 224 -240. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from [https://edsources.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Noltemeyer\\_Ward\\_2015\\_Meta-Analysis.pdf](https://edsources.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Noltemeyer_Ward_2015_Meta-Analysis.pdf).

29 Anderson, K., and Ritter, G. (2017). *Disparate use of exclusionary discipline: Evidence on inequities in school discipline from a U.S. state*. Education Policy Analysis Archives. Retrieved October 25, 2022, from <https://doi.org/10.14507/epaa.25.2787>.

30 Porowski, A., O'Conner, R., and Passa, A. (2014). *Disproportionality in school discipline: An assessment of trends in Maryland, 2009-12*. (REL 2014-017). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED544770>.

31 Laco, J., and Manley, M. (2019). *Disproportionality in school discipline: An assessment in Maryland through 2018*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED598820.pdf>.

32 Anderson, K., and Ritter, G. (2017). *Do School Discipline Policies Treat Students Fairly? A Second Look at School Discipline Rate Disparities*. EDRE Working Paper No. 2015-11. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2700707>.

- Does this rate include
  - in-school suspensions;
  - out-of-school suspensions;
  - short-term suspensions (for example, 1 day) for relatively minor infractions of school policy such as the use of obscene language; and
  - long-term suspensions that imply more serious infractions such as physical fights?
- Are suspensions administered uniformly
  - in all schools within an LEA; and
  - in all LEAs within a state?
- Does a low or high Suspension Incident Rate indicate
  - few (or many) incidents that included behaviors worthy of suspension;
  - suspension policies that are not actively enforced; or
  - that the school has an alternate approach to dealing with incidents (for example, restorative justice practices)?
- Who or what determines whether an incident behavior warrants suspension?
- Are there different Suspension Incident Rates by student demographic groups?<sup>33</sup>

These are just some examples of the contextual information necessary to interpret data correctly. Contextual information also is critical when drastic changes in a local setting, such as natural disasters or responses to a global pandemic, impact school policies and the behaviors of students and staff. These changes impact data and can cause inconsistencies in data collection and reporting that must be documented. For example, the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic resulted in an unexpected, rapid, and widespread shift to virtual and remote learning that affected student data. Many school staff focused on ensuring that students were safe and had access to coursework. Data collection and management staff were called upon to coordinate efforts to deliver meals and other pandemic benefits to students, distribute technology devices such as tablets and hotspots to students and teachers, and manage new attendance and engagement policies. These changes caused disruptions in ongoing data collection while also producing new types of data.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many schools experienced a reduction in discipline incidents in the 2019-2020 school year as students shifted off school campuses. When some students started to go back to school buildings in the 2020-2021 school year, some administrators saw a significant increase in discipline incidents. This increase was coupled with schools shifting back and forth from in-person to remote learning, which further clouded the data. This shift in the data could suggest any number of conclusions, such as

- students had less opportunity to engage in rule-breaking behaviors when attending school remotely in spring 2020;
- at the start of the pandemic, school staff were focused on ensuring continuity of learning and student support and did not have time to develop policies and procedures around expectations for students during online learning (that is, rules were not clearly defined in the online space, educators did not have clearly defined procedures for identifying or documenting discipline incidents, or both);
- educators were not trained to define or report incidents of online rule-breaking behavior;

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<sup>33</sup> The federal Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) Section 300.530 (d) regulates the discipline of students with disabilities. For more information, see <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/regs/b/e/300.530/d>.

- staff turnover, such as the widespread and frequent use of substitutes, led to classroom disruption; or
- students and staff, some of whom had been off campus for more than a year and a half, were experiencing a collective traumatic event (that is, a global pandemic). Upon reentering an in-person classroom environment, many agencies shifted approaches to discipline from compliance and adherence to compassion and patience.

### **Collecting and Reporting Changing Data**

Two Forum resources provide useful information on collecting and reporting data when there are drastic changes in a local setting.

The *Forum Guide to Planning for, Collecting, and Managing Data About Students Displaced by a Crisis* provides timely and useful best practice information for collecting and managing data about students who have temporarily or permanently enrolled in another educational setting because of a crisis. The guide highlights best practices that education agencies can adopt before, during, and after a crisis. [https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2019163.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2019163.asp)

The *Forum Guide to Metadata* presents and examines the ways in which metadata can be used by education agencies to improve data quality and promote a better understanding of education data. The guide discusses how to plan and successfully implement a metadata system in an education setting and provides examples of standard metadata items and definitions to assist agencies with standardization. [https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2021110.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2021110.asp)

## Chapter 2: Key Considerations for Tracking Discipline Data

Discipline data give educators and other school staff the information they need to ensure student safety, understand the context of student behaviors, identify patterns of behavior, and intervene when students need support. Discipline data can inform efforts to transform school environments, such as when local and state education agencies (LEAs and SEAs) use data to inform the development and implementation of new programs aimed at promoting positive behaviors. Discipline data also are used to meet state and federal reporting requirements, which in turn inform policymaking decisions.

Systems used to track discipline data should not only meet the needs of school staff, they also should provide the data necessary to keep parents, community members, and others informed about the disciplinary practices used and their effectiveness. Data are presented to various stakeholder groups in the form of reports and presentations. At the state and federal levels, a certain degree of detail is necessary to meet reporting requirements. However, a greater degree of specificity is necessary to understand the context for individual data points and for use in program evaluation and prevention efforts such as early warning systems. Although some data collected at the local level are not required for state or federal reporting, those data enable LEAs and SEAs to address student needs and understand the impact of behavioral interventions and supports. In Tennessee, for example, LEAs report to the state only incidents that resulted in in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, or expulsion. However, at the LEA level, there are many more incidents and responses that are not reported to the state. These incidents may include restorative justice efforts and other alternative ways of working with students in the school that do not include exclusionary practices.

Resources are a key consideration for tracking discipline data. Collecting and reporting discipline data require considerable time, effort, and financial resources. When determining which data to collect and what system or systems to use to track and manage data, agencies should be aware of the resources required for data collection, use, and analysis. It is important that data collection efforts produce information that is valuable enough to justify any collection burden.

### **Defining an Incident**

Another key aspect of tracking discipline data is an agreed-upon, clear definition of the term “incident” as it relates to discipline, as well as specific definitions of various types of incident behaviors. These definitions facilitate consistency and comparability in reporting within and across schools, LEAs, and SEAs. As referenced in the glossary at the beginning of this guide, an incident is an event that constitutes a conflict with an established code of conduct, policies, rules, or law.

The following considerations can help agencies determine when student behaviors constitute a reportable incident, define incident behavior types, and develop policies to help staff accurately report incidents and track data:

- What incident behavior types are specified in state and district education policies, regulations, and codes of conduct? It is common for districts to have many more types or categories of incident behaviors than are reported to the state, and sometimes those categories are broken into more detailed levels to address district needs. Definitions for incident behavior types should align with state and district education policies. Mapping district terms to state terms and updating the map when definitions change at either level is necessary to maintain accurate reporting.
- When data elements change at either the district or state level, is it necessary to adjust longitudinal data to ensure accurate comparisons from year to year? Adjustments might be needed in some reporting, and in other cases, it may be important to use the mapping that was used for that particular year.
- Are there written student rights and responsibilities that establish guidelines for which behaviors must be reported? Different interpretations of what behaviors constitute an incident can lead to over-or under-counting incidents.
- What level of behavior constitutes a reportable incident? For example, some agencies may not want to capture every small classroom disruption, while other agencies track small disruptions to identify behavior patterns or escalation.
- Are more incidents recorded for certain student subgroups than others? If so, why? What role does implicit bias have in the reporting of those incidents?
- Are there clear policies for identifying primary and secondary incident behaviors? For example, a student may skip class and get into a fight on the school premises. The fight may be recorded as the primary incident behavior, and skipping class may be recorded as a secondary incident behavior. Schools may have different policies for tracking incidents and associated behaviors.

## Managing and Maintaining Discipline Data

### System Requirements

An agency’s method of collecting discipline data must be robust enough to capture and manage all the data needed while also being flexible enough to accommodate any potential changes to local, state, and federal policies or reporting. The systems<sup>34</sup> should be designed to meet standard requirements, such as the ability to identify the types of behaviors or infractions that constituted the incident, specific dates, locations, and the people involved (including instigators, victims, witnesses, and staff). They also should connect to the organization’s student information system (SIS). SISs are secure information management systems designed to support all aspects of a student’s educational experience. They often include demographic data and information related to scheduling, attendance, discipline, health, grades, test results, and academic programs. They also may include data about economic status, accommodations, or geography.

Agencies manage and maintain discipline data using an incident-based system because many incidents that lead to discipline include more than one participant—the student or students instigating, the adult or adults who intervene, and witnesses. In an incident-based system, the incident is recorded as a unit, so a fight is defined as a single incident even if it involved four students, each of whom received multiple disciplinary actions. Incident-based systems also can show links between multiple behaviors or infractions that constitute a single incident—for example, a student involved in a fight who is sent to the principal’s office and then swears at the principal. These systems also can link incidents. Demographic and other information about

<sup>34</sup> Some agencies have multiple discipline reporting systems, such as separate systems for classroom incidents and school bus incidents.

participants can be accessed via student identifier elements, such as a unique student ID, that link to information from each participant's record (for example, contact, demographic, and academic information).

When establishing system requirements, agencies should consider the system's capability for updating data. Discipline data are not always static and may change over time—sometimes weeks after the incident. For example, if there is an appeal process for suspensions, the system may need to reflect a retracted suspension. Expulsion information also may need to be updated. If a student meets certain behavioral requirements, they may be eligible to have an expulsion expunged. Establishing a process for reviewing suspension and expulsion data to account for appeals is an important aspect of maintaining accurate data for timely reports.

#### **Data Definitions**

Many organizations use a data dictionary, which is an agreed-upon set of clearly and consistently defined elements, definitions, and attributes. A data dictionary is an authoritative source for data terminology, data definitions, and other attributes typically associated with data elements, including field lengths, code lists and definitions, formats for each type of data (for example, MMDDYYYY format for dates), and any restrictions on values or value ranges (for example, “age must be a value between 1 and 99”). Authoritative sources like data dictionaries standardize how discipline data terms are defined, where specific data are located, and what their values mean.<sup>35</sup> It is important to review the terminology and data definitions used in the discipline data collection to ensure that they meet federal, state, and local requirements and that they conform or can be mapped to nationally developed definitions whenever possible. Standardization helps to ensure that data are comparable at the school, district, state, and federal levels.

#### **Data Elements**

The Common Education Data Standards (CEDS) initiative is a national collaborative effort to develop voluntary, common data standards for a key set of education data elements to streamline the exchange, comparison, and understanding of data within and across P-20W (early learning, kindergarten through 12th grade, postsecondary, and workforce) institutions and sectors. CEDS contains data elements that are aligned with U.S. Department of Education (ED) reporting requirements. The following list includes CEDS elements that are commonly used in education agencies to track discipline data. More information on the following elements can be found by accessing section “K12 > Incident” in the CEDS Domain Entity Schema (<https://ceds.ed.gov/domainEntitySchema.aspx>):

- Incident Identifier;
- Incident Date;
- Incident Time;
- Incident Time Description Code;
- Incident Description;

### **Forum Guide to Technology Management in Education**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/tech\\_management.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/tech_management.asp)

This website is designed to help education agency staff understand and apply best practices for selecting and implementing technology. It addresses the widespread use and integration of technology in modern education systems, including administration—such as human resources and finances—reporting, infrastructure, SISs, classroom software, and apps.

<sup>35</sup> For more information on the data management benefits of data dictionaries, see Chapter 1 of the *Forum Guide to Metadata* ([https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2021110.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2021110.asp)).

- Incident Behavior;
- Secondary Incident Behavior;
- Incident Location;
- Incident Injury Type;
- Reporter Identifier;
- Incident Reporter Type;
- Incident Multiple Offense Type;
- Incident Perpetrator Identifier;
- Incident Perpetrator Injury Type;
- Incident Perpetrator Type;
- Incident Person Role Type;
- Incident Victim Identifier;
- Incident Victim Type;
- Incident Witness Identifier;
- Incident Witness Type;
- Related to Zero Tolerance Policy;
- Incident Regulation Violated Description;
- Incident Related to Disability Manifestation;
- Incident Reported to Law Enforcement Indicator;
- Weapon Type;
- Firearm Type;
- Discipline Reason;
- Disciplinary Action Start Date;
- Disciplinary Action End Date;
- Disciplinary Action Taken;
- Duration of Disciplinary Action;
- Discipline Action Length Difference Reason;
- Full Year Expulsion;
- Shortened Expulsion;
- IDEA Interim Removal Reason;
- IDEA Interim Removal;
- Educational Services After Removal; and
- Incident Cost.

### Data Governance

Accurate collection and management of discipline data require effective data governance. Data governance refers to a comprehensive set of policies and practices designed to ensure the effective management of data within an organization. Effective data governance encompasses robust data security, definition, collection, access, quality, and disposal. Agency staff responsible for the implementation of discipline programs and processes should have the authority to make changes at the policy level and understand data systems

### Forum Guide to Data Governance

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2020083.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2020083.asp)

This guide highlights the multiple ways that data governance programs can benefit education agencies. It addresses the management, collection, use, and communication of education data; the development of effective and clearly defined data systems and policies to handle the complexity and necessary protection of data; and the continuous monitoring and decision-making needed in a regularly shifting data landscape.



at an operational level in the organization. System security is a key aspect of data governance; when possible, agencies should establish role-based access for discipline data systems to ensure that sensitive data can be accessed only by staff whose work requires the use of those data.

An agency's data governance structure should be designed to meet the needs of the agency, such as the need to accurately track and report data at different levels. For example, not all organizations use the same type of system to track discipline data. In some states, such as West Virginia, the SEA has implemented a single, centralized SIS where LEAs can enter and manage discipline data. However, in many states, LEAs maintain their own systems, either because there is no centralized state system or because they need more granular data than can be tracked in the state system. In cases where there are both local and state systems, LEAs often must map their data to the SEA's system.

Effective data governance helps ensure the quality of discipline data. Data quality depends on the policies, procedures, and tools that each agency uses to collect, manage, and maintain discipline data, including the training and support provided to the staff members who collect, manage, and maintain the information. The goal of any data system is to produce data that are

- complete (include all of the expected or required information);
- valid (measure what they purport to measure);
- accurate (contain no known errors);
- reliable (produce consistent measures over time);
- useful (relevant to the issues in question); and
- timely (available in time to inform decision-making and reporting).

### Data Privacy

Discipline data typically are protected by state and federal privacy laws, including the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). FERPA is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records.<sup>36</sup> FERPA prohibits sharing personally identifiable discipline data, with some exceptions. For example, parents can inspect and view their child's records, and schools are permitted to disclose personally identifiable information from students' education records to school officials who have a legitimate educational interest in the information.<sup>37</sup>

#### The U.S. Department of Education's Student Privacy Policy Office (SPPO)

<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/>

This website provides information about federal laws relating to the privacy of students' education records, and technical assistance on student privacy issues for the broader education community.

Stakeholders such as parents, community partners, school board members, and others may be unaware of state and federal regulations governing the privacy and confidentiality of personal information and may request data that cannot be publicly shared. For example, a parent may request information about their child's disciplinary record, but in some cases that involve multiple students, information related to other students involved in the incident may not be sharable if not directly related to the student. Discipline data that are reported to the public must be aggregated or de-identified to prevent the release of personally identifiable information.

<sup>36</sup> Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 34 C.F.R. § 99.1-99.67. Retrieved July 12, 2023, from <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-34/subtitle-A/part-99?toc=1>.

<sup>37</sup> U.S. Department of Education Student Privacy Policy Office. (2021). *A Parent Guide to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)*. Retrieved July 12, 2023, from <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/parent-guide-family-educational-rights-and-privacy-act-ferpa-0>.

Some discipline data cannot be de-identified in a way that permits public sharing. For example, an LEA with a low rate of suspensions may be unable to publicly report suspension data because the number of individuals impacted does not meet the minimum threshold necessary to ensure privacy. Agencies can help stakeholders understand the limitations on data access by sharing information about the laws that govern data privacy and clearly communicating agency policies and procedures regarding data requests.

### **Importance of Information About Victims**

Collecting data about victims can be useful for recognizing patterns of victimization, such as a series of bullying, harassment, and intimidation incidents that target members of a particular demographic group. Moreover, education organizations have a responsibility to support the victims of violence following school-related incidents—and, in some states, following non-school-related incidents as well. Support services may include counseling and emotional support, as well as safety planning and crisis prevention programs to avert future discrimination and harassment. Data about the victims involved in incidents help identify students who are eligible for these services.

### **Training Staff to Collect Discipline Data**

Training is a critical element in effective data collection and use. Training can help staff understand the importance of data collection, including how discipline and other types of behavior data are used to improve services to students and improve school climate. Ensuring that those entering the data understand how the data are used, as well as their value, helps emphasize the importance of their work and improve the quality of the data they enter.

LEAs have different requirements for who can enter discipline data in the agency's SIS or discipline data system. In some systems, only one or two school-based staff are trained, such as the principal and vice principal. Other systems are set up for more stakeholders to enter data, such as teachers. As more people enter data, it is critical that they are trained to enter data consistently.

In addition to technical training on how to access the system, enter data, save records, and generate reports, it is crucial to provide staff with information regarding LEA policies, processes, and procedures related to managing and addressing student behavior. For example, a training program might show how behaviors such as tardiness, insubordination, or disorderly conduct are defined in a Student Code of Conduct and how those definitions align with disciplinary elements in a data management system. Staff responsible for entering data need to clearly understand how incidents are defined, including what kinds of behaviors must be entered into a discipline data system. With clear direction, staff are better prepared to

### **Forum Guides to Supporting Data Access for Researchers**

SEA Perspective:  
[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2012809.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2012809.asp)

LEA Perspective:  
[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2014801.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2014801.asp)

The *Forum Guides to Supporting Data Access for Researchers* provide policies, practices, and templates that LEAs and SEAs can adopt and adapt as they consider how to effectively respond to requests for data about the education enterprise, including data maintained in longitudinal data systems.

### **SLDS Data Use Standards: Knowledge, Skills, and Professional Behaviors for Effective Data Use**

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED595040.pdf>

This resource details the essential knowledge, skills, and professional behaviors required by educators to effectively use data to inform instructional and programmatic decisions. The goal of this publication is to increase the effective use of data by teachers and administrators to support student learning and success.

respond to student behaviors in a manner that aligns with school and LEA guidelines, leaving less opportunity for subjectivity or implicit bias, which lead to inconsistencies in addressing student behaviors.

### Implicit Bias in Discipline Data

Understanding implicit biases and their effects on discipline can inform stakeholders who use discipline data and help educators understand and reduce disparities in discipline. Implicit biases are the “attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner.”<sup>38</sup> These unknown, automatic reactions to other people can lead to unintentional discrimination.<sup>39</sup> For example, teacher biases are associated with achievement gaps and disparities in suspension rates.<sup>40</sup>

38 Staats, C. (2015-2016, Winter). Understanding Implicit Bias: What Educators Should Know. *American Educator*. Retrieved May 8, 2022, from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1086492.pdf>.

39 Project Implicit. (n.d.) *What is implicit bias?* Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://www.projectimplicit.net/>.

40 Harvard Graduate School of Education. (2020). Measuring Implicit Bias in Schools. *Usable Knowledge*. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/20/08/measuring-implicit-bias-schools>.

School- and district-level administrators will be better prepared to guide their staff in district discipline policy after the administrators have participated in training by qualified instructors. Many data systems are purchased from vendors who offer staff basic training to operate and manage the system. Vendors may offer additional training to ensure that the system is used to its fullest potential and that users are aware of updates to the system, including changes to how incident behaviors are coded. Vendor-provided training is only one aspect of a comprehensive training program. Additional training that goes beyond the technical aspects of the system can provide important information on applicable policies, processes, and laws that guide the documentation of incident behaviors, as well as using discipline data to improve classroom learning and school climate.

A well-designed training program will

- explain district and school operational definitions and expectations (for example, clear definitions of what constitutes tardiness or coming to school unprepared);
- clarify policy goals, including how discipline data are used;
- explore the role of implicit bias in teacher and staff reporting incidents;
- explain the system’s technical operations;
- explain data terms and definitions;
- demonstrate how to use supporting resources such as data dictionaries;
- ensure that incident behaviors are categorized according to state codes;
- include technical assistance materials such as video clips of examples and non-examples of each type of incident behavior; and
- endeavor to improve the consistency of data entry and system implementation.

Real-life examples can be especially effective for teaching staff to recognize and categorize types of incident behaviors. Providing examples of behaviors that do and do not meet the standard for each type helps users differentiate among incident behavior types (for example, the difference between “Fighting” and “Physical Altercation, Minor” in the data element Incident Behavior).



In one school district, for example, staff were concerned that schools might be coding too many incident behaviors as “disorderly conduct” when a less serious infraction would have been accurate. After training staff on the definition of disorderly conduct, the number of reported incidents involving disorderly conduct decreased substantially because of more accurate coding.

Real-life examples also help prevent staff from miscoding incident behaviors, which can have unintended consequences. In California, for example, certain Student Offense Codes “are used in determining whether or not a school is at -risk of being identified as Persistently Dangerous.”<sup>41</sup> It is therefore critical to use these codes appropriately.

Clear rules for entering and reporting data improve accuracy. For example, one LEA found that some principals were recording all fights as multiple incidents—one incident for each participant. Trainers were called in to explain the structure of the discipline data system, which had separate modules for incident and student information so that a single fighting incident is recorded as a single file in the system with linked files for each involved student. The number of reported incidents decreased substantially because of more accurate coding.

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<sup>41</sup> California Department of Education. (n.d.). *Persistently Dangerous Offense*. Retrieved December 19, 2022, from <https://documentation.calpads.org/Glossary/EndofYearData/PersistentlyDangerousOffense/>.

## Chapter 3: Using and Reporting Discipline Data

The primary goals for collecting discipline data are to support students and staff and to provide a safe environment conducive to teaching and learning. Reporting discipline data is important for helping stakeholders understand which discipline policies are working and which are falling short. Schools and districts need to examine and report not only data on incidents but also information on prevention and intervention programs. In this way, the public know about and are more likely to support efforts to provide effective interventions for students that improve school climate.

To support these efforts, it is important to minimize any stigmatizing or negative consequences to schools that report high rates of disciplinary incidents. To get an accurate picture of a local education agency's (LEA's) discipline data, the administrative team needs to be able to present its data without fear of negative impacts on the agency and with confidence that it will receive support to address its challenges.

### Using Discipline Data

At the LEA level, the main purpose of discipline data is actionable use—such as intervening to support and protect students. At the state education agency (SEA) and federal levels, discipline data contribute to a broader understanding of trends in discipline, program effectiveness, and disproportionality in how discipline is administered. For example, data that LEAs report to the Office for Civil Rights as part of the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) contribute to nationwide reports.<sup>42</sup>

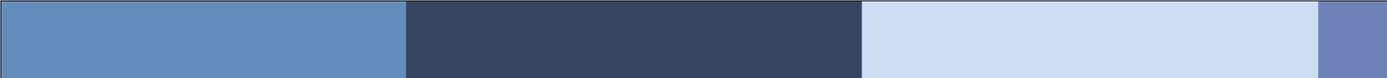
#### Collecting Contextual Data

Macomb Intermediate School District in Michigan uses a Review Worksheet for Special Needs Students to track not only discipline data, but also consequences, interventions, and services provided. This worksheet demonstrates how LEAs can capture the contextual data needed to fully understand incidents and to research the efficacy of interventions and other services.

Macomb's worksheet is available at <https://www.misd.net/seresources/files/2013%20MISD%20Discipline%20Review%20Worksheet%20Report.pdf>.

Local-level data needs are more granular than data needs for SEA and federal reporting. Incidents reported by schools and LEAs to the SEA or federal government fall into specific summary categories required by federal and state legislation. These summary categories often are broad, such as arson, assault, or property damage. However, the data collected and used within schools and LEAs include both the summary information and additional details needed

<sup>42</sup> U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) Reports and Presentations*. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/resources/datareports>.



for the LEA to act. For example, an LEA expulsion review board may need details that go beyond reporting requirements to make decisions about specific student actions.

Used in the proper context, discipline data can inform efforts to promote safe and supportive learning environments. Individual student data can help educators identify students who may need behavioral support or assist students who are victims, such as in cases of harassment, bullying, and intimidation. These data also can help administrators identify staff in need of additional support or training in classroom management. Data about when and where incidents occur can help identify times and places in need of additional staffing. For example, disruptions at lunch may indicate the need for extra staff in the cafeteria. Discipline data also can provide evidence for the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of prevention programs by showing whether incidents decreased following interventions. Over time, data can help administrators identify trends in student behavior and allocate resources toward prevention.

Stakeholders can use discipline data to question assumptions about the effectiveness and implementation of discipline policies. For example:

- Are suspensions an effective way to teach students how to behave in school?
- Do the current discipline practices maintain school safety?
- Are there disproportionate rates of discipline among certain groups of students?
- Are certain teachers administering more discipline than others?

Discipline data also are critical for preventing problems from escalating. Agencies that include discipline data in their early warning systems (EWSs) can use these systems to identify students who are involved in multiple incidents and need additional support. An EWS applies predictive analytics to student data to determine student risk level in relation to predefined indicators and thresholds. By identifying students who are at risk, an EWS provides targeted data that may be used to develop student interventions designed to avoid negative student outcomes.<sup>43</sup> For example, one LEA uses an EWS to see whether a student was involved in multiple incidents in a school year and then provides those data to counselors and other approved staff who develop supports to help the student succeed in the next school year. Some agencies also have found it useful to pair discipline data with other types of data, such as information from anonymous reporting systems, to identify trends and prevent violence.

#### **Forum Guide to Early Warning Systems**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2019035.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2019035.asp)

This guide provides information and best practices to help education agencies plan, develop, implement, and use an early warning system in their agency to inform interventions that improve student outcomes. The document includes a review of early warning systems and their use in education agencies and explains the role of early warning indicators, quality data, and analytical models in early warning systems.

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<sup>43</sup> National Forum on Education Statistics. (2018). *Forum Guide to Early Warning Systems* (NFES 2019-035). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved July 12, 2023, from [https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2019035.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2019035.asp).

## Using Discipline Data to Improve Policy and Programs

After reviewing discipline data, Putnam County Schools in West Virginia took steps to improve student behavior and school climate by taking part in the West Virginia National Guard's Future Leaders Program. High school students in the program take courses on leadership, citizenship, life skills, and military science taught by military veterans. The program also promotes community connections using service and mentorship opportunities. There are four levels of Future Leader courses, with plans to expand to five levels in one high school.<sup>44</sup>

In California, discipline data helped policymakers recognize that statewide, many students were being suspended for defiance alone. The state has since implemented programs to improve school climate and revised state law to eliminate most of these defiance-only suspensions.<sup>45</sup> This policy does not mean that students remain in class to disrupt instruction, but rather that they receive alternative consequences such as being sent to the school counselor rather than sent home.<sup>46</sup>

44 West Virginia National Guard. (n.d.). *Future Leaders Program*. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from <https://www.wv.ng.mil/Home/Future-Leaders-Program/>.

45 California Legislative Information. (n.d.) *SB 419 Pupil Discipline: suspensions: willful defiance*. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from [https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billCompareClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201920200SB419](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billCompareClient.xhtml?bill_id=201920200SB419).

46 Jones, C. (2019). *L.A. Unified's ban on willful defiance suspensions, six years later*. EdSource. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from <https://edsource.org/2019/how-l-a-unifieds-ban-on-willful-defiance-suspensions-turned-out-six-years-later/620949>.

## Reporting Discipline Data

### Meeting Reporting Responsibilities

Discipline data are reported to meet several purposes. At the federal and state levels, reports are required by law or regulation. For example, LEAs report civil rights data and SEAs report discipline data to the U.S. Department of Education (ED). Within each community, reports about school safety are an important component of communication with community members. School district leaders such as board members and senior administrators rely on reports to inform policymaking aimed at improving safety and security in schools.

### Forum Guide to Strategies for Education Data Collection and Reporting

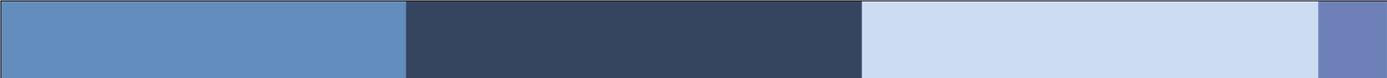
[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2021013.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2021013.asp)

This resource provides best practices for education agencies that are interested in designing and implementing a strategy for data collection and reporting, focusing on these as key elements of the larger data process. This resource is designed to be relevant to the LEAs and SEAs of today, in which data are regularly collected for multiple purposes and data collection and recording may be conducted by many different individuals within an agency.

School staff are expected to report accurate and timely discipline data to a range of stakeholders. These data are used by

- building-level administrators to plan effective management strategies;
- LEA-level planners to identify and prioritize resource use;
- parents and community members to determine school safety and effectiveness;
- SEAs to develop and evaluate policies and regulations intended to improve school safety; and
- ED to ensure compliance with laws intended to ensure the education rights of students.

Discipline data reports can be misused. For example, stakeholders may assume incorrectly that discipline data reflect problems with school management when school leaders are



actively engaged and accurately tracking incidents according to existing policies. This accurate data tracking then can help leaders evaluate policies and programs and identify areas for improvement. Proactively sharing accurate and complete data enables agencies to tell a comprehensive story about the disciplinary challenges they face and the effectiveness of efforts to address those challenges. Transparency conveys that the school is aware of problems and wants to engage the community in solving them. It is important to report unfavorable results fully and openly along with an action plan to address the issues that these data identify. This approach may mean not only reporting information on the types of incidents and disciplinary actions that have occurred, but also determining whether data reflect an increase or decrease in the number or types of incidents, what the school has done to prevent and reduce incidents, or how the school plans to address an increased number of incidents. Of course, positive information about low rates of disciplinary actions and about improvements should be shared with the community, as well.

### ***Reporting Roles and Responsibilities When Working With Law Enforcement***

The criteria for reporting an incident to law enforcement should be outlined clearly (for example, when a weapon is used or when a student is seriously injured in the incident). Wake County Public School System (WCPSS) in North Carolina developed a memorandum of understanding (MOU)<sup>47</sup> that governs the LEA's school resource officer (SRO) program. The MOU outlines the goals and guiding principles needed to foster a positive working relationship between schools and law enforcement, including the duties of each agency, the expectations of SROs while on campus, and relevant documents such as the Code of Student Conduct. The MOU also includes reporting expectations:

- Article II, Section 7 of the MOU details expectations for discipline data reporting by law enforcement agencies to the district. At least quarterly, law enforcement agencies provide the district with reports of the aggregated number of student referrals (reported by race, gender, offense charged, and school assignment) by the SRO to various criminal and juvenile justice systems and mediation programs.
- Article IV, Section 5 details expectations for data collection and reporting by the district to law enforcement agencies. North Carolina state law requires that WCPSS maintain data and reports on school-based discipline referrals that result in SRO and/or law enforcement involvement. These data are reviewed annually and include the name of the staff person making the referral, staff involved, details about the incident, the name of the SRO or

#### **School Resource Officers, School Law Enforcement Units, and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)**

<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/school-resource-officers-school-law-enforcement-units-and-ferpa>

This resource from the U.S. Department of Education's Student Privacy Policy Office answers questions about schools' and school districts' responsibilities under FERPA relating to disclosures of student information to school resource officers, law enforcement units, and others. It explains and clarifies how FERPA protects student privacy while ensuring the health and safety of students and others in the school community.

<sup>47</sup> Wake County Public School System (North Carolina). (n.d.). *School Resource Officer Program Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)*. Retrieved April 8, 2022, from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B7qMkxCIUZE7MGVvQXRObTFIVHM/view?resourcekey=0-XMfk6MMSMIuZeBJYtjC39A>.



other law enforcement persons involved, actions taken in response to the incident, details of student(s) being referred, and details of other students involved in the incident.

### **Providing Context**

As discussed in chapter one, context is critical when presenting discipline data for both internal and external reports. Reports should include any information that users will need to understand the data. For example, reports should be clear about the definitions used for different types of incident behaviors. Notes in the report or a reference page can provide useful context to help users interpret the data. For example, when discussing incidents that resulted in a suspension or expulsion, it is important to explain the category of suspensions being described. Are all suspensions being reported or only specific types of suspensions (for example, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, bus suspension)? Report summaries or data highlights can call attention to key points.

Context can help readers understand that discipline data can be fluid and change over time. For example, incidents that result in a suspension might require an investigation, which could reveal that a victim was also a perpetrator or that someone initially accused is innocent. The resulting conclusions might change the reported data. Providing this context in a report could help stakeholders understand shifts in discipline data, particularly around suspension rates at different points in time.

Context also helps data users understand anomalies in trend data. SEAs and LEAs that temporarily switch from in-person to virtual learning for reasons such as a natural disaster or a pandemic likely will see changes in their discipline data resulting from the switch. If these changes are not explained in the reports, data users may assume incorrectly that there are data errors or that the changes are due to a new intervention or program. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic showed the importance of explaining the context for data reports to prevent misunderstandings and misuse. The rapid and prolonged change from in-person to virtual learning that occurred in many agencies because of the pandemic caused drastic changes in discipline data that can lead data users to incorrect assumptions. For example, stakeholders viewing discipline data trends may incorrectly attribute a decrease in reports of tobacco possession or use to an intervention program when, in fact, students were not on campus and schools could not monitor their tobacco use. By clearly documenting and explaining the external factors that affect the data, LEAs and SEAs equip stakeholders to interpret and use the data.

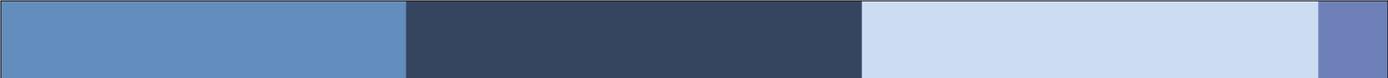
### **Protecting Data Privacy**

When reporting data publicly, privacy protections must be strictly followed. Discipline data should never be presented in ways that potentially identify individuals. In some cases, this means aggregating categories of data so that small groups of students cannot be identified by their unique characteristics or suppressing certain data by applying statistical methods and restrictions to limit the disclosure

#### **Forum Guide to Education Data Privacy**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2016096.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2016096.asp)

This resource is intended for state and local education agencies (SEAs and LEAs) to use in assisting school staff in protecting the confidentiality of student data in instructional and administrative practices. SEAs and LEAs also may find it useful for developing privacy programs and related professional development activities.



of information about individual respondents.<sup>48</sup> ED’s Student Privacy Policy Office (SPPO) provides resources and technical assistance to help schools and school districts safeguard information about students,<sup>49</sup> including methods for protecting personally identifiable information in reports.<sup>50</sup>

### Developing Reports

Reporting can take many different forms, including formal written reports, data dashboards, or datasets that may be accessed and used for local, state, or federal reporting. There are several ways to report discipline data, such as by student subgroup, school, academic year, incident behavior type, incident severity, or type of disciplinary action taken. Month-by-month data can show whether a school’s number or rate of incidents resulting in disciplinary action has changed as staff implement a new behavior management program. Time of day and location also are commonly used to subcategorize incidents. For example, grouping incidents by time of day could help a principal assign staff to provide additional supervision during times with increased incidents, such as before school or during lunch.

At the LEA level, frequently requested reports include

- suspension or expulsion rate by various filters (for example, student subgroup, academic year);
- the total count of suspensions or expulsions and an unduplicated count of students suspended or expelled;
- out-of-school and in-school suspension counts, where a high number of suspensions can indicate school-wide problems that need further information to address;
- information required for the CRDC, such as counts of suspensions and types of offenses; and
- disciplinary action by student, which authorized school staff can use to discuss and plan interventions for specific students needing support.

Data about the number of disciplinary actions, the number of incidents, and the number of students involved in incidents can be reported in several ways. When reporting multiple types of information, it is important to be clear about what data are being reported, and it can be useful to highlight the differences among these counts. For example, the number of disciplinary actions likely will differ from the number of incidents, as a single incident like a fight can lead to more than one student being disciplined. A single incident also can result in multiple sanctions for a student, such as both a suspension and restorative justice. Some reports will contain duplicated counts of students; that is, students will be counted more than once if they are involved in more than one incident or are disciplined more than once. Other reports contain unduplicated counts in which individual students are tallied only once, regardless of the number of incidents in which they are involved. For example, the number of students suspended for fighting is an unduplicated count; it counts each student only one

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48 United States Census Bureau. (2016). *Data Suppression*. Retrieved September 12, 2022 from <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/technical-documentation/data-suppression.html>.

49 U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.). *Protecting Student Privacy*. Retrieved October 26, 2022, from <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov>.

50 Statewide Longitudinal Data Systems Grant Program. (2010). *Technical Brief #3: Statistical Methods for Protecting Personally Identifiable Information in Aggregate Reporting* (NCES 2011-603). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved July 5, 2022 from <https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/resources/tech-brief-3-statistical-methods-protecting-personally-identifiable-information-aggregate>.



time, regardless of how many times that student was suspended for fighting. On the other hand, the total number of suspensions for fighting is a duplicated count of students, as students are counted each time they are suspended for fighting. Clear labels should identify exactly what information is being reported.

It can be useful to create different reports for a range of audience needs. For example, reports that fulfill state requirements may not cover all the areas of interest to parents and the community. The following considerations can help present data and findings appropriately for the intended audiences:

1. Consider producing separate reports for selected audiences.
2. Make public reports easy to understand and technically accurate.
3. When a narrative is needed, write in straightforward, nontechnical language to the degree that the subject matter permits.
4. Avoid jargon, regional terms, technical language, and acronyms.
5. Use subheadings and summary data to help audiences find salient information.
6. Consider presenting reports or data in multiple languages based on the most prevalent language groups in the area.
7. Consider using a variety of methods for communicating information about the data collection activities; brochures, fact sheets, videos, and slides may be used in addition to or in place of traditional narrative reports.
8. Ensure that requirements for the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA)<sup>51</sup> are met in public reporting products as well as accessibility requirements specified under Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.<sup>52</sup>
9. Include the data source and the date that data were pulled.

### Visualizing Data

Graphs are particularly useful for identifying changes over time or differentiating among variables such as type of incident behavior or disciplinary action. Discipline data may be grouped by type or category in numerous ways, including incident or disciplinary action. Reporting rates is important because rates can help put levels of disciplinary action in perspective. For example, a school of 1,000 students with 20 incidents clearly had more incidents than a school of 100 students with 2 incidents. However, both schools had the same rate: 2 incidents per 100 students. Trend data should be reviewed thoroughly for consistency in reporting to ensure that visualizations are

#### **Forum Guide to Data Visualization: A Resource for Education Agencies**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2017016.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2017016.asp)

This resource recommends data visualization practices that will help education agencies communicate data meaning in visual formats that are accessible, accurate, and actionable for a wide range of education stakeholders. Although this resource is designed for staff in education agencies, many of the visualization principles apply to other fields, as well.

<sup>51</sup> Americans with Disabilities Act. (n.d.). *State and Local Governments*. Retrieved July 12, 2023, from <https://www.ada.gov/topics/title-ii/>.

<sup>52</sup> For more information about applying Section 508 accessibility guidelines in the education community, see National Forum on Education Statistics. (2011). *Forum Guide to Ensuring Equal Access to Education Websites: An Introduction to Electronic Information Accessibility Standards* (NFES 2011-807). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved July 12, 2023, from [http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2011807.asp](http://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2011807.asp).

accurate. If there are changes in reporting—for example, if a specific type of incident behavior is moved from one category to another—the data should not be presented longitudinally.

The following figures are examples of typical graphs or charts that can be reported.

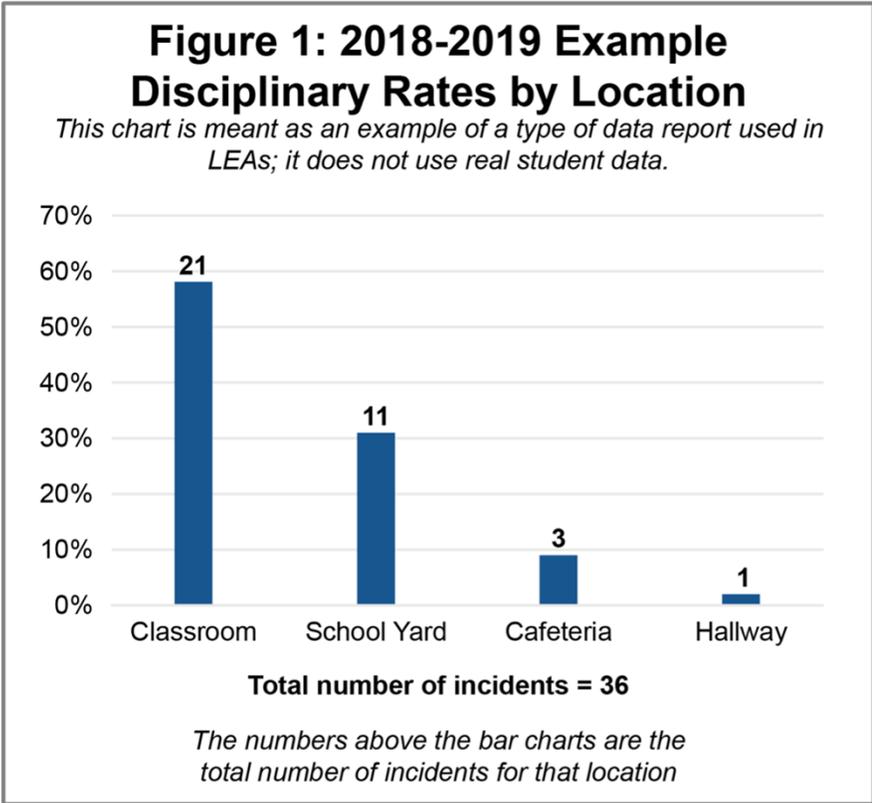


Figure 1 displays where incidents are taking place.

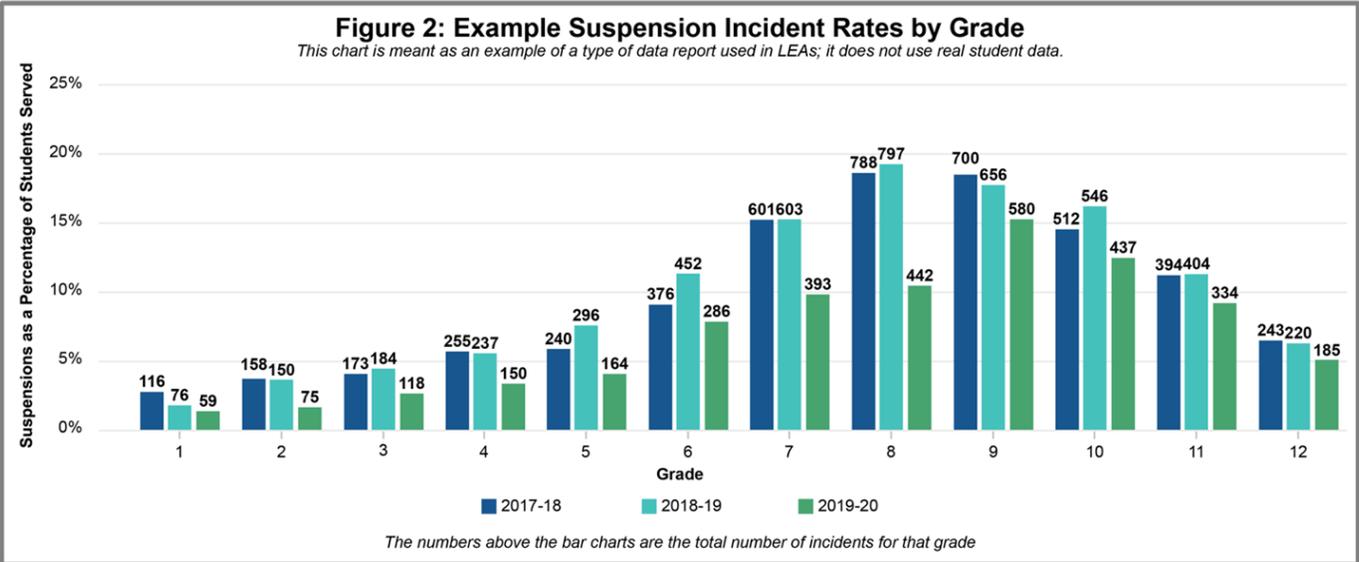
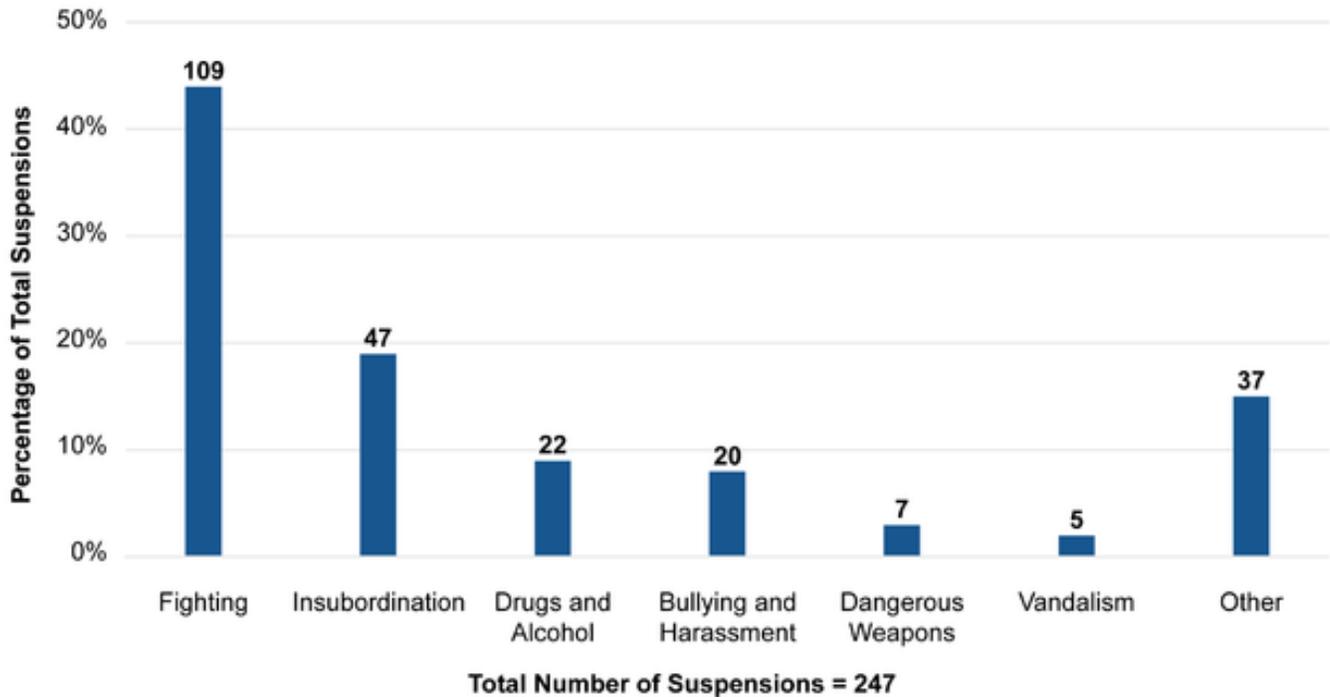


Figure 2 displays discipline data across grade levels and three consecutive school years, allowing the reader to compare rates of suspensions both within groups (for example, one grade over time) and across groups. This allows the reader to see any spikes in suspensions across grades as well as notice any trends over time, such as how suspension rates may change over a 3-year period within a particular grade.

### Figure 3: 2018-2019 Example Suspensions by Primary Behavior Type

*This chart is meant as an example of a type of data report used in LEAs; it does not use real student data.*



*The numbers above the bar charts are the total number of suspensions for that behavior type.*

**Figure 3** displays the number of suspensions by primary behavior type.

## Chapter 4: Case Studies From State and Local Education Agencies (SEAs and LEAs)

### Beaverton School District, Oregon: Using Data to Reduce Exclusionary Discipline and Support Students

In response to state laws,<sup>53</sup> the Beaverton School District (Beaverton) in 2012 started a process to reduce exclusionary discipline. Through a collaborative alliance with other Oregon districts and the Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest (REL Northwest), Beaverton conducted a comprehensive review of its discipline policies and practices. This review led to a district-wide shift from zero-tolerance, exclusionary discipline responses to a culture of restorative justice.<sup>54</sup> In the years following, Beaverton continues to build on its commitment to reduce exclusionary discipline in favor of practices that repair harm, while also aiming to reduce disparities in discipline among student subgroups. This shift is an ongoing process that involves policy reviews, data monitoring, and expanded support for student health and wellness.

#### Updating Policies to Reduce Exclusionary Discipline

Districts involved in the collaborative alliance compared student handbooks and identified potential policy updates that would keep students in school by reducing exclusionary discipline practices. For example, Beaverton changed its policy to suspend students from school for too many absences. Instead of further restricting these students' access to school, Beaverton updated its policy to encourage alternatives to exclusion. These alternatives address why a student was missing school, which helped to decrease suspensions and thus absences.

Beaverton expanded on the outcomes of the policy review by reviewing the level of response administered for each type of violation. The Beaverton Student Code of Conduct outlines four levels of responses to conduct violations:<sup>55</sup>

Level 1. Classroom Support and School-Based Interventions. These interventions aim to teach correct, alternative behavior.

Level 2. Intensive Support and Administrative Staff Interventions. These interventions aim to correct the behavior by keeping the student in school. They

53 Drinkwater, S. (2014). *Executive Numbered Memo 002-2014-15 - House Bill 2192-School Discipline* [Memorandum]. Oregon Department of Education Office of Learning. Retrieved July 12, 2023, from <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/rules-and-policies/StateRules/Documents/Executive%20Numbered%20Memo%20002-2014-15%20-%20House%20Bill%202192-School%20Discipline.pdf>.

54 For more information on Beaverton's initial policy review, including collaboration with other districts and the Regional Educational Laboratory Northwest, see Bridges, J. (2017). Keeping Kids in Class: How an Oregon School District Is Reducing Exclusionary Discipline. *Education Week*. Retrieved July 12, 2023, from <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-keeping-kids-in-class-how-an-oregon-school-district-is-reducing-exclusionary-discipline/2017/06>.

55 Beaverton School District. (2022). *Student Code of Conduct*. Retrieved July 12, 2023, from <https://www.beaverton.k12.or.us/about-us/bsd-student-family-handbook/student-code-of-conduct>.



are appropriate when supports have are in place but the behavior has continued to negatively affect the learning environment.

Level 3. Suspension and Referral Responses. This level is appropriate when interventions and supports are in place but the behavior is escalating (repeatedly) or when the behavior is severe.

Level 4. Extended Suspension and Expulsion. This level is appropriate when the student's behavior seriously affects the safety of themselves or others in the school environment.

Beaverton reviewed which types of incidents resulted in each level of intervention and enacted limits on when Level 3 and 4 responses are administered, based on violation type. These limits reduced the number of students excluded from school for being tardy, having unexcused absences, and defiance. Discipline data also inform the annual review and revision of discipline policies by school and district leaders.

### **Monitoring Data to Understand Discipline**

Staff review and analyze discipline data to better understand how discipline is administered, including questions such as which students have the most frequent office referrals for discipline incidents, which code violations result in the most referrals, and what types of interventions are implemented to address the incidents.

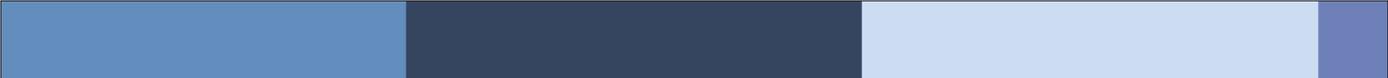
Beaverton works to reduce disparities in which students experience exclusionary discipline, as well as disparities in which students are referred. Analysis of Beaverton's discipline data using risk ratios shows disproportionate rates of both discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline among students of color when compared to White students. Risk ratios are used to measure the risk of an outcome for one student subgroup as compared to the risk of that outcome for other subgroups in the same agency.<sup>56</sup> Beaverton helps principals and other school leaders understand these data.

Beaverton's student information system (SIS) tracks both the type of discipline incident and the intervention implemented to address the incident. This information allows for in-depth data reviews; for example, approved staff can view data by code-of-conduct violation type and then see whether each violation resulted in exclusion. Staff can filter the data further by student subgroups. This capability provides school leaders with the data they need to identify and address disparities and ensure that individual student needs are met. For example, if a report shows that a student has multiple referrals, the principal can easily review the reason for each referral, whether the referral resulted in exclusion, and whether the school used restorative approaches or other interventions to support the student.

Beaverton also encourages principals to review referral data to help identify when teachers need more training or support to build better relationships with students and develop skills to respond to student conflict that reduce the need for discipline referrals. Beaverton has made progress around training staff in restorative practices; however, more professional development is needed in areas such as staff awareness of how implicit bias can affect referrals.

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<sup>56</sup> Definition adapted from Iowa Department of Education. (2019). *Explanation of Simple Risk Ratio*. Accessed January 10, 2023, from <https://educateiowa.gov/documents/special-education/2019/03/explanation-simple-risk-ratio>.



## **Increasing Support for Student Health and Wellness**

In response to data analysis, the district invested more resources in behavioral health and wellness teams that include social workers and student success workers. Having this team in place, particularly at the elementary level, provides a way for staff to address incidents before referring students to the principal. These teams focus on promoting positive conduct in schools and connect students and families with resources to address the reasons for conduct violations.

The district measures the impact of this investment quarterly by looking at data about which students have been referred to behavioral health and wellness teams and the tier of support they are receiving, disaggregated by student subgroups. Students, families, and teachers received this strategy positively. Beaverton gathered feedback on the success of its wellness team approach, and families and teachers reported that this level of support is critical for student engagement.

Like many districts, Beaverton experienced challenges in its efforts to reduce exclusionary discipline and address disparities in discipline. Notably, when students came back to campus after school closures during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, many struggled with socialization and re-acclimating to codes of conduct. In addition, the shifts in policy and practice that Beaverton is implementing require time and resources, both of which are limited. Finding time to train staff, especially with pandemic-related staff shortages, is challenging for schools. Student health and wellness investments help mitigate these challenges, and Beaverton remains committed to providing staff with the data and training needed to reduce exclusionary practices and disparities in discipline.

### **Best Practices**

- A discipline data system should show both the incident and the intervention that was administered. This way, staff can easily track which interventions are given for each conduct violation, such as when restorative justice versus exclusionary discipline is administered.
- A key factor in limiting suspensions is offering an alternative to exclusion. School staff need effective practices to address conduct violations, and changes in policies to reduce suspensions and expulsions must be coupled with changes in practice.
- Using data to explain the rationale for making changes is an important part of helping staff implement changes. Principals and other authorized staff need timely access to discipline data at the school level and the tools and reports necessary to analyze and understand the data. Reports on data such as discipline referrals and interventions are actionable, and they enable administrators to make real-time decisions about how, where, and when to intervene to support students and families, as well as where to invest time and resources.



## Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, Alaska: Using Data Dashboards to Facilitate Data Use

Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD) in Alaska uses data dashboards to make data available in a visual format that is easy to access and use. Many stakeholders, from school board members to parents and community members, requested these dashboards; through them, the district puts reports and data files, tailored for end users, directly into the hands of the stakeholders who need them.

### Purpose of the Dashboard

The district developed its Discipline Data Dashboard ([https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/k12northstar/viz/Discipline\\_8/Discipline](https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/k12northstar/viz/Discipline_8/Discipline)) in answer to the Board of Education's requests for discipline information. Board members and other stakeholders wanted to review existing disciplinary protocols and policies and consider different approaches that could be taken, such as restorative justice policies. They also needed data on discipline trends to answer questions such as

- whether there was disproportionate discipline (if certain groups of students were disciplined at higher rates than other students); and
- whether certain types of incidents (such as bullying) were increasing or decreasing.

The dashboard is divided into two sections, "Discipline" and "Discipline\_Rate," accessible through tabs at the top of the page. The "Discipline" tab indicates the number of disciplinary incidents, whereas the "Discipline\_Rate" tab provides rates and accounts for students who have more than one disciplinary incident.

### Development of the Dashboard

FNSBSD began planning its Discipline Data Dashboard by seeking an authoritative data source to populate the dashboard. The stakeholder concerns that were driving development of the dashboard, such as changes in discipline data over time, required consistent longitudinal data. Data reported to Alaska's SEA do not meet the threshold for consistency. For example, the process for collecting data on bullying has changed at the SEA level. However, within the district, discipline codes are aligned with the district's *Student Rights, Responsibilities & Behavioral Consequences Handbook* (<https://www.k12northstar.org/domain/5353>). The handbook and the aligned codes have remained consistent over time, which guided the district's choice to populate the dashboard with district data.

The dashboard pulls data from discipline logs, which are submitted by principals and assistant principals. These data are updated yearly and are subject to data accuracy checks. In addition, discipline data are merged with demographic data by means of student IDs; a data accuracy check can therefore confirm, for instance, that a student with a logged disciplinary incident was marked present at school the day the incident occurred.

FNSBSD also works to ensure student data privacy, an essential and ongoing task that requires nearly as much time, resources, and labor as building the dashboard. It is essential to allot time and resources to this ongoing effort. For this purpose, the dashboard includes built-in, multilayered suppression techniques to ensure that student information remains anonymous. The dashboard clearly communicates this data suppression to the user as follows: "Data with Null/Blank values may have been suppressed to protect personally identifiable information."



## Best Practices

FNSBSD has found that a data dashboard is a valuable tool for communicating trends in discipline to the school community. The dashboard can help to answer stakeholders' questions, highlight improvements, and identify areas where more support is needed. Dashboards can help stakeholders better understand discipline data—for instance, by making it easier to compare data for different schools or groups of students or by illustrating data patterns that are not easily discerned from reports. The dashboard also reduces staff burdens. For example, principals no longer need to create their own files to track and report the data.

The district has identified several key areas that other agencies developing discipline data dashboards should consider:

- Collaboration between dashboard developers and the administrators responsible for data collection and reporting is a good way to identify the most advantageous ways to compile and present information for stakeholders in a discipline dashboard, including format and time range.
- Longitudinal data require consistent presentation. Many stakeholders are interested in knowing how data have changed over time, and it is incumbent on agencies to communicate clearly any changes that would affect trend comparisons, such as changes to discipline categories. A data dictionary is a useful tool for clear definition and description of common data elements, such as graduation rate and demographics.
- Agencies can build trust with stakeholders by maintaining transparency around discipline data, such as by being clear about what data are collected, why they are collected, and which privacy protections may affect the data.
- Stakeholders may need contextual information to understand and work with the data in the dashboard. For example, the widespread transition to remote and virtual learning has dramatically changed the rates and types of discipline incidents reported. By communicating this context, agencies can help stakeholders interpret the data appropriately.
- Dashboards can help present complex information clearly and concisely. Well-designed, dynamic dashboards increase stakeholder engagement by making it easy for stakeholders to quickly access and understand key data. For example, school board members can use the dashboards to quickly find answers to questions, rather than sorting through existing reports or requesting new reports. FNSBSD measured the use of both narrative reports and dashboards and found that although narrative reports were infrequently used, dashboards have been viewed thousands of times.

## Putnam County Schools, West Virginia: Effective Data Systems Facilitate Data Use

Putnam County Schools in West Virginia serves more than 9,000 students in prekindergarten through 12th grade. The district tracks discipline data daily by using an incident-based system connected to the statewide Student Information System (SIS). Putnam County Schools' experience shows how a well-designed system with regular updates, interoperability with the state system, and stringent data quality can facilitate data use and lead to improved student support.

### Discipline Data System Design

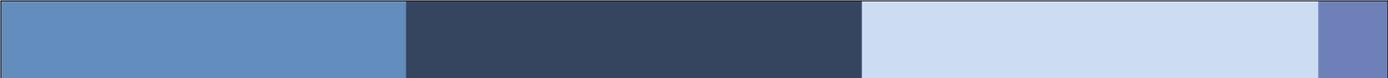
The incident-based system is designed so that users with the correct access credentials can view data by student or by incident, and it includes longitudinal data to help identify trends over time. The system tracks data using the West Virginia Department of Education's standardized system for classifying and reporting inappropriate student behavior, which ranks infractions into four levels:<sup>57</sup>

- Level 1: Minimally Disruptive Behaviors “disrupt the educational process and the orderly operations of the school but do not pose direct danger to self or others” and include behaviors such as tardiness or deceit.
- Level 2: Disruptive and Potentially Harmful Behaviors “disrupt the educational process and/or pose potential harm or danger to self and/or others. The behavior is committed willfully but not in a manner that is intended maliciously to cause harm or danger to self and/or others” and includes behaviors such as insubordination or technology misuse.
- Level 3: Imminently Dangerous, Illegal, and/or Aggressive Behaviors “are willfully committed and are known to be illegal and/or harmful to people and/or property” and include behaviors such as vandalism or harassment, bullying, or intimidation.
- Level 4: Safe Schools Act Behaviors are the most serious level of behaviors, including possession of dangerous weapons and illegal substance-related behaviors. These behaviors are addressed in West Virginia legislation as well as the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994. These laws specify how the principal, superintendent, and county board must respond, including requirements for alerting law enforcement.

Data elements used in the system include the following:

1. Student Being Disciplined (Offender);
2. Victim(s);
3. Date of Incident;
4. Time of Incident;
5. Location of Incident;
6. Primary Incident Type/Level of Severity;
7. Primary Incident Description or Code;
8. Weapons Information, if any;
9. Restraint Type, if any;
10. Harassment/Bully/Gang/Racial/Sexual/Gender Identification Type, if any;
11. Notes;
12. Witness;
13. Reporter;

<sup>57</sup> West Virginia Board of Education. (n.d.). *West Virginia Manual for Expected Behavior in Safe and Supportive Schools* (Policy 4373). Retrieved July 19, 2023, from <https://wvde.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/policy-4373.doc>.

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14. Disciplinary Intervention;
  15. Intervention Start Date;
  16. Intervention End Date;
  17. Length of Disciplinary Intervention; and
  18. Additional Incidents.

Error checks are built into the system to ensure accurate data. For example, attendance records are linked to discipline incident records so that the date of a student's suspension record is cross-referenced to their attendance record. This ensures that student absences for disciplinary incidents are coded correctly for the day(s) of their suspensions. Identified discrepancies then can be reviewed easily. There are times when a recommended disciplinary intervention does not reflect the final punishment; for example, a recommended 10-day suspension may be shortened to a 5-day suspension. Matching the suspension record to the attendance record enables the LEA to ensure that the discipline system has the correct date(s) of the student's suspension. It further ensures that discipline-related absences are appropriately accounted for in the calculation of attendance rates and in other uses of attendance data.

Principals maintain data quality and standardization. They also are responsible for training staff to input data and must approve all discipline data entries. Teachers are authorized to input disciplinary interventions that fall into lower-level infraction categories, but as a means of checks and balances, an administrator reviews the incident. This accounts for differences in how teachers view incidents, ensuring that discipline is being administered equitably and in line with district policies and procedures.

#### **Discipline Data System Benefits and Uses**

The district's discipline data system is designed to help staff use data to support students. As one example of this support, the incident-based system populates discipline data to the district's early warning system (EWS). An EWS identifies students who are at risk of dropping out of school. This type of system applies predictive analytics to student data to determine student risk level in relation to predefined indicators and thresholds. By identifying students who are at risk, an EWS provides targeted data that may be used to develop interventions designed to avoid negative student outcomes. Within the EWS, users can select relevant indicators to trigger early warnings in multiple areas, such as attendance, discipline, or grades. Each indicator is triggered individually, so the school knows which issues to target to help the student. For example, a student with multiple level 1 infractions can be flagged in the EWS to receive intervention services with the school counselor.

The system also is designed to reduce staff reporting burdens. Because it is interoperable with the statewide SIS, data are readily available for state reporting. The system also includes data fields needed for both the Civil Rights Data Collection and *EDFacts* reporting.

The system's data dashboards provide a useful tool to help staff easily visualize data and trends. For example, a middle school principal noticed a spike in discipline incidents on Wednesday afternoons. In response, they developed a lunchtime intramurals program to keep students occupied during this time. As a result, discipline incidents decreased. Each principal can see a live dashboard of their data when they log into their discipline data system. The dashboard shows the top five incident behaviors, interventions taken, students who are at risk, most common locations of incidents (such as in the classroom, the cafeteria, the bathroom, on the



playground, or elsewhere), and day of the week. They can see trends changing in real time without having to run a report. School counselors also have access to discipline information for each student. The system supports additional reports as needed.

### Best Practices

Putnam County Schools has found that several key considerations can help agencies create discipline data systems that support students and reduce staff burdens:

- Interoperability is a key to ensuring data quality and reducing reporting burdens. By linking the discipline system with the statewide SIS and using standard codes, the district can automate error checks and ensure the comparability of data.
- Role-based responsibilities also help ensure the quality of data. The district trains principals and some assistant principals to use the discipline data system. Principals are responsible for reviewing each infraction and assigning the intervention to be taken. This process helps ensure that incidents are entered correctly and minimizes the risk that different staff within a single school view incidents differently.
- Staff buy-in is essential when implementing a new system. It is useful to start with a handpicked group of staff who are comfortable with technology and eager to use the system. The dashboards also help build buy-in for the system. The dashboard gives users easy-to-understand data, quickly and simply, without having to run reports. Just looking at the dashboard can help users see what is happening at the school level.

### San Bernardino City Unified School District, California: Using Data to Reduce Student Suspensions

San Bernardino City Unified School District (SBCUSD) is a large LEA in an urban environment in southern California. The district faces several challenges in providing services to students:

- Ninety percent of the LEA's student population is considered socioeconomically disadvantaged.
- Twenty percent of students are English learners.
- Thirty-eight percent of students are considered chronically absent.<sup>58</sup>

Within the district, there are disparities in discipline among different groups of students. The district is committed to understanding and addressing these disparities. As part of this commitment, district leaders have focused considerable effort on reducing student suspensions through understanding and reporting suspension data. Their approach to working with the data was to focus on data visualization, including comparing data by subgroups and grade level.

### Key Findings

A multiyear analysis of discipline data highlighted disparities in suspension rates, with a disproportionate number of African American students suspended as compared to their peers. The analysis also found that suspension incidents peaked in grades 7-9 and that most suspension incidents were violations of just a few specific California Education Codes. Zero-tolerance rules drove many of the suspensions. Mapping methods were used to link student suspension

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<sup>58</sup> The California Department of Education defines a chronically absent student as a student who was absent for 10 percent or more of days that they were expected to attend and were enrolled for 31 or more instructional days. California Department of Education. (n.d.). 2020-21 Chronic Absenteeism Rate. *Data Quest*. Retrieved July 12, 2023, from <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/DQCensus/AttChrAbsRate.aspx?aggllevel=District&cde=3667876&year=2020-21>.



incidents to home neighborhoods. Spatial analysis of these data identified neighborhoods with statistically significant hotspots for student suspension.

### Using the Data

To reduce suspension rates, SBCUSD implemented two strategies:

1. regular and frequent reporting of student suspension data; and
2. positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS)<sup>59</sup> that include multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS).

Based on the findings from the multiyear data analysis, suspension reports were prepared and provided regularly to SBCUSD district and school administrators to help them better monitor suspension incidents at all schools. Reports included detailed metrics on the numbers and rates of students suspended, numbers and rates of suspension incidents, numbers of incidents of defiance, numbers of expulsions, and average numbers of days suspended per incident. Focusing attention on these suspension data metrics helped raise awareness about the impact of student suspensions on the district.

SBCUSD first piloted and then implemented a districtwide PBIS program to provide a welcoming and supportive environment for all students, teaching students specific behavior expectations while recognizing and reinforcing positive behavior. This allows school staff to spend more time rewarding students who succeed in meeting behavioral expectations rather than punishing those who struggle. This approach has led to a more positive school climate overall, where students want to behave well. It also has helped educators intervene early and prevent incidents from escalating. The district's approach is described on the Student Wellness and Support Services website, which includes an overview of the systems, data, and practices that make up each tier within the MTSS.<sup>60</sup>

As part of the PBIS implementation, SBCUSD schools use a PBIS Principal Dashboard to monitor data. The dashboard, illustrated below, details pertinent information about school suspensions and referrals, including the number of office referrals and suspensions by grade, type of behavior, the location of incident, and the teacher who wrote the referral or suspension.<sup>61</sup>

SBCUSD also has used data to refine professional training for school staff. Through PBIS training, there are fewer suspensions for defiance-only behaviors. School staff were trained in de-escalation strategies—a PBIS technique—to address students' reactions and help prevent students from fighting.

Combined, these data efforts yielded positive results. Between the 2007-08 and 2017-18 school years, suspension incidents declined from more than 16,000 incidents by nearly 7,000 unique students to fewer than 5,000 incidents by 2,800 unique students. The student suspension rate—defined as the number of students with one or more suspensions divided by the cumulative student enrollment—declined from 11 to 5 percent.

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59 Center on PBIS. (2022). *What Is PBIS?* Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://www.PBIS.org>.

60 San Bernardino City Unified School District. (n.d.). *SWSS Department—Student Wellness & Support Services*. Retrieved September 12, 2022, from <https://sites.google.com/sbcusd.k12.ca.us/sel-informed-pbis/swss-dept>.

61 The data shared in the example dashboard are not real and do not represent an actual school or student.



### Best Practices

- Buy-in from stakeholders is essential for the success of a data-based effort like the one undertaken by SBCUSD. Data require a great deal of effort to collect and report accurately. It is important that administrators communicate to staff that reporting disciplinary events is not a negative thing; instead, it contributes to understanding how far the discipline problem extends, where to stage interventions, and where to steer resources. As SBCUSD began focusing on suspension data, the district emphasized to principals that the goal was to help understand the scope of the problem so that it could be addressed. Because principals know that accurate and timely data are needed for the analysis, data quality has improved.
- Documentation is critical for effective data collection and use. SBCUSD has found that digitization of records has helped improve documentation.
- Using data to improve practices is an ongoing effort. SBCUSD has worked hard to mitigate disparities and reduce the overall number of suspensions; as a result, data analysis has shown continuous improvement. However, there is still work to be done.

**Example of a PBIS Principal Dashboard**

*This dashboard is meant as an example. It does not represent a real school and does not use student data.*

OFFICE REFERRALS			SUSPENSIONS			Total Suspensions to Date		50
<b>Total Referrals to Date</b>			<b>Unique Incidents to Date</b>			<b>110</b>		<b>200</b>
<b>Office Referrals by Tiers</b>			<b>Suspensions by Tiers</b>			<b>Days Missed Due to Suspension</b>		<b>200</b>
	Students YTD	% Students		Students YTD	% Students	School Days Missed		
0-1 Referrals (Tier One)	750	90%	0 Suspensions (Tier One)	750	90.36%			
2-6 Referrals (Tier Two)	73	9%	1-2 Suspensions (Tier Two)	70	8.43%			
7+ Referrals (Tier Three)	7	1%	3+ Suspensions (Tier Three)	10	1.20%			
<b>Office Referrals by Problem Behavior</b>			<b>Suspensions by Violation</b>			<b>Average Length of Suspensions</b>		
	Incidents	% Incidents		Incidents	% Incidents	Avg Len = Total days of suspension for a subgroup/ Number of suspensions for the subgroup		
1) Fighting	50	45%	1) Cause, Attempt, or Threatened Physical Injury 48900 (a1)	25	22.73%	School-Wide		1.82 days (200/110)
2) Following Instructions	30	27%	2) Possession of Controlled Substances 48900 (c)	15	13.64%	African-American		*
3) Drugs	10	9%	3) Committed Obscene Act or Profanity 48900 (i)	13	11.82%	Hispanic/Latino		*
4) Profanity Toward Staff	10	9%	4) Threaten or Harassed Others (Ec 48900.4) 48900 *	10	9.09%	White		*
5) Other	10	9%	5) Warning: Only 4-12, Defiant or Disruptive Activities 48900 (k)	10	0.00%			
<b>Office Referrals by Location</b>			<b>Suspensions by Location</b>			<b>NOTE: When comparing sub-groups, use the data below</b>		
	Incidents	% Incidents		Incidents	% Incidents	<b>YTD SUSPENSION %</b>		
1) Classroom	190	58%	1) Classroom	30	60.00%	Total suspensions for a subgroup (YTD enrollment) /Total suspensions at site YTD		<b>Rate</b>
2) Outside	100	31%	2) Outside	10	20.00%	African-American		*
3) Other	5	2%	3) Other	5	10.00%	Hispanic/Latino		*
4) Office	30	9%	4) Office	5	10.00%	White		*
<b>Office Referrals Written By:</b>			<b>Teacher Suspensions Written By:</b>			<b>YTD UNDUPLICATED SUSPENSION %</b>		
	Incidents	% Incidents		Incidents	% Incidents	YTD number of students in a subgroup with at least one suspension/YTD enrollment for the subgroup		<b>Rate</b>
1) Teacher 1	30	27.27%	1) Teacher 1	15	30.00%	School-Wide (All)		*
2) Teacher 2	29	26.36%	2) Teacher 2	10	20.00%	African-American		*
3) Teacher 3	28	25.45%	3) Teacher 3	10	20.00%	Hispanic/Latino		*
4) Teacher 4	10	9.09%	4) Teacher 4	5	10.00%	White		*
5) Teacher 5	5	4.55%	5) Teacher 5	5	10.00%			
<b>Office Referrals by Grade</b>			<b>Suspensions by Targeted Violations</b>			<b>EXPULSIONS</b>		
	Incidents	% Incidents		Incidents	% Incidents	Number of Expulsion Recommendations		<b>7</b>
1) Grade 6	100	30.77%	Profanity (i)	20	40.00%			
2) Grade 7	100	30.77%	Defiance (k)	13	26.00%			
3) Grade 8	125	0.00%	Bullying (x)	10	20.00%			



## New York State Education Department: Using Data to Reduce Exclusionary Discipline Practices and Promote Student Re-Engagement

Under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), the New York State Education Department (NYSED) identifies the lowest performing 5 percent of public schools that are supported under Receivership.<sup>62</sup> NYSED’s Office of Innovation and School Reform (OISR) collaborates with these schools and district leaders to provide targeted technical assistance and supports—with a focus on schools meeting or exceeding demonstrable improvement indicator (DII) targets with the intent of increasing students’ academic growth and proficiency while ensuring equitable access to high quality educational programs and social-emotional learning (SEL) services in a safe space for all students. Such targets include but are not limited to

- increasing all student’s average daily attendance;
- reducing chronic absenteeism;
- increasing English language arts, math, and, as applicable, graduation rates;
- reducing Office Disciplinary Referrals (ODRs);
- reducing rates of behavioral recidivism; and
- increasing ongoing student, parent and family, and community engagement.

As a core part of technical assistance, OISR first reviews how schools ensure inclusivity by assessing discipline practices. Then, OISR supports the transformation of discipline practices from exclusionary consequences to cross-functional supports based on SEL. OISR helps schools and districts use discipline data to inform interventions that are responsive to all students’ needs. These efforts seek to ensure sustained, equitable access to education and SEL-based services to all students in a safe academic environment.<sup>63</sup>

### In-Depth Data Reviews

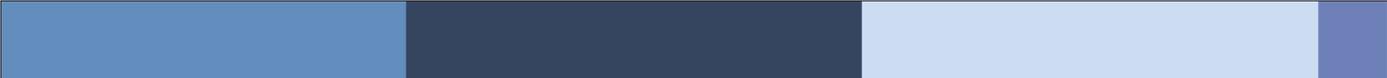
As part of its process, OISR first conducts site-based visitations, called “reflective review and coaching sessions,” with school and district leaders to best contextualize school-specific needs. Using school-based trend data, OISR’s outside perspective is intended to help schools improve the supports they provide to students to reduce discipline incidents, tracking duplicated and unduplicated in-school, out-of-school, and short- and long-term suspensions. OISR collaborates with and supports school and district leaders to use the data maintained at the school and state levels to identify areas where supports are needed and to develop plans for interventions. Often, this work involves conversations between OISR staff, school administrators, and district staff to understand available discipline data and how these data can be combined with other data to identify patterns, mitigate systems issues, and inform interventions.

OISR has found that in addition to discipline data, other data including school report cards, live point-in-time average daily attendance, chronic absenteeism, and student performance data provide context around student needs. These data help school and district staff understand why discipline incidents are occurring, assess incidents—including location, whether classroom-based or in unstructured environments (such as halls or the cafeteria), and determine possible interventions to prevent reoccurrences. For example, if the data indicate that transitions

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62 For more information on Receivership in New York, see New York State Department of Education. (n.d.). *School Receivership for 2018-19 to 2022-23: Frequently Asked Questions*. Retrieved July 12, 2023, from <https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/innovation-school-reform/school-receivership-2022-23-faq.pdf>.

63 New York State Department of Education. (n.d.). *Innovation and School Reform*. Retrieved July 12, 2023, from <http://www.nysed.gov/innovation-school-reform>.



between classes need more structure and the school implements a change, then OISR at the next visit can help school leaders review data to determine whether interventions have led to a reduction in ODRs related to that area of the building.

One method that OISR uses to help school and district leaders better understand their discipline data is to disaggregate the data in multiple ways.<sup>64</sup> For example, OISR encourages schools to assess office discipline referrals (ODRs) by referral type, location, incident, and title of ODR author. Using these data, leaders can identify ‘high needs locations,’ assess collective building-based SEL-based resources, and determine next steps for site-based professional development planning. To measure the success of these interventions, OISR encourages schools to reexamine the referral numbers across segments of personnel applying SEL-based interventions such as restorative practices and targeted professional development. Once the schools have identified students in need of support, they can continue to use data to monitor students’ progress over time and track the supports they are provided. OISR can help schools connect student discipline data, such as how often a student is suspended, to student performance and the school’s overall rate of absenteeism.

### **A Collaborative Approach to Improvement**

Addressing school discipline to improve outcomes for students requires coordination across levels. OISR works with schools, districts, and other NYSED offices and teams to use all available data to identify issues and offer targeted supports. Representation from the district’s central office is crucial when the OISR team meets with a school. OISR has found that district support is essential to a school’s success in addressing discipline issues and sustainably reducing suspensions. To ensure the district’s ongoing support, OISR ends each meeting by asking the district representative to commit to three actions the district will take to support the school’s principal in their ongoing efforts to reengage students.

Beyond assisting with data analysis and promoting collaboration across levels, OISR also helps schools access information about effective interventions. OISR does not mandate school practices but instead provides guide rails. For example, OISR suggests options accessible to schools and that are within the scope of district work and support. Examples of such resources are restorative practices that help schools promote mutual respect among students and staff. OISR maintains a repository of quality intervention strategies, with other NYSED offices as key resources, and can make recommendations for additional supports that have worked in schools with similar demographics. After a school has implemented an intervention, OISR helps to monitor a wide range of data to gauge the contributive value of the intervention. For instance, to measure student reengagement after the application of a mentoring program, OISR encouraged schools to track attendance rates, triangulating the same with student assessment and proficiency rates and, as applicable, graduation rates.

### **Best Practices**

OISR has identified several key considerations that are useful for collaborating across school, district, and state levels to address exclusionary discipline and promote student reengagement:

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<sup>64</sup> Disaggregation of data refers to breaking down data about a population into smaller groupings. It is sometimes referred to as separating a whole into its component parts or drilling down into the data.

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- Promote data literacy. Data are needed to drive planning, and while many schools and districts are data rich, staff and administrators may be unaware of how they can harness the data to inform their work. Professional development can teach staff how to use data for multiple purposes, from reframing classroom plans to refining systems and structures.
  - Encourage schools and districts to think about incremental planning. Help them to define the planning process, how their plan will be implemented, and what measures of success will point to progress. Documenting the plan and implemented interventions is paramount to sustainable change. Reviewing plans informs future actions.
  - When planning interventions, emphasize how a listed program or intervention is being used. Check that the application of an intervention is outlined in enough detail to ensure the program is being used with fidelity and that the methods can be replicated with other students.

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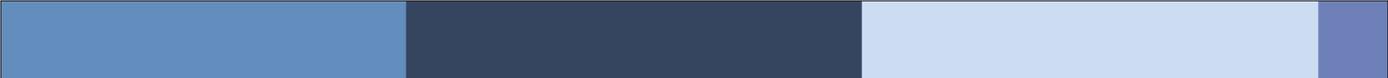
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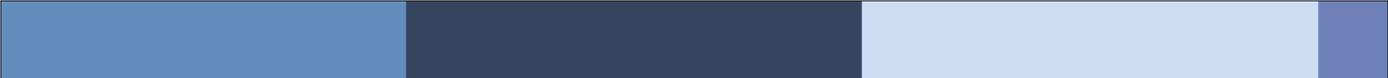
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## Related Resources

### Federal Resources

#### Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports

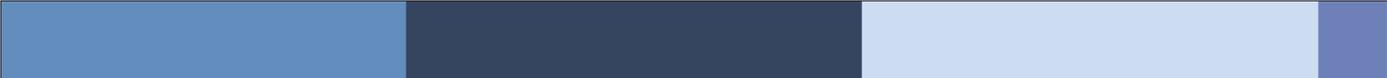
<https://www.pbis.org/>

Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs and the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Center on PBIS supports schools, districts, and states to build systems capacity for implementing a multi-tiered approach to social, emotional, and behavior support. The broad purpose of PBIS is to improve the effectiveness, efficiency, and equity of schools and other agencies. PBIS improves social, emotional, and academic outcomes for all students, including students with disabilities and students from underrepresented groups.

#### Common Education Data Standards (CEDS)

<https://ceds.ed.gov/>

CEDS is an education data management initiative whose purpose is to streamline the understanding of data within and across early learning, elementary, secondary, postsecondary, and workforce (P-20W) institutions and sectors. The CEDS initiative includes a common vocabulary, data models that reflect that vocabulary, tools to help education stakeholders understand and use education data, an assembly of metadata from other education data initiatives, and a community of education stakeholders who discuss the uses of CEDS and the development of the standard.



## **Report on Indicators of School Crime and Safety: 2021**

<https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2022092>

This annual report produced by the National Center for Education Statistics and the Bureau of Justice Statistics examines crime occurring in schools and colleges. It presents data on crime at school from the perspectives of students, teachers, principals, and the general population. It covers topics such as victimization, bullying, school conditions, fights, weapons, the presence of security staff at school, availability and student use of drugs and alcohol, student perceptions of personal safety at school, and criminal incidents at postsecondary institutions.

## **School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS)**

<https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/ssocs/>

The SSOCS is a nationally representative survey of public elementary and secondary schools designed to provide estimates of school crime and safety in U.S. public schools. It includes data on school practices and programs, parent and community involvement, school security staff, school mental health services, incidents, and disciplinary problems and actions.

## **U.S. Department of Education Student Privacy Policy Office (SPPO)**

<https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/>

SPPO is responsible for the administration and enforcement of federal laws relating to the privacy of students' education records, and for the provision of technical assistance on student privacy issues for the broader education community.

## **Other Resources**

### **The Effect of Discipline Reform Plans on Exclusionary Discipline Outcomes in Minnesota**

<https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/rel/Products/Publication/40022>

This study examined the use of exclusionary discipline practices by Minnesota local education agencies from 2014-15 through 2018-19 and the extent to which the creation of discipline reform plans by identified local education agencies was associated with changes in discipline outcomes. The study found that creating a discipline reform plan was not associated with a statistically significant change in exclusionary discipline actions experienced by students.

### **School Discipline Data Indicators: A Guide for Districts and Schools**

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED573680.pdf>

This guide is designed to help educators select and analyze data to determine whether racial/ethnic disproportionality exists in a school or district's discipline practices. It provides examples of how to select and analyze data. The guide also describes how to use data as part of a Plan-Do-Study-Act continuous improvement cycle to impact desired school discipline outcomes.



## **National Forum on Education Statistics Resources**

### **Forum Guide to Metadata (2021)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2021110.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2021110.asp)

This resource presents and examines the ways in which metadata can be used by education agencies to improve data quality and promote a better understanding of education data. The resource highlights the uses of metadata, discusses how to plan and successfully implement a metadata system in an education setting, and provides examples of standard metadata items and definitions to assist agencies with standardization.

### **Forum Guide to Strategies for Education Data Collection and Reporting (2021)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2021013.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2021013.asp)

This resource provides best practices for education agencies that are interested in designing and implementing a strategy for data collection and reporting, focusing on these as key elements of the larger data process. This resource is designed to be relevant to the state and local education agencies of today, in which data are regularly collected for multiple purposes and data collection and reporting may be conducted by many different individuals within an agency.

### **Forum Guide to Data Governance (2020)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2020083.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2020083.asp)

This resource provides timely and useful best practices, examples, and resources for agencies implementing or updating their data governance programs. It provides an overview of data governance; discusses effective data governance practices, structures, and essential elements; describes how to meet privacy and security requirements while also meeting data accessibility and sharing needs; and includes detailed case studies from education agencies' data governance efforts.

### **Forum Guide to Planning for, Collecting, and Managing Data About Students Displaced by a Crisis (2019)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2019163.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2019163.asp)

This resource provides timely and useful best practice information for collecting and managing data about students who have enrolled in another district or school because of a crisis. It highlights best practices that education agencies can adopt before, during, and after a crisis and features contributions from agencies that have either experienced a crisis or received students who were displaced by a crisis.

### **Forum Guide to Technology Management in Education (2019)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/tech\\_management.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/tech_management.asp)

This resource is designed to assist help education agency staff understand and apply best practices for selecting and implementing technology to support teaching and learning in the classroom. It addresses the widespread use and integration of technology in modern education systems and focuses on technology governance and planning, technology implementation, integration, maintenance, support, training, privacy, security, and evaluation.



### **Forum Guide to Early Warning Systems (2018)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2019035.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2019035.asp)

This resource provides information and best practices that will help education agencies plan, develop, implement, and use an early warning system in their agency to inform interventions that improve student outcomes. This document focuses on early warning systems and their data from the perspective of the education data community.

### **Forum Guide to Reporting Civil Rights Data (2018)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2017168.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2017168.asp)

This resource presents a variety of effective methods through which LEAs report civil rights data to the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights. In addition, the guide provides examples of how SEAs can voluntarily help their LEAs with Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) reporting. The guide includes an overview of the CRDC, a discussion of the challenges and opportunities in reporting civil rights data, an explanation of the CRDC reporting process, and six case studies that examine how specific education agencies report civil rights data.

### **Forum Guide to Education Data Privacy (2016)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2016096.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2016096.asp)

This resource provides SEAs and LEAs with best practice information to use in assisting school staff in protecting the confidentiality of student data in instructional and administrative practices. SEAs and LEAs may also find the guide useful in developing privacy programs and related professional development programs.

### **Forum Guide to Data Visualization: A Resource for Education Agencies (2016)**

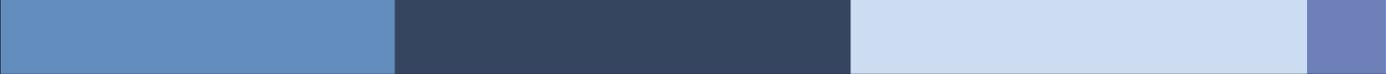
[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2017016.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2017016.asp)

This resource recommends data visualization practices that will help education agencies communicate data meaning in visual formats that are accessible, accurate, and actionable for a wide range of education stakeholders. Although this resource is designed for staff in education agencies, many of the visualization principles apply to other fields, as well.

### **Forum Guide to Supporting Data Access for Researchers: A Local Education Agency Perspective (2013)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2014801.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2014801.asp)

This resource recommends a set of core practices, operations, and templates that can be adopted and adapted by LEAs as they consider how to respond to requests for both new and existing data about the education enterprise.



**Forum Guide to Supporting Data Access for Researchers: A State Education Agency Perspective (2012)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2012809.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2012809.asp)

This resource recommends a set of core practices, operations, and templates that can be adopted and adapted by SEAs as they consider how to respond to requests for data about the education enterprise, including data maintained in longitudinal data systems.

**Forum Guide to Ensuring Equal Access to Education Websites (2011)**

[https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub\\_2011807.asp](https://nces.ed.gov/forum/pub_2011807.asp)

This guide is designed for use by information technology administrators, data specialists, and program staff responsible for the “content” in data reports, as well as education leaders (for example, administrators who prioritize tasks for technical and data staff) and other stakeholders who have an interest in seeing that schools, school districts, and SEAs operate in an effective and equitable manner for all constituents, regardless of disability status. It is intended to raise awareness in nontechnical audiences and suggest best practices for complying with Section 508 goals at an operational level in schools, school districts, and SEAs. It is not intended to recreate technical resources that already exist to facilitate Section 508 compliance.

## Appendix A: Relational Databases and Data Modeling

As data systems have developed, relational databases such as an incident-based discipline data system can connect to student and staff demographics by using student and staff IDs. The recommendations presented in figure 4 illustrate discipline data in a relational database with separate modules for each of the following tables:

- incident;
- reporter;
- witness;
- perpetrator;
- victim; and
- disciplinary action.

Incidents rarely are simple occurrences. They often involve more than one student or staff member and also can result in more than one disciplinary action. Relational databases allow for linking the different parts of the incident so that details can be collected and connected to understand the incident. For example, a school fight involving 10 students likely would likely include perpetrators, victims, and witnesses. The incident could include more than one type of behavior and result in different disciplinary actions. There could be several staff members who witness the incident or help break up the fight. There even could be individuals involved who are not students or staff of the school. A relational database that allows for multiple entries in the different tables is needed to fully capture an incident. The incident itself has an ID that links the different tables that include roles, weapons, actions, and other data elements. The database also can be linked to the local education agency's student information system, staff system, or other systems via the student or staff ID, allowing for connections to demographic information, academic outcomes, and even emergency contacts.

A data model should be used for an incident-based discipline data system to organize, describe, and illustrate the relationship between the agency's information needs, data elements, relational logic, and file structures. Such a data model can be presented at a conceptual level, illustrating relationships between data elements and the larger body of information around which they are generated; a logical level, reflecting the technical and operational parameters in which the data elements exist; or a physical level, specifying layout, file structures, and other characteristics. At a more detailed level, a data model maps how data elements, metadata items, business rules, subsystems, data repositories, data flows, and information needs relate to one another.

Figure 4. Entity relationships in a typical incident database

