

Behavior Support and Discipline Practices

What to Learn from Your State's ESSA Plan

States must describe, under Title I, how they will support LEAs and schools to improve “school conditions for student learning” through reducing the overuse of discipline that removes students from classrooms, and the use of behavioral interventions that compromise student health and safety.⁵

Guidance for School Improvement

Exclusionary or “zero-tolerance” discipline practices (e.g. suspension/expulsion, restraint and seclusion) have a significant negative impact on academic outcomes for students. Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS) strategies, restorative practices, and other inclusive discipline practices are evidence-based strategies that lead to better learning outcomes for all students, particularly for those struggling the most. Under IDEA, PBIS is a recommended consideration for addressing the needs for students with disabilities and promoting inclusive leadership.

LEAs and schools should consider implementing a behavior framework that is preventive, multi-tiered, and culturally responsive, and be transparent about discipline data and decision-making about their discipline practices.⁶ Additionally, disproportionality in the use of harmful discipline strategies between students of color and their white peers, or for students with disabilities must be addressed. Behavioral support is explicitly listed under Title I as an allowable use of funds to support students.

Reducing Policing in Schools

The presence of policing in schools contributes to the School-to-Prison Pipeline. Given that all disciplinary changes must be systemic, reducing the unequal and harmful effects of law enforcement as a disciplinary tool includes: ending or reducing the regular presence of law enforcement in schools, creating safe schools through positive safety and discipline measures, and restricting the role of law enforcement that are called in to schools to ensure that students' rights to education and dignity are protected, including their constitutional rights to counsel and due process. Check out the Dignity in School Campaign's Resource Guide on Counselors not Cops and the National Association of School Psychologists' A Framework for Safe and Successful Schools for more.

Find Support for this Strategy in ESSA

TITLE I, PART A: Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies

TITLE II PART A: Supporting Effective Instruction

TITLE IV, PART B: 21st Century Community Learning Centers

5. <http://civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/education/School-Discipline-Provisions-in-the-Every-Student-Succeeds-Act.pdf>

6. <https://www.pbis.org/common/cms/files/pbisresources/MTSS-B-Equity%20FINAL.pdf5>



Keep in Mind

Changes in discipline practices must include family engagement and professional development to ensure that the program is comprehensively used and implemented with fidelity to the evidence-based practice.

Essential Stakeholders

- ✓ Students and families, including students with disabilities, English learners, system-involved youth, chronically absent students, students in the foster system or who are experiencing homelessness, students affected by trauma, and others
- ✓ Disability rights advocates
- ✓ Discipline or school climate experts (e.g. Center for Restorative Process; PBIS)
- ✓ Educators and educator trainers (e.g. Teachers Unite)
- ✓ Youth development organizations and out-of-school time providers
- ✓ Alternative education programs
- ✓ Law enforcement
- ✓ Civil Rights organizations and community-based organizations (CBOs) that promote the social and emotional welfare of young children and families, including national and local advocates (e.g. Healthy Schools Campaign)

Ask the Experts

- ✓ [Aligning and Integrating Family Engagement in Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports \(PBIS\)](#) (Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports)
- ✓ [ESSA Resources](#) (Dignity in Schools Campaign)
- ✓ [Educational Exclusion: Drop Out, Push Out, and the School-to-Prison Pipeline among LGBTQ Youth](#) (GLSEN)
- ✓ [Stopping School Pushout for: Girls of Color](#) (National Women’s Law Center)

Spotlight on New York, NY: Implementing Restorative Practices



During the 2013-2014 school year, NYC schools reported more than 53,000 suspensions and Black students, less than one third of the student population, were given more than half of the suspensions citywide, and students with disabilities, 12 percent of the student body, were given 30 percent of the suspensions. Four schools in New York City committed to ending these disparities and began to engage with stakeholders to transform their school climates.

Read more about their practices and results in the Case Study: [Building Safe, Supportive and Restorative School Communities in New York City](#) (Teachers Unite).

Spotlight on Oakland Unified School District, CA Restorative Justice in Schools

OUSD began to implement Restorative Justice (RJ) practices in schools in 2011. Since then, the RJ program in OUSD has successfully helped to decrease suspensions by half across the district. In addition to in-school tools for students, the RJ program in OUSD has trained over 1000 staff in restorative practices, including law enforcement.

Learn more about the project at www.ousd.org/restorativejustice. Watch a video to hear from teachers and students at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RdKhcQrLD1w>. Read the guide to implementation: <http://rjoyoakland.org/wp-content/uploads/OUSTRJOY-Implementation-Guide.pdf>