

# Common Misconceptions of Suspension – Ideas and Alternatives

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# Agenda

- History of Discipline Policies
- Exclusionary Discipline Practices
- Addressing Disparities
- Research & Data on Current Policies
- Recommendations

Q/A throughout

# History of Discipline Policies

# History of Discipline Policies

- 100 year history
- Safe School Study
  - **While school violence decreased compared to previous years, school crime increased when rules were not clear and/or were extremely punitive.**
  - **Largest shift towards the need for the use of written policies**
- SSS, National School Resource Network, and legislation

(Fenning & Bohanon, 2006; National Institute of Education, 1978)

# Earlier Perceptions of Discipline Policies

- A positive way of providing clear guidelines for behavior that would likely result in the “consistent and equitable application of rules for all” while making schools safer.

(Fenning & Bohanon, 2006)

# Discipline policies: Early 1990's

- Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 (GFSA): A series of shooting and deaths in US schools.
  - **Mandated an adopted of zero tolerance weapons policies**
    - Reduce weapons on campus
    - Reduce school violence and violence at school-sponsored events
- In the 1990's- 60% of the US states broadened federal guidelines for zero tolerance:
  - **Fighting**
  - **Drug or alcohol**
  - **Gang activity**
  - **Possession of narcotics**
  - **Disrespect to authority**
  - **Sexual harassment**
  - **Verbal threats vandalism**
  - **...and all other behaviors considered to disrupt the school environment**

(Congressional Quarterly Incorporated, 2000; Skiba & Peterson, 1999)

# Effects of Zero Tolerance and Exclusionary Discipline Policies

- Overrepresentation of students of color and students with disabilities receiving exclusionary discipline practices for minor and arbitrary behaviors unrelated to weapons or drugs (Skiba et al., 2000).
- Policies are theoretically unsound, empirically unsupported, and fall prey to several legal critiques (Losen, 2013; Mongan & Walker, 2012; Skiba et al., 2000).
- ***Consequences for firearms should not equate to those for “disrespect” as they do not have the same implications for safety.***

# **Exclusionary Discipline Practices (EDPs)**



# Exclusionary Discipline Practices

- Removing students from typical instruction (or social environment) for a period of time in response to unwanted student social behavior.
- Range of intensities
  - **Brief timeout from classroom instruction**
  - **Cross-class timeouts**
  - **Sitting in the hall**
  - **Reflection rooms**
  - **Seclusion rooms**
  - **Office discipline referral**
  - **Detention**
  - **Suspension**
  - **Expulsion**

# What Do We Know about EDPs?

- Students miss:
  - **Academic instructional time**
  - **Social skill building time**
  - **Being a part of a larger learning community**
- Harsh & disproportionate discipline in schools for non-threatening behaviors linked to:
  - **School failure**
  - **Drop-out**
  - **Substance use**
  - **Incarceration**

# What Do We Know about EDPs?

- A **SINGLE** OSS in 9<sup>th</sup> grade is associated with a:
  - **50% increase in dropping out**
  - **19% decrease in enrollment in postsecondary education (Balfanz et al., 2015)**
- Controlling for other risk factors (antisocial behavior, deviant peer group), receipt of an OSS is a significant predictor of future antisocial behavior (Lee et al., 2011).
- Severity of the EP is related to severity of long-term outcomes.
  - **OSS is more strongly related more to negative outcomes than ISS (Noltemeyer et al., 2015)**

# What Do We Know about EDPs?

- These effects are not seen only for students receiving the exclusion
  - **Schools with high rates of OSS have lower school-wide achievement and lower perceptions of school safety by the student body as a whole (American Psychological Association, 2008).**
- Most often used for non-threatening problem behaviors
  - **One study found that 34% of OSS were issued for non-violent behaviors, such as disruption or willful defiance (Losen et al., 2014).**

# What Do We Know about EDPs?

- Most frequently used with:
  - **Students of color**
    - 7% of White students were suspended, but 11% of Hispanic/Latino students, 12% of American Indian students, and 23% of Black students were suspended (Losen et al., 2015).
  - **Students with disabilities**
    - 18% of students with disabilities were suspended.
    - One in 5 districts in the country suspended over 50% of its Black male students with disabilities (Losen et al., 2015).
  - **Students in poverty and struggling academically**
    - Race remains a significant predictor, even when controlling for poverty (Anyon et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2011).
    - Bias in disciplinary decision persists, particularly for more subjective behaviors (Skiba et al., 2002; Smolkowski et al., 2015).



# What Do We Know about EDPs?

- OSS/EP = ineffective for changing student behaviors
  - If it's reinforcing, it will lead to **MORE inappropriate behaviors (coercive cycle with academics)**
  - **Can be reinforcing for school personnel as well**
- 1 in 3 students have been suspended at one point in their K-12 schooling (Schollenberger, 2015).
  - **If suspensions served a deterrent effect on future behavior, perhaps their use at these high rates could be justified.**
- Among students that were suspended in August, September, or October, **72%** received further discipline later in the year, indicating there was little evidence of a deterrent effect for suspensions (Massar et al., 2015).

# Addressing Disparities

# Addressing Discipline Disparities

- Civil Rights Data Collection Surveys
- Dear Colleagues Letter (2014)
  - Remove zero tolerance and exclusionary policies
  - Multi-tiered behavioral frameworks
  - Manage discipline equitably
  - Implementing PBIS
  - Restorative Practices



# PBIS and EDPs



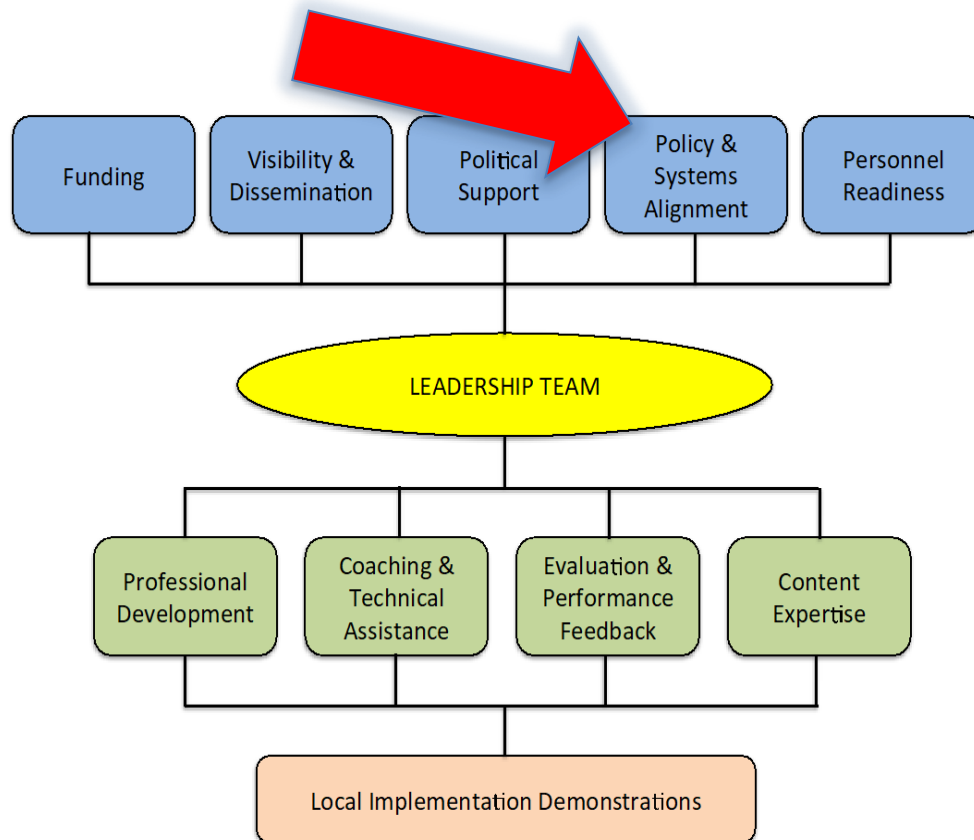
## Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports Implementation Blueprint:

### Part 1 – Foundations and Supporting Information

Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

U. S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs

Version 18 October 2015



**But, how many schools/districts changed their policies?**

# Research and Data on Current Policies

# Systematic Review of District Discipline Policies

- Coded 147 policies
  - Hawaii, NYC, and D.C. coded as 1 policy each
- Checklist for Analyzing District Policies for Equity (CADPE)
  - Adapted from **Discipline Disproportionality Policy Guidebook and other policy checklists** (*Longstreth et al. 2013, Fenning and Bohanon, 2006*)
  - **7 Domains Elements and Early Childhood Section**
    - 47 Questions



**PBIS** Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports  
HELP TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER

September 2015

## Key Elements of Policies to Address Discipline Disproportionality: A Guide for District and School Teams

Ambra Green, Rhonda Nese, Kent McIntosh, Vicki Nishioka, Bert Eliason, & Alondra Canizal Delabra

This practice guide is one of a series of guides for enhancing equity in school discipline. The guides are based on a 5-point multicomponent intervention described by McIntosh, Girvan, Horner, Srnolkowski, and Sugai (2014). The 5 points include engaging instruction, School-wide PBIS as a foundation for culturally-responsive behavior support, use of disaggregated discipline data, equity policies, and reducing bias in discipline decisions. This guide addresses equity policies.

The recommendations and guides are available at:  
<http://www.pbis.org/school/equity-pbis>.

# 7 Domains

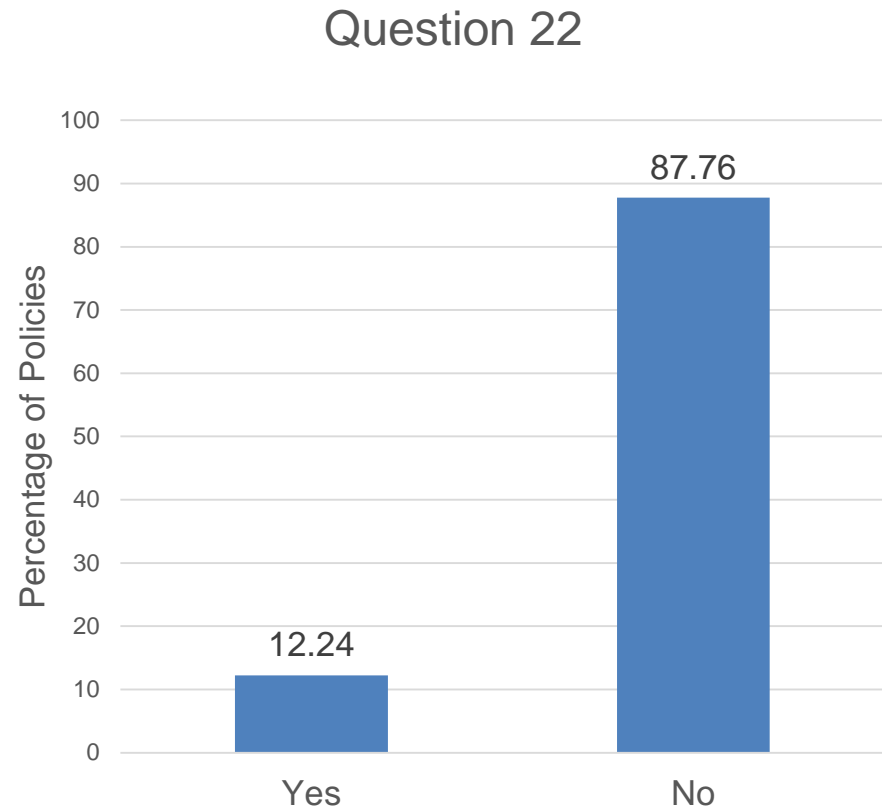
## Key Elements of Effective Policy to Enhance Equity in School Discipline

Based on the limited research available, we recommend seven key elements for equity policies (and policies in general). These elements include:

1. Specific Commitment to Equity
2. Family Partnerships in Policy Development
3. Focus on Implementing Positive, Proactive Behavior Support Practices
4. Clear, Objective Discipline Procedures
5. Removal or Reduction of Exclusionary Practices
6. Graduated Discipline Systems with Instructional Alternatives to Exclusion
7. Procedures with Accountability for Equitable Student Outcomes

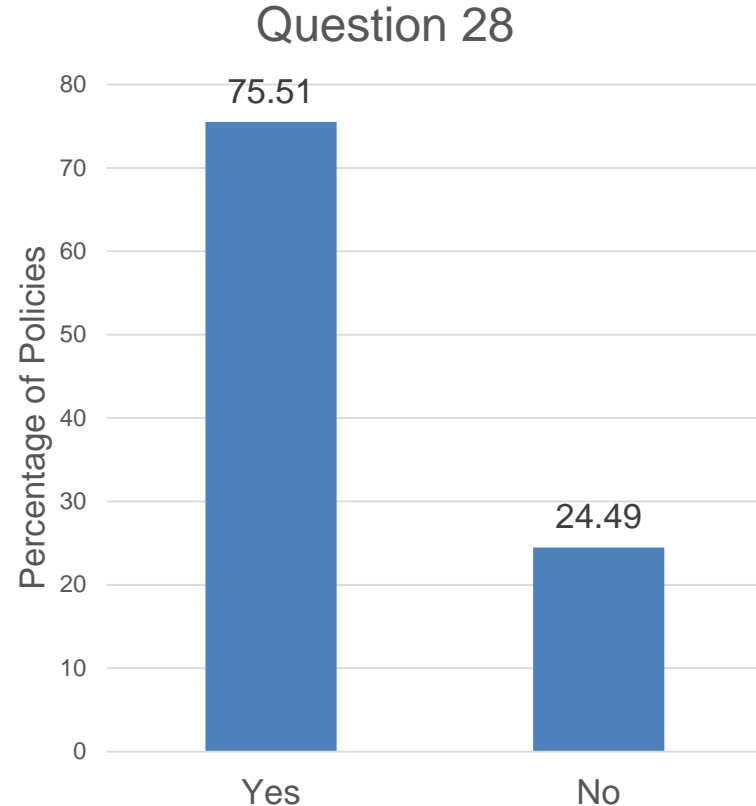
# Systematic Review

- Does the policy provide practices for reinforcing prosocial and expected behaviors?



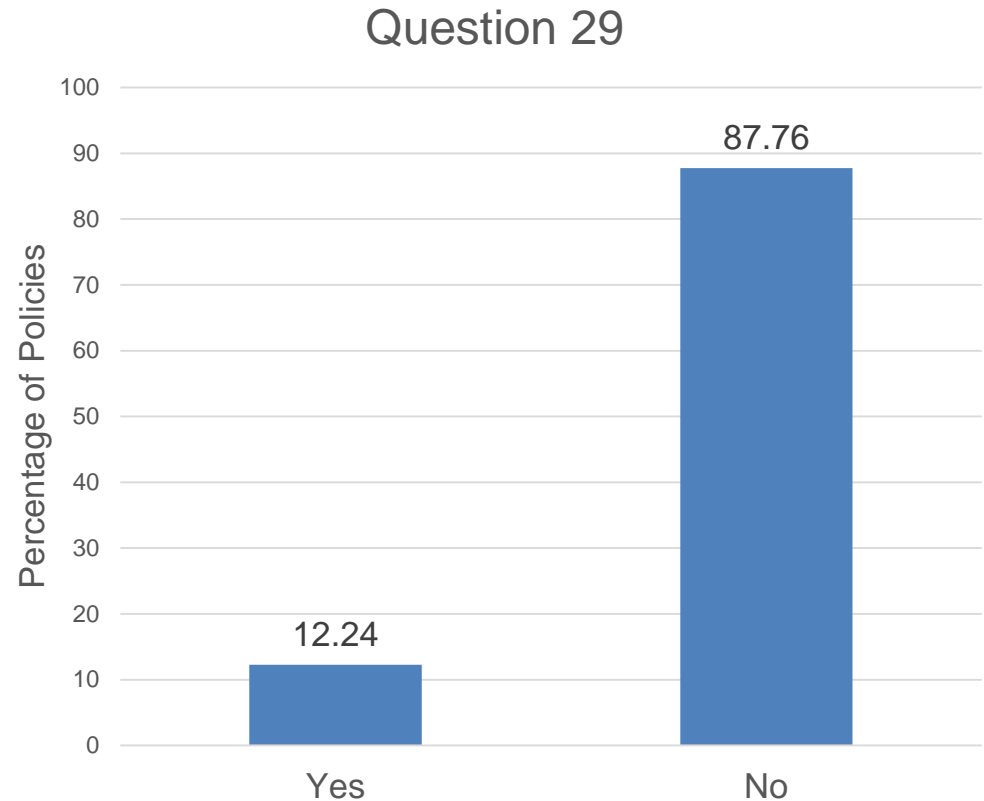
# Systematic Review

- Is “zero tolerance” (i.e., automatic suspension procedures for certain behaviors) mentioned as a practice/strategy in the district policy?



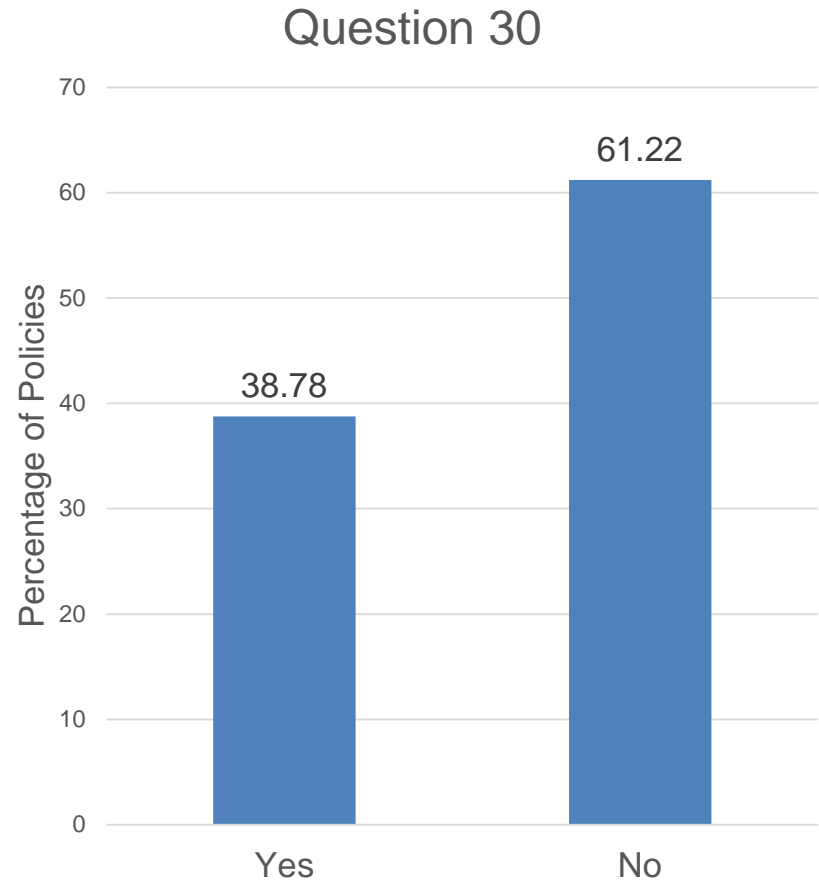
# Systematic Review

- Is there clear communication that suspension or expulsion is limited to behavior incidents that pose a serious and credible threat to the safety of students and staff?



# Systematic Review

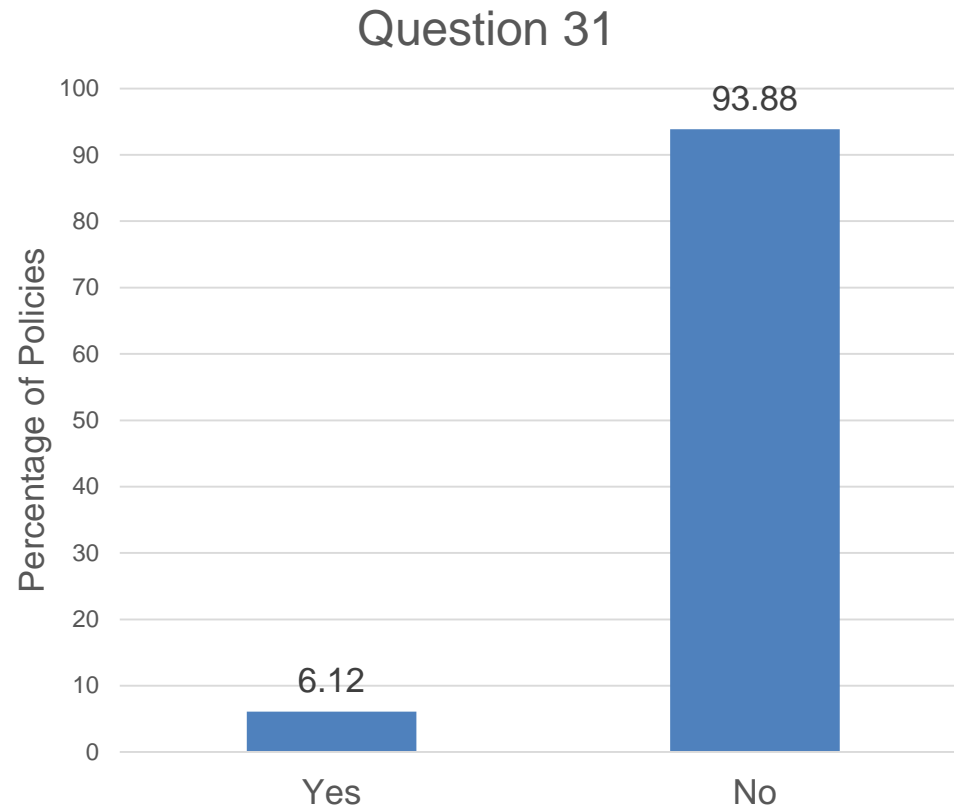
- Does the policy include descriptions of and guidelines for using alternatives to suspension?





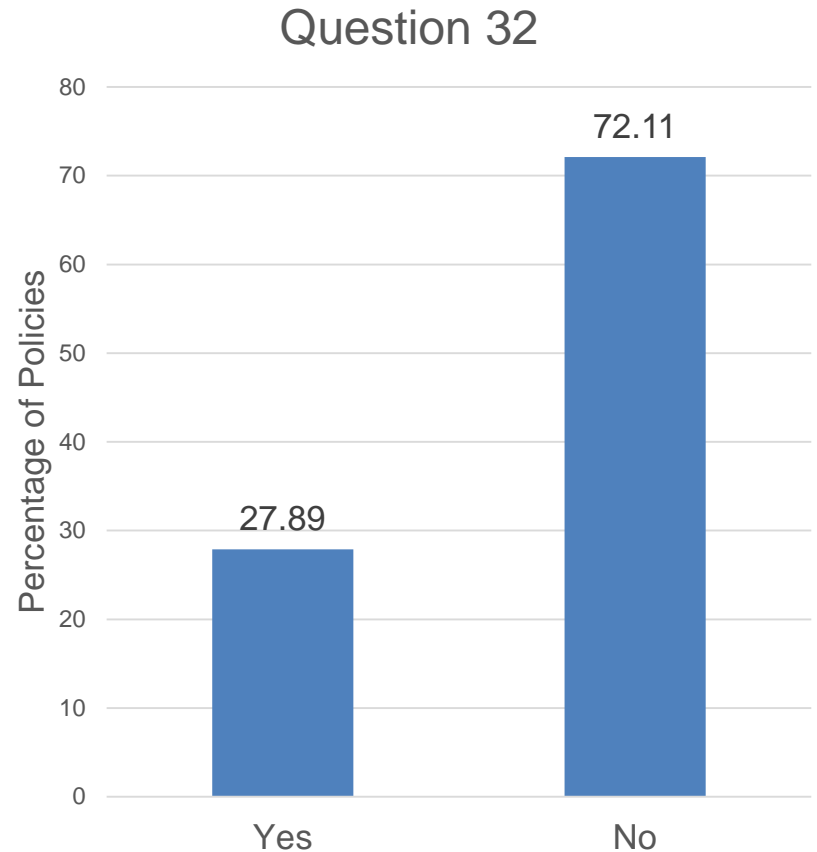
# Systematic Review

- Does the policy restrict the use of exclusionary discipline (i.e., ISS, OSS, and expulsion) for non-violent behavior incidents (e.g., suspensions for disrespect)?




# Systematic Review

- Does the policy provide lists of possible instructional responses in place of punitive responses?



# Misconceptions

# Common misconceptions of suspension: Ideas and alternatives for school leaders

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## Abstract

The use of exclusionary discipline practices in schools has been well documented since the 1970s with the passing of the Safe Schools Act and implementation of zero-tolerance policies. Despite research indicating the ineffectiveness of exclusionary practices, students continue to receive suspensions and expulsions at alarming rates. Additional research highlights that there may be misconceptions regarding the application of suspensions and their perceived functions and effectiveness on students and their families. The purpose of this article is to discuss common misconceptions regarding the effects of suspension and provide teachers, school psychologists, and administrators with proactive strategies for implementation in local systems to create positive school climates and optimize successful outcomes for all students and staff.

# Misconception

#1. The use of out-of-school suspension can be used to improve the teaching and learning environment

Research says:

- No data demonstrating that OSS or expulsions reduce the rate of student discipline.
  - High rates of suspension correlate with low academic achievement (Skiba & Rausch, 2006) and have no academic benefits (Fabelo et al., 2011).
- Classrooms are not supportive environments for students identified with challenging behaviors regardless of disability status and may actually promote inappropriate behavior (Moore-Partin et al., 2010).

(Green, Maynard, & Stegenga, 2018)

# There are misconceptions around the function of suspension.

## Misconception

#1. The use of out-of-school suspension can be used to improve the teaching and learning environment

## Alternate Recommendations

- Explicitly teach behavioral expectations
- Precorrection
- Opportunities to respond

(Green, Maynard, & Stegenga, 2018)

# Misconception

#2. The use of out-of-school suspension can be used to deter other students from engaging in inappropriate behavior

Research says:

- There is no data to support this outcome.
  - Relatively high rates of disciplinary recidivism among those who are suspended (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010) with marginalized students subject to multiple suspensions (Sullivan, Van Norman, & Klingbeil, 2014;OCR, 2014).
- Outcomes of using suspension and EDPs are damaging to the individual student and school climate, resulting in the possibility of negatively impacting all students' academic and behavioral outcomes (Skiba, Arredondo, & Williams, 2014).

(Green, Maynard, & Stegenga, 2018)

# Misconception

#2. The use of out-of-school suspension can be used to deter other students from engaging in inappropriate behavior

- Schools with higher rates of exclusionary discipline are associated with negative student perception of school climate, reduced school bonding and engagement, as well as reductions in educational opportunity according to school climate survey data (Flynn, Lissy, Alicea, Tazartes, & McKay, 2016; Skiba et al, 2014; U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014).

(Green, Maynard, & Stegenga, 2018)



# There are misconceptions around the function of suspension.

#2. The use of out-of-school suspension can be used to deter other students from engaging in inappropriate behavior

- Differential reinforcement
- Behavior-specific praise
- Active monitoring and supervision

(Green, Maynard, & Stegenga, 2018)

## Misconception

#3. The use of out-of-school suspension can be used to improve the student's behavior by getting the parent's attention and active involvement

Research says:

- Recognize and understand the many forms of parent engagement and to approach family engagement from a strength-based lens.
- Recent research has revealed the following 4 key principles for family engagement including:
  - 1) Engaging families as equal partners in the educational process with shared and meaningful responsibilities and goals,
  - 2) Family engagement must be part of a comprehensive learning plan and system of educational supports,

(Green, Maynard, & Stegenga, 2018)

## Misconception

#3. The use of out-of-school suspension can be used to improve the student's behavior by getting the parent's attention and active involvement

Research says:

- 3) Family engagement must be founded on a proactive developmental perspective that includes regular involvement to meet the needs of changing contexts and communities, and
- 4) Supports for family engagement must be embedded into systems and demonstrate components to promote sustainability over time (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014; Halgunseth, 2009; Weiss et al., 2009).

(Green, Maynard, & Stegenga, 2018)

# There are misconceptions around the function of suspension.

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#3. The use of out-of-school suspension can be used to improve the student's behavior by getting the parent's attention and active involvement

- Family engagement over time
- Systems level supports
- Meaningful school-family partnerships
- Comprehensive plan of supports that includes family engagement elements

(Green, Maynard, & Stegenga, 2018)

# There are misconceptions around the function of suspension.

**TABLE 1** Misconceptions and alternate recommendations to meet desired outcomes

Misconception	Alternate Recommendations
#1. The use of out-of-school suspension can be used to improve the teaching and learning environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Explicitly teach behavioral expectations</li><li>● Precorrection</li><li>● Opportunities to respond</li></ul>
#2. The use of out-of-school suspension can be used to deter other students from engaging in inappropriate behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Differential reinforcement</li><li>● Behavior-specific praise</li><li>● Active monitoring and supervision</li></ul>
#3. The use of out-of-school suspension can be used to improve the student's behavior by getting the parent's attention and active involvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>● Family engagement over time</li><li>● Systems level supports</li><li>● Meaningful school-family partnerships</li><li>● Comprehensive plan of supports that includes family engagement elements</li></ul>

*Note:* Italicized strategies are not directly discussed in the manuscript but are recommended for meeting the desired outcomes within each misconception. Additional evidence-based practices and recommended strategies can be found at <https://www.pbis.org/school/pbis-in-the-classroom>. (Green, Maynard, & Stegenga, 2018)

# Recommendations

# 1. Paradigm Shift

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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### Common misconceptions of suspension: Ideas and alternatives for school leaders

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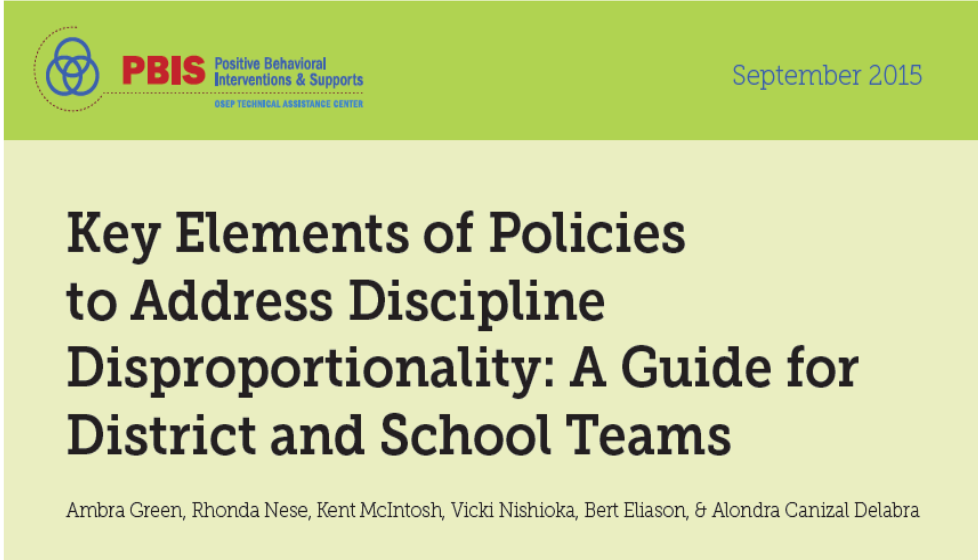
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# 2. Policy Recommendations

**pbis.org**

- **School**
  - **Equity & PBIS**



The image shows the cover of a report. At the top left is the PBIS logo, which consists of three interlocking circles forming a triangle, with the text 'PBIS Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports' and 'OSEP TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER' below it. To the right of the logo is the date 'September 2015'. The main title of the report is 'Key Elements of Policies to Address Discipline Disproportionality: A Guide for District and School Teams'. Below the title is the authors' names: 'Ambra Green, Rhonda Nese, Kent McIntosh, Vicki Nishioka, Bert Eliason, & Alondra Canizal Delabra'.

This practice guide is one of a series of guides for enhancing equity in school discipline. The guides are based on a 5-point multicomponent intervention described by McIntosh, Girvan, Horner, Smolkowski, and Sugai (2014). The 5 points include engaging instruction, School-wide PBIS as a foundation for culturally-responsive behavior support, use of disaggregated discipline data, equity policies, and reducing bias in discipline decisions. This guide addresses equity policies.

The recommendations and guides are available at:  
<http://www.pbis.org/school/equity-pbis>.



# 2. Policy Recommendations

- Language that is more conversational and less legal to ensure that it is available to everyone.
- Define district-wide (or school-wide) expectations.
- Define prosocial behaviors.
- Define problem behaviors.
- Graduated discipline policy.
- Separate equity policies ensuring the use of equitable practices.
- Instructional approaches (i.e., re-teach expectations, model).
- Evidence-based practices (i.e., precorrection, positive specific feedback, reinforcement).

# Non-examples of policy statements

- Students suspended from school will receive up to a maximum of 50% credit for all make up work completed for the time they were suspended from school.
- Missing an assigned detention or misbehaving during a detention will result in referral to the office for disciplinary action. Subsequent offenses will include in or out-of-school suspension.
- Many policies continue to use suspension for truancy and attendance.

# Examples of policy statements

## Key Elements of Effective Policy to Enhance Equity in School Discipline

Based on the limited research available, we recommend seven key elements for equity policies (and policies in general). These elements include:

1. Specific Commitment to Equity
2. Family Partnerships in Policy Development
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# Questions?

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