

Out-of-School Suspension Outcomes: Examining Child Protection Involvement and BIPOC Identity

Translating research to practice may be difficult, yet a better understanding of current research is necessary to ensure child welfare workers, educators, and other professionals engage in best practices when working with children and families. The Minn-LInK Discussion Guide is designed to help facilitate thoughtful dialogue about the information presented in the research brief in order to inform practice and enhance discussion surrounding meaningful issues.

In this issue we were interested in understanding the academic and justice system-related outcomes of out-of-school suspension, and whether these outcomes were related to other factors such as BIPOC identity and involvement in Child Protective Services (CPS). We used linear and logistic regression to analyze the relationship between our outcomes (standardized math and reading scores, and juvenile justice involvement), and independent variables (including OSS, CPS involvement, out-of-home care setting, BIPOC identity, and other potentially relevant variables). BIPOC students, students emotional and behavioral disabilities, and students who experienced congregate care were more likely to experience both OSS and negative outcomes of OSS. These findings are consistent with concepts of school push-out and the school-prison nexus disproportionately affecting BIPOC and disabled students. Our findings add to the understanding of these systemic issues, in demonstrating that Indigenous students are also affected.

Discussion on Practice Implications

1. We found that among students who experienced out-of-school suspension, the severity of the disciplinary incident that resulted in their suspension was NOT significantly related to their academic outcomes. We also found that Black and Indigenous students who were suspended experienced significantly poorer academic outcomes than non-Black or non-Indigenous students who were suspended. What do you think this means about the association between out-of-school suspension and academic outcomes? What factors do you think lead to this disparity in outcomes?
2. What are some ways to reduce disproportionality in academic outcomes? Are there existing programs that work to reduce these academic achievement gaps? Do these programs or solutions take the influence of out-of-school suspension and other disciplinary factors into account?
3. Students who experienced congregate care were more likely to experience poorer academic outcomes in middle school, both among all students and among students who experienced OSS in elementary school. Why do you think children who have lived in congregate care settings tend to have poorer academic outcomes, and what could be done to better support these students' academic success?

Discussion on Agency- & System-Level Changes

1. Out-of-school suspension was associated with poorer academic outcomes following suspension. What approaches to discipline could be used that would help support students' academic success rather than hindering it? What changes need to be made to the structure of school discipline in order for this to be possible?
2. Early OSS was associated with higher risk for justice system involvement for Black students and students with emotional and behavioral disabilities compared to non-Black students and students without these disabilities. This supports the idea of a "school-prison nexus" affecting primarily Black students and students with disabilities. What are your state or local policies in terms of the intersections of the law enforcement/justice and educational systems? How can we advocate for policies that disrupt the school-prison nexus?
3. Early OSS was also associated with poorer academic outcomes for Indigenous students than for non-Indigenous students who were also suspended. This suggests that the phenomena of "school push-out" impacts Indigenous students. What new practices or policy changes are needed to better support the academic success of Indigenous students, particularly those who have experienced exclusionary discipline?