



THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Governance | Accountability | Achievement | Oversight | Career & College Readiness

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| Title: | Discipline Data and Accountability | |
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| Policy Considerations / Key Questions: | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What would a discipline indicator show and what problem would it define? How could it be useful? 2. What data are available currently? What do they show? Are there concerns or limitations? What data will be available in the future? 3. Are there other states that include a discipline indicator in their accountability systems? 4. What are the challenges for incorporating a discipline indicator into the health indicator system authorized by ESSB 5491? Are there other ways in which a discipline indicator might be used in an accountability system? | |
| Possible Board Action: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Review <input type="checkbox"/> Adopt <input type="checkbox"/> Approve <input type="checkbox"/> Other | |
| Materials Included in Packet: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Memo <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Graphs / Graphics <input type="checkbox"/> Third-Party Materials <input type="checkbox"/> PowerPoint | |
| Synopsis: | <p>There are a number of goals and concerns that discipline indicators could potentially address, including the impact of suspension or expulsion on student achievement and the disproportionality of exclusionary discipline according to race/ethnicity, income, and special education needs.</p> <p>Discipline data that could be used as an indicator are in the initial stages of collection and analysis. Findings include that more than half of suspensions and expulsions are for “other” behaviors and that Black/African American students are suspended or expelled at higher rates than other student groups. The Student Discipline Task Force is working on creating new definitions for behaviors that currently fall under “other” to get a more accurate picture of what students are being excluded for, but these will not be fully incorporated into data collection until 2015-2016. Since the first year of data is just becoming available, incorporation of a discipline indicator into a state accountability system will be difficult. Problem definition and goal setting will require more data.</p> | |



DISCIPLINE DATA AND ACCOUNTABILITY

Policy Considerations

Members of the State Board of Education requested that staff investigate the feasibility of including a discipline indicator as a statewide indicator of educational system health. Policy considerations in addressing this question include:

1. What would the indicator show and what problem would it define? How could it be useful?
2. What data are available currently? What do they show? Are there concerns or limitations? What data will be available in the future?
3. Are there other states that include a discipline indicator in their accountability systems?
4. What are the challenges for incorporating a discipline indicator into the health indicator system authorized by ESSB 5491? Are there other ways in which a discipline indicator might be used in an accountability system?

Background

In 2012, Washington Appleseed and TeamChild released a report on student discipline in Washington state that demonstrated disproportionality in the use of suspension and expulsion with students of color and low-income students. The report also described the connection between exclusionary discipline and dropout rates and the lack of educational services available to students during their exclusion. The report highlighted the lack of data collected by the state — no student level data was available through the state system, so the authors collected data from the individual districts.

National research also shows that exclusionary discipline impacts student achievement and outcomes. There have been movements in districts and schools across the country to alter discipline policies and practices and many states have begun to incorporate discipline indicators into dropout early warning systems.

In the 2013 legislative session, ESSB 5496 addressed the topic of student discipline by, among other things, establishing the Student Discipline Task Force (RCW 28A.600.490) and requiring that discipline data be collected by the state at the student level, made publicly available, and cross-tabulated by student demographics.

Summary

There are a number of goals and concerns that discipline indicators could potentially address. The first is the concern about the impact exclusion from school through suspension or expulsion has on student achievement. Related, is the concern about the disproportionality of exclusionary discipline according to race/ethnicity, income, and special education needs. This potentially contributes to the opportunity gap, but also speaks to social justice concerns within the school environment. Within these two top-level concerns are others, such as a student not being provided with educational services while suspended or expelled, which could be a separation of the student from his or her constitutional right to an education. Disproportionality

may also illuminate issues within the school culture and climate resulting in inequitable treatment or disengagement of a particular group of students. These are all important concerns that create some tension when choosing an indicator and goal. Should the indicator address the outcomes resulting from exclusion with the goal of reducing suspensions and expulsions, or should the goal be to close the gap between student groups in the application of exclusionary discipline? Another question would be if the indicator will address improvement in student behavior or improvement in discipline practices. Both would likely result from changes in adult behavior and district policies, but the distinction impacts the goal definition of a potential indicator.

The data that would be used in a discipline indicator are just becoming available at the student level. The data collected are also being added to by the Student Discipline Task Force, so more detailed analysis and nuanced indicators may be available in the future. With the new data becoming available, there is a tension between using the data to describe the problem with student discipline in Washington state and using the data for accountability purposes. Without historical data, it is difficult to establish benchmarks and goals necessary for an accountability system. There is also not a clear description through the data yet of the issue at a state level, making it difficult to determine the scope of the problem to be addressed.

Exclusion from school through disciplinary action is an emerging issue, and it is critical that the data on its impacts are used in the correct system to maximize effectiveness. Whether that is a statewide accountability system or another vehicle remains to be seen.

Data Considerations

Current Data

The data that will be used to define the scope of a problem with discipline in Washington state are in the initial stages of collection and analysis. Student-level data were collected for the first time in the 2012-2013 school year and include the date of the incident, behavior type, intervention applied, intervention length and date, and Interim Alternative Education Setting for special education students. Because this is collected at the student level, it can be cross-tabulated with student demographic information. Previous discipline data were reported at the school and district levels only.

The current behavior types that are collected in the CEDARS system are:

- Bullying
- Tobacco
- Alcohol
- Illicit drugs
- Marijuana
- Fighting without major injury
- Violence without major injury
- Violence with major injury
- Possession of a weapon
- Major bodily injury
- Other

Some of these behavior types carry mandatory disciplinary action, primarily exclusion. Other behaviors, particularly in the "other" category, do not require specific disciplinary action and so are left to the discretion of the districts.

Current intervention types collected in the CEDARS system are:

- Expulsion
- Long-term suspension (more than 10 days)
- Short-term suspension
- No intervention
- Other

Interventions that are not exclusionary and in-school suspensions are reported in the “other” category.

OSPI provided preliminary analysis of the 2012-2013 data. Charts for the analysis are attached in the packet. The most common behavior associated with suspension or expulsion is “other.” In 2012-2013, over 35,000 suspensions or expulsions were for “other” behaviors. The next most common behavior that resulted in exclusion was “fighting without major injury,” at just over 10,000 suspensions or expulsions. Since no mandatory intervention is associated with “other” behaviors, the suspensions and expulsions are the result of district policies and decisions.

The OSPI analysis also examined the incident and exclusion data by race and ethnicity. Black/African American students had the highest rates of incidents reported and suspension or expulsion, at 13.3 percent and 11.83 percent respectively. The percentage of Asian students that had incidents reported or were suspended or expelled was the lowest of the student groups, at 2.2 percent and 1.7 percent respectively. OSPI also looked at bilingual, special education, and low-income student groups and their rates of suspension or expulsion. The data show that bilingual students are not more likely than their non-bilingual peers to be suspended or expelled. For special education students, 9.67 percent of students were suspended or expelled, compared to 3.78 percent of their non-special education peers. A similar discrepancy was found in the low-income and non-low-income populations where 7.26 percent of low-income students were suspended or expelled compared to 2.18 percent of their non-low-income peers. Cross-tabulation of behavior type that resulted in the incident report or exclusion with student demographic groups is possible, but has not yet been performed.

Future Data

The Student Discipline Task Force established in RCW 28A.600.490 is currently working on defining additional behavior types and developing data collection standards for discretionary action taken by a district, educational services provided to students while subject to disciplinary action, the status of petitions for readmission, credit retrieval, and school dropout as the result of disciplinary action. The task force has established definitions for two new categories of behavior that will be incorporated into CEDARS collection in the 2014-2015 school year: “failure to cooperate” and “disruptive conduct.” Additional behavior definitions are being discussed for data collection in the 2015-2016 school year.

The collection of discipline-related indicators, such as the educational services provided while a student was under disciplinary action, the credit retrieval of students subject to discipline, and the achievement or dropout rate of students that were excluded will help to illuminate the academic consequences of discipline in Washington state.

Data Challenges

The current data challenges center around the definitions and reporting of the “other” categories, in both behavior and interventions. “Other” is the largest behavior category

resulting in exclusion and could encompass a wide variety of behaviors — meaning the reasons that the majority of students are excluded are not known. The Student Discipline Task Force is charged with providing more definitions for behaviors that currently fall into the “other” category, which should result in more accuracy in examining student behavior trends.

In the intervention reporting, only exclusionary interventions are recorded in CEDARS. Any non-exclusionary action is reported as “other,” so there are no data on the types of alternative interventions a school or district might use. Staff for the Student Discipline Task Force indicated that this makes it difficult to track a student’s disciplinary history leading up to the exclusionary intervention.

Data collection at the district level may also pose challenges and result in inconsistencies. The Office of Student Information at OSPI indicated that reporting on categories that have been part of the federal requirements should not pose significant concerns for data quality, since districts are accustomed to these categories. The introduction of the reporting categories that districts are unfamiliar with, however, may cause data quality concerns. Another consideration is that smaller districts may have staff members performing data entry functions that are not trained in the reporting system.

Staff for the Student Discipline Task Force indicated that even with the new behavior category definitions, inconsistencies may persist in data reporting. The current CEDARS system does not provide the opportunity for descriptive reporting, so inconsistent responses to similar behaviors or inconsistent categorization could still be a problem. For example, talking back to a teacher in one district could be coded as “failure to cooperate” and “disruptive behavior” in another, depending on the interpretation of the action and circumstances.

Other States

No state has been identified by board staff, as of yet, that includes a discipline indicator in a statewide accountability system. There are districts and schools throughout the country that have developed robust discipline data systems and strategies including Baltimore, Maryland; Highline School District, Washington; and Lincoln High School in Walla Walla, Washington. These systems often involve formative data that are used to develop interventions for students, as well as to assess trends among schools and faculty to inform shifts in discipline policy and practices. The question remains if these systems and strategies are scalable to the state level and if they are useful in the same way as at the district level.

Many states have also developed early warning systems, which often include a discipline indicator. These systems are not used for accountability purposes, but for targeted interventions.

Incorporation into State Accountability Systems

Indicators

Staff consulted with OSPI staff and held a discussion at the most recent Achievement and Accountability Workgroup (AAW) meeting on the use and nature of a discipline indicator in a state accountability system. Several suggestions were made for how a discipline indicator might be defined. The conversations highlighted that the goal of a discipline indicator and its inclusion in a state accountability system can vary greatly.

The first indicator that could be collected at this time is the number of discretionary exclusions — the suspensions and expulsions that resulted from behaviors not associated with a mandatory exclusion. At a district level, the number of discretionary exclusions may be an indicator of the quality of the school culture or climate, or of the level of engagement of students. At the state level, it would help to establish the scope of the issue, but it is not clear that a decrease in the number of exclusions would lead to an increase in student achievement or improvement of school culture across the state. A more nuanced indicator would be needed.

Another suggested indicator that could be collected immediately is the disproportionality of discretionary discipline rates among student groups. This gets to the concern about discipline contributing to the opportunity gap, with higher discipline rates leading to higher incidence of dropouts. Closing the gap in discipline rates could indicate that districts are applying discretionary discipline equitably. However, this indicator also discounts the impact that exclusion from the learning environment has on all students.

Using the outcomes of students who were subject to disciplinary action, such as their dropout rates or return to school, is another potential indicator that would help illustrate the impact of discipline on student achievement. The data are not currently available for this type of indicator but will be collected starting in 2015-2016.

State Accountability Systems

Incorporating a discipline indicator into the educational system health indicators established in ESSB 5491 creates a number of challenges. ESSB 5491 requires that OSPI and SBE establish a process for realistic goal setting for each of the statewide indicators. Since there is only one year of data available currently and impending changes to what will be collected in the coming years, setting a realistic goal for a discipline indicator would be challenging at this time. It will also be difficult to compare Washington's performance on a discipline indicator to national data, as required in the legislation, because no other states with discipline indicators in their accountability systems have been identified. ESSB 5491 also stipulates that if the state does not meet an indicator goal, recommendations must be made for potential changes in the program of basic education. To date, the program of basic education has been defined in solely academic terms, so it is difficult to discern what changes to the academic program would impact the state's performance on a discipline indicator.

Using a discipline indicator in another state accountability system, such as the Achievement Index, was also considered. Using an indicator such as the number of exclusionary disciplinary actions or disproportionality of student discipline could create a perverse incentive to misreport. To avoid this unintended consequence, the use of a positive indicator like the type of services a student received while out of school or the number of students excluded that returned to school could be used. However, data are not yet available for this type of indicator.

The inconsistency of interventions for the same behavior across the state also makes using a discipline indicator in the Achievement Index difficult. Other indicators, such as student performance on state exams, utilize a standardized measure that is not subject to district discretion. Using discipline disproportionality in the Achievement Index may also penalize schools with diverse student populations since factors like a teaching staff not trained in cultural competency can result in higher discipline rates.

Key Questions

Some key considerations for discussion include:

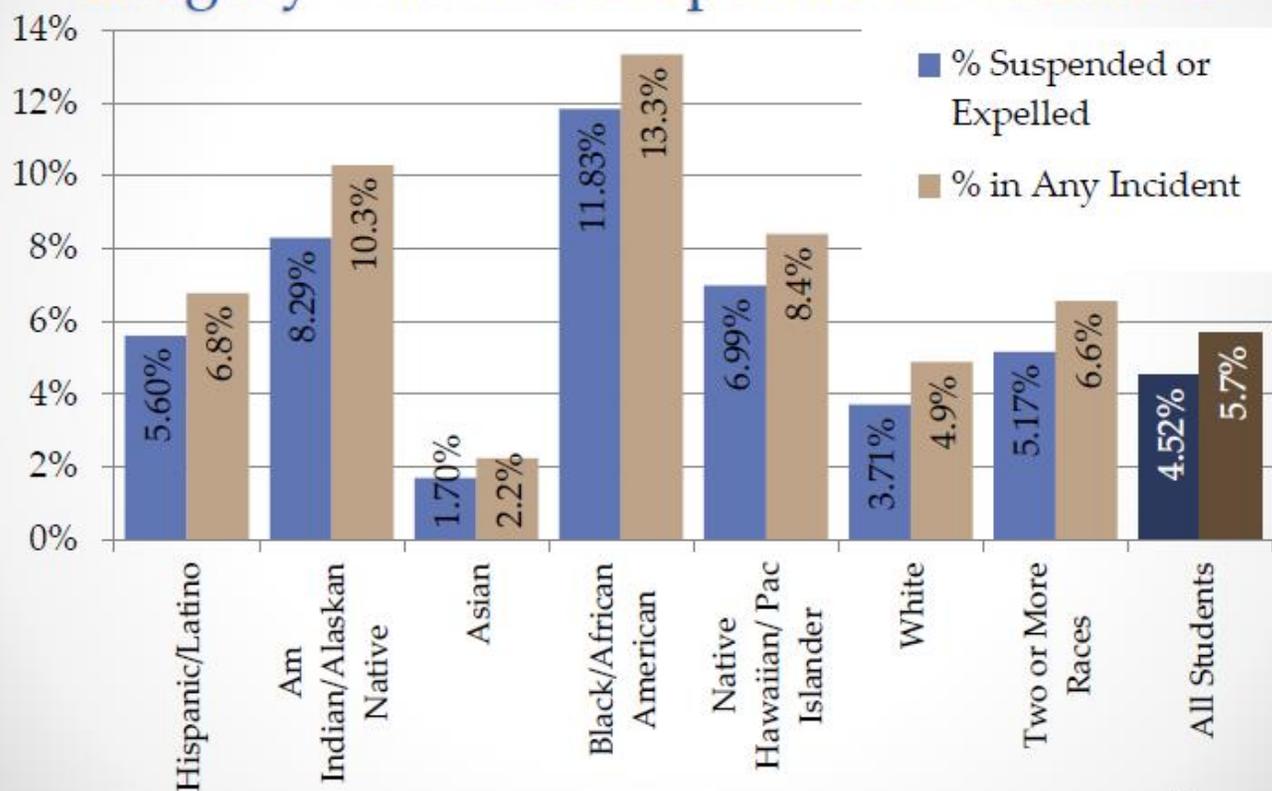
- Is the goal of a discipline indicator to address student achievement or equity in discipline practices?
- Is the indicator meant to measure student behavior or adult behavior?
- Is the best use of the data descriptive or as part of an accountability system?
- Will the data be formative or summative if used in a statewide accountability system?

Action

The board will consider staff analysis of the current feasibility of incorporating a discipline indicator into a statewide accountability system.



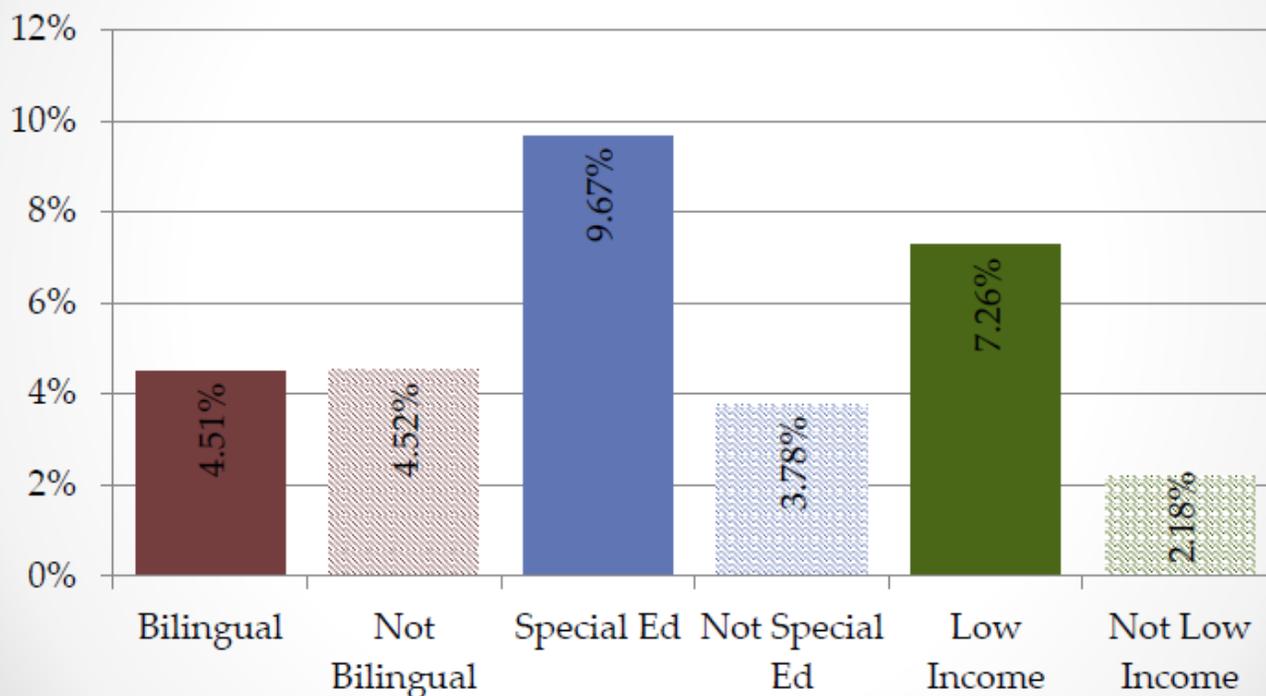
Percent of students in each race / ethnicity category who were reported in incidents



12/9/2013 13



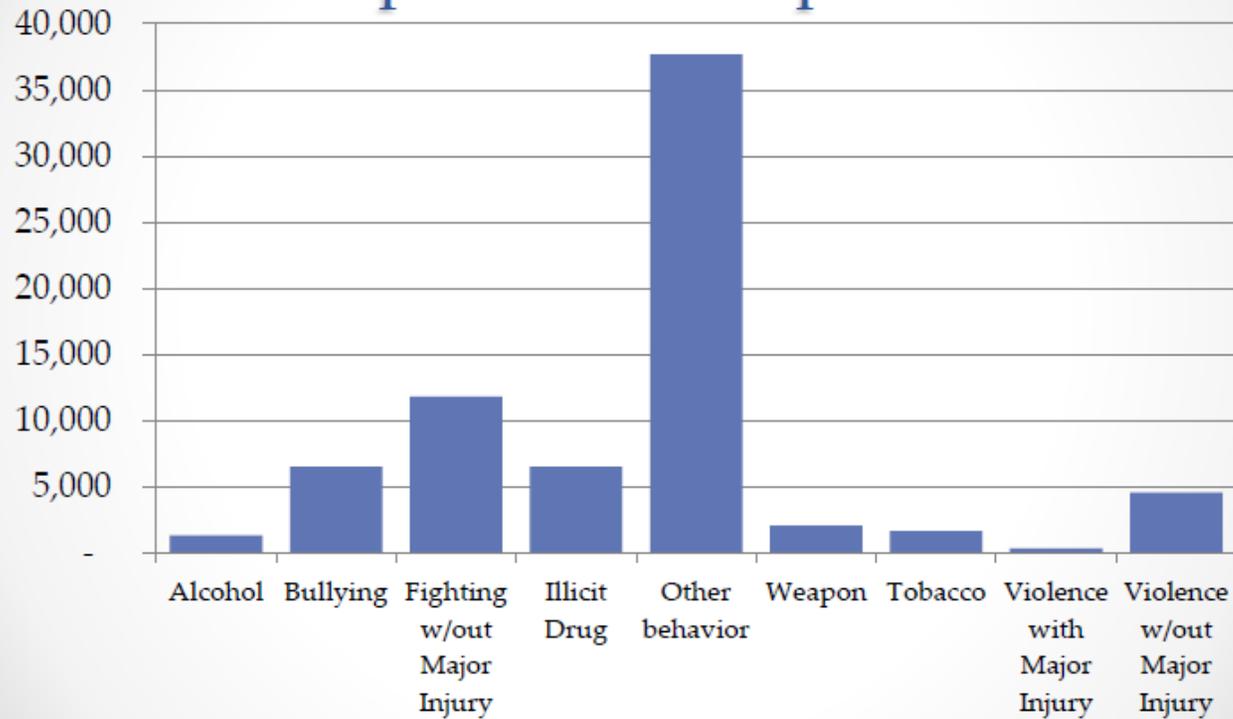
Percent of students who were suspended or expelled



12/9/2013 14



Behaviors associated with a suspension or expulsion



12/9/2013 15