

Objective

The aim of this investigation is to identify schools, Local Educational Agencies (districts), and Charter Management Organizations (CMOs), within Maricopa County, Arizona, that were disproportional in their use of exclusionary discipline during the 2013-14 school year. Within this investigation, *disproportionality* refers to the “as the over- or under-representation of a group in a category that exceeds our expectations for that group, or differs substantially from the representation of others in that category”¹ and *exclusionary discipline* is defined as in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, expulsion, referral to law enforcement, and school-based arrest. The current document addresses the use of all forms of discipline in charter and non-charter schools.

Dataset

Data from the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) 2013-14 was used to address the research questions below.² Charter schools were identified using [NCES](#) data.³

Measurement

There are numerous ways to assess disproportionality (e.g., Risk Ratio, Composition Index)⁴. The calculation of relative measures, such as the Risk Ratio, are influenced by fluctuations in demographics and/or the rates of the comparison groups. As one of the ways to measure the effectiveness of this project is to track disproportionality over time, suspension rates and differences in the rates (i.e., gaps) were included in the accompanying spreadsheets in addition to risk ratios.⁵ Disproportionality was measured in the following manner:

Metric 1: Discipline Rate (Risk Index): The proportion of students disciplined in a group.

$$\text{Rate} = \frac{\text{\# of Students Disciplined}}{\text{\# of Students Enrolled}}$$

Metric 2: Discipline Rate Gap: The difference in discipline rates between groups.

$$\text{Gap} = \text{Rate Group A} - \text{Rate Group B}$$

Metric 3: Risk Ratio: Risk ratios represent the likelihood of the outcome (e.g., Suspension/Expulsions) for one group in relation to a comparison group. Risk ratios are calculated by dividing the risk index of the group of interest by the risk index of a comparison group. The comparison group most commonly used is White students, but others, such as the risk index for all other groups is sometimes used.

$$\text{Risk Ratio} = \frac{\text{Risk Index of Target Group}}{\text{Risk Index of Comparison Group}}$$

A risk ratio of 1.0 shows that the risk for the two groups is equal, whereas a risk ratio greater than 1.0 is indicative of overrepresentation, and a risk ratio less than 1.0 is indicative of underrepresentation (Boneshefski & Runge, 2014).

¹ (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.indiana.edu/~equityiu/understanding-equity/>

² According to the CRDC 2013-14 Public-Use Manual, data elements with small cells were suppressed and replaced with a -2. The suppressed data were not included in the discipline calculations in this report. This omission primarily affected subcategories of SWDs. A database including the suppressed data is available upon request.

³ Note: The school list reflects 2014-2016 data as 2013-14 data were not available on the site. Therefore, the list of charter schools may not match exactly with the charters that were active in 2013-14.

⁴ McIntosh, K., Barnes, A., Morris, K., & Eliason, B. M. (2014). Using discipline data within SWPBIS to identify and address disproportionality: A guide for school teams. *Eugene, OR: OSEP Technical Assistance Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, University of Oregon.*

⁵ Losen, D. J., Hodson, C. L., Keith, I. I., Michael, A., Morrison, K., & Belway, S. (2015). Are we closing the school discipline gap?. *K-12 Racial Disparities in School Discipline.*

Metric 4: Composition: Composition metrics provide another measure of disproportionality. One common metric is the comparison of the proportion of students within a racial/ethnic group to the proportion of disciplinary actions from the same group. This metric allows researchers to evaluate whether the number of disciplinary actions from one group is proportionate to the group's size.

Research Questions

Is there disproportionality in the use of suspensions for students of color and students with disabilities?

Table 1. In-School and Out-of-School Suspension Risk Ratios

| Charter Indicator | Suspension Type | School Level | Number of Schools | Black | Latino | Native American | Students w/ Disabilities |
|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------|--------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Charter | In School Suspensions | Lower | 138 | 1.63 | 0.72 | 2.39 | 2.15 |
| Non-Charter | In School Suspensions | Lower | 604 | 3.93 | 1.64 | 2.57 | 1.93 |
| Charter | In School Suspensions | HS | 67 | 2.55 | 5.23 | 1.02 | 1.21 |
| Non-Charter | In School Suspensions | HS | 85 | 2.71 | 1.82 | 2.14 | 1.97 |
| Charter | Out of School Suspensions | Lower | 138 | 2.58 | 0.75 | 1.59 | 1.94 |
| Non-Charter | Out of School Suspensions | Lower | 604 | 4.55 | 2.01 | 2.79 | 2.19 |
| Charter | Out of School Suspensions | HS | 67 | 8.09 | 6.76 | 1.62 | 1.27 |
| Non-Charter | Out of School Suspensions | HS | 85 | 2.93 | 1.54 | 2.28 | 2.34 |

*Note the comparison group for race/ethnicity categories was White students. The comparison group for students with disabilities was students without disabilities.

A risk ratio of greater than 1.0 indicates disproportionality in the use of suspensions. As shown in Table 1 above, except for Latino students, all groups were disproportionately disciplined across all school levels and school types.

The following sections will address the use of expulsions, referrals to law enforcement, and school-based arrests.⁶

Expulsions

Is there disproportionality in the use of expulsions for students of color and students with disabilities?

Table 5. Expulsions Risk Gaps

| Charter Indicator | School Level | Number of Schools | Black | Latino | Native American | Students w/ Disabilities |
|-------------------|--------------|-------------------|-------|--------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Charter | Lower | 138 | 0.14 | 0.11 | -0.02 | -0.02 |
| Non-Charter | Lower | 604 | 0.01 | 0.00 | 0.01 | 0.00 |
| Charter | HS | 67 | 0.36 | -0.06 | -0.16 | 0.53 |
| Non-Charter | HS | 94 | 0.06 | 0.01 | -0.04 | -0.01 |

*Note the comparison group for race/ethnicity categories was White students. The comparison group for students with disabilities was students without disabilities.

As shown in Table 5 above, on average, Black students were expelled at a greater rate than their White peers. Amongst the schools that used expulsion, the overall risk for expulsion was less than 2%. Therefore, it is important to note that a risk gap such as 0.36 for Black students in charter schools is moderately large considering the scope of the overall risk. Contrary to Black students, the risk rate for Native American students appeared to be the same or slightly less than their White peers. Finally, the risk gaps for Latino and students with disabilities varied.

⁶ Expulsion, referral to law enforcement, & school-based arrests have low incidence rates. This means that oftentimes, the risk rate for the comparison group was 0%, which negates the use of risk ratios. Therefore, risk rate gap was chosen for the analyses for these forms of discipline.

Referrals and Arrests

Is there disproportionality in the use of referrals to law enforcement and arrests for students of color and students with disabilities?

Table 8. Referrals and Arrests Risk Gaps

| Charter Indicator | Discipline Type | School Level | Number of Schools | Black | Latino | Native American | Students w/ Disabilities |
|-------------------|-----------------|--------------|-------------------|-------|--------|-----------------|--------------------------|
| Charter | Referrals | Lower | 138 | -0.01 | -0.01 | -0.01 | 0.00 |
| Non-Charter | Referrals | Lower | 604 | 0.29 | 0.05 | 0.49 | 0.16 |
| Charter | Referrals | HS | 67 | 0.65 | 0.26 | -0.05 | 0.06 |
| Non-Charter | Referrals | HS | 94 | 0.60 | 0.18 | 0.27 | 0.53 |
| Charter | Arrests | Lower | 138 | ** | ** | ** | ** |
| Non-Charter | Arrests | Lower | 604 | 0.02 | 0.00 | 0.03 | -0.01 |
| Charter | Arrests | HS | 67 | 0.35 | 0.18 | 0 | 0.03 |
| Non-Charter | Arrests | HS | 94 | 0.07 | -0.02 | 0.03 | 0.04 |

*Note the comparison group for race/ethnicity categories was White students. The comparison group for students with disabilities was students without disabilities.

**There were no students reported arrested at the lower levels for charter schools.

Like expulsions, it appears that in charter schools at the high school level, there's a greater disparity between the use of arrests for Black students than their White peers (Table 8). In contrast, there is a greater disparity in referrals to law enforcement at non-charters in the lower grades. For Latino students, the disparity in referrals and arrests appears to occur to a greater extent in charter schools at the high school level. With respect to Native American students and those with disabilities, a disparity in referrals to law enforcement appears across all levels of non-charter schools.