



Transparency of School Discipline Data and Policies Benefits Students and Families

IDRA Testimony for House Bill 2126, submitted by Alisha Tuff to the Texas House Youth Health and Safety Committee, April 3, 2023

Dear Chair Thompson and Honorable Members of the Committee:

My name is Alisha Tuff, and I am an Education Policy Fellow at IDRA, an independent, non-partisan non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

IDRA supports HB 2126 and all efforts to increase transparency regarding and ultimately eliminate harmful discipline practices in Texas public schools.

HB 2126 allows for students and families to have greater transparency and accountability of school discipline data and policies. Data transparency enables students and families to leverage information for meaningful change. The bill requires schools to notify parents at the beginning of each school year if the school has a corporal punishment policy and the procedures for parents to opt out of that policy, as allowed by current law.

Additionally, HB 2126 makes important discipline data more accessible to families and communities. Currently, school districts and charter schools report some discipline data to TEA, but that data can be hard for the public to access and does not include all discipline issues that matter to families. Given the disproportionalities in discipline according to race, ethnicity, gender, and disability status, families must have access to this data to inform their decisions about their students' education and prepare them to engage with teachers and school staff.

For instance, school district data on corporal punishment are currently only reported at the federal level, which presents challenges to timeliness. The most recently published data is from the 2017-18 school year. It indicates that Black students made up 10% of the student population in schools that used corporal punishment, but they accounted for 17% of children hit (Craven & Sánchez, 2023).

In addition, Texas does not collect or report on student interactions with law enforcement, including school-based arrests or Class C citations. Yet, according to the most recently-available federal data on school arrests, Black students accounted for 32% of reported arrests in U.S. schools, though they only made up 15% of the total student population (CRDC, 2021; IDRA, 2022).

Available state data highlight these disparities. For example, in 2021-22, Black students received 32% of all out-of-school suspensions and 25% of in-school suspensions, though they only made up 12.8% of the Texas student population (TEA, 2022). Black students experience 22% of

disciplinary alternative education program (DAEP) assignments and 20% of juvenile justice alternative education program (JJAEP) assignments. Latino students receive 60% of JJAEP assignments, though they only made up 53% of the Texas student population (TEA, 2022).

Similarly, students with disabilities represent 12% of the population and account for 22% of out-of-school suspensions, 20% of in-school suspensions, 19% of DAEP assignments and 18% JJAEP assignments (TEA, 2022).

Families and community members deserve to know how students are disciplined in their schools. HB 2126 sheds light on discipline data that affects students' safety and well-being and makes it easier for families to be engaged in school practices. Schools also should use this data to identify areas for improvement, develop targeted interventions and supports for students who are at risk of discipline, and hold themselves accountable for progress. By leveraging data in this way, schools can work with students and families to create a more just and equitable learning environment for all students.

Recommendations

- Adopt HB 2126 to provide discipline data in an accessible way to parents and families.
- Support policies that promote positive, safe school climates and institute best practices for alternative discipline, such as restorative justice and programs that support building healthy student relationships.
- Foster relationships with families by making clear to them their options and giving them the ability to make decisions on their children's education.
- Collect and release data to enhance transparency and reveal disparities so that schools can reevaluate their discipline policies and catch disproportionality before student become heavily targeted.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, contact Alisha Tuff at alisha.tuff@idra.org or Paige Duggins-Clay, J.D., at paige.duggins-clay@idra.org.

Resources

- Craven, M. (June 16, 2022). What Safe Schools Should Look Like for Every Student – A Guide to Building Safe and Welcoming Schools and Rejecting Policies that Hurt Students, Issue Brief. IDRA. <https://idra.news/SafeSchoolsIB>
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- TEA. (September 21, 2022). State Level Annual Discipline Summary – PEIMS data for 2021-2022. Texas Education Agency. https://rptsvr1.tea.texas.gov/cgi/sas/broker?_service=marykay&_program=adhoc.download_static_summary_sas&district=&agg_level=STATE&referrer=Download_State_Summaries.html&test_flag=&_debug=0&school_vr=22&report_type=html&Download_State_Summary=Next

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