



The Center for Civil Rights Remedies

at The Civil Rights Project | *Proyecto Derechos Civiles*

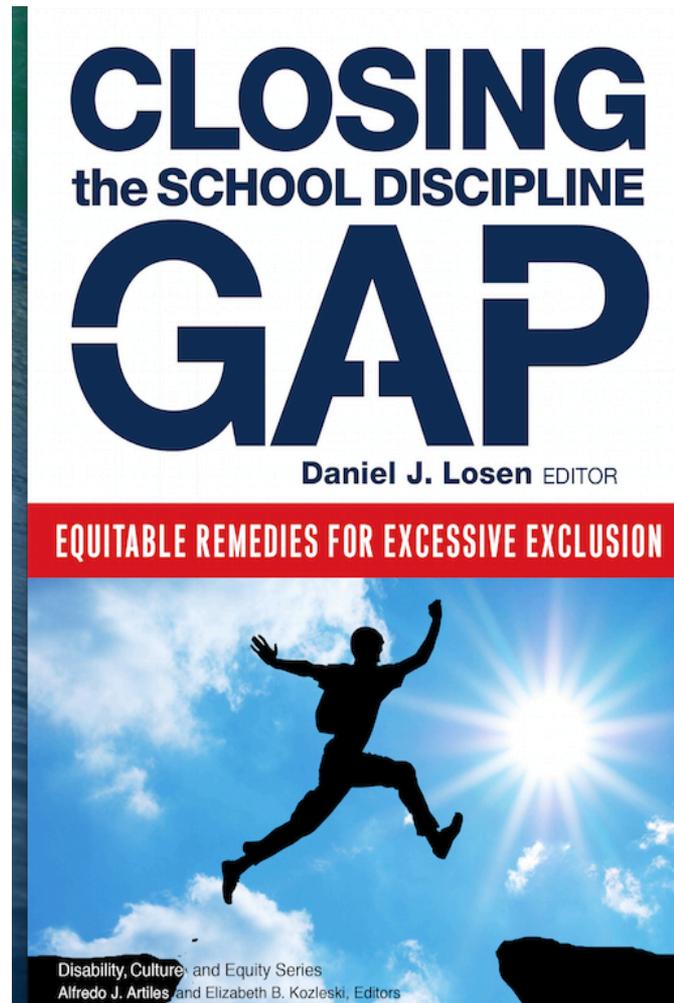
The School To Prison Pipeline: What Research Says About Contributing Factors and the Remedies

by Daniel J. Losen

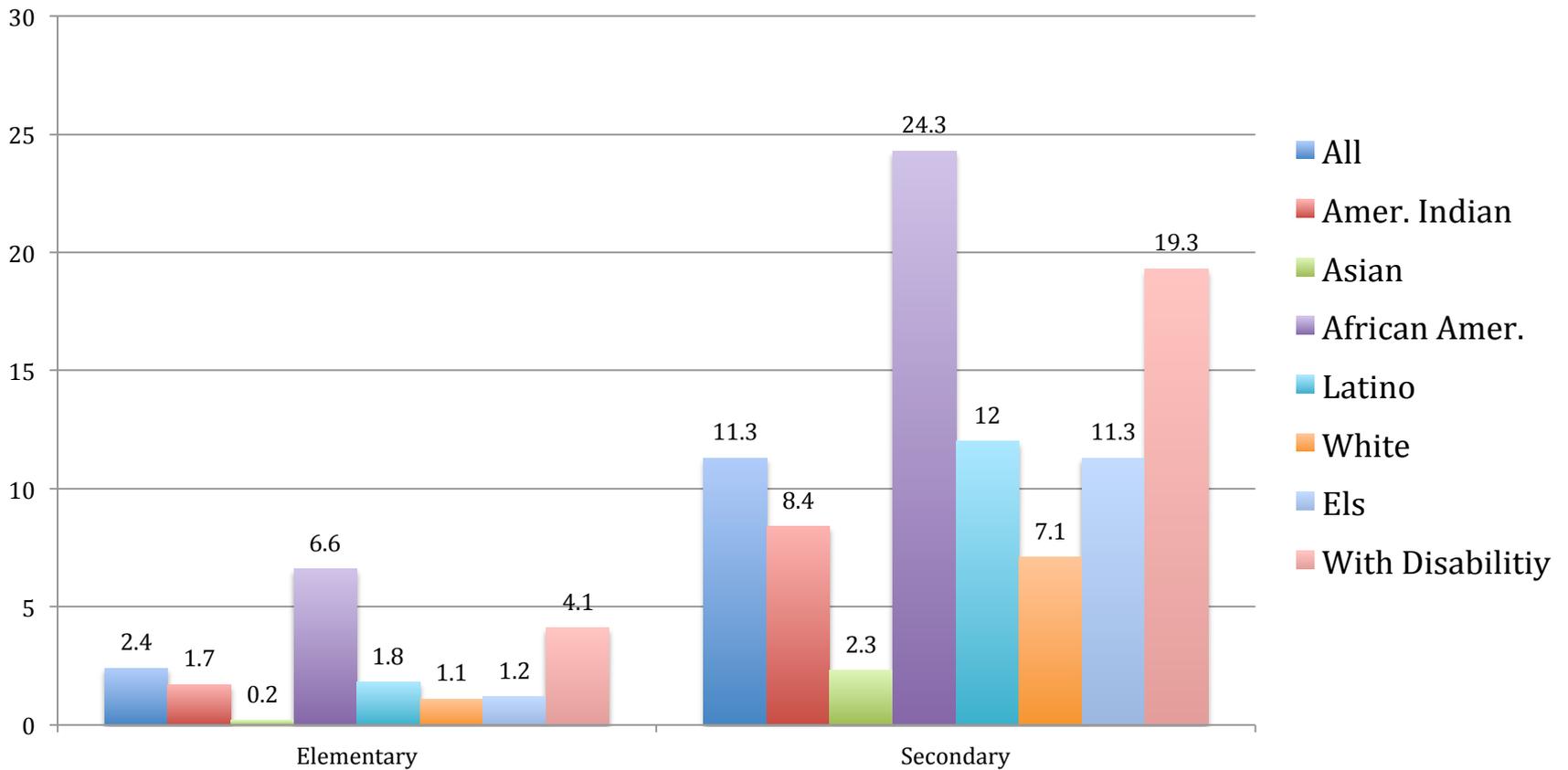
February 11, 2015

Director, The Center for Civil Rights Remedies, at
UCLA's Civil Rights Project

Research Citations From



National Data (2009-10) Show Schools Suspend Secondary Students 4 to 10 Times More Often Than Elementary Students



STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

In general, students with disabilities are suspended at twice the rate of their non-disabled peers. Nearly one out of every 5 secondary students with disabilities was suspended in 2009-10. (Losen, Ee, Hodson & Martinez, 2015)

One out of every three students with emotional disturbance was suspended in 2011-12. (Losen, Ee, Hodson & Martinez, 2015)

These high rates and large disparities suggests a widespread failure to provide appropriate counseling, special education supports and services and effective interventions.



COMMON MISPERCEPTIONS FUEL THE PIPELINE

Myth:

Out-of-school suspensions are primarily safety measures because they are usually responses to severe and/or dangerous, or unlawful behavior.

Reality:

California: Most frequent offense is “disruption/defiance.”(Losen & Martinez, 2014)

Every state that reports minor offenses next to serious ones shows that minor offenses are the most prevalent reason for out of school suspension.

The most serious infractions are uncommon and usually result in expulsion rather than an out of school suspension.



FREQUENT USE OF OUT OF SCHOOL SUSPENSION

Associated with lower achievement at school level, after controlling for race and poverty (Skiba, 2015).

High rates and large racial disparities are predicted by the beliefs and approaches of school leaders more so than the behavior of the students or any other factor (Skiba, 2015).

Is common, but NOT the norm: There are more lower-suspending schools and districts than high suspending ones (Losen, 2015).



SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT IMPROVES SAFETY

Researchers suggest that suspension often rewards and reinforces the behavior it is meant to deter.

School engagement is the most powerful antidote to delinquency and gang involvement (Gottfredson, 2001).

If dress codes are meant to discourage gang involvement, what does suspending a student out of school for violating the dress code achieve?



RESEARCH FINDINGS OF ROBERT BALFANZ, BYRNES & FOX, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY (2015)

Being suspended just once in grade 9 correlates with a doubling in the dropout rate from 16% to 32%.

While suspension was the trigger that put some on the path to dropping out, for most it co-occurred with other factors such as chronic absenteeism and course failure.

Being suspended is one of the three core predictors of dropping out and tracking discipline is integral to early warning systems.



FREQUENT SUSPENSIONS LIKELY INCREASE JUVENILE DELINQUENCY

National longitudinal study suggests that suspensions may be contributing to higher rates of delinquency and less safe school environments. (Schollenberger, 2015)

Black and Latino males were the most likely to be suspended from school, *prior* to any evidence of delinquent behavior.

In Texas, being suspended in a given year predicted a three-fold increase in the risk for juvenile justice involvement.



CHICAGO SCHOOLS SERVING CHILDREN FROM THE HIGHEST CRIME NEIGHBORHOODS (STEINBERG, ALLENSWORTH & JOHNSON, 2015).

Felt safest according to teachers and students when the levels of student-teacher and teacher-parent engagement and trust were high.

These same schools had lower rates of out of school suspension.



RESEARCHERS CONCLUDE INVESTING IN HEAVY SECURITY IS LIKELY COUNTER PRODUCTIVE

National study of security measures, controlled for race and poverty (Finn & Servoss, 2015). Higher levels of security correlated with more frequent suspensions, especially for Black students, but not higher ratings on safety.

Cleveland Ohio: After a school shooting, social emotional learning and systemic supports and interventions for students were more effective for improving safety than “Hardware” security investments (Osher, et al., 2015).



MOST STUDENTS WHO MAKE THREATS

Do not need to be suspended.

Virginia's threat assessment protocol help educators distinguish threats that constitute dangerous behavior from harmless ones, and respond accordingly (Cornell & Lovegrove, 2015).

Implementation reduced suspensions and racial disparities in discipline (Cornell & Lovegrove, 2015).

Statewide effort is now keeping more kids in school with no risk to safety.



SUSPENSIONS HAVE ECONOMIC TOLL

Texas study (Marchbanks, et al., 2015).

Suspensions predict grade retention which adds a year of schooling at a cost of over 178 million dollars per year.

Suspensions predict an increase in dropout rates which in turn predicts higher crime and greater dependency, lower earnings and productivity.

Lifetime costs associated with increased dropouts is estimated at 760 million dollars for each cohort.



RESTORATIVE PRACTICES WORK: CORRELATE WITH HIGHER ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Study of Denver Public Schools systemic adoption of restorative practices (Gonzalez, 2015):

Restorative practices hold students accountable, but are designed to keep the rule-breaker in the community and remediate the cause of the misbehavior to prevent repeated offenses.

Results in Denver: Over six-year period, reduced suspensions and racial disparities while each year test scores improved for every racial/ethnic group and in every subject.



FEDERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Data: All schools collect this data: Federal law should require annual public reporting of disaggregated discipline data, so that parents and policymakers have complete information about this core predictor of academic outcomes and can evaluate the impact of reform efforts.

Support: The U.S. Department of Education should encourage investment in what works and discourage unsound discipline policies and practices. Support should include preparation and training for teachers and leaders in improving student engagement and in particular intervention strategies like restorative practices that have demonstrated success with diverse student bodies.

Accountability: We should include measures of healthy school climate, including suspension rates, as part of the ESEA's required academic and performance measures.



NEW REPORT: ARE WE CLOSING THE DISCIPLINE GAP?

Covers elementary and secondary rates for every state and district in the nation.

Covers disparities by race/ethnicity, gender, disability status, English learner status and the cross-sections.

Find and compare your district's data with others at www.schooldisciplinedata.org

New Book: Closing the School Discipline Gap (Teachers College Press, 2015)

<http://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/>

[Contact: losendan@gmail.com](mailto:losendan@gmail.com)