



Educators Gather at the White House to Rethink School Discipline

U.S. Department of Education Announces New Tools to Help Schools Rethink Discipline

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The U.S. Departments of [Education](#) and [Justice](#) are hosting [teams of superintendents, principals, and teachers from across the country](#) today for "Rethink Discipline," a day-long conference at the White House on creating positive school climates and implementing effective discipline practices. The [conference](#) seeks to advance the national conversation about reducing the overuse of unnecessary out of school suspensions and expulsions and replacing these practices with positive alternatives that keep students in school and engaged in learning, but also ensure accountability.

More Resources



"Creating and sustaining safe, supportive schools is absolutely essential to ensuring students can engage in the rich learning experiences they need for success in college, work and life—that's why rethinking school discipline is critical to boosting student achievement and improving school outcomes. Today's conference shows that there are leaders across the country who are committed to doing this work. We are proud to stand as partners with these educators to say that we have to continue to do better for all of our students," said U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan.

According to data from the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), the number of students losing critical learning time due to out of school suspensions and expulsions is staggering. Over 3 million students are suspended or expelled every year.

At the event, the Department of Education will release new maps based on the CRDC data illustrating out-of-school suspensions across the country to help educators and communities understand the extent of this practice. The maps highlight how southeastern school districts have the highest rates of out of school suspension in the nation. The maps also clearly demonstrate the widespread and frequent use of out-of-school suspension among students with disabilities. The following maps are being released today:

- Percent of all students who have received one or more out-of-school suspensions by district [Map](#) and [Data Table](#)
- Percent of students with disabilities who have received one or more out-of-school suspensions by district [Map](#) and [Data Table](#)

The impact of out of school suspensions and expulsions on students is devastating—suspended students are less likely to graduate on time, and more likely to repeat a grade, drop out of school, and enter the juvenile justice system.

School Districts across the country have already made progress in transforming policies and school climate to support student learning including the following districts attending the conference: Oakland, Los Angeles and Vallejo City, (CA); Baltimore (MD); Broward County (FL); and Syracuse and Buffalo (NY). For instance:

- **Baltimore City Schools**, with help from the Council of State Governments' Discipline Consensus Project, revamped their code of student conduct for a more rehabilitative approach to misbehavior. The State Board of Education is implementing new discipline regulations—from giving school systems more flexibility in managing cases, to requiring that students suspended for short periods are able to complete schoolwork they've missed.
- **LA Unified** was the first district, in 2013, to ban suspensions for willful defiance—which disproportionately impacted African-American students, and includes actions like refusing to turn off a cellphone or failing to wear a school uniform—in favor of alternative discipline.

- **Syracuse** has adopted a new code of discipline, established training for staff in alternative approaches, and hired an independent monitor to oversee progress.

As part of the conference, new resources and initiatives are being announced today to assist school leaders in their efforts to reduce suspensions and expulsions and provide school environments that are safe, supportive, and conducive to teaching and learning.

- **Addressing the Root Causes of Disciplinary Disparities: An Educator's Action Planning Guide:** This new resource from the Department's National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments provides a guide to assist schools and districts in identifying the root causes of disparities in the outcomes of school discipline through an analysis of student-level discipline data. [Addressing the Root Cause of School Discipline Disparities](#) provides a practical, action-oriented method for schools and districts to develop an action plan to address the roots causes of discipline disparities. The Guide includes a Disciplinary Disparities Risk Assessment Tool to aid in data gathering and analysis, templates to help plan and facilitate communication among stakeholders, real world examples from schools and districts already experiencing success and much more tools and information.
- **Rethink School Discipline: Resource Guide for Superintendent Action:** This [Resource Guide](#) offers a set of seven potential action items to help school leaders implement safe, supportive school climate and discipline by engaging stakeholders, assessing the results and history of existing school climate and discipline systems and practices; implementing reform; and monitoring progress. Also included in the Resource Guide are links to federal guidance and resources as well as postcard templates that districts may use to support local educator and parent and family engagement in the district's school discipline reform efforts.
- **Support for State and Local Educational Leaders and Partners from Other Systems:** On July 27, the U.S. Department of Justice is launching the [National Resource Center for School Justice Partnerships](#) to advance school discipline reform efforts across the nation. In addition to serving as a dynamic resource hub, the center will also serve as a training and technical assistance portal for juvenile courts, schools, law enforcement agencies, and others to support school discipline reform efforts at the local level. Among its many responsibilities, the Center will support the Supportive School Discipline Training and Technical Assistance Collaborative, an effort by the U.S. Departments of Justice, Education, and Health and Human Services to coordinate resources and provide strategic support to schools and school communities in areas such as building safe and supportive learning environments and addressing disparities in discipline for students of color and students with disabilities.
- **#RethinkDiscipline Public Awareness Campaign:** In the weeks and months following the conference, the U.S. Department of Education will continue to use social media events, blogs, and other approaches to engage the field about new tools and resources to help school communities to improve school climate and discipline.

The White House Rethink Discipline conference builds on the work of the [President's My Brother's Keeper Initiative \(MBK\)](#), the [White House Council on Women and Girls](#), and the Supportive School Discipline Initiative—a collaboration between the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice launched in 2011 to support the use of school discipline practices that foster safe, supportive, and productive learning environments while keeping students in school. Highlights from the Initiative's work this past year include:

- At the [White House Summit on Early Education](#), Secretaries Burwell and Duncan announced the release of a [policy statement on expulsion and suspension practices in early learning settings](#). The effort, part of MBK, encourages states, early childhood programs, and families to partner in preventing, reducing, and eventually eliminating the expulsion and suspension of young children from early learning programs.
- Education and Justice jointly released a [School Climate and Discipline Guidance Package](#) to provide schools with a roadmap to reduce the usage of exclusionary discipline practice and clarify schools' civil rights obligation to not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or national origin in the administration of school discipline.
- Educators at the conference have already started to implement the School Climate and Discipline Guidance and will share challenges they have faced and best practices they have identified. Additionally, participants in the conference have committed to improving school climate with the goals of ultimately, avoiding disruptions in instructional time and boosting student achievement. At the end of the conference, they will identify next steps for action on school discipline so as to deepen implementation of the School Climate and Discipline Guidance.
- Education released the results of the [2011-2012 Civil Rights Data Collection](#), which includes school discipline data from most every school in the country and certain juvenile justice facilities.

For more information about the Administration's work on school climate and discipline go to www.ed.gov/rethinkdiscipline.

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