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What is the Cause for the Suspension Disparity between Caucasians and Students of
Color?

A MASTER'S THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF BETHEL UNIVERSITY

By
Pamela M Beatty

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS

FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTERS OF ARTS

MAY 2017

Bethel University

What is the Cause for the Suspension Disparity between Caucasians and Students of Color?

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August 2017

APPROVED

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Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my Lord for being the Head of my life and thoughts. I would like to express my profound gratitude to my children; Tairae, Dominique and Karol-Anne and my late wonderful husband and outstanding parents (Darnell Beatty aka (Darling), Bobbie and John Nickens) for providing me with unfailing love and spiritual support and continuous encouragement throughout this journey. Also, to my closet and dear friends, Michelle, Nancy and Kia for their personal and professional support of whom which I love dearly!

I would like to thank Mrs. Charlene Koel-Turner who became more than my mentor and advisor throughout my life's journey. Mrs. Charlene Koel-Turner was always open and supportive whenever I ran into a trouble spot or had a question about my research or writing. I am gratefully indebted to her for her very valuable comments on this thesis and about life's situations. I would like to thank you, Kathy as the second reader of this thesis for being a part of my life's journey. May God bless you! Thank you.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the professors at Bethel University for their help and support.

Abstract

The purpose of this research is to showcase the ineffectiveness of suspension upon students and to illustrate the disparity in the use of suspension and expulsion towards African American students when compared to their peers. Studies show that although African Americans make up a small portion of the student population, they make up a majority of the suspended student population. The impact of suspension and expulsion on African Americans can leave them alienated and severely hamper not only the academic future of the students, but also the adult future. Research shows that students who are frequently suspended have lower wages, are more likely to rely on government assistance programs, and more likely to be in the criminal justice system. Any student who feels they are being singled out more than their peers will withdraw from the system and become a repeat offender. Students who get suspended lose a lot of education time and can get placed in alternative schooling. This is not ideal for the school or the student. Future research could focus on the reason why minority students are punished more than their peers and the future of student discipline should try to keep the student in the classroom and establish better rapport with them.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This review of the literature will challenge the use of suspension as a means of punishment, show the gross disparity in the use of suspension between minority students and Caucasian students, illustrate the unequal treatment of minority students, and determine how schools can provide better methods of relationship building with minority students that will result in lowered rate of suspensions.

Disciplining children in school is a difficult task. An ideal system is one that discourages unwanted behavior without hindering the education of the student. The current means of disciplining students may be effective at inhibiting inappropriate behavior, but it does little in the way of making sure that the student continues to learn. Detention, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion are the most common methods used to discipline children and work on the idea of positive punishment, but all involve removing the child from the classroom. This inevitably leads to the child falling behind in his or her studies with the expectation of catching up independently of the class. The use of these deterrent methods often lead to the labeling of children regardless of the circumstance behind the incident, and subsequently leads to a positive feedback loop of punishment and poor education.

Minority students are especially troubled with the discipline methods within the education system. Many minorities can carry the negative stereotype of poor performers and problem students (Ferguson, 2001). This leads to the overuse of suspension as punishment as well as minor disciplinary infractions becoming offenses resulting in suspension. One study showed Caucasian students were suspended for smoking, leaving classroom without permission, vandalism, disrespect, excessive noise, threats, possession of weapons, loitering and obscene language. African American students in this study were suspended for disrespect, excessive

noise, threats and loitering (Fernandes, McElroy & Myers, 2016). A disparity in the severity of offenses that leads to suspension can produce repeat suspension for African American students as well as an increase in the number of African American students that are suspended.

Frequently suspended African American students can feel ill-treated by the school system, especially when the offense for which they are suspended seems less severe than their Caucasian peers. This perceived unfairness often leads to negative responses on the part of the student including but not limited to: lower academic performance and effort, increased truancy and absences, disruptive behavior in the classroom, and dropping out. In order to correct the bias in suspension and prevent a downward spiral in student education and behavior, a better method for building relations with minority students must be reached (Blake Keith, Luo, Le & Salter, 2016).

The key to correcting a student's behavior should not be through the use of fear by means of a punishment that takes the student out of the classroom. The ability to build rapport with the student, understanding his or her needs and providing for those needs while keeping with in the structure of the classroom, is ideal. This may prove to be a difficult task when taking a traditional approach to education. A different approach might be taken towards students; one which would engage students more and extend beyond the classroom. Classroom approaches that focus more on rewards and peer cohesion could also give children a sense of responsibility to their peers in addition to themselves (Blake, et al., 2016).

Definitions

According to Minnesota State Education Statute 121.A.41, suspension is defined as, "An action by the school administration, under rules promulgated by the school board, prohibiting a pupil

from attending school for a period of no more than ten school days. Expulsion is defined as a school board action to prohibit an enrolled pupil from further attendance for up to 12 months from the date the pupil is expelled. This absence can cause students to fall behind requiring them to receive an IEP. IEP is an acronym for Individualized Education Program. Individualized Education Programs are designated under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and is a program designed to: identify, evaluate, and assist students with special education need (2004). Based on the research of Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson (2002), the disproportionate discipline of African American students has been extensively documented. In one survey in Maryland spanning four years, the percentage of African American students that received out of school suspension or expulsion was 9.1% whereas Caucasian out of school suspension and expulsion was 3.7% (O'Conner, Porowski & Passa, 2014). This is almost three times larger in percentage. In special education classrooms the gap was a slightly higher with 16 percent of black children verses eight percent white children. The consistency of the difference in percentages suggest unfair treatment towards African Americans within the classroom.

Rationale for Disparities

The unrealized and devastating effects of suspension used by the school system is disturbing and more drastically impacts minorities with little to no home support. Students with low social and economic status can have a life altering and negatively predetermined future when subjected to repeated suspension. School can be much more than just a place to be educated for many students. It can provide a stable and safe environment for children with less than desirable home lives. Children who are repeatedly suspended have greater chances of dropping out and other problems leading well into adulthood (Nishioka, 2013).

Students who are absent from class frequently develop learning disability labels that affect their self-identity. Suspension can change the perception of the education system as a whole in students who are often punished and removed from institutions. This academic ostracization often causes students to distance themselves from the group and later abandon the school system entirely (Skiba, et al., 2014).

The effects of suspension are exacerbated when suspension is more frequently and unfairly administered. African American students are 1.57 times more likely to be suspended than Caucasians (Krezmien, Leone & Achilles, 2006). African American students are also almost three times more likely to be suspended than Caucasian students (O'Conner, Porowski & Passa, 2014). This disparity can be detrimental to African American students with little to no support at home.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Students and Schools

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013), the goals for out-of school (OOS) suspension and expulsion policies were to promote a safe environment for students and staff by decreasing violent behavior, combatting statutorily criminal activities, and discouraging inappropriate behavior and limiting its influence on others. It was believed that this would serve as an example on what behavior would be tolerated while removing any immediate threats from the classroom. Research from The Civil Rights Project, (2000) showed that schools with higher OOS suspension and expulsions were not safer for students or faculty.

Suspension and expulsion do not keep the classroom safe and it also affects the disciplined student negatively. It removes the student from the education process without recompense for the education loss. “Data suggest that students who are involved in the juvenile justice system are likely to have been suspended or expelled” (Skiba, Reynolds, & Graham 2006). They also found that students who are suspended or expelled are 10 times more likely to drop out of high school. Students who are suspended with working parents are less likely to keep up with missed schoolwork. The use of suspension as a discipline did not deter student behavior, but rather increased the total number of students’ suspended (Sparks, 2017).

These means of discipline are also detrimental to the school district. A 2006 study revealed that just 10% of schools were responsible for 50% of the total suspensions (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Students with higher suspension rates had lower academic qualities, performed lower on standardized testing, and payed less attention to school climate. The American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) argues that placing children in OOS suspension places students back into the environment that may have contributed to the antisocial behavior. The removal of

children from the classroom not only loses capitation funds for the school, but it also cost the school time and money in meetings and hearings without yielding any educational benefit.

Disproportion for Minority Students

Suspension and expulsion affects all students negatively. The more frequent the suspension, the more negatively it impacts the student. Using White students with no disability as a comparing base, African American students were on average 5.5 times more likely to be suspended (see Appendix A). Based on a study by Aud, Hussar, & Synder (2010), 42.8% of African American students were suspended and 12.8% were expelled. This is in comparison to 15.6% and 1.0% of white student who were suspended and expelled respectively. During the 2000 school year, black students comprised 17% of the U.S. population but accounted for 34% of the OOS suspensions (Kinsler, 2011).

African American students are sent to the office for disciplinary reasons than their peers. Compared to Caucasians, African American students were referred to the office for discipline three times as frequently and received five times more as many suspensions (Shirley & Cornell, 2001). Students were also less likely to report peers that show aggressive behavior and less likely to express willingness to seek help from their teachers. This behavior leads to more suspensions. The rate of suspension among African American was three times greater than the risk for white students (Aud, Fox, KewalRamani, 2010).

The threat of suspension is not a deterrent nor is suspension itself a deterrent for misbehavior. Frequent discipline referrals and suspensions do not appear to result in improved student behaviors. Studies repeatedly show that disciplined students continue to engage in misbehavior such as truancy, vandalism, and aggression towards peers repeated misbehaviors and suspensions which increases the rates of dropouts, in a nationally representative high school

student sample in the United States, found that 10% of the dropouts reported school suspension as a major reason for dropping out (O’Conner, Porowski, & Passa, 2012).

A study conducted by (O’Conner, et al., 2012) also showed that Black students get higher suspension rates based on infractions. In 2011 and 2012, Black students experienced higher rates of OOS suspension than did Hispanic or White students for three different categories of infraction: attacks, threats or fighting, disrespect, insubordination or disruption, and others. These categories were divided into two types of punishments: out of school suspension and expulsion, and in school suspension. For attacks, threats, and fighting, 89.7 percent of Black students were given out of school suspension or expulsion while 10.3 percent were given in-school suspension. White students were given out of school suspension or expulsion 82.9 percent of the time and in-school suspension 17.1 percent. Black students in the disrespect, insubordination, or disruption category received out of school suspension or expulsion 69.0 percent and in-school suspension 39.0 percent of the time. White students in the same category received 63.7 percent out of school suspension and 36.3percent in-school suspension. In the “Other” category, the percent of out of school suspension and in-school suspension for Black students was 69.7 and 30.3 respectively, for Whites the percent was 59.8 and 40.2. In this study Blacks received more severe punishments than Whites for the same infractions. The study also found that Black students received out of school suspension or expulsion more than twice as often as White students (O’Connor, et al., 2012).

Shirley and Cornell (2011) used a Chi square test of association and determined that African American students were more likely to receive discipline referrals than Caucasian students. “Sixty-three percent of African American students received referrals versus 26% of Caucasian students”. African American students were also shown to receive more suspensions than

Caucasians. The test concluded that 27% of African American students received suspension compared to the 6% of Caucasian students. This was in spite of African Americans making up a fifth of the school population. African Americans comprised only 20.2% of the school population yet accounted for 60.3% percent of office referrals and 20.7% of suspensions. Caucasians constituted 60.5% of the student population and only 27% of office referrals and 6% of suspensions. Shirley and Cornell (2011) concluded that, “African American 6th and 8th graders were almost four times more likely than Caucasian students to be suspended out of school and almost three times more likely to be suspended in school.”

African Americans have been the most affected by expulsions and suspensions. Forty-two percent of African American students were suspended and 12.8% were expelled in 2007 compared to the 15.6% suspensions and 1.0% expulsions of Caucasian students (Vincent, Sprague, & Tobin, 2012). African American students were found to be likely to be suspended more than any other racial group, including Caucasians and Hispanics. The percentage gap of exclusionary discipline between Black and White students went from 3% in the year 1973 to 10% in 2000. In a study conducted by Raffaele-Mendex & Knoff (2003), 20.69% of African American students were suspended at least once, while 12.8% of Hispanic students and 8.84% of white students were suspended at least once.

African American elementary students were found to be 3.75 times more likely to receive OOS suspension when compared to Caucasian students (Skiba et al., 2011). The reasons for the suspension also varies between Black and White students. Black students were suspended for minor misbehaviors such as, inappropriate language, defiance, non-compliance, and disruption. In middle school, lying, cheating, tardiness, bullying, and abusive language were more likely to get African American students suspended or expelled than Caucasian students. The majority of

Whites were suspended for acts such as smoking, vandalism, and leaving without permission, while Blacks were suspended for disrespect, excessive noise, threats, and loitering (Fernandes et al., 2016).

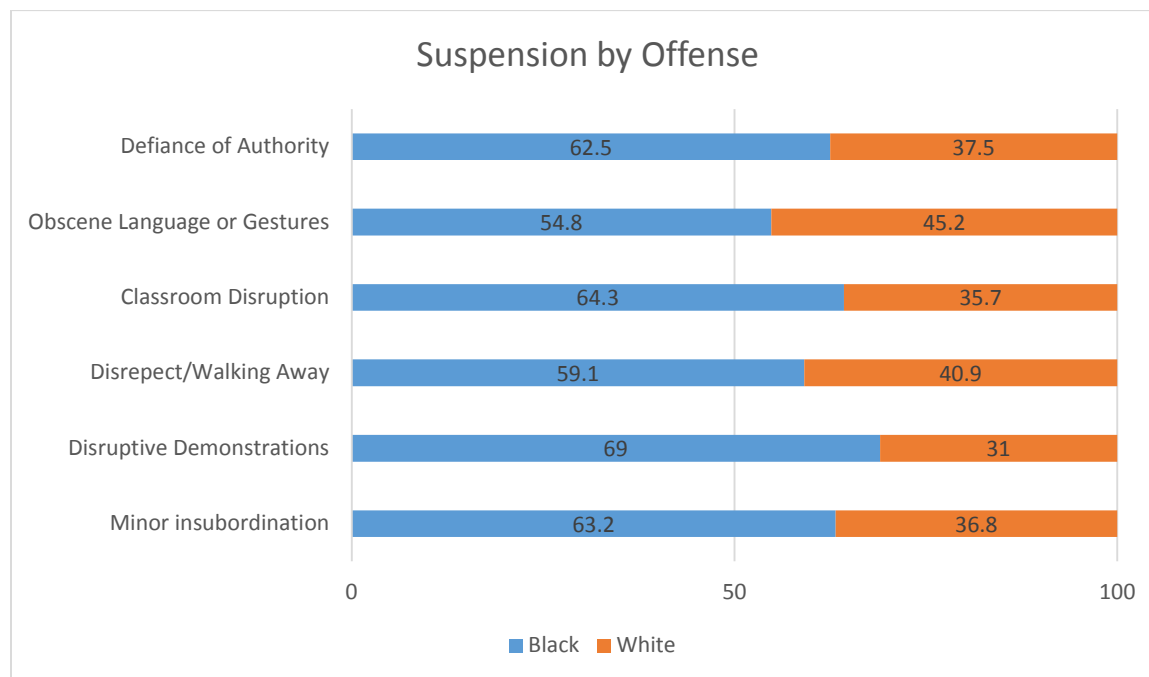


Figure: Heilbrun et al. 2015

(see Appendix B) Suspension among middle school children were analyzed and significant differences between racial groups were found. More than 28% of Black males were suspended within the past year compared to 10% of White males and 4% of White females (Losen & Skiba, 2010). Schools in the sample with higher than average suspension showed a suspension rate of 33% or higher. Black students were also found to be more likely suspended for “soft offenses” or minor infractions such as insubordination and disruption. The soft offenses are more subjectively measured in terms of severity and more open to overreaction when determining proper punishment.

Stereotypes can also affect the discipline process for African American students. Pigott and Cowen (2000) found that although there was no difference in interaction between teachers and students, there was a higher reported incidence of race-related stereotypes for African American students. Caucasian teachers may interpret impassioned or emotive interactions as combative or argumentative (Townsend, 2000). This misunderstanding leads to higher disciplinary action towards African American students. African American students under this paradigm were disproportionately violators of unspoken and unwritten rules.

Suspension increases the risk of psychosocial damage for students. Children who are suspended may feel disconnected from school and have increased involvement with the juvenile justice system (Gibson & Haight, 2013). The dropout rate increases as a result of chronic suspension which leads to lower rate of employment as well as more reliance on government assistance programs (Gibson & Haight, 2013).

The racial bias shown in the suspension of students would be expected to be with different race teachers than that of the students. Caucasian teachers would be expected to treat African American students differently in this paradigm, African American teachers on the other hand would not. A study concluded this to be the not to be the case. African American teachers were just as bias against African American students, suggesting that there are more factors driving student referrals and cross-school variation in discipline policy (Kinsler, 2011).

Kinsler (2011) conducted a statistical analysis on 93 school districts in North Carolina that were required to report all infractions resulting in OOS suspension. The 93 school districts contained 1,000 schools, over 500,000 students, and were distributed across three levels of schooling: elementary, middle, and high school. His analysis showed that, compared to the entire population, suspended students were significantly more likely to be, male, Black, and come from

low income households. This demographic is also likely to be suspended at least once a year. (Kinsler, 2011) also found the negative correlation with the suspended students is that they score almost one-half a standard deviation lower than students who are not suspended frequently.

Black elementary schools students have a ten percent greater chance of receiving OOS suspension when compared to White students regardless of the infraction (Kinsler, 2011). Black students are also suspended a full day longer than White students for fighting. Black students have on average been shown to receive much harsher penalties than White students for the same contraventions. Middle and high school students on average miss more than a week of school when suspended.

Students who are suspended more than others over time develop a reputation which causes them to be more likely suspended. Disregarding this situations and focusing on students who graduate to a new school (i.e. students entering 6th and 9th grade) Black students are 7% more likely to be suspended conditional on offense and 79% increase of being suspended for any violation when compared to White students (Kinsler, 2011). This also coincides with a 22% longer suspension time for Black students as opposed to Whites.

The average public high school in Virginia issued 85 total suspensions to an average of 47 students, giving suspension to one tenth of all students (Heilbrun, Cornell & Lovegrove, 2015). Whites in Virginia school had a significantly higher suspension rate than Black for alcohol, tobacco, or other drug offenses. Black suspension rates were higher in all disruptive categories: classroom-disruption, disruption demonstrations, defiance, walking away, obscene language or gestures, and minor insubordination (Heilbrun et al., 2015). Black students are suspended twice as much as White students, but do not commit aggressive behaviors at a higher rate than White students. This shows that teachers who suspend students on disruptive infractions

must make a subjective judgment to justify the suspension (Aud & KewalRamani, 2010). determined that in large, diverse, urban high schools, black students accounted for approximately 37% of the student populations but accounted for 80% of on-campus suspension and 68% of OOS suspension. Black public high school students suspense rate rose from 37% in 1999 to 49% in 2007, while suspension rates for White students decreased from 18.2% to 17.7% in the same time frame (Aud & KewalRamani, 2010). Expulsion rates had congruent rates of change with an increase of Blacks from 6.5% to 10.3% and a decrease of in Whites from 1.8% to 1.1%.

Racial bias of suspensions towards African American students is also present in schools that use zero tolerance discipline policies. Zero tolerance are “defined as a school or district policy that mandates predetermined consequences or punishments for specific offenses” (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). School with a stricter, more structured, and formal stance on discipline are specious and lead to increased dropout rate, poorer school climate, and lower student achievement (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). An analysis of a school district containing 24,000 students conducted by (Hoffman, 2014) shows an increase in expulsion recommendations in all students comparing rates two years prior to implementation of zero tolerance policy to two years after. It also shows a more significant increase in expulsion of black students.

School Year	Student Race/ Ethnicity	Number of expulsion recommendations	Number of secondary Students	% Students recommended for Expulsion
Before expansion of Zero Tolerance Discipline Policy				
2005-2006	Asian	5	1,376	0.36
	Black	60	2652	2.26
	Hispanic	12	1,303	0.92

	Native	1	71	1.41
	American			
	White	27	8,718	0.31
	Total	105	14,120	0.74
2006-2007	Asian	3	1,362	0.22
	Black	59	2,802	2.11
	Hispanic	10	1,456	0.69
	Native	0	90	0.00
	American			
	White	20	7,570	0.26
	Total	92	13,280	0.69
Following expansion of Zero Tolerance Discipline Policy				
2007-2008	Asian	4	1,315	0.30
	Black	133	2,888	4.61
	Hispanic	19	1,542	1.23
	Native	3	88	3.41
	American			
	White	39	7,244	0.54
	Total	198	13,077	1.51
2008-2009	Asian	4	1,335	0.30
	Black	129	2,918	4.42
	Hispanic	13	1,568	0.83
	Native	1	102	0.98

American			
White	35	6,867	0.51
Total	182	12,790	1.42

The data shows a significantly higher discipline rate for Black students in the years before the expansion into zero tolerance policy than White students with more than a doubling of that number in the years after. This study also showed there were no schools within the district where Black student suspension rates were lower than White students. A ratio of approximately 7 to 1 percentage between Black students and White students. This also considered schools that have high and low Black student populations. The average percentage of Black students suspended was 0.71% while the average amount for Whites was 0.10% (Hoffman, 2014). The implementation of zero tolerance discipline increased the percentage days of suspension for Black students from 0.8% to 0.9% of possible school days but left White students' percentage at 0.1% of possible school days. This percentage increase seems miniscule, but resulted in an additional 700 days or 140 weeks of missed educational opportunities for Black students within the district. The Zero Tolerance Discipline system, a system that was designed to treat all infractions and those who commit these infractions equally, has also shown that there is a racial bias in discipline measures within the school system.

Schools in Miami-Dade County that also use zero tolerance discipline policies showed racial disparities in punishments. Minorities were 1.78% - 2.23% more likely to be suspended than White students (Thompson, 2016). When committing the same offenses, 39% of African American students were suspended compared to 22% of White students. Even African American students with the same socioeconomic status as their White peers were given longer suspensions.

These suspensions have short and long term consequences. Seventy-three percent of students who were suspended failed the subsequent course compared to the 36% who were not suspended (Thompson, 2016). Due to the disproportionate suspensions, many minorities are sent to alternative schools, which are schools for children who struggle in a traditional school. These schools are designed to help students who struggle due to an actual need for academic help. Instead, it was being used to house those with discipline problems that fall behind academically because of suspensions.

International Research

Suspension and Expulsion Japan

Suspension and expulsion in the Japanese education system is rare in comparison to the American education system. In early 2000, there were only 55 cases of suspension reported nationally (Sadler, 2001). Japanese education laws state that students are only allowed to be expelled from municipal elementary or lower secondary schools. Suspension and expulsion in the Japanese culture is meant to protect both students and teachers from violent and disruptive students. However, in the Japanese education system, the rules also ensure that students being disciplined are still receiving adequate measures to education so that the punishment does not infringe upon students' right to education (Sadler, 2001).

Prior to WW II, a large portion of the Japanese society was illiterate until a stringent dictator by the name of Tokugawa Ieyasu came into power. He and his regime stressed the importance of morals, education and hierarchical order. This regime lasted from 1688 – 1703 and was known as the Edo period. During this time local lords created fief schools for Japanese Warriors, which in turn, required them to be literate (Sadler, 2001). Farmers, craftsmen, and wholesalers sent their children to “temple schools” to learn the basics of reading, writing, and

arithmetic. By the end of the Edo period, 86% percent of the children living in urban areas attended school (Japanese Education in the 21st Century, 2005).

After WW II, Japanese authoritarians became more relaxed with the traditions of the more strict way of life during the Edo period (Sadler, 2001). However, in the early 1980s, Japanese schools experienced a significant increase in juvenile delinquency and school violence saw a loss of social unity and a decline in educational functions of the family, and the environment of education for children worsened due to largely populated schools and entrance competition. Frequent incidents of violence amongst students led to poor school attendance, which sparked the national interest to reinstate the older traditions of conformity such as those during the Edo period (Chira, 1988). An education reform began in September 1984, which was founded on the following criteria:

1. The principle of respect for the individual;
2. Transition to a lifelong learning system; and
3. Response to internationalization and the information society

This reform along with other societal factors led the Japanese students to receive some of the highest academic accolades in the world. According to Sadler (2001), Japanese students were ranked among the highest in math and science.

Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 2003) Chart Ranking out of 46 Countries

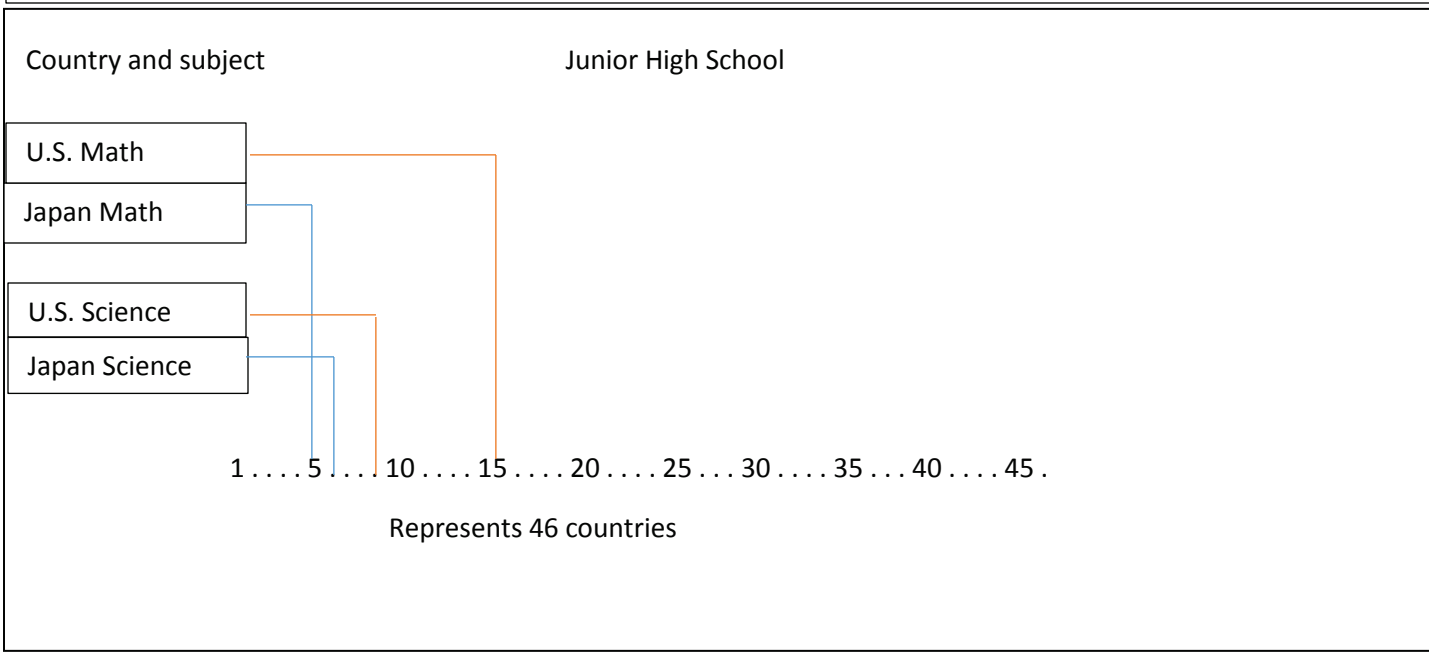
Country and subject

Junior High School

- U.S. Math
- Japan Math
- U.S. Science
- Japan Science

1 5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40 45 .

Represents 46 countries



Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS 2004) Chart Ranking out of 26 Countries

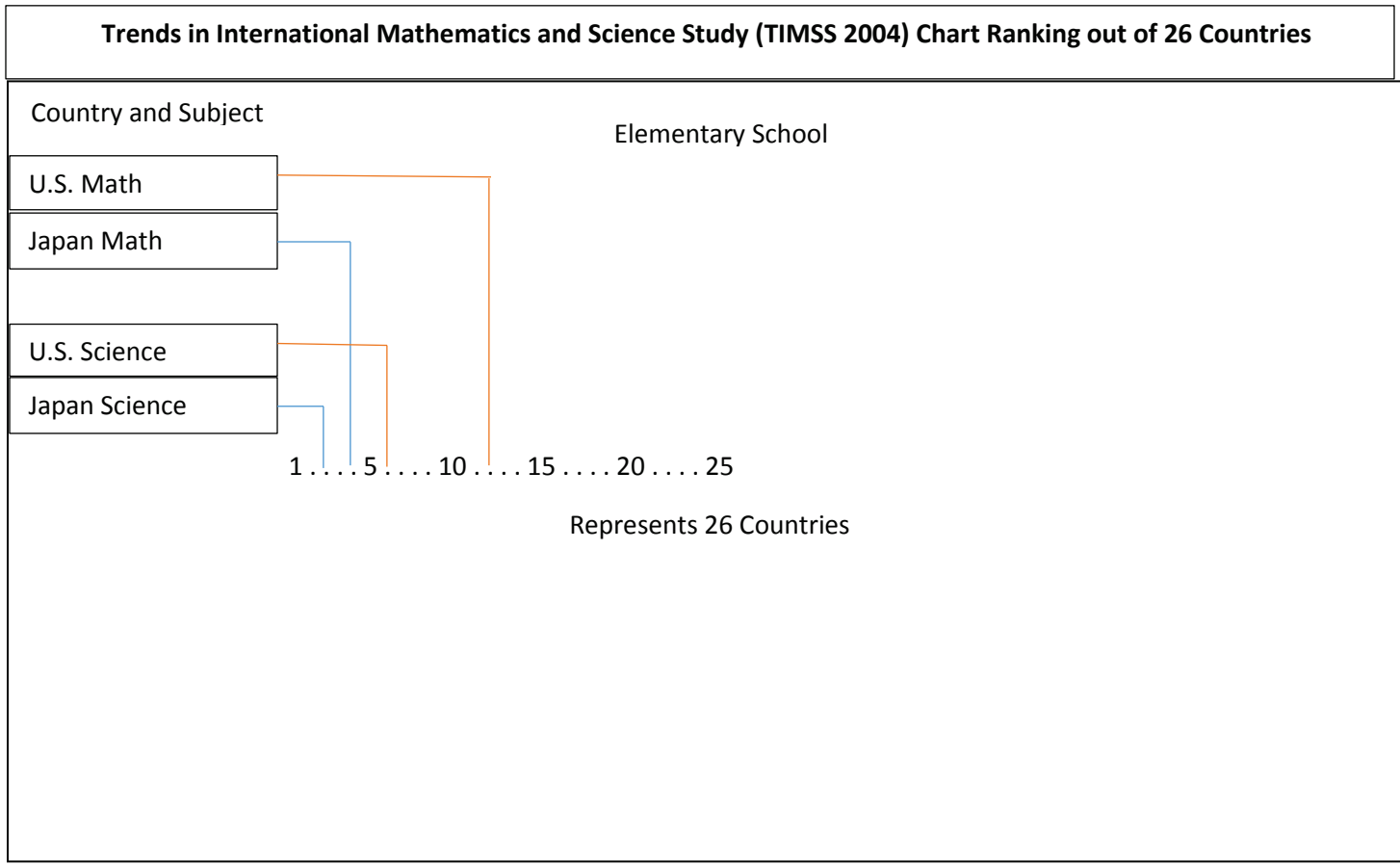
Country and Subject

Elementary School

- U.S. Math
- Japan Math
- U.S. Science
- Japan Science

1 5 10 15 20 25

Represents 26 Countries



Many of the Japanese schools decided on uniforms even in public school systems. Strict dress codes included rules for male and female physical appearance such as hair may not touch their eyebrows, any part of their ears, or their collars. Girls may not wear ribbons, accessories or permanent waves, and they must wear modest-colored gloves. Girls cannot wear make-up and girls may not pluck their eyebrows (Chira, 1988). Even rote education was widely indoctrinated and consequences for breaking such rules often came with swift and sometimes harsh punishment that could end in suspension, expulsion, or even corporal punishment, thus making suspensions, expulsion, and disciplinary actions rare in the Japanese school system (Chira, 1988). However, changes were made in 2001 when yet another education reform took place which listed specific details on rules for students serving suspension, which focused on the following:

1. Individuals must list the specific acts subject to suspension, such as violence against other students and teachers, and to make conditions for suspension clearer by stipulating that suspension is imposed when a student commits such acts repeatedly;
2. Provide a specific procedure for suspension, which includes hearing from parents of a suspended student as well as delivering a document listing reasons and the period of suspension;
3. Municipal boards of education must take measures for students under suspension, such as supporting their learning at home (Sadler, 2001).

After the Education Reform in 2001, by 2003, 97.3 % of 15-year-olds were enrolled in high school and are expected to graduate with only a 2.3% rate of dropouts. A total of 63.5% of high school graduates went on to postsecondary schools and by 2005, many major city schools went to a six days a week school schedule. Though harsh punishment has been talked about amongst students and some parents, most believe that the harsh discipline is the direct result of

the success in the Japanese education system. Even though there has been some increase, it remains that expulsion and suspension is rare in the Japanese school system (Sadler, 2001).

Japan's educational system produces students who perform far better on international examinations than Americans do, and Japanese students are indisputably among the best in the world in solving mathematical equations. ...Youngsters are well-behaved, studious, and law abiding; Japan's low crime rates are well known and widely envied around the world. But what is even more striking than the lack of crime is the overwhelming civility; graffiti and vandalism are rare, and school sports teams not only bow to each other before a game but also rush over to the opposing team's stand after the game to pay their respects (Karan, 2005).

Suspension in Australia

Suspensions in Australia schools are more closely linked to the statistics of the United States Japan statistics are far in comparison. In 2011, Queensland, Australia reported it had an increase of 1.5 per 1000 student's suspension in 2002 to 3.7 per 1000 students in 2011. New South Wales reported that it suspended 13,000 students in 2012 and 3000 of those students were Indigenous. In North Territory it was reported that it suspended 650 students due to violence, with 253 assaults against teachers in 2013 (McCreadie, n.d.).

The history of the current Australian education system began in the 1800s with the colonization of British Settlers. The Australian colonization history reads much like that of the United States "White settlers" colonized America. British settlers came to Australia in 1829 and the effect was that the natives of the land, when the Settlers called Aborigines, of Western Australia slowly lost their tribal lands to the settlers. Government policies forced the Aborigines to settle in parts of lands away from Whites. Conditions were often extremely poor, trapping the

Aborigines into a self-perpetuating cycle of poverty and some were even taken into slavery (Karan, 2006). Due to the foreseeable retaliation of the Aborigine people, the Australian government established the Aborigines Protection Act in 1905 (Aborigine Protection Act, 1905). These familiar beginnings of the merger of cultures between the Aborigines and “British Settlers”, reads almost identical to the issues that Black, Hispanic, and other minority students face in America. The education systems overwhelmingly promote social and educational growth for those of Anglo-Saxon cultural background but seems to ignore or degrade those of Aboriginal background (Plevitz, 2015).

A Census taken in 2006 by the Australian Bureau of Statistics showed that Indigenous children between the ages of 3 to 5 years old, only 36% were reported to be attending preschool and 21% were attending primary school. The same census showed that children between the ages 15-17 only 36% attended schools while 66% of non-indigenous students attended school. Aborigine students are 3 times more likely to get suspended or expelled from school than White students (Plevitz, 2015).

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Aborigine youth are said to be 20 times more likely to be incarcerated. They represent 3% of the population but over 27% of the prison's population consist of Aboriginal people. In 2015, the number of un-sentenced prisoners in adult corrective services custody increased by 22%, from 9,898 at 30% to 12,111. This follows a 21% increase from 2014 to 2015. Convicted prisoners increased by 2% from 26,163 to 26,649 prisoners (Australian Bureau of Statistics, n.d).

The suspension and expulsion rates amongst Aborigines are relatively high in comparison to non-Aborigines. One report shows the disproportionate rates of expulsion and suspension in a

(Race Discrimination Annual Report, 2003) district where the Aborigine population only made up of 5% of the total school population:

1. Referrals for Truancy- 17% Aborigine 1.6% non-Aborigine
2. Referrals for Suspension- 8.4% Aborigine 3.7% non-Aborigine
3. Referrals for Expulsion 9% Aborigine 0.03% non-Aborigine

CHAPTER III: DISPARITY IN OUR
SCHOOLS,
POWER POINT PRESENTATION

Disparity in Our Schools

Disproportionate suspension of minorities within the education system

Suspension as a form of Punishment



Does it Work??

NO!

A Critical Look at Suspension.

What suspension is designed to do.

- Provide a safer environment for students and faculty.
- Decrease violent behavior.
- Remove negative influences from the classroom.
- Serve as a warning and example that certain behaviors will not be tolerated.

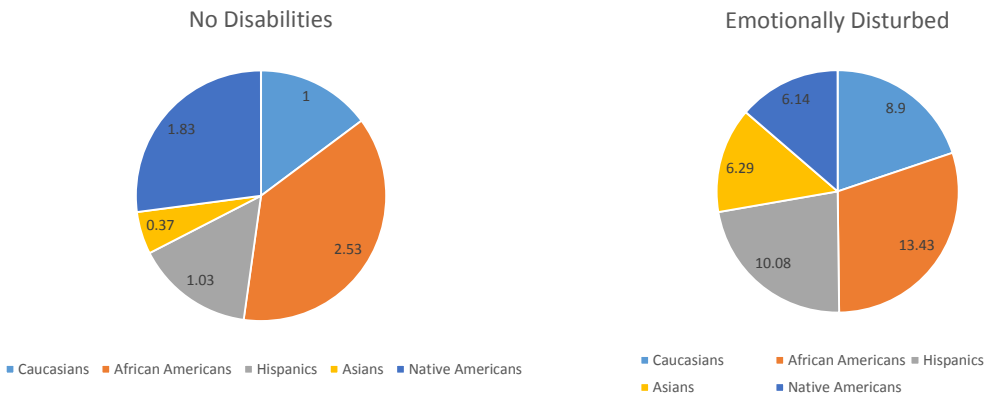
What it actually does and doesn't do.

- It doesn't make classrooms safer.
- Does not deter children to commit acts leading to suspension.
- Costs the school district additional capital to execute.
- Removes students from classroom without providing supplemental education.
- Increases the total number of student likely to be suspended.
- Increases the likelihood of student to suspended more than once
- Stereotypes repeat offenders as "problem students".
- Increases the dropout rate.
- Increases the likelihood that students will be involved in the juvenile justice system.

Who is getting suspended?



Likelihood of Students to be suspended by Ethnicity. *



*(compared to Caucasian students with no disabilities)

Studies have consistently shown that African-American students, regardless of population density, are at least 2 times as likely to be suspended than their peers.



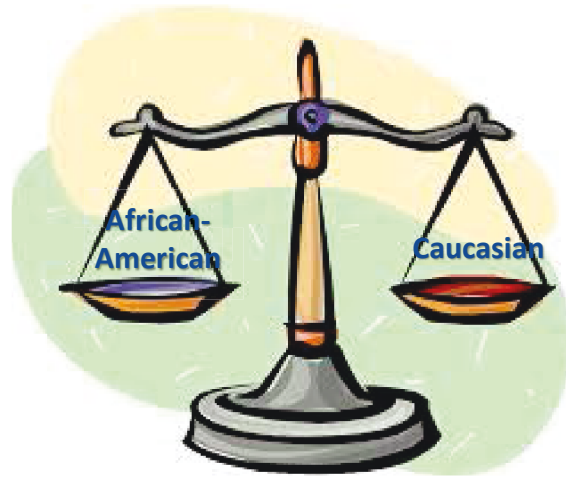
Possible reasons for the imbalance

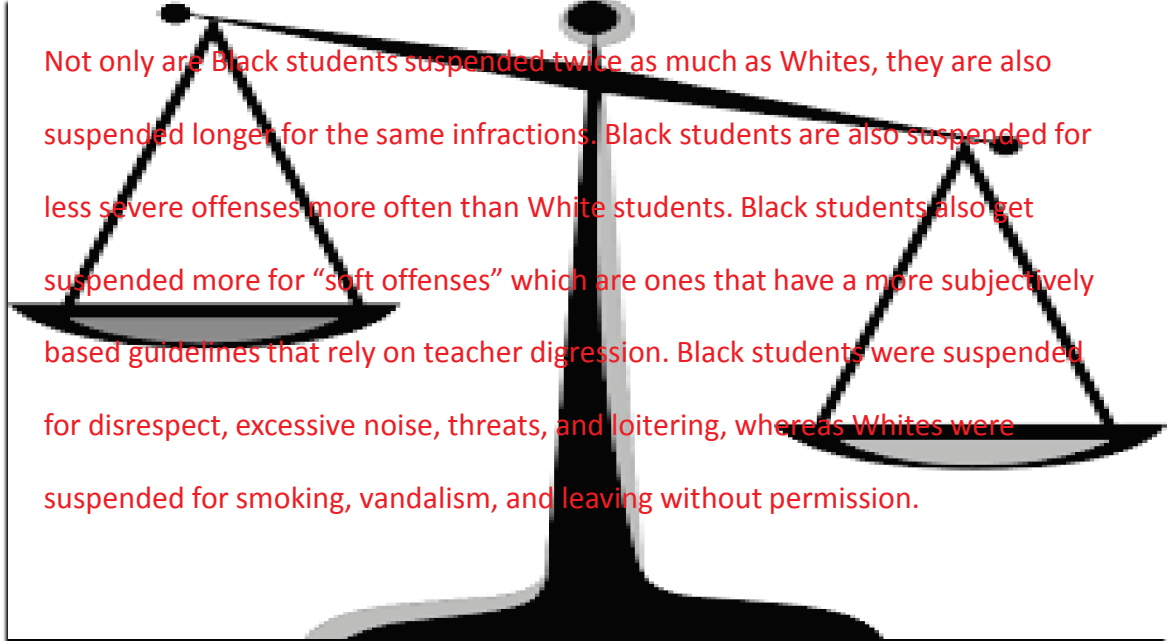
- African American students are often victims of stereotyping.
- They can come from lower income and lower socio-economical status.
- They are less likely to connect to teachers and school authority figures.
- African American students are more likely to engage self-serve justice when being bullied.

How does this Affect African American students?

Suspension creates a cycle of repeating patterns for students. These frequent suspensions will give a student a reputation within the school which will lead to more suspensions for minor offenses. Students under this paradigm will often become disheartened with the education system and lash out by becoming more disruptive and quitting school all together. Frequently suspended students also fall far behind in their education resulting in the need for alternative schooling and also assigns pejorative intellectual labels to them as a result.

Are all students getting equal treatment?





Not only are Black students suspended twice as much as Whites, they are also suspended longer for the same infractions. Black students are also suspended for less severe offenses more often than White students. Black students also get suspended more for “soft offenses” which are ones that have a more subjectively based guidelines that rely on teacher digression. Black students were suspended for disrespect, excessive noise, threats, and loitering, whereas Whites were suspended for smoking, vandalism, and leaving without permission.

It seems to be getting worse

The suspension rates for Blacks have increased substantially over the years. Suspension rates rose 120% in the years between 1972 and 2000 whereas the suspension rates for Whites increased half that at 64%. This in conjunction with the fact Blacks already are suspended more than their peers, make up less of the population, and receive longer, stiffer punishments makes it the more devastating.

Key Takeaways

- Blacks are a minority in the total student population but a majority in suspended students.
- Blacks receive harsher and longer punishments for the same offenses.
- Regardless of the student/teacher dynamic, Blacks are highly likely to be a victim of stereotyping by their teachers.
- Blacks are more likely to be suspended for “soft” offenses.
- The amount of Blacks being suspended have nearly doubled in the last 3 decades.
- The more frequent the suspension rate the more likely any student dropout and suffer long term negative benefits.
- Black students low in socioeconomical status who are suspended are more likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system.

Alternative to Suspension

Suspension has been shown to be not only ineffective but detrimental to all parties involved. Alternate discipline methods that would be ideal would be ones that do not involve taking the students out the classroom. The main goal of any educational institution should be to educate. Disciplining a child should not affect the education of that child. Schools should also try to connect more with all their students and create an environment that can identify and empathize with students. This will help eliminate stereotyping and reduce alienating minorities.

What's in store for the future

Future research should focus on what drives this disparity in suspensions. Even African-American teacher showed disproportionate suspension rates towards minority students. African-American students also had higher suspension rates in schools where they were the majority as well as the minority. Finding what this cause would help immensely in reconciling the problem.



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CHAPTER IV: Discussion and Conclusion

Summary

Suspension and expulsion are the primary disciplinary actions used by education systems. They are designed to act as a punishment for misbehavior as well as a deterrent for the rest of the student population. Suspensions and expulsions are also supposed to create a safer and more productive environment for learning. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013), suspension do not accomplish any of its intended objectives; it has been shown to do the opposite. Unfortunately, this doesn't work and it also doesn't make the classroom safer (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2013). The main criticism of suspension is that it takes children out of the classroom, resulting in the suspended student falling behind in class.

Students who get suspended can become disillusioned with the education system. Students who regard school as a means to escape a less than ideal home life can be sent right back to those negative situations. Children who are suspended are not supplied with the supplemental education materials and often do not have any supervision at home. Students in this position can become repeat offenders and fall further and further behind in their education (Taras, 2013) children who are frequently suspended are more likely to drop out of school and be involved in the juvenile justice system.

Some students are suspended more often than others. Although Black students make up a small percentage of the student population, they make up the majority of suspended students. Shirley and Cornell (2011) showed that it is at least four times as likely that Black students will be suspended when compared to White students. Black students also get suspended longer and more often for the same offenses compared to their White peers. White students get suspended more often for "hard" offenses or offenses that have a more recognizable and concrete outlook

on the type and duration of the punishment examples of such offenses are vandalism, smoking, and leaving without permission (Fernandes et al., 2016). Examples of offenses for which Black students get suspended are inappropriate language, defiance, non-compliance, and disruption. These are “soft” offenses or offenses that are more subjective and vary in the extent of the punishment depending on the teacher/student relationship. This subjective nature of discipline approach leads to many more suspensions for Black students. This causes Black students to be suspended almost four times more than White student in a study by (Fernandes, et al, 2016).

Black students who get suspended more frequently become labeled as problem children. This makes for more frequent suspensions which further perpetuates this label. It often follows them throughout several grades and only is diminished when the student graduates to another level of schooling. African American students are also often stereotyped as problem students prior to any incident of misbehavior. This leads to harder scrutiny towards the actions of Black students and a propensity to act more rashly and harshly to their misbehaviors by their teachers. This is has been shown to be true regardless of the ethnicity of the teacher through the study conducted by (Kinsler 2011).

Professional Application

There are many education issues that plague our public school systems. The issue that stands out as the most pressing is the use of suspension and expulsion and the disparity of its use towards African American students. As an African American woman, mother, and educator, I have a passion for equal opportunity learning for all students and creating a positive, productive, and welcoming classroom. I think suspension is a very unproductive form of punishment as indicated by a study from the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013). Most students are affected negatively from suspension both in the short term and in long term. This can be

especially damaging for students who are of low social or economic status, in which many African Americans are. These long term effects can lead to children dropping out of school and increase the likelihood of unemployment, reliance on social welfare programs, and imprisonment.

I have encountered many students who act-out with alarming behaviors, which usually suggests these may be a sign of more complicated issues at home. This can be really damaging to the spirit of a student. When students get suspended and have to go home to an unstable environment, they often return more distraught and less willing to co-operate with group activities. It is difficult for me to find the time within the regular class schedule to get my students caught up to the current place in the curriculum. This is why I disagree with using suspension as a method of punishment. The more the student is out of class, the less I am able to teach them. I'd rather find constructive ways to keep students engaged in the education process to prevent misbehavior. I establish rapport with my students and connect with them personally, which allows me to prevent my student, who may be used to acting out in other classrooms, from doing so in mine. I think that giving students purpose and a sense of belonging goes a long way in eliciting compliance and cooperation on the part of the student and makes it easier for me to reach a student from an education standpoint as well as a personal one. I want my students to feel welcome when they enter my classroom but more importantly, I want them to look forward to coming to class. The use of suspension would only defeat this purpose. Students who are suspended will feel rejected both socially and emotionally and the more frequent the incidents the more they will see it everywhere. In order to prevent this downward spiral, I like to involve the peers of misbehaving children in guiding the student back to proper classroom behavior. I have found that a student's peers have a far greater influence in changing that student's behavior

than any traditional form of discipline. This provides an opportunity for the student to redeem themselves, which keeps their self-esteem intact. But more importantly, it keeps them in the classroom where they can continue to learn.

With any student, I am required to suspend due to the regulation of the school district in which I find myself, I always try to involve that student's parents personally, whether it's a conference or merely a detailed phone conversation. This is important, not only for the student, but for the parent as well, as it shows both parties a personal interest in the student. Involving the parent also creates the need for academic support in the household by holding the parent responsible to some degree for keeping their child caught up and correcting or eliminating the cause of the transgression. My main contention behind this course of action is that staying involved in the student within and extending beyond the classroom reduces the chance that the student will feel abandoned. In my experience as a mother and an educator children almost always give up when they feel that they have been given up on.

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Appendix A

Bagshaw E: These six charts show the state of discrimination towards indigenous Australians

Comparison of Disparities between Caucasians and People of Color

Disability Category	White	African American	Hispanic	Asian	American Indian
No Disability		2.53 (2.49-2.58)	1.03 (0.99-01.08)	0.37 (0.34-0.39)	1.83 (1.60-2.08)
Mental Retardation	1.20 (1.02-1.41)	3.35 (3.08-3.65)	0.83 (0.43-1.63)	0.45 (0.14-1.41)	1.23 (0.29-5.18)
Speech/language Impairment	0.44 (0.40-0.48)	1.82 (1.69-1.95)	1.00 (0.81-1.24)	0.29 (0.17-0.50)	.05 (0.46-2.40)
Emotional Disturbance	8.95 (8.39-9.54)	13.43 (12.66-14.24)	10.08 (7.61-13.36)	6.29 (3.34-11.84)	6.14 (3.19-11.83)
Other Health Impairment	3.63 (3.39-3.89)	8.61 (8.01-9.26)	3.58 (2.56-5.01)	2.3 (1.34-3.93)	11.27 (6.14-20.69)
Learning Disability	2.76 (2.65-2.88)	6.73 (6.48-6.98)	2.71 (2.40-3.05)	1.91 (1.40-2.61)	5.2 (3.55-7.63)
Autism	0.86	0.68	0.31	0.44	N/A

	(0.70-1.06)	(0.50-0.91)	(0.08-1.26)	(0.16-1.19)	
Other Disability	0.95(0.84- 1.07)	1.53 (1.387- 1.70)	0.66 (0.43-1.01)	0.31 (0.15-1.01)	0.78 (0.19-3.21)

Figure 1: Rate of student suspension by race compared to White students with no disabilities

Appendix B

Figure 2: Ratio of suspension between Black and White students based on offense