



UNIVERSITY *of*  
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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

# School Discipline Rooms

## A Mixed Methods Study

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The content of this report is solely the responsibility of the lead authors and does not necessarily represent the official views of study participants or funders.

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## Study Summary

In this report, we examine school discipline rooms. A “school discipline room” is a place inside of a school where teachers and staff send students during the day for disciplinary reasons. To date, few studies have examined these rooms. To better understand them we conducted a mixed-methods study in one large, urban public school district. We first conducted qualitative case studies of seven schools and then used descriptive and multilevel statistics to assess disproportionalities, disparities, and correlates of in-school discipline consequences district-wide. Qualitative data included 70 observations of school discipline rooms and interviews with 43 people, including school principals and assistant principals, deans, restorative justice coordinators and paraprofessionals, teachers and central office administrators. Our quantitative dataset consisted of demographic and discipline records from more than 100,000 students across 200 schools.

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## Key Definition

*School discipline rooms are spaces in the school building where teachers and administrators send students during the day because of perceived misconduct. Approaches to managing school discipline rooms range from proactive to punitive.*



Taken together, study results suggest that punitive approaches to managing school discipline rooms raise many of the same concerns as out-of-school suspensions. Future research on exclusionary school discipline should include all practices that require students spend time outside of their regular classrooms, including when students remain in the school building. Our findings also indicate the need for research on the effects of different types of school discipline rooms on student and school outcomes.

## Key Findings

Our qualitative and quantitative results together suggests the following key insights from this study:

- More students in the district experienced in-school discipline consequences than out-of-school suspensions.
- School policy and practice related to school discipline rooms varied widely within the same district; some used proactive approaches, others used punitive.
- School staff used a range of terms to describe students' time outside of the classroom, recording and reporting similar practices inconsistently.
- Deans and restorative justice coordinators supervised both proactive and punitive school discipline rooms.
- Students who were black, Latinx, male, in special education, or designated as having a serious emotional disability were significantly more likely to experience in-school discipline consequences than their peers.
- Schools serving a larger proportion of low-income students, middle schools, charter schools, and larger schools used in-school discipline consequences more often than their counterparts did.

At schools that used a proactive approach:

- Support staff often pushed into classrooms;
- The discipline room conveyed a warm aesthetic;
- Support staff often used de-escalating behaviors to diffuse conflict with students;
- Students usually spent time in the discipline room to process a discipline incident;
- Students were referred primarily for minor physical altercations;
- Low to moderate numbers of students filled the discipline room; and,
- Disciplined students were typically out of their regular classrooms briefly.

At schools that used a punitive approach:

- Classroom discipline ladders specified an immediate referral to the school discipline rooms as a final step;
- Teachers had wide discretion to send students out of class without consulting or collaborating with support staff;
- The discipline rooms were cold and unwelcoming;
- Staff often engaged in behaviors that escalated conflicts with students;
- Staff mostly focused on their own work tasks or rule reminders;
- Students spent much of their time completing work independently;
- Students were there for low-level, subjective reasons that typically involved minor forms of disrespect, defiance, or disruption;
- Moderate to high numbers of students filled the room;
- Disciplined students were out of class longer; and,
- Students of color were more dramatically overrepresented.





# Introduction

## School Discipline Rooms

Research suggests that educators are relying more heavily on discipline approaches that keep disciplined students inside school, but remove them from their regular classrooms (Ritter, 2018; Wiley, 2020). National data indicate that in-school suspensions are now more common than out-of-school suspensions (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). More broadly, some schools have reduced out-of-school suspensions by designating classrooms or offices in their school building to address discipline incidents outside of class. These school discipline rooms function as receiving spaces for students that staff perceive as misbehaving during instructional time. Policy and practice approaches to managing these rooms likely fall on a continuum from proactive to punitive. Some schools may use these spaces to connect disciplined students with proactive support services or restorative mediations, whereas others may focus on implementing punitive consequences like in-school suspension and detention, however there exist few studies on these spaces.

## Historical Context

Interest in school discipline rooms dates back at least forty years. In 1979, educators, researchers, and civil rights lawyers convened to share empirical and legal insights on what they referred to as “in-school alternatives” (Garibaldi, 1979). At that time, out-of-school suspensions had fallen out of favor, leading researchers and practitioners to consider approaches such as in-school suspensions, detention centers, corporal punishment, work detail, and counseling programs (Garibaldi, 1979). We now find ourselves in a similar time; concerns about the school-to-prison pipeline have led to a renewed focus on discipline strategies that keep students in school (Gonzalez, 2012; Power U & Advancement Project, 2017; Shah, 2012). Although practitioners, researchers, and advocacy groups have highlighted school-wide restorative justice and positive behavioral interventions as promising strategies for preventing or replacing out-of-school suspensions (Anyon et al., 2016; Black, 2016). The type of in-school alternatives identified during the 1979 conference, e.g., in-school suspension, detention, have received much less attention, despite their continued use in schools.

## Effectiveness

Although sending students to school discipline rooms may be an improvement from removing them altogether from the school building, we know very little about what happens in these settings (Cholewa et al., 2017). By definition, they accomplish the goal of keeping students in school. Yet isolating students from their regular classrooms for disciplinary reasons is ineffective and counterproductive (American Psychological Association, 2008; Anyon, Zang, & Hazel, 2016; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Noguera, 2008; Yang & Anyon, 2016; Losen & Skiba, 2010; Skiba & Peterson, 2003). Limited evidence suggests that these spaces do not consistently provide students with access to meaningful academic instruction or support services. Instead, several reports have characterized school discipline rooms as “holding tanks” or “warehouses” where students spend their time “simply watching the clock” (Gonzalez, 2012; Gregory, Nygreen & Moran, 2008, p. 134; Paterson, 2016; Power U & Advancement Project, 2017, p. 3)



It seems unlikely that sending students to these kinds of punitive school discipline rooms will lead to substantially better outcomes than suspending them from school entirely. Although research has not considered the impact of school discipline rooms, studies of in-school suspension indicate that they are negatively associated with disciplined students' standardized test scores, GPA, school persistence, and school connectedness (Cholewa, Hull, Babcock, & Smith, 2017; Huang & Anyon, 2018; Noltemeyer, Ward, & McLoughlin, 2015). Recent research also suggests that all students, not just those in the discipline system, have lower math achievement and college attendance when they attend schools with high rates of in-school suspensions (Jabari & Johnson, 2020).

On the other hand, educators report using school discipline rooms to provide counseling, hold restorative circles, offer incentives, or implement social-emotional learning activities. In some cases, educators do not consider these practices to be forms of discipline in the traditional sense and conceptualize them as strategies for supporting discipline reform. In particular, restorative justice includes a variety of practices that fall on the prevention-intervention continuum. Classroom peace circles, for example, aim to prevent conflict while others, such as mediations, intervene after discipline infractions have occurred (Anyon et al., 2016). Although research has not examined the impact of using these proactive approaches to managing school discipline rooms, it is possible that their use will be associated with more positive student outcomes. An emerging literature on restorative justice in schools indicates the promise of this proactive approach in reducing out-of-school suspensions and improving school climate (Fronius et al., 2019). Other school-wide and adult-focused interventions, such as Responsive Classroom and Culturally Responsive Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, are among the most effective approaches for improving student behavior, reducing exclusionary discipline outcomes, and strengthening academic achievement (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011; Gregory & Clawson, 2016; Lee & Gage, 2020; Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2014).

### **Disproportionalities & Disparities**

Research suggests that school discipline rooms may also be subject to the same equity issues as out-of-school suspensions. Districts are not required to report on all of the discipline approaches used in these spaces, but data on in-school suspensions indicate significant disproportionalities based on gender, race, and disability (U.S. Department of Education, 2018; Fabelo et al., 2011; Hwang, 2018; Seider, Gilbert, Novick, & Gomez, 2013; Wing & Noguera, 2008; Wiley, in press). For example, the federal government reported that White students comprised 50% of the student population in 2013-14, but represented only 38% of students with in-school suspensions (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). In contrast, Black students represented 15% of the student population, but made up 32% of students with in-school suspensions (Civil Rights Data Collection, 2018). Using a nationally representative dataset, Cholewa et al. (2017) found that Black students, male students, and students with disabilities were more likely to receive in-school suspensions, even after controlling for factors such as free and reduced lunch eligibility.

Research has not considered whether proactive approaches to managing school discipline rooms lead to outcomes that are more equitable. Even proactive strategies have not consistently led to reduced disproportionalities or disparities by race, gender, or disability (Gregory et al., 2018; Vincent et al., 2015). Scholars and advocates have argued these approaches will not benefit



disadvantaged students unless they explicitly attend to multiple determinates of inequality in schools, such as limited access to engaging and culturally responsive instruction, implicit biases, and school financing based on local property tax revenue (Carter, Skiba, Arredondo & Pollock, 2017; Gregory & Fergus, 2017).

### **The Current Study**

Few studies have examined school discipline rooms. We know very little about whom teachers and administrators send to school discipline rooms and what happens once they arrive. Extant research has focused on single cases, leaving an opportunity to study multiple schools inside the same district to understand the array of practices that may be occurring within the same policy context. Motivated to fill this gap, we conducted qualitative case study research in seven schools for five months during the 2018-2019 school year. We also assessed broader trends by analyzing district-wide data on in-school discipline consequences that, by definition, involve students being outside of the classroom but still in the school building (e.g. in-school suspensions and teacher removals). In the next sections, we describe our research methods, results, key insights, and implications.

A graphic for the 'Methods' section featuring a dark red background with a white, stylized, abstract pattern resembling a city skyline or a network of lines. The word 'Methods' is written in a large, white, serif font at the bottom.

## **Methods**

In order to generate new knowledge about school discipline rooms, we conducted a mixed methods study in a large urban district. Qualitative methods provide rich descriptions of settings, activities and practices, and, in education, are particularly helpful for understanding educational programs, policies and interventions, and their intended or unintended consequences (Creswell, 2018; Mathis, 2016; Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). On the other hand, quantitative research relies on the distribution of attributes among a population (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Quantitative methods are well suited for testing hypotheses based on pre-existing information and predicting the likelihood of a phenomenon occurring under similar conditions. Quantitative methods tend to be deductive and deterministic, emphasizing the reliability, validity, and generalizability of unidirectional relationships (Benton & Craib, 2001). When triangulated in a mixed methods study, qualitative and quantitative research provide a more expansive and complex understanding of a subject or topic.

### **Qualitative**

For the qualitative component of this study, we employed an exploratory case study approach, which researchers use to understand a topic of interest in a holistic way (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Case studies answer how and why questions (Merriam & Tisdale, 2016). Instead of producing findings that are representative of all schools, exploratory case studies generate data that highlight specific issues in particular school settings. In this study, we combined interviews, observations and document collection to generate case profiles of participating schools.

**Table 1.** Case Study Schools<sup>1</sup>

School <sup>1</sup>	Grade Level	% Black	% Latinx	% White	% FRL <sup>2</sup>	% SWD <sup>3</sup>	% In-School Discipline Consequences <sup>4</sup>
Galileo	ECE - 5	15	80	5	90	10	0
Stevenson	ECE-5	20	40	30	70	15	1
Northwood	ECE-5	45	30	20	80	10	20
Westview	ECE - 8	30	30	15	90	10	5
Roslyn	ECE - 5	20	50	10	80	15	0
Lakeshore	6-8	20	30	40	50	10	15
Dalton	6-8	25	25	40	50	15	15

<sup>1</sup>All names are pseudonyms; percentages are rounded to ensure anonymity

<sup>2</sup>Students eligible for free and reduced lunch

<sup>3</sup>Students with disabilities

<sup>4</sup>Students with one or more in-school suspensions and/or teacher removals.

### Participating Schools

During the fall of 2018, the lead author recruited district-managed schools for the qualitative component of this study by circulating a one-page study overview among principals and deans inviting them to participate. Incentives included a \$250 gift card for each participating school and a \$20 gift card for individual interviewees. Of the schools that volunteered, we filtered them against three selection criteria: grade-level, student racial composition, and past rates of in-school discipline consequences. We prioritized elementary and middle schools because students' early experiences with discipline influence their long-term educational and developmental trajectories (Anderson, Ritter & Zamorro, 2019; Hemez, Brent & Mowen, 2019).

Given that Black students are consistently overrepresented in exclusionary discipline, we selected schools with larger proportions of Black students relative to the district enrollment. Finally, we aimed to include schools with a range of rates of in-school discipline consequences because we suspected that indicated different school discipline room approaches. Table 1 describes the final sample.

### Consent

After initial email inquiries, the lead author and research assistants visited each school to describe the purpose of the study and research methods, including preliminary interview and observation protocols. Principals consented to their school's participation and individual participants gave consent prior to observations and interviews. All agreed to participate on the condition of anonymity.





### **Data Collection**

One research assistant collected data at each case study school. Research assistants made bi-weekly visits from January 2019 through May 2019 to collect observations and interviews. Research assistants conducted observations using structured protocols that included sections for describing the environment of the school discipline room, related activities, referral process, and referral reasons. For interviews, research assistants used semi-structured interview protocols that addressed school discipline rooms, reasons for their use, and considerations along the lines of early childhood, special education and cultural responsiveness. All together, we conducted more than forty interviews and seventy observations.

### **Research Team**

The research team consisted of three masters in social work students, two doctoral students in education psychology and education leadership, led by a research associate in educational policy with support from an associate professor of social work.

### **Interview Participants**

Forty-three people participated in the interviews. More than half (58%) identified as White, Caucasian or European American, and 21% identified as Black or African-American. The majority identified as female (74%).

### **Analysis**

In qualitative data analysis, researchers assemble, chunk, compare and contrast the words that participants generate during data collection in different ways, and then organize them around themes and patterns (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). To arrive at our qualitative results, the research team coded observations and interview transcripts to create case studies of each school's approach to its school discipline room. The lead author and two graduate students reviewed approximately three hundred observation excerpts and classified them into five main deductive categories, each with two to ten inductively derived sub-codes. These categories included referral reasons and locations, students and staff activities, and the nature of staff behavior. For each sub-code, we developed a codebook (McQueen, 2008), and counted the number of excerpts that met particular criteria in order to identify trends in terms of percentages. We coded in several rounds to clarify inclusion and exclusion criteria, reconciled disagreements, and then compiled trends for each school and across schools. We then created qualitative data displays presenting text about each school's approach to school discipline rooms, as well as quantitative data displays of code trends across schools (Miles, Huberman & Saldaña, 2014). We conducted participant checks by sending a copy of a report on qualitative code trends to each school and inviting feedback (Carspecken, 2006).



After compiling the case studies, we classified each school's discipline room as proactive, punitive, or a blend of both based on their settings, staff behaviors, student and staff activities, referral processes and reasons, and student compositions. We did not use discipline data reported to the district to make these classifications because of observations that staff recorded and reported in-school discipline consequences differently across schools.

Drawing on a review of the literature by Price & Baker (2012), we defined a proactive approach as one that relied on problem-solving, root-cause analysis, dialogue, exploration of feelings, restitution, and replacement behaviors. In proactive schools, accountability involved students understanding the impact of their actions, identifying solutions and repairing harm. Adults in these schools typically used de-escalating behaviors with students including calm body language, displaying empathy, presenting options, respecting students' space and autonomy, and acknowledging or rewarding desired behaviors (see Table 2).

We defined a punitive approach as one that relied on penalties and negative consequences, such as isolation, revoking privileges, and limiting class time. This approach emphasized rule following and accountability in terms of punishment. It assumes that removing students from class will deter behavior (Ewing, 2000). Adults in these schools used escalating behaviors more often, such as minimizing, shaming, using physical proximity to intimidate students into complying, using humor when the "joke" is on the student, scoffing, and eye rolling.

**Table 2.** Behaviors that Escalate or De-Escalate Conflict

<b>Escalating Behaviors</b>	<b>De-escalating Behaviors</b>
Calling out a student in front of their peers	Moving to private area to discuss concerns
Telling a student to “snap out of it” or “calm down”	Acknowledging the student’s emotions and experiences
Criticizing; using the language of should/shouldn’t	Empathizing and minimizing your input
Judging, blaming, accusing, or asking “why” aggressively	Assessing the situation and seeking understanding
Using a loud tone of voice; speaking over the student	Using a low tone of voice; speaking in stops and starts
Displaying angry body language: moving quickly, clenching teeth, walking stiffly, raising one eyebrow, closing eyes longer than normal, exhibiting show of force, giving a hard stare, shrugging shoulders to indicate indifference, pointing finger	Displaying calm body language: facing towards student, using eye-contact that is not fixed, keeping your hands visible; appearing confident but not arrogant
Ignoring	Listening actively and restating what the student says
Focusing on your own feelings	Validating the student’s feelings
Being sarcastic, minimizing, making light, or trivializing	Seeking connection
Ordering and engaging in power struggles	Affirming the student’s autonomy and offering choices
Threatening, harassing or intimidating	Providing face-saving alternatives to violence
Touching or invading personal space	Remaining close to person but far enough away that you cannot touch
Communicating ambiguous expectations	Stating clear expectations
Setting aggressive or unrealistic limits	Setting reasonable limits
Asking to discuss difficult or sensitive topics	Giving time and space
Allowing violence between peers	Praising non-violent behaviors
Name-calling, embarrassing, shaming, or teasing	



### **Quantitative**

For the quantitative component of this study, we used descriptive and statistical methods to analyze district-wide discipline records of in-school discipline consequences that involve students spending time outside of their regular classrooms for disciplinary reasons. These classroom removals include times that administrators pull witnesses or victims for interviews or safety reasons, or when students receive rewards or incentives outside of class.

### **Data Collection**

The district provided demographic and discipline records from the district's student information system. We merged incident-level discipline data, student-level demographic information, and school-level covariates, with student ID and school number as the matching variable.

### **Measures**

The dependent variable was a dichotomous indicator of whether or not a student had one or more in-school discipline consequences. We recoded student racial categories into dummy variables with White students as the reference group. Other student-level covariates were all dichotomous and included gender (male or not), special education status (active Individualized Education Program or not), designation as seriously emotionally disabled (disability coded as emotionally disabled or not), identification as homeless (homeless or not), participation in the gifted and talented program (participant or not), and native language (native speaker of English or not). School-level covariates included the proportion of the student body that is Black, the percent of the student body that was eligible for free and reduced lunch, grade configuration with middle schools as the reference group, charter status with district schools as the reference group, and school size.

### **Participants**

The quantitative dataset included all students, over 100,000, in grades K to 12 enrolled in more than 200 district schools during the 2018-2019 academic year (detailed data not provided to ensure district anonymity). The sample was predominantly students of color (Latinx and Black), whereas White students made up a quarter of the student population. Half of the student population was female and the other half male (the student information system did not include other gender identities). Over a third of students were identified as English language learners whereas more than a tenth were eligible for special. Seven percent of all students in the district had a recorded discipline incident, half of whom were assigned in-school discipline consequences.





## Analysis

To identify trends in the use of different discipline approaches over time, we calculated rates among all students and among only disciplined students for every year from 2008-2019. The overall student rate represents the number of students with at least one type of consequence divided by the number of all students enrolled in the district. The disciplined student rate reflects the number of students with at least one type of consequence divided by the number of students with a discipline incident. To assess disproportionalities among those who received in-school discipline consequences, we used a two-sample test of proportions to compare the percentage of students with at least one of these consequences with their overall representation in the student body. To understand racial disproportionalities further, we calculated rates for each racial group by dividing the number of a group of students with at least one of those consequences by the total number of students in that same group enrolled in the district. We also calculated relative risk ratios by dividing the rate for each group by the rate for students from another group. We tabulated incident-level data to identify trends in the types of referral reasons that led to an in-school discipline consequence. Finally, we used STATA 13 software to analyze a multilevel logistic regression model estimating the likelihood of a student experiencing one or more in-school discipline consequences, controlling for a range of student- and school-level covariates. These models accounted for the nested structure of the dataset with students (level 1) clustered within schools (level 2).



# Findings

## School Discipline Room Settings, Practices and Activities

Discipline rooms at the case study schools ranged from small offices to large classrooms, decorated brightly or not at all. Staff referred to the practices and activities taking place in these spaces using a range of terminology, including in-school suspension, detention, cool-downs, breaks, behavior interventions, and restorative conversations or mediations. However, even when staff used similar terms to describe their discipline rooms (e.g., “intervention room”), the nature of the rooms were could range from proactive to punitive in nature.

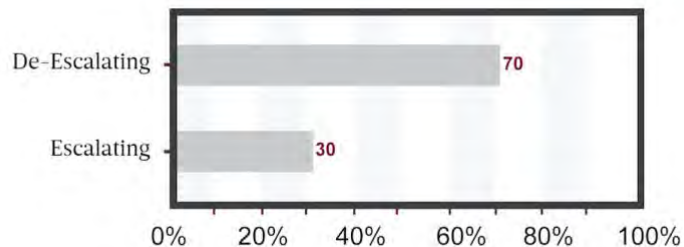
## Proactive Approaches

Galileo, Stevenson, and Northwood, all elementary schools, used a proactive approach to managing their discipline rooms (Table 3). Support staff often “pushed in” to classrooms to address challenging student behavior, but also used the offices of support staff or deans to work with disciplined students

outside of class. These spaces tended to convey a warm aesthetic, with furniture like sofas, fidget toys, and colorful decorations. We typically observed staff use a proactive approach processing discipline incidents with students using

de-escalating body language and techniques, usually for a short period before returning students to class.

### Adult Behaviors in Discipline Rooms, All Schools



Galileo elementary school primarily resolved discipline incidents by calling RJ coordinators into classrooms to work with students that teachers perceived were misbehaving. Teachers also sent students to a “buddy classroom” where they received instruction until their regular teacher was ready to process the discipline incident. In the rare instances when teachers sent students out of class, they went to the RJ coordinator’s office, where support staff engaged students in conversations that de-escalated conflict.

At Stevenson elementary, two deans pushed into classrooms to resolve discipline incidents, while RJ staff also worked with students outside of class in a room that housed conflict resolution resources, sensory tools, and social emotional learning (SEL) software on iPads. The RJ coordinator recruited and trained multiple volunteers and interns to work with students in the discipline room. As a result, Stevenson had the highest rate of adults processing discipline incidents with students, using de-escalating behaviors, facilitating conflict mediations, and giving social emotional learning lessons.



**Table 3.** School Discipline Room Settings, Staff, and Activities

	<b>Galileo</b>	<b>Stevenson</b>	<b>Northwood</b>	<b>Westview</b>	<b>Roslyn</b>	<b>Lakeshore</b>	<b>Dalton</b>
<b>Categorization</b>	Proactive	Proactive	Proactive	Punitive-Proactive	Punitive	Punitive	Punitive
<b>Grade Level</b>	Elementary	Elementary	Elementary	K-8	Elementary	Middle	Middle
<b>Location</b>	Buddy classrooms or RJC <sup>1</sup> office	RJC office	RJC or admin office	Designated classroom	RJC office or library	Designated classroom	Designated classroom
<b>Staffing</b>	RJC Social Worker	RJC Deans Volunteers Interns	RJC Dean SEL Coach	RJC Dean	RJC	Deans Paras	RJC Security Officer
<b>Staff Behavior</b>	De-escalating	De-escalating	De-escalating	De-escalating	Mixed	Mixed	Mixed
<b>Top Student Activity</b>	Processing <sup>2</sup>	Processing	Independent work	Independent work	Independent work	Independent work	Independent work

<sup>1</sup>Restorative Justice Coordinator

<sup>2</sup>These instances typically included an adult asking the student, “What happened?” followed by a short exchange between the adult and student.



Northwood elementary school's discipline room was a space shared by the RJ coordinator and SEL coach. They also held pre-assigned in-school suspensions on Monday and Friday afternoons in available administrators' offices or a small classroom in the gym. Students often came to the discipline room to have their behavior tracker checked, or to take short breaks where they worked independently on an iPad or computer, colored, or played with blocks and sensory tools. In this space, support staff usually helped students process discipline incidents using de-escalating behaviors, or completed other work tasks such as email and talking with other staff. Overall, Northwood had one of the highest rates of staff using restorative mediations; they also emphasized positive rewards for good behavior more than the other case study schools.

### **Proactive-Punitive Approach**

Westview, a K-8 school, used a mix of punitive and proactive approaches. A dean and RJ coordinator were responsible for supervising pre-assigned in-school suspensions and detentions, along with occasional SEL groups, in a designated classroom. Staff members used de-escalating strategies when processing discipline incidents with students, but students spent most of their time working independently while staff entered data on computers, talked with other staff, or communicated with parents.

### **Punitive Approaches**

Roslyn elementary, along with Lakeshore and Dalton middle schools, all used a punitive approach. At Roslyn, students went to the RJ coordinator's office or the library, whereas Lakeshore and Dalton had designated classrooms close to the main office that were furnished with chairs, desks, computers, school supplies, and, in one case, exercise equipment. The punitive school discipline rooms tended to convey a sterile aesthetic, with minimal adornments other than signs about rules and consequences (See Figure 1).





**Figure 1.** “Room Rules” Posted at Dalton Middle School



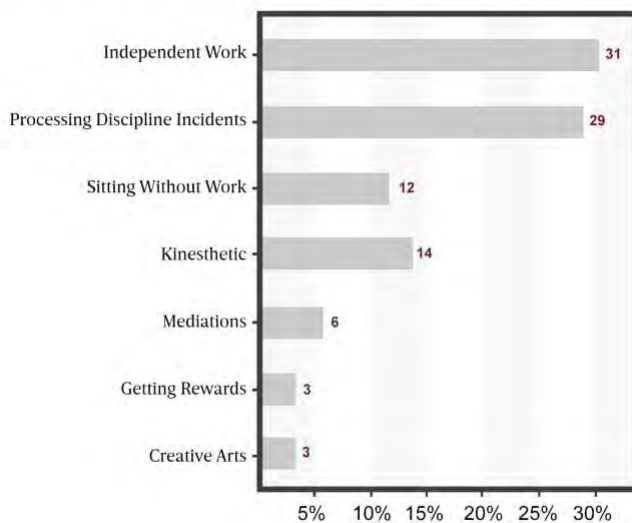


At all of the punitive schools, staff engaged in escalating behaviors more often than staff at the proactive schools. They emphasized rules, rule breaking and accountability through punishment, sometimes denigrating students. Staff at these schools also processed incidents with students less often compared to proactive schools and more often assigned students independent work as punishment.

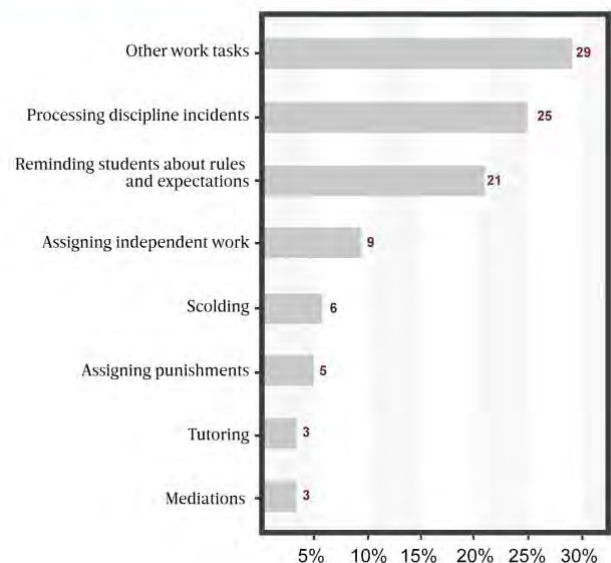
Roslyn regularly held detention during class time in the RJ coordinators' office or library. Most often, we observed students doing independent work, which included reflection sheets, classwork, writing apology letters, and SEL modules. Staff members typically spent their time processing discipline incidents with students, but a significant proportion of these interactions involved escalating behaviors, more so than the other elementary schools.

Lakeshore designated a separate classroom for in-school suspensions, detention and "cool-downs." The nature and tone of student-staff interactions at Lakeshore were largely negative and conveyed the message that students were there for punishment. Staff usually spent their time issuing rule reminders and reiterating behavioral expectations with students, using an equal amount of de-escalating and escalating strategies. Lakeshore had the highest rate of scolding of any school. We most often observed students participating in independent work, which included filling out reflection sheets, doing SEL modules on computers, completing homework, writing apology letters or statements, and cleaning the room. Compared to the other case study schools, students at Lakeshore more often sat in the school discipline room doing nothing.

**Student Activities in Discipline Rooms, All Schools**



**Adult Activities in Discipline Rooms, All Schools**



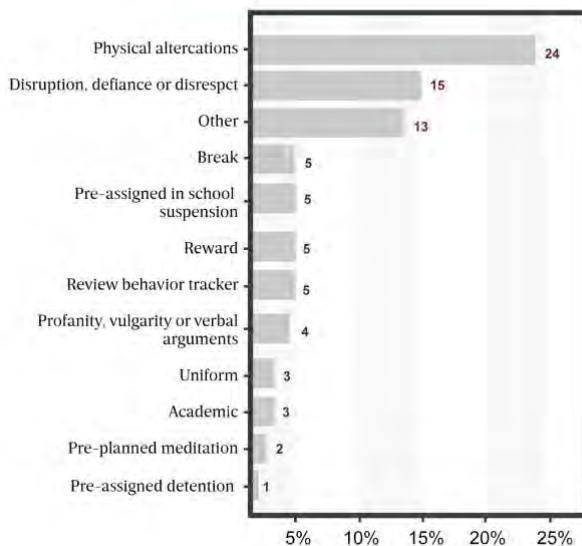


Dalton also reserved a separate room for in-school suspension, detentions, and “cool downs.” Sending students to this room was a standard part of classroom discipline ladders. The school dedicated half of the room to disciplined students and the other half for students working on classroom assignments or homework. Students usually completed independent work, which included classwork, reflection sheets, and social emotional modules. Staff members completed administrative work on their computers or talked with other adults, retrieved students from class and sent them back, assigned independent work, or processed discipline incidents with students. Staff used a mix of de-escalating and escalating behaviors during interactions with students, mostly reiterating school rules.

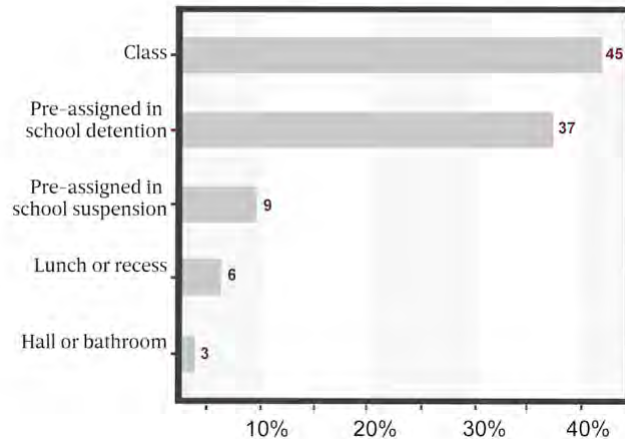
### School Discipline Room Referral Processes, Reasons, and Student Composition

The process for sending students to the school discipline room varied considerably across schools (Table 4). Typically, school staff members immediately sent students to the discipline room because of incidents that took place in the classroom. From what we observed, staff most commonly sent students to the discipline room for what we referred to as “altercations,” a category that included “horseplay,” “throwing things,” “verbal altercations,” and “pushing” and “fighting.” In all of the schools, staff members sent more students of color, often boys, to the rooms than White youth.

#### Referral Reasons



#### Referral Origins





### **Proactive Approaches**

At proactive schools, support staff tended to “push in” to classrooms to address discipline issues rather than pull students out. If a teacher needed a student removed, a dean or RJ coordinator would typically come to classrooms and escort students down to the discipline room. Teachers and staff members at the proactive schools usually sent students to have their behavior trackers checked or because of low-level physical incidents like pushing, shoving, or throwing items like pencils or teddy bears. These schools tended to report lower rates of in-school discipline consequences to the district.

Galileo elementary resolved most discipline incidents in the classroom with the assistance of two RJ Coordinators. They regularly monitored classes with the most reported student behavior challenges and directly responded to radio calls from teachers who requested support. The RJ coordinators occasionally met with students in their office, but quickly returned students to class following restorative conversations. In addition, when discipline incidents arose teachers could send students to a colleague’s “buddy classroom” to receive instruction for limited periods. At Galileo, reasons for teacher removals included arguing, fighting, finishing academic work, a student refusing to put a hoodie up and two mediations. We rarely observed students out of class (approximately nine students across all observations). During most observations, there were no students in the RJ coordinators’ office.

Outside of the dean pushing into classrooms, Stevenson teachers sent students to an administrator’s or RJ coordinator’s offices, usually for physical incidents. When this happened, students spent time with staff reflecting on the incident and then returned to class. We typically observed 1-2 students sent from class to work with a dean or to visit the RJ staff during every visit.

At Northwood, if teachers wanted to remove students, they had to call the office and have a support staff member come to their classroom to decide next steps together. According to the principal, this requirement reduced the number of students sent to the school discipline room compared to years prior.





**Table 4.** School Discipline Room Referral Processes, Reasons, and Student Compositions

	Galileo	Stevenson	Northwood	Westview	Roslyn	Lakeshore	Dalton
<b>Categorization</b>	Proactive	Proactive	Proactive	Punitive-Proactive	Punitive	Punitive	Punitive
<b>Process</b>	Teacher contacts RJC.	Teacher contacts Dean.	Part of behavior plans, by student choice	Teacher sends directly out or calls staff. <sup>1</sup>	Consequence for classroom demerits, or teacher calls staff	Embedded in CDL <sup>2</sup> with staff sending directly	Embedded in CDL with teacher sending directly
<b>Student Numbers</b>	Low	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate	High	High
<b>Length of Time Out of Class</b>	Few minutes	Few minutes to one period	Few minutes to part of day	Few minutes to all day	One period to all day	One period to all day	One period to several days
<b>Top Referral Origin</b>	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom	Pre-assigned	Pre-assigned	Classroom	Classroom
<b>Top Referral Reason</b>	Physical altercations	Physical altercations	Review behavior trackers	Physical altercations	Low attendance	Other <sup>3</sup>	Other
<b>Majority Racial &amp; Gender Group in Room<sup>4</sup></b>	Latinx boys	Latinx boys	Black boys & girls	Black & Latinx boys & girls	Black boys	Black boys & girls	Black boys & girls
<b>Majority Racial Group in School</b>	Latinx	Latinx	Black	Black & Latinx	Latinx	White	White
<sup>1</sup> Staff could include the Dean or Restorative Justice Coordinator (RJC) Observed by research team during site visits <sup>2</sup> Classroom Discipline Ladder <sup>3</sup> Other reasons include minor misbehaviors like misusing school supplies, using cell phones, being late to class, being out of gym uniform and not completing homework <sup>4</sup> Observed by research team during site visits							



Northwood also used “pressure passes” as part of students’ behavior intervention plans, which allowed students to take a break in the school discipline room for five minutes. The principal explained the rationale behind this approach: “When we don’t [give breaks] we’re seeing [students] get their break by escalating. If we can be proactive, it’s a much better response for kids than once they’ve thrown a chair, flipped something, upset someone, and then they’re picked up and removed.” We typically observed between 2-3 students sent out of class during each visit, and only three instances of in-school suspension.

### **Proactive-Punitive Approach**

At Westview, the proactive-punitive school, a teacher contacted the RJ coordinator or dean, or sent students directly to the school discipline room. We usually observed between 5-10 students in the room, although during one observation we did not see any students.

### **Punitive Approaches**

At punitive schools, sending students to the discipline room was as a standard consequence built directly into classroom discipline ladders. Teachers and staff members sent students to the room for a range of minor misbehaviors including misusing school supplies, using cell phones during class, being late to class, being out of gym uniforms and not completing homework. Staff members at the punitive schools regularly invoked the terms “disruptive” and “defiant” to describe why students were sent to the room. These included “not being on task,” “not getting it together,” “not following instructions,” “not walking,” “not listening,” and “not doing what they are supposed to do,” talking to staff members with “sass,” cussing, or “calling the teacher names.” One administrator observed that many of these behaviors did not necessarily warrant a referral to the school discipline room, saying, “a lot of the stuff that kids are getting kicked out for, like not opening their Chromebooks fast enough, or talking in class... those are all tier-one stuff that teachers should be able to handle, not removable offenses.” These schools reported higher rates of in-school discipline consequences (Table 1), except for Roslyn, which reported none, though we did observe students in the discipline room for multiple periods or entire days. In the punitive schools, the racial composition of students in discipline rooms was clearly disproportionate relative to the general student body.

*“Now we require teachers to go through the office first before removing a student, they need to call the office to have someone come... it’s not just to send a kid to the office. It’s call and have someone come to your door. That way we can decide ‘are we pulling you out?’ ‘Are we pulling them out?’ ‘What is that relationship?’ We’re not just sending a kid to the office. That is gone at this point.”*

**- Principal, Northwood Elementary**



At Dalton, once teachers determined a student had reached “step five” on the discipline ladder, they could send the student there. A teacher at Dalton expressed concerns that staff members escalated the ladder at different speeds, based on their individual “tolerance level” for specific students. He told us, “what takes one teacher eight minutes to progress to step five, takes another teacher forty” and that some teachers used “step five” for “anything, from not responding to a question, to throwing a piece of paper, to just being defiant. At Dalton, “other” behaviors were the most common referral reason, e.g., “getting into teacher’s supplies,” “running inside” and “leaving class.” The second most common reason was disruption or defiance, such as “challenging authority,” “inappropriate comments,” and “sarcasm.” During every observation at Dalton, we typically saw 4-5 students in the school discipline room.

Roslyn students were often in the school discipline room because of pushing and fighting, low attendance, or classroom demerits. During each observation, we typically saw 1-2 students sent out of class. On two occasions, we observed numbers of students in the double-digits, once because students had not accrued enough attendance points and were serving detention in lieu of attending field day.

For the most part, school staff at Lakeshore sent students to the room directly from class, although some students served pre-assigned in-school suspensions in the space. Referral reasons were usually low-level behaviors like missing work, dress code, cell phones, and skipping class, followed by physical altercations. We observed students in the school discipline room during every visit, typically 4-6 young people, although two observations involved more than 10 students.

*“The first step is a verbal warning, second is an intervention, like ‘Do you need to stand? Do you need to walk?’ Those kinds of things. The third used to be a Refocus form that they would fill out...that wasn't really working...the refocus was just like a one-on-one meeting. Step four is another intervention, ‘Do you need to erase the blackboard? Do you want to stack the books in the bookshelf?’ Something to get them moving and get them active, so they're not focusing on whatever they're doing. And step five is removal.”*

**- Teacher, Dalton Middle School**



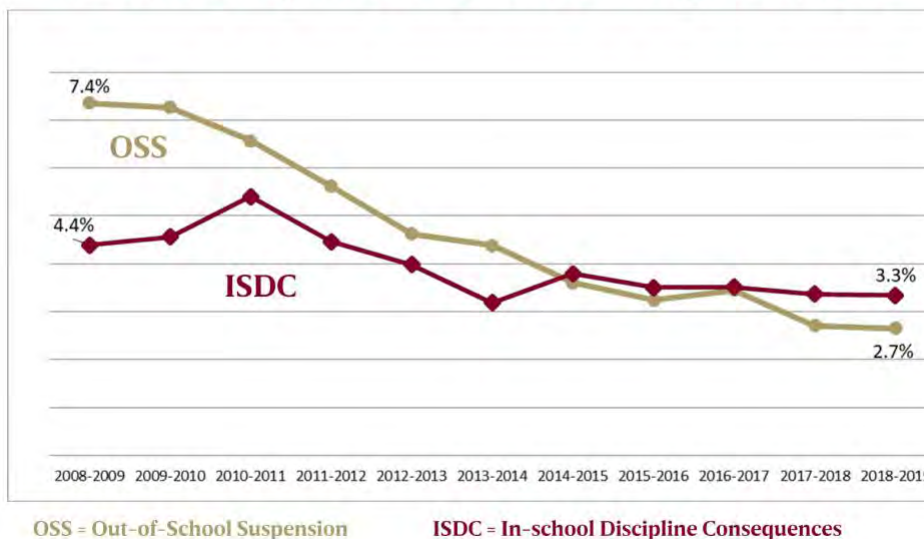
# Quantitative Results

Our analysis of district-wide discipline data focused on discipline consequences that involve students missing instructional time but staying in the school building, which we refer to collectively as in-school discipline consequences (ISDC).

## In-School Discipline Consequences and Out-of-School Suspensions over Time

Over the last ten years, out-of-school suspension rates for all students in this district have consistently been on the decline. Although the proportion of students who received in-school discipline consequences is lower than it was during the 2008-2009 school year, their use has increased over the last five years and now surpasses out-of-school suspensions. For example, in the most recent year of data, the district wide out-of-school suspension rate among all students was 2.7%, whereas the rate of in-school discipline consequences was 3.3%.

**Rates of out-of-school suspensions and in-school discipline consequences among all students**

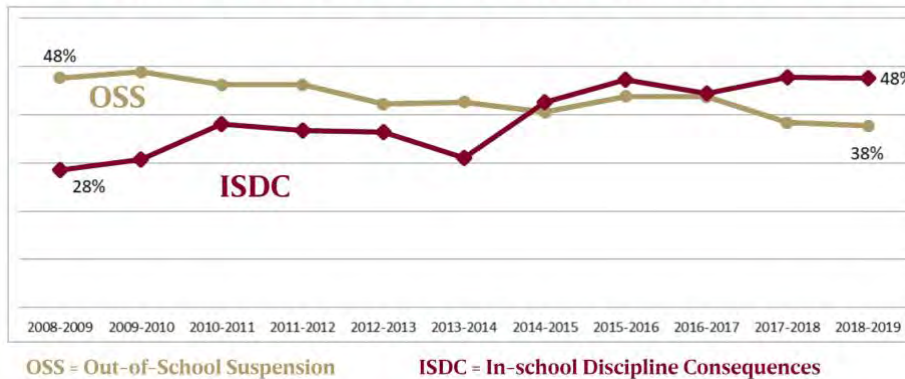






A relatively similar pattern emerges among disciplined students. In 2008, nearly half of students with a discipline incident received out-of-school suspensions (48%) and less than a third had experienced in-school discipline consequences (28%). Now those numbers have almost reversed, with more students in the discipline system receiving in-school discipline consequences (48%) than out-of-school suspensions (38%).

### Rates of out-of-school suspensions and in-school discipline consequences among disciplined students



### Disproportionalities and Disparities<sup>i</sup>

More than 3,500 students in grades K-12 across all district schools received in-school discipline consequences during the 2018-2019 school year. Mirroring trends in overall discipline referrals, students who were Black, Latinx, male, eligible for special education, classified as having a serious emotional disability, homeless, in grades 6-10, or enrolled in traditional middle school or charter school were overrepresented among those who received in-school discipline consequences. For example, Black students comprised approximately 15% of the general student population versus 25% of the population assigned in-school discipline consequences. Students who were Asian, White, female, eligible for the gifted and talented program, in grades pre-K-5 or 12, attended an elementary or traditional school were issued in-school discipline consequences at significantly lower rates than their enrollment (data not shown to ensure district anonymity). Table 5 presents data on disparities for all racial groups in the district that parallel these patterns. For example, 6% of Black students in the district were assigned in-school discipline consequences, compared to just 2% of White youth. Dividing the rate for Black students by that of White students equals a relative risk ratio of four. The rate of in-school discipline consequences among Latinx students was 4%, with a relative risk ratio of two compared to White students.

<sup>i</sup>Disproportionality represents a comparison of information about one population (e.g. all Black students) to a subgroup of that same population (e.g. Black students who were suspended). Disproportionality is an indicator of the overrepresentation or underrepresentation of a group of suspended students, relative to their proportion of the general student population. A disparity is a comparison of information about two different populations (e.g. suspended Black students compared to suspended White students). Disparity is an indicator of the likelihood of student from one group receiving an in-school discipline resolution compared to a young person of another group. The concepts are related; for example, disproportionalities in suspension occur whenever a subgroup of students experiences disparities in suspensions. In other words, disparities lead to disproportionalities.

**Table 5.** Rates and Relative Risk Ratios, In-School Discipline Consequences

	<b>Rate<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Relative Risk Ratio<sup>2</sup></b> (Compared to White students)	<b>RRR</b> (Compared to Pacific Islander students)	<b>RRR</b> (Compared to Multiracial students)	<b>RRR</b> (Compared to Asian students)	<b>RRR</b> (Compared to Native students)	<b>RRR</b> (Compared to Black students)	<b>RRR</b> (Compared to Latinx students)
Latinx	3.6%	2.2	1.4	1.1	2.6	1.4	0.6	1.0
Black	6.0%	3.6	2.3	1.8	4.3	2.3	1.0	1.7
Native American	2.6%	1.6	1.0	0.8	1.9	1.0	0.4	.7
Asian	1.4%	0.8	0.5	0.4	1.0	0.5	0.2	0.4
Multiracial	3.3%	2.0	1.3	1.0	2.4	1.3	0.6	.9
Pacific Islander	2.6%	1.5	1.0	0.8	1.8	1.0	0.4	.7
White	1.7%	1.0	0.6	0.5	1.2	0.6	0.3	0.5

<sup>1</sup>The rate is the percent of students in each group who have one or more in-school discipline consequences

<sup>2</sup>The relative risk ratio (RRR) is computed by taking a ratio of the rates between two groups. A value greater than one indicates higher risk, whereas a value less than one indicates lower risk.



### Correlates of In-School Discipline Resolutions

Results from a multilevel logistic regression (Table 7) indicate that several student and school characteristics are correlated with students' likelihood of experiencing one or more in-school discipline consequences when other factors are accounted for. Black (OR 2.8,  $p < .001$ ), Latinx (1.6,  $p < .001$ ), and Multiracial students (OR 1.8,  $p < .05$ ) were significantly more likely<sup>ii</sup> to experience an in-school discipline consequence compared to White youth. Boys (OR 1.9,  $p < .001$ ), students experiencing homelessness (1.5,  $p < .001$ ), youth in special education (OR 1.4,  $p < .001$ ), students designated as seriously emotionally disabled (OR 3.6,  $p < .0001$ ), and students in higher grades (OR 1.2,  $p < .001$ ) also were significantly more likely to be assigned in-school discipline consequences than their peers. Students enrolled in middle schools (OR 4.1,  $p < .001$ ), charter-run schools (OR 1.6,  $p < .001$ ), schools with a greater concentration of low-income students (OR 2.5,  $p < .001$ ), and larger schools (OR 1.0,  $p < .001$ ) were significantly more likely their counterparts to have in-school discipline consequences.

### Referral Reasons and Locations

Nearly six thousand separate discipline incidents were resolved with an in-school discipline consequence. Table 2. indicates that students received these consequences for low-level offenses, based on the district's discipline policy. The four most common referral reasons leading to an in-school discipline consequence were level one fighting (22%); misconduct that disrupts the school environment (17%); severe defiance of authority/disobedience (14%); and, other school based misconduct that substantially disrupts the school environment (12%). Students usually received in-school discipline consequences because of incidents that occurred in the classroom (49%) or in the hallway (16%).

**Table 6.** Referral reasons for discipline incidents resolved with an in-school discipline consequence (n=5,800 incidents).

Level 1	46 %
Level 2	48 %
Level 3	6 %
Level 4	0 %
Level 5	0 %

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<sup>ii</sup>The term “more likely” is a comparison of risks, which is the chance that something will occur. If you are flipping a coin, your “risk” for landing on tails is 50%, or 50 out of 100 times. If you are drawing a card from a deck, your “risk” of getting a spade is 25% or 25 out of 100 times. If you are playing a game where you can win by landing on tails in a coin flip, or pulling a spade from deck of cards, you are 100% (2 times) “more likely” to win if you flip a coin rather than pull a card. In the context of this report, “more likely” means the risk of in-school discipline consequences in one group (e.g. boys) is higher than the risk for another group (e.g. girls).

**Table 7.** Multilevel regression model of factors associated with receiving one or more in-school discipline consequences (n~100,000).

Odds Ratio <sup>1</sup>	
<b>Student-Level</b>	
Race (ref. group = White)	
Latinx	1.6***
Black	2.8***
Native American	1
Asian	0.7*
Multiracial	1.8*
Pacific Islander	1
Male Gender (ref. group = female)	1.9***
Homeless	1.5***
English Language Learner	0.8***
Gifted and Talented	0.7***
Special Education	1.4***
Emotional Disability	3.6***
Grade	1.2***
<b>School-Level</b>	
% Black	0.6
% Free and Reduced Lunch	2.5*
Grade Level (ref. group = Elementary)	
High School	1
Middle school	4.1***
Other Grade Spans (e.g. K-8)	1.6
Charter School (ref. group = district-run schools)	1.6*
School Size	1.0***
*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001 level of statistical significance.	

<sup>1</sup>An odds ratio that is greater than one (e.g. 1.6) indicates increased likelihood or risk for an in-school discipline consequence, whereas an odds ratio of less than one (e.g. 0.7) signifies lower likelihood.



## Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify patterns and trends in school discipline rooms and related in-school discipline consequences. We learned there are two primary approaches to managing school discipline rooms: proactive and punitive. Proactive schools (Galileo, Stevenson and Northwood) primarily integrated support staff into classrooms or required consultation before sending a student to the in-school discipline room. On the other hand, punitive schools (Roslyn, Lakeshore and Dalton) built teacher removal directly into their classroom discipline ladders, providing a direct route to the school discipline room. Proactive schools dedicated spaces for therapeutic and restorative interventions that they implemented using de-escalation strategies. Conversely, punitive schools designated entire classrooms to administer negative consequences that often seemed to exacerbate conflict between students and staff. In proactive schools, teachers sent fewer students out of class for discipline issues, and for shorter periods, whereas punitive schools tended to have larger groups in its discipline rooms for longer times. It is important to keep this finding in the context of our data on referral reasons, which indicated students were sent to in-school discipline rooms low-level misconduct that rarely involved serious harm or violence, and more often involved subjective reasons like defiance that are prone to implicit bias.

Galileo, Stevenson and Northwood's proactive approaches to in-school discipline rooms align with best practice in school discipline. For example, the National Association of Secondary School Principals recommends modeling constructive behavior for students and providing them with opportunities for growth after a discipline incident occurs (NASSP, 2014). Proactive strategies are more likely to improve student behavior and create a positive school environment than punitive approaches (AASA, 2014). For example, available research suggests restorative justice can help improve school climate, increase students' connectedness to school, parent engagement and improve academic achievement as well as decrease fighting and conflict, especially when implemented school-wide and with fidelity (Fronius et al., 2019). Unfortunately, Roslyn, Lakeshore and Dalton's punitive approaches contradicts expert recommendations. Reports issued by a range of research organizations and educational stakeholders warn against using punitive discipline because of evidence it is usually ineffective at changing behavior and consistently associated with negative academic and developmental outcomes (e.g. APA, 2008; Morgan, Salomon, Plotkin & Cohen, 2014).



Given overwhelming evidence in support of proactive discipline approaches, why did we observe so much variation at the case study school? Several interviewees suggested that the principal's preferences determined each school's approach. Indeed, principals had a high degree of autonomy in decisions about school suspensions. As the Northwood principal noted, the district did not "give me a top-down mandate as to what discipline needed to look like at my school." Those in the central office similarly attributed variation in discipline approaches to principal discretion and autonomy. As one district administrator explained, "in the land of autonomy...schools can do what they want. The school is the unit of change; the principal has the autonomy to do what they want." Another central office employee agreed, attributing each school's approach to "the principal. It all goes back to the principal, the building leader." The finding that school leaders play a critical role in school discipline is consistent with other studies in this area (Skiba et al., 2016; Wiley, 2020).

Why can teachers send students out of the classroom to begin with? Like many places across the country, policy in this district requires schools use a tiered approach to discipline that starts with classroom-based interventions. If these efforts fail, teachers and staff may use punitive consequences such as detention, in-school suspension, and out-of-school suspension. District decision-makers designed this tiered approach in order to limit the use of exclusionary and punitive discipline in schools, explicitly outlining the kinds of strategies teachers and administrators should use to keep students in the classroom and learning. At the same time, district policy also permits teachers to decide unilaterally to remove students from their classrooms if they have tried behavior management strategies and still find students' behavior to be consistently defiant or interfering with the learning environment. Central office staff members we spoke with indicated this is due to contractual parameters jointly negotiated with the teacher's union. We saw how this exception played out differently inside schools; in some schools, discretionary removal was limited, while other schools gave teachers wide latitude to determine when they could send students out. Our findings revealed school discipline rooms were used for low-level discretionary reasons, suggesting a need to examine how teachers' interpretations of students' actions affect removal decisions. This pattern also raises questions about whether it is necessary to modify policies related to classroom removal as part of a broader strategy to reduce disciplined students' loss of instructional time, which may require joint negotiation between central offices and teachers unions.

This study also revealed substantive equity issues with school discipline rooms and in-school discipline consequences. At the case study schools, we found that staff sent youth of color to these spaces more often than they referred White students. This pattern is evident in district data, which indicates that students of color, boys, and students with disabilities are all more likely to experience punitive in-school discipline consequences, even when accounting for factors like grade-level and school composition. A central office administrator noted this trend: "The disparities in out-of-school suspensions have just shifted to in-school suspension. It's just another space where folks put the students out of class that they find most challenging in their building." Yet our qualitative data from proactive schools illustrates that it is possible to create high-quality approaches to discipline in schools serving a majority of students of color. A proactive approach appears to be an organizational decision, not, as some might argue, endemic to perceived challenges that come with "difficult to serve" students.





Study findings indicate that schools' reported rates of in-school discipline consequences may not reflect the reality of how many students are outside of their classrooms for all or part of the school day. For example, Roslyn reported no instances of in-school discipline consequences, though we observed two occasions of students outside of class for a full day and many others for entire class periods. This suggests that what schools report may or may not accurately reflect the reality of students missing instructional time for disciplinary reasons. Furthermore, we learned that some schools consider students' time in discipline rooms during the day to be detention, which they are not required to report. This indicates that some discipline strategies that involve removing students from class are beyond the purview of district and state oversight and accountability.

Lastly, we found that RJ coordinators were responsible for supervising punitive school discipline rooms, overseeing in-school suspension and detentions where they conducted few restorative dialogues or mediations. These activities contradict the key principles of restorative justice, which focuses on repairing relationships. Tasking RJ Coordinators with punitive discipline supervision and responsibilities likely attenuates the impact of RJ at a school, as it creates role confusion and may break students' trust or confidence in the restorative process. Across all of the case study schools, we observed a low percentage of staff activities that would traditionally constitute restorative justice (particularly peer-to-peer or peer-to-staff mediations), despite RJ coordinators' involvement in all but one site. Instead, we mostly observed "what happened" conversations where students gave their version of the incident, but staff often focused on the students' responsibility for what took place and how their time in the school discipline room was a form of punishment or accountability. In some schools, reflection sheets contained "restorative justice questions printed on a sheet of paper" which students completed and handed back to an adult, at times without conversation.

Our findings seem especially timely given major policy reforms across the country that limit the use of out-of-school suspensions for low-level student misconduct or conflict (Ritter, 2018). In response to these regulatory demands, schools are increasingly implementing in-school discipline consequences and using in-school discipline rooms, in part based on the belief that this practice is less harmful to students. Our findings complicate this notion and suggest that schools should be more cautious in their use of these strategies. Given that in-school discipline consequences still remove students from their regular classrooms classroom, they likely break bonds between students and teachers, which could exacerbate challenging behavior and negative perceptions of school climate. In fact, recent research challenges the notion that removing disciplined students from the classroom benefits their peers, as all students in schools with high rates of in-school suspension have worse academic outcomes than schools that use this consequence less frequently.



## Recommendations & Implications for Best Practice

The results of this study have several implications for policy and practice, particularly given evidence of systemic patterns in district-wide data that extend beyond the seven case study schools. Below we outline recommendations at multiple levels based on our findings and the broader literature on effective school discipline that mitigates disparities (see, for example Gregory, Skiba & Mediratta, 2017; McIntosh, 2018).

### **Policy Makers and District Administrators:**

- Promote proactive approaches to preventing and resolving disciplinary incidents.
- Discourage classroom discipline ladders that include removal as a last step.
- Work with teaching professionals associations to examine the effects of policies related to classroom removal and modify those policies to reflect best practice.
- Work with local teachers unions to identify and remedy contractual agreements that may inadvertently promote classroom removal.
- Collaborate with multiple stakeholder groups to define the nature of student behaviors that warrant teacher removal.
- Prohibit all forms of teacher removal for subjective, low-level forms of disrespect, defiance and disruption.
- Incentivize equity in discipline by including indicators of positive discipline in accountability measures.
- Prohibit the use of punitive school discipline rooms that keep students from their regular classrooms for extended periods.
- Provide principals support for engaging parents and families, teachers, staff and community organizations to find solutions to end racial disparities in discipline.
- Expand efforts to hire and retain teachers, school leaders, and staff members of color, and those with expertise in special education.
- Clarify the difference between different in-school discipline consequences and provide guidance on how each should be conducted.
- Establish job protections to prevent schools from involving restorative justice coordinators, social workers, and psychologists, in punitive discipline.
- Standardize training and job duties for restorative justice coordinators.



### **School Leaders:**

- Develop classroom ladders that proactively affirm desired behavior and do not include removal as a standard response.
- Have staff members responsible for discipline push into classrooms rather than supervise a school discipline room.
- If using a discipline room, create a structured process for entry and exit into the school discipline room. Prioritize returning students to class as soon as possible.
- Operationalize and provide examples that distinguish low-level subjective offenses (e.g., minor vs. severe defiance or disruption) and when in-school discipline consequences rooms are permissible under school, district, and state policy.
- Offer all school staff opportunities for coaching and professional learning about de-escalation behaviors.
- Do not involve restorative justice coordinators in punitive roles or as the supervisors of punitive approaches to managing school discipline rooms.
- Designate instructional time for relationship building between students, teachers, and staff.
- Create opportunities for students and families to share their personal experiences with school discipline, perspectives on why disparities exist, and ideas for addressing them.
- Confront stereotypes, low expectations and punitive mindsets among school staff about “bad” students or “troublemakers.”
- Offer regular professional learning about culturally relevant and responsive teaching that engages students.
- Identify a staff member who is responsible for entering discipline data and include this in their job description and evaluations.
- Review discipline data regularly with school staff to identify gaps in data entry.
- Disaggregate your school’s discipline and school climate data by race, gender, and disability and review it with teachers and staff members.



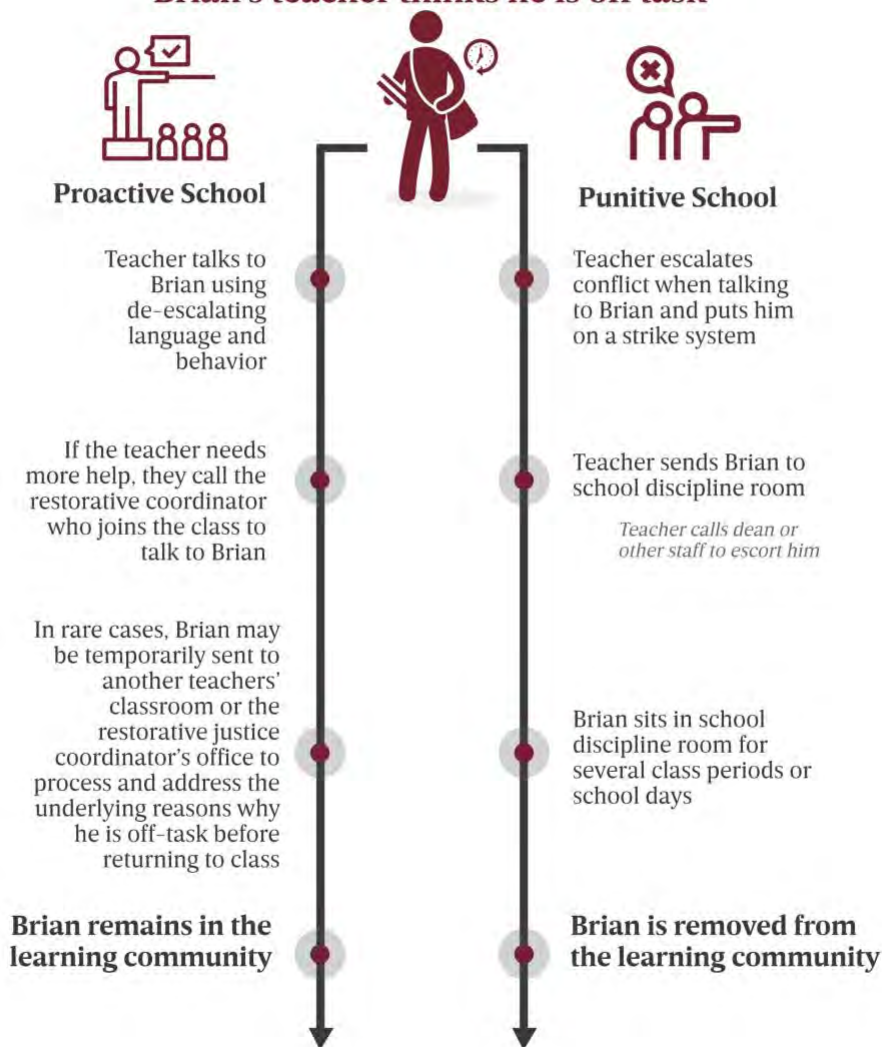
### **School Staff:**

- Reduce the time students are out of their classrooms by using de-escalation behaviors in the short-term, following up with restorative mediations or therapeutic services that address the root causes of conflict or misbehavior during non-instructional time.
- If there are too many students in the room to engage individually, revisit referral processes and procedures with school staff.
- Use the room as a place for rewarding positive behavior.
- Clarify distinctions between low-level issues that will be resolved in the classroom and serious disrespect, defiance, or disruptions that warrant referrals to the in-school discipline room.
- Adopt and model de-escalation behaviors.
- Write grants, recruit volunteers, and enlist peer mediators to increase capacity for processing discipline incidents individually.
- Reduce implicit bias through intentional strategies like perspective taking, doubting your objectivity, individuation and counter-stereotypic imaging.
- Take time to process a discipline incident before determining a consequence. Implicit bias is strongest when making decisions while emotionally escalated.
- Ask students about their perceptions of fairness in the discipline process.
- Initiate conversations about the role of race, gender, disability in the discipline process with colleagues.
- Read official state and district discipline policy.
- Participate in trainings to understand discipline process requirements and expectations
- Clearly differentiate the roles of different staff members involved in discipline. Ensure students understand each person's role and that restorative justice is not a punitive approach.



## In-school Discipline Consequences: A Tale of Two Schools

Brian's teacher thinks he is off task



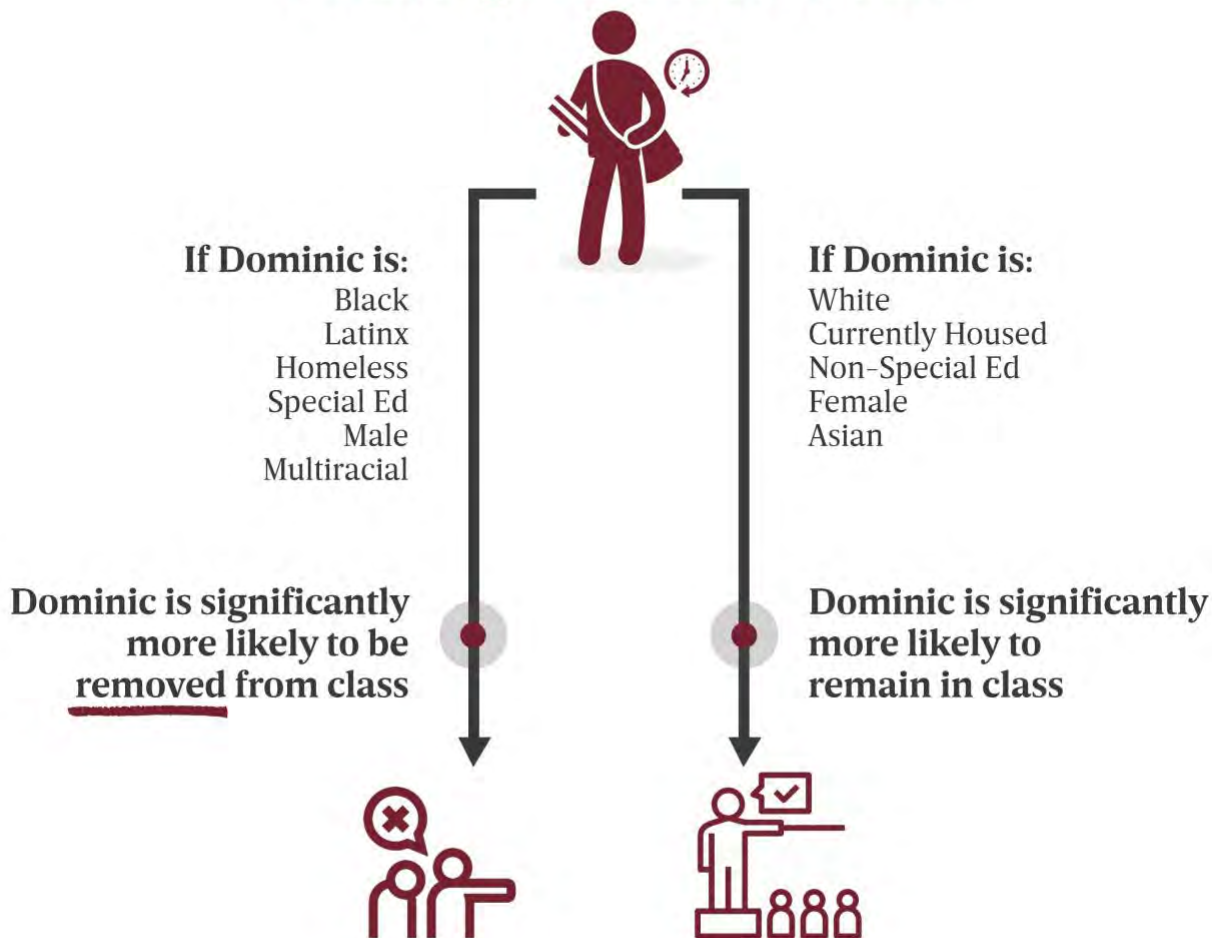
Source: Wiley, K., Anyon, Y., Townsend, C., Keltner, J., Santarella, M., Deiser, S., & Schieder, A. (2020). *School discipline rooms: A mixed methods study*. Denver, CO: University of Denver, Graduate School of Social Work.

This visual is based on findings from a qualitative study of school discipline rooms that found schools used either a predominantly proactive or punitive approach, each with different implications for the amount of time that students spent outside of classroom and away from their regular learning community.



# In-School Discipline Consequences: Marginalization and privilege

**Dominic gets in trouble in class**



**Source:** Wiley, K., Anyon, Y., Townsend, C., Keltner, J., Santarella, M., Deiser, S., & Schieder, A. (2020). *School discipline rooms: A mixed methods study*. Denver, CO: University of Denver, Graduate School of Social Work.

This visual is based on findings from a statistical regression that controlled for a range of student- and school-level covariates. \*The term “more likely” is a comparison of risks, which is the chance that something will occur. If you are flipping a coin, your “risk” for landing on tails is 50%, or 50 out of 100 times. If you are drawing a card from a deck, your “risk” of getting a spade is 25% or 25 out of 100 times. If you are playing a game where you can win by landing on tails in a coin flip, or pulling a spade from deck of cards, you are 100% (2 times) “more likely” to win if you flip a coin rather than pull a card. In the context of this report, “more likely” means the risk of in-school discipline consequences in one group (e.g. boys) is higher than the risk for another group (e.g. girls).





## Tools & Resources

### *Electronic hyperlinks*

#### **Effective School Discipline Policy and Practice**

- [Ending the school to prison pipeline](#) National Education Association
- [Fixing school discipline](#) Public Counsel.
- [Discipline policies that support social emotional learning](#) Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning
- [National clearinghouse on supportive school discipline](#) and the [National center for safe and supportive learning environments](#) American Institutes for Research
- [School climate and discipline](#) U.S. Department of Education
- [Discipline policy](#) National Education Policy Center
- [Addressing the out-of-school suspension crisis: a policy guide for school board members](#) Schott Foundation

#### **Professional Learning Modules**

- [Creating opportunities through relationships](#) University of Virginia
- [Delivering research to the field: Tools for training educators in proactive discipline](#) University of Denver

#### **Supporting High Quality Implementation**

- [School-wide restorative practices implementation guide](#). Restorative Justice Partnership.

#### **Addressing Disproportionalities and Disparities by Race and Disability**

- [Addressing discipline disproportionality for district and school teams](#) U.S. Dept. of Education Technical Assistance Guide
- [Creating the space to talk about race in your school](#). National Education Association
- [Black lives matter at school](#) National Coalition Organizing for Racial Justice in Education.
- [The National Equity Project](#). Resources.
- [Delivering on the Promise: Effective Early Childhood Education](#). (2018). National Black Child Development Institute.
- [Institute for Racial Equity and Excellence \(IREE\)](#) Resources, workshops, various services
- [The Education Trust](#) Webinars available if you click on the more localized chapters

#### **Engaging Parents & Community**

- [Taking it to the next level: Strengthening and sustaining family engagement](#). Institute for Educational Leadership.
- [Lessons Learned and Curriculums](#), National Parent Leadership Institute
- [Digital Promise](#)



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