



Alternatives to Exclusionary Discipline: What, Why, and How

What is 'Exclusionary Discipline'?

Exclusionary discipline indicates a response to student behavior that includes a **removal or exclusion** from the classroom or school environment.

Research shows exclusionary school discipline has wide-reaching, harmful impacts on students, staff, and the school community as a whole:



Suspension increases the risk of dropout and involvement with the juvenile justice system.¹



Frequent and ongoing suspension is linked with decreased likelihood of enrolling in postsecondary education.²



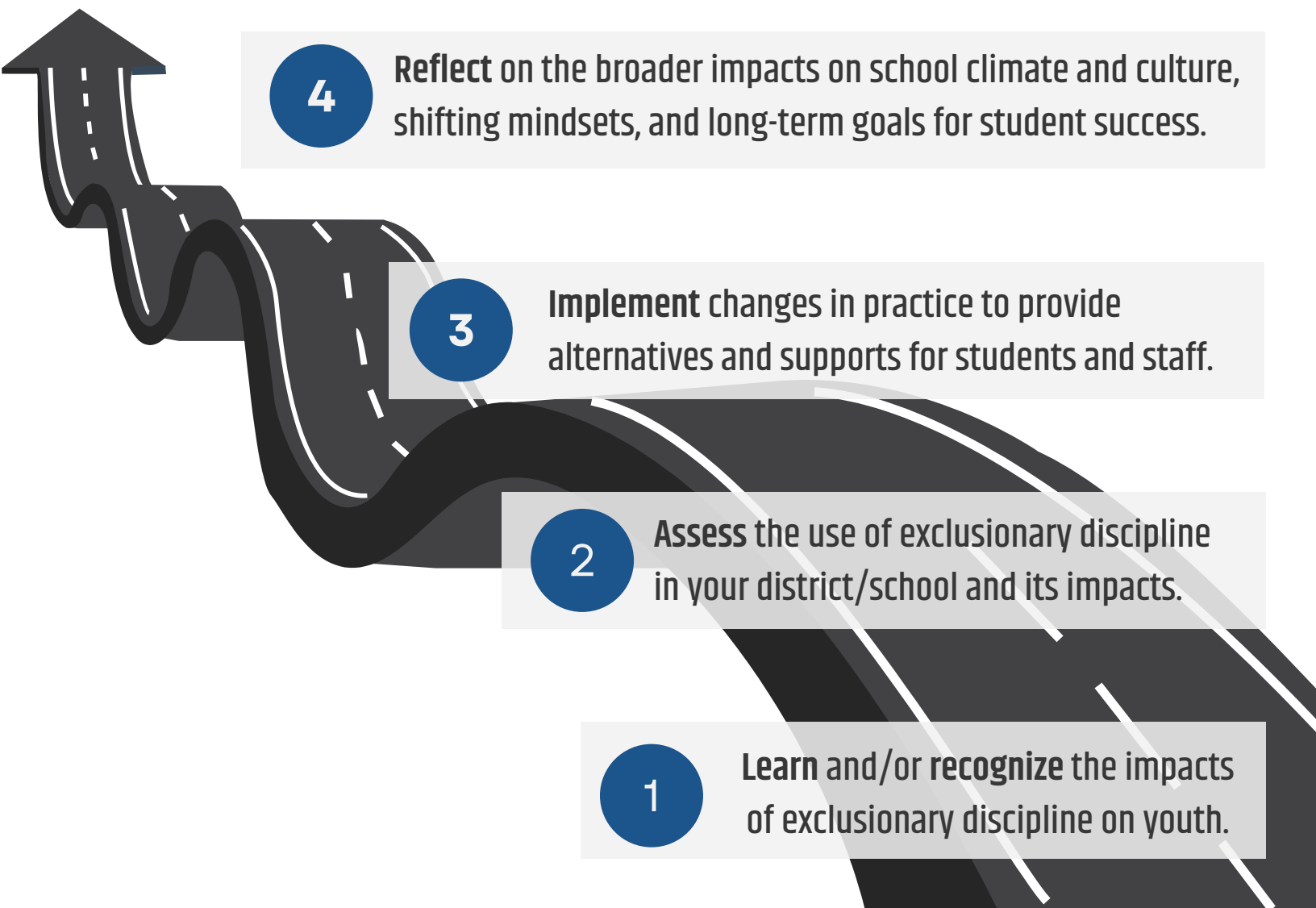
Exclusionary discipline can weaken school-student bonds and positive perceptions of safety and belonging, or school climate.³

Goals to Shift Our Practice

- Reduce the use of exclusionary discipline practices, especially those that disproportionality impact students based on race/ethnicity, disability, or gender.
- Implement evidence-based or promising, non-punitive practices and programs.
- Build capacity to support students' academic and social-emotional development.



Pathway to Discipline Reform



Discipline Disproportionality

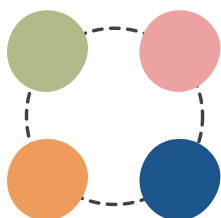
Disciplinary decisions are not always consistent across all students. **Disciplinary disproportionality** occurs when disproportionately high rates of office discipline referrals, suspension, expulsion, or school arrests occur for students from specific subgroups.

Extensive research has shown that students of color and/or students with disabilities tend to receive more frequent, harsher disciplinary actions than their peers for the same rule violations. This leads to disparate and negative outcomes for youth and families.

Gregory, A., Skiba, R.J., & Mediratta, K. (2017). Eliminating disparities in school discipline: a framework for intervention. *Review of Research in Education*, 41(1), 253-278.

Ryberg, R., Her, S., Temkin, D., & Harper, K. (2021). Despite reductions since 2011-12, black students and students with disabilities remain more likely to experience suspension. *Child Trends*. [\[Link\]](#)

Changes in Practice to Support Discipline Reform



Restorative Practices

Restorative practices is the application of restorative justice techniques within a school setting with the goal(s) of building community, strengthening relationships, resolving conflict and repairing harm within the community.

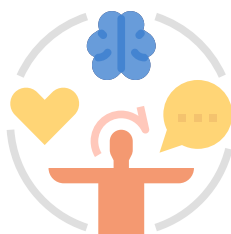
[International Institute on Restorative Practices](#)



Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports

School-wide PBIS is a multi-tiered system that focuses on establishing a positive and healthy school culture, effective use of data, and implementing a continuum of behavioral supports ([Center on PBIS](#)).

[What Works Clearinghouse: Research-Based Behavioral Interventions](#)



Social Emotional Learning

Social emotional learning (SEL) is "the process through which all young people and adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions" ([CASEL](#)).

[Establish Discipline Policies that Promote SEL](#)



Addressing Implicit Bias

Implicit bias refers to "the attitudes, beliefs, or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner" ([National Education Association](#)). Biases can emerge in observations and responses to student behavior, and as stereotypes or microaggressions.

[Neutralizing Implicit Bias in School Discipline](#)

Resources to Learn More

Outcomes and Impacts

- [Lost Opportunities: How Disparate School Discipline Continues to Drive Differences in the Opportunity to Learn](#)
- [Relationship Between School Suspensions and Student Outcomes: A Meta-Analysis](#) (School Psychology Review)

Data Collection & Analysis

- [School Discipline Data Indicators: A Guide for Districts and Schools](#)
- [Using Discipline Data within SWPBIS to Identify and Address Disproportionality: A Guide for School Teams](#)

Engaging Families

- [Transforming School Discipline Collaborative's Strategies for Parent Engagement](#)
- [Creating Safe Passage: Collaborative Approaches to Equitable School Discipline Reform](#)

Changes in Practice

- [Code of Conduct: A Guide to Responsive Discipline](#) (Learning for Justice)
- [School Discipline Consensus Report: Strategies from the Field to Keep Students Engaged in School and Out of the Juvenile Justice System](#)

What are other states doing to reform school discipline?

States across the U.S. are implementing new legislation and policy shifts to reduce exclusionary school discipline, implement systems for data analysis, and funding supports and professional development for school professionals. To learn more, visit the [Education Commission of the States Policy Snapshot: Alternative School Discipline Strategies](#).

