

# Measuring Discipline Disparities

Presentation at U.S. Commission on Civil  
Rights Briefing: “The School to Prison  
Pipeline: The Intersection of Students of  
Color with Disabilities”  
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James P. Scanlan  
Attorney at Law  
[jps@jpscanlan.com](mailto:jps@jpscanlan.com)

# Key Points

- Federal civil rights policy regarding school discipline has been based on the premise that generally reducing adverse discipline outcomes will tend to reduce:
  - (a) relative (percentage) racial differences in discipline rates and
  - (b) the proportions racial minorities make up of students who are disciplined.
- Exactly the opposite is the case.

# Clarification of Terms

- If suspension rates are 15% for minorities and 5% for whites
  - ratio of minority rate to white rate is 3.0 (i.e., minority rate is 3 times the white rate)
  - relative difference is 200% (i.e., minority rate is 200% greater than white rate)
  - if minorities make up 20% of students they would make up 43% of suspended students

# **Table 1. Illustration of effect of lowering test cutoff on relative difference between pass rates of advantaged group (AG) and disadvantaged group (DG)**

<b>Cutoff</b>	<b>AG Pass Rate</b>	<b>DG Pass Rate</b>	<b>AG/DG Pass Ratio</b>
1 High	80%	63%	1.27
2 Low	95%	87%	1.09

**Table 2. Illustration of effect of lowering test cutoff on (a) relative difference between pass rates and (b) relative difference between failure rates of advantaged group (AG) and disadvantaged group (DG)**

<b>Cut-off</b>	<b>AG Pass Rate</b>	<b>DG Pass Rate</b>	<b>AG Fail Rate</b>	<b>DG Fail Rate</b>	<b>AG/DG Pass Ratio</b>	<b>DG/AG Fail Ratio</b>
1 Hi	80%	63%	20%	37%	1.27	1.85
2 Lo	95%	87%	5%	13%	1.09	2.60

**Table 3. Illustration of effect of lowering test cutoff on (a) relative difference between pass rates and (b) relative difference between failure rates of advantaged group (AG) and disadvantaged group (DG) and proportion DG makes up of (c) persons who pass the test and (d) persons who fail the test**

<b>Cut-off</b>	<b>AG Pass Rate</b>	<b>DG Pass Rate</b>	<b>AG/DG Pass Ratio</b>	<b>DG/AG Fail Ratio</b>	<b>DG Prop of Pass</b>	<b>DG Prop of Fail</b>
1 Hi	80%	63%	1.27	1.85	44%	65%
2 Lo	95%	87%	1.09	2.60	48%	72%

**Table 4. Illustration of effect of giving all students reprimand instead of first suspension on African American proportion of K-12 and preschool students receiving one or more suspensions**

<b>Setting</b>	<b>Number Suspensions</b>	<b>AA Proportion of Students Receiving</b>
K-12	One or more	37%
K-12	Two or more	43%
Preschool	One or more	44%
Preschool	Two or more	48%

**Table 5. Illustration of effect of giving all students reprimand instead of first suspension on male proportion of K-12 and preschool students receiving one or more suspensions**

<b>Setting</b>	<b>Number Suspensions</b>	<b>Male Proportion of Students Receiving</b>
K-12	One or more	70%
K-12	Two or more	72%
Preschool	One or more	80%
Preschool	Two or more	82%



**Table 6: Out-of-school suspension rates for African American and white students in Massachusetts and nationally in 2012-2013, with measures of difference**

<b>Area</b>	<b>AA Rate</b>	<b>White Rate</b>	<b>AA/Wh Ratio Susp</b>	<b>Wh/AA Ratio No Susp</b>	<b>EES</b>
Mass	10.0%	2.7%	3.70	1.08	0.65
National	16.4%	4.6%	3.57	1.14	0.71

**Table 7: Out-of-school suspension rates for African American and white students in Loudoun County (VA) and nationally in 2012-2013, with measures of difference**

<b>Area</b>	<b>AA Rate</b>	<b>White Rate</b>	<b>AA/Wh Ratio Susp</b>	<b>Wh/AA Ratio No Susp</b>	<b>EES</b>
Loudoun	4.70%	1.3%	3.54	1.04	0.55
National	16.4%	4.6%	3.57	1.14	0.71

**Table 8: Proportions African Americans make up of students and expelled students overall and in schools with zero tolerance policies, with ratio of African American expulsion rate to white expulsion rate**

<b>Setting</b>	<b>AA Prop of Students</b>	<b>AA Prop of Expulsions</b>	<b>AA/Non-AA Expulsion Ratio</b>
Overall	18%	39%	2.91
Zero Tolerance	19%	33%	2.10