



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING

RICK SNYDER  
GOVERNOR

BRIAN J. WHISTON  
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

**MEMORANDUM**

**DATE:** August 24, 2017

**TO:** Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents  
Public School Academy Directors

**FROM:** Brian J. Whiston, State Superintendent 

**SUBJECT:** Student Suspension Data Collection

In January of 2014, the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights and the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division jointly issued a "Dear Colleague" letter outlining local education agencies' obligation to review their discipline policies and practices for unnecessary reliance on exclusionary discipline and asking whether such discipline is administered disproportionately to certain groups, such as racial/ethnic minority students and students with disabilities.

According to the Civil Rights Data Collection, of the 49 million students enrolled in public schools in 2011-2012:

- 3.5 million students were suspended in-school;
- 3.45 million students were suspended out-of-school;
- 130,000 students were expelled.

In addition, the collection shows that black students are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than white students, while students with disabilities were twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension as their non-disabled peers. The relationship of exclusionary discipline to negative outcomes, particularly racial/ethnic minority students and students with disabilities, has raised questions among policymakers, parents, and other stakeholders about the use and equity of school punishment and whether alternatives may be employed in response to student offences. As a start to address these issues, Public Acts 360-366 of 2016 were signed and took effect August 1, 2017. These Acts amended the Revised School Code to require school officials, before suspending or expelling a student, to consider several situation-specific factors, including whether a lesser intervention or restorative practices would address the student's violation or behavior.

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The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) is committed to coordinating partnerships and initiatives to improve student supports, including behavioral, as outlined in the State Superintendent's Top 10 in 10 Strategic Plan. To effectively address the negative student outcomes fostered by exclusionary discipline practices, we must better understand Michigan's discipline data. Currently, MDE collects student level expulsion data on all students, but only collects suspension data for students with disabilities. To assist in the process of collecting, analyzing, and creating systems of support, the MDE will begin to collect suspension data for *all* students. MDE will include both expulsion and suspension data on the upcoming Transparency Dashboard. Expulsion data is planned for the first phase of the dashboard to be released later this year. Suspension data for all students will be reported on the second phase of the dashboard, to be release in fall 2018. The Transparency Dashboard is Michigan's new school accountability system, aligned to MDE's Top 10 in 10 Strategic Plan and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The Michigan Student Data System (MSDS) will continue to be utilized for the collection of disciplinary data. Each student suspension shall be reported in the MSDS in the same way suspension data had been reported for students with disabilities, with no changes in the reporting structure. The data to be reported on a student includes information such as the date the incident occurred, the type of incident, and the type of disciplinary action incurred. Each incident may be reported with up to three consequences with the dates each was initiated and the number of days per consequence. More detailed information about the reporting requirements for disciplinary data is available on the Center for Education Performance and Information (CEPI) web site [www.michigan.gov/CEPI](http://www.michigan.gov/CEPI) in the CEPI Applications/MSDS Section.

As concerns about school discipline and its impact on equity and student success become a priority, data analyses can help all levels of leadership understand what types of discipline students receive and for what offenses, whether disciplinary actions are used disproportionately, and the relationship between type of discipline and later student outcomes. It is the goal of MDE to collaborate with and support districts conducting discipline data analyses in providing resources and evidence-based practices to improve outcomes for all students. If you have questions about reporting suspension data, please contact CEPI Customer Support at 517-335-0505. If you have policy related questions, please contact Aimee Alaniz at 517-373-8862 or [AlanizA1@michigan.gov](mailto:AlanizA1@michigan.gov).

cc Michigan Education Alliance