

Absolute numbers

The actual physical number counted in the population. In terms of disparities, absolute numbers allow measures of difference between subgroups. For example, if 35 students with disabilities are suspended while only six students without a disability designation are suspended, these numbers may suggest a higher rate of suspensions for students with disabilities compared with nondisabled students.

Aggregate

The compilation of statistics as a whole. It involves combining data from individuals or subgroups into larger groups. These statistics include the overall number or percentage of the group (e.g., total of individual students in a subgroup, total school data in a district or state) or in each of the reporting subgroups for specific outcome measures (e.g., the percentage of students in each racial and ethnic group who graduate from high school, the percentage of English learners who score in each achievement level on a state assessment).

Attribution bias

An erroneous conclusion drawn from incomplete evidence. Attribution bias can occur when someone prematurely arrives at a conclusion without taking into consideration factors that may be causing the behaviors in question. For example, a teacher or an administrator could wrongfully assume that a student is tardy because she does not care or is being disrespectful when, in fact, the student may be suffering from a personal setback or issue that is the cause of her tardiness.¹

Correlational data

Data used to measure relationships between two or more variables. For example, correlational data can be used to study the relationship between suspensions and academic achievement. The extent to which variables are related is measured through correlation coefficients. Correlation coefficients can range from -1.00 to $+1.00$. The value of -1.00 represents a perfect negative correlation, where an increase in one variable is associated with a decrease in the other, while a value of $+1.00$ represents a perfect positive correlation, where an increase in one variable is associated with an increase in the other. A value of 0.00 represents a lack of correlation, meaning that the variables are unrelated.² Correlations can only explain the associations between two variables; they do not establish causality.

Cross-tabulation

A technique of examining two or more data elements together, including by respondent subgroups. Cross-tabulation allows data to be examined separately by characteristics or other data elements that may be related. For example, a school administrator can cross-tabulate the percentage of students suspended by race/ethnicity, gender, and grade. The administrator would then be able to look for patterns among those subgroups (ninth-grade students who are male and of color are suspended more than their counterparts).³

Cultural and linguistic competence

The beliefs, behaviors, knowledge, skills, and systems through which individuals and organizations demonstrate empathy, understanding, and respect for the values, historical context, expectations, language, and experiences of a diverse population. Cultural and linguistic competence (CLC) implies that an individual is self-aware of his own biases and how his experiences and needs may differ from others. It also consists of an individual or an organization's personnel having the capacity to effectively communicate and interact in cross-cultural situations. For example, an individual demonstrates effective CLC when diffusing and preventing tensions that may arise in diverse settings by stimulating interests in discoveries and celebrating the diversity of others.⁴

Data cleansing

Also known as data cleaning or data scrubbing. A process of ensuring that a set of data is correct and accurate. During this process, records are checked for accuracy and consistency and are either corrected or deleted as necessary. This process can occur within a single set of records or among multiple sets of data that need to be merged or that will work together.⁵ For example, when reviewing discipline data, you may find that some information is missing. You may need to check records to confirm and enter additional data so a data set is complete.

De-identify

“The process of removing or obscuring any personally identifiable information from student records in a way that minimizes the risk of unintended disclosure of the identity of individuals and information about them. Specific steps and methods used to de-identify information (see disclosure limitation method for details) may vary depending on the circumstances, but should be appropriate to protect the confidentiality of the individuals. While it may not be possible to remove the disclosure risk completely, de-identification is considered successful when there is no reasonable basis to believe that the remaining information in the records can be used to identify an individual” (pp. 2–3).⁶

Differential treatment

Treating someone differently based on a personal characteristic(s) or perceived or actual membership in a subgroup. Differential treatment may include policies or practices in which similarly situated students are disciplined differently based on race, color, national origin, gender or disability; selective enforcement of a facially neutral policy against students of a single race, color, national origin, gender, disability; adoption of a facially neutral policy with an intent to target students of a particular race, color, national origin, gender, or disability for invidious reasons; or disciplinary action taken with intent to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, or disability.⁷

Disaggregate

A technique used for analyzing the data of different groups or subgroups within a population. Examining disaggregated data can be extremely useful in helping to identify patterns between subgroups.⁸ For example, disaggregating discipline data by demographic characteristics and school, class, and grade information can help identify patterns and answer the Big Risk questions described on page 23 of the *Guide*.

Discrimination

Intentionally treating someone differently on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin is prohibited by Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Schools also violate federal law when they evenhandedly implement facially neutral policies and practices that, although not adopted with the intent to discriminate, nonetheless have an unjustified effect of discriminating against students on the basis of race, color, or national origin. The resulting discriminatory effect is commonly referred to as “disparate impact.” Other federal and state laws also may protect students from being discriminated against based on other personal characteristics such as disability status, gender, sexual orientation, or age. In general, the definition of discrimination based on such other personal characteristics parallels and reflects the definition of discrimination based on race, color, or national origin.

Disparate Impact

When a facially neutral policy or practice has an unjustifiable effect of discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, or disability.⁹

Disparities in school discipline

The consequences experienced by subgroups of students (e.g., based on race/ethnicity, disability, and sexual orientation) who are disproportionately or differentially disciplined at school, including office referrals, and are overrepresented in rates of exclusionary discipline (school suspension and expulsion).¹⁰

Disproportionality

A particular group (based on any personal characteristic) being represented in a given category at a significantly higher or lower rate than other groups.

Exclusionary discipline

Any type of school disciplinary action that removes or excludes a student from his or her usual educational setting. Two of the most common exclusionary discipline practices at schools include suspension and expulsion.

Explicit bias

Conscious attitudes toward other people, things, or groups expressed as judgments and behaviors. These attitudes are deliberately formed and therefore can be regulated.¹¹ Explicit biases can either be a product of prejudice or prematurely arriving at a biased conclusion without using complete evidence.

Face validity

The degree to which data demonstrate what was intended to be measured. For example, if a survey is used to measure teacher perceptions of policies on suspensions at school, the degree of face validity would be dependent on whether or not the survey generated relevant information that answers the questions intended for the analysis.¹²

Fidelity assessments

A measure of how faithfully all the protocols of a specific intervention being implemented was followed. Fidelity is determined by the degree of participant's adherence to the program, exposure to the program, quality of delivery, responsiveness, and program differentiation. For example, if a school implements a positive behavioral intervention, fidelity to the intervention objectives would consist of the teachers being consistent in their behavioral expectations of students and in their response to particular behaviors, adherence to schoolwide protocols for dealing with behaviors, and periodic self-reflections, peer-evaluations, and monitoring of progress to ensure that everyone is on track with what the intervention aims to achieve.¹³

Implicit bias

Subconscious attitudes toward other people, things, or groups expressed as judgments and behaviors. For example, a person may excuse certain infractions from some subgroups and not from others because they unconsciously made judgments. There are three vital steps in combating implicit bias, particularly when referring to school discipline, beginning with the initial step acknowledging that a disparity exists. During Stage 2, one may find implicit bias is the root cause of discipline disparities and come to terms with his or her implicit bias. In Stage 3, one can plan how to address it. This approach includes increasing exposure to counter-stereotypes and stereotypical individuals, revising the code of conduct, and providing training on building social and emotional learning competencies. It is important to note that Stage 3 is most effective after individuals have gone through Stage 2.

LGBTQ

A label that describes the sexual orientation or gender identity of people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning.

Odds ratio

A measure of the likelihood of an occurrence given a particular exposure, compared with the odds of the outcome occurring in the absence of that exposure.¹⁴ For example, schools sometimes calculate the odds that students of color will graduate if suspended compared with the odds that White students will graduate if not suspended. This calculation can be used to identify discipline disparities when comparing odds ratios.

Positive behavioral interventions and supports

A framework or an approach for assisting school personnel in adopting and integrating evidence-based behavioral interventions into classroom management strategies to enhance academic and social behavior outcomes for all children. The approach is built on the notion that most students will be academically and socially successful when positive school culture is promoted, academic success is maximized, and the use of prosocial skills is recognized. This framework emphasizes the establishment of organizational supports or systems, which give school personnel the capacity to effectively implement interventions at the school, district, and state levels. The supports include team-based leadership, data-based decision making, continuous monitoring of student behavior, regular universal screening, and effective ongoing professional development.¹⁵

Positive school climate

A school that fosters safety; promotes a supportive academic, disciplinary, and physical environment; and embraces respectful, trusting, and caring relationships throughout the school community. A positive school climate is critically related to school success. For example, it can improve attendance, achievement, retention and graduation rates.

Qualitative data

Data that are not expressed numerically. This type of data provides information drawn from reviewing policies, rules, and regulations, and from conducting interviews or focus groups (e.g., “Why do you feel that discipline is unfair”). Qualitative data are useful in deepening understandings of what the statistical findings show—deeper conversations, even interviews and focus groups—with individuals who were or are affected by disciplinary practices.¹⁶

Quantitative data

Data that are expressed numerically. Examples of this type of data may include information that your school or district collects on how many students are sent out of class and for what reasons or how many students are suspended from school in a given year. It also can include quantification of individuals’ perceptions or attitudes (e.g., data on school climate and attitudinal surveys).¹⁷

Ratio

The quantitative relation between two amounts showing the number of times one value contains or is contained within the other: the ratio of men’s jobs to women’s is 8 to 1.¹⁸ (See also *odds ratio*, *risk ratio*, and *risk index* for definitions relevant to this term.)

Restorative practices

A framework of processes that schools can use to prevent and address conflict and poor behavior, including, but not limited to, restorative circles, family group conferences, social and emotional learning, and informal practices such as affective questioning. Rather than implementing a program, restorative practices focus on building and maintaining healthy relationships among individuals and maintaining a sense of community. In the case of a disciplinary infraction, restorative practices allow individuals to take full responsibility for their behavior by addressing the individual(s) affected by the behavior. Through these practices, individuals come to understand how their behavior affected others, recognize that their behavior was harmful to others, move toward repairing the harm, and work on not repeating that behavior again.¹⁹

Risk index

The risk index indicates the likelihood of a student experiencing a disciplinary outcome such as expulsion. It answers the question: What percentage of students from a specific demographic group experience a particular type of disciplinary action? It can be calculated using the following formula:²⁰

$$\text{Risk} = \frac{\text{Number of students (unduplicated student count) from demographic group in discipline category}}{\text{Number of students from demographic group}} \times 100$$

For instance, if 229 Black students were subjected to in-school suspension and there were 533 Black students enrolled in the school, the likelihood of or risk for in-school suspension for Black students would be 36.6%. That is, 36.6% of all Black students were referred to in-school suspension at least once during the school year. The percentage of a given population that is represented by a specific subgroup. This number can help you quantitatively pinpoint specific disparities by allowing an individual to identify (and compare) the percentage of students in each subgroup. For instance, if 8% of all Hispanic students in a school have been suspended, then it can be said that Hispanic students in that school have an 8% chance of being suspended, which may vary from the likelihood of their counterparts from different racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Risk ratio

The risk ratio indicates how the risk (see risk index) for one demographic group compares with the risk for a comparison group. It answers the question: How does the risk for disciplinary action of a particular demographic group compare with another? The risk ratio can be calculated using the following formula:²¹

$$\text{Risk Ratio} = \frac{\text{Risk for demographic group for discipline category}}{\text{Risk for comparison group for discipline category}}$$

For instance, if the risk for in-school detention for Hispanic students is 32.3% and the risk for White students is 12.9%, then the risk ratio for in-school detention for Hispanics is 2.5, indicating that Hispanics are 2.5 times more likely than White students to be referred to in-school detention.

Root cause analysis

A method of problem solving that tries to identify the root causes of problems or patterns found within data. For example, when conducting a root cause analysis on how many students are experiencing exclusionary discipline, the analysis will consist of assessing the extent to which subgroups are represented in the exclusionary discipline categories, based on the rate of students from one racial/ethnic demographic in comparison with their counterparts.²²

Weighting (Weighting data)

A method used in statistical analysis to adjust sample data in order to make inferences from a sample to a population. In other words, when data are collected from only a portion of the population, each respondent is given a “weight” value to indicate how many similar individuals (or entities) that respondent’s data represent. Weights should reflect unequal probabilities of selection into the sample, adjust for omissions from nonresponse of sample persons, and improve the precision of estimates by using information about the target population. For example, if you want to conduct a study about a population of 100,000 students, and a representative sample of students is selected to participate, each student will receive a weight value that indicates how many students his or her data will represent (those weights will add to 100,000).

Endnotes

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