This study examined the impact on student academic performance of referrals for disciplinary intervention in West Virginia. The study also examined differences in these impacts among various student subgroups.

**Method of study.** Using discipline referral data entered into the West Virginia Education Information System for the 2012-2013 school year and employing cross tabulations and binary logistic regression procedures, the odds of scoring below proficiency on WESTEST 2 based on disciplinary involvement and student characteristics were determined. Findings were essentially the same for math and reading/language arts, so results focus only on math.

**Findings.** Of 160,480 students in the analysis, about 29.6% had one or more referrals for inappropriate behaviors. Overall about 12% had only a single referral, 10.4% had 2 to 4 referrals, and 6.7% had 5 or more. Results include the following:

- Students with one or more discipline referrals were 2.4 times more likely to score below proficiency in math than those with no discipline referrals; math proficiency among these students exhibited a 40 percentage point deficit (29.7% vs. 70.3%).
- As the number of discipline referrals increased so did the odds of poor academic performance. Students with 2 to 4 referrals were 2.7 more likely to score below proficiency; students with 5 or more were 4.6 more likely. Students with a single discipline referral saw a 25 percentage point proficiency gap, while 2 to 4 referrals added another 20 points and 5 or more referrals added yet another 20 points.
- When the disciplinary consequences take the form of in-school or out-of-school suspension, the risk of scoring below proficiency increases and proficiency gaps widen.
- Students with disabilities who had a single discipline referral were no more likely to score below proficiency than students with disabilities without discipline referrals. However, when they received 2 to 4 referrals they were 3.7 more likely to score below proficiency; with 5 or more discipline referrals they were 12 times more likely.
- Low income students with a single discipline referral were 1.48 times more likely to score below proficiency than low income students with no referrals; those with 5 or more were 3.25 more likely.
- While previous studies showed Black students to be at greater risk of receiving discipline referrals and suspensions, no interaction was found between disciplinary involvement and race relative to academic performance.

**Limitations of study.** 2012–2013 was a transition year as West Virginia deployed a new discipline management system. It is not clear what effect this transition had on the completeness or accuracy of data summarized in this report.

**Recommendations** include (a) encourage diligence in accurately reporting discipline behaviors as required by Policy 4373; (b) provide training/technical assistance specific to positive discipline approaches and alternatives to suspension; (c) build district and school staff capacity to provide appropriate behavioral interventions via the Support for Personalized Learning three-tiered framework; and (d) further investigate subgroup disparities and deliver professional development and technical assistance to minimize them.

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