
HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE POLICIES

A Health Impact Assessment of Exclusionary School Discipline, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and Restorative Justice Policies in Three California School Districts



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1 Executive Summary

Introduction

One major responsibility of the U.S. public school system is to provide a safe and hospitable “school climate” in which teachers can successfully teach and students can successfully learn. School discipline policies are one factor for promoting safe, positive, and healthy schools. “Zero tolerance” discipline policies enforce mandatory sentencing for specific behaviors, leaving no room for administrators to exercise good judgment based on specific contexts. Current national, state, and local school district policy debates have explored the costs and benefits of zero tolerance and alternative discipline programs. Few of these debates, however, incorporate the health of students and their communities as part of the cost-benefit analysis. In order to more deeply investigate the potential impacts of different school discipline policies on health determinants and disparities, Human Impact Partners (HIP) conducted a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) on school disciplinary policies being implemented or considered in Los Angeles, Oakland, and Salinas, California school districts. This HIA was the first HIA on an education policy in the United States and was funded by The California Endowment (TCE).

HIA is a combination of procedures, methods, and tools by which a policy or project may be judged for its potential health effects on a population, and the distribution of those effects within the population. HIA can be used to improve the quality of public policy decision-making through evidence-based recommendations to enhance predicted positive health impacts and minimize negative ones.

Background and Screening

Human Impact Partners initially pursued incarceration as a topic for a prospective HIA due to its major impacts to individual and societal health and wellbeing, as well as our understanding that these impacts are not commonly discussed in policy-making or advocacy contexts. Discussions with foundations and advocates revealed that school discipline would be a more impactful focus area. School suspensions and expulsions were acknowledged as upstream determinants of incarceration outcomes, and advocates perceived that momentum for policy change was growing in many school districts around the country. Prior needs assessments conducted by TCE identified school discipline as a priority health issue with opportunities for change in Los Angeles, Oakland, and Salinas. School districts in each of these cities were found to be at various stages of reforming and/or implementing their discipline policies, with advocates in each city already working to advance discipline policy change and policy implementation. Thus, the HIA was funded in these three TCE sites. To guide the HIA process, HIP assembled a national stakeholder advisory group consisting of academic scholars of education policy, leaders of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Justice (RJ) development and implementation, nonprofit leaders in policy analysis, and public health and school district representatives.

As described in more detail below, school discipline policies assessed in this HIA are Exclusionary School Discipline (ESD; also called “zero tolerance”), Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and

Restorative Justice (RJ). In Los Angeles, HIP worked in collaboration with Community Asset Development Re-Defining Education (CADRE), which has fought for greater implementation of an existing School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports (SWPBS) policy in schools throughout Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). This HIA aims to inform implementation of the policy in Los Angeles.

Oakland Unified School District's (OUSD's) board passed a district-wide Restorative Justice resolution 2010, and while RJ is being practiced in some Oakland schools, this HIA aims to provide evidence to inform further implementation.

Restorative Justice Partners (RJP) was the Salinas partner on the HIA. RJP works to introduce RJ practices into Salinas school districts, and in 2011, Salinas City Elementary School District (SCESD) passed an RJ resolution. In Salinas, this HIA aims to inform a decision-making process on whether to introduce RJ practices to the Alisal Union School District (AUSD).

School Discipline Policies Evaluated in this HIA

Exclusionary School Discipline (ESD) policies, also known as “zero tolerance policies,” typically enforce mandatory sentencing such as automatic out-of-school suspension, expulsion, or even arrest as consequences for specific student behaviors. These policies emerged as part of a federal mandate regarding weapons at school, but over the course of their widespread adoption in the 1990s, local school districts slowly broadened their scope, eventually including drugs, alcohol, threats, insubordination, and even cursing to the list of behaviors that may now trigger severe disciplinary actions. While there are limited data on the proportion of schools in the United States that formally implement ESD policies, there is consensus in the research community that the majority of U.S. public schools tend to rely heavily on ESD as their primary disciplinary strategy.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports and *Restorative Justice* are two well-known whole-school climate programs currently being scaled up in U.S. schools to address classroom and campus behavior, often as alternatives to zero tolerance policies. The two policies are complementary.

With the goal of improving school climate and decreasing school disruption, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) teaches social skills and reinforces positive student behaviors. HIA partners in South Los Angeles have focused efforts on adopting and implementing PBIS district-wide in LAUSD, and there is interest within OUSD and multiple Salinas school districts (including SCESD) to increase the use of PBIS in schools as well.

A Restorative Justice (RJ) approach also can be universally applied across a school, engaging students in taking responsibility for school improvement and when necessary, focusing on ‘repairing the harm’ caused by challenging behavior through stakeholder cooperation and dialogue. Administrators, teachers and peers work with the offender to take responsibility for his/her actions and change disruptive behavior. HIA partners in both Oakland and Salinas have focused on implementing RJ.

HIA Goals and Scope

The goals of this HIA are to:

- Determine health impacts of ESD policies and potential impacts of PBIS and RJ
- Recognize where gaps in equity occur
- Provide recommendations for school districts
- Increase awareness of ESD alternatives
- Increase HIA as a tool for policy decisions

The health impacts that were assessed at each site were those associated with educational attainment, recurring misbehavior in schools, community violence and crime, drug use, family, school and community cohesion, and mental health. The national advisory committee provided guidance on, reviewed, and approved the HIA scope.

HIA Assessment Methods

Methods utilized in this HIA included a review of the literature, evaluation of California state student and school staff surveys, a survey administered by and for parents in South Los Angeles, focus groups with students and parents in Los Angeles and Oakland, and interviews with a school superintendent and advocates in Salinas.

Summary of Findings

The HIA finds that ESD is hazardous for health in terms of the health determinants studied, while both PBIS and RJ are promising alternatives for improving health impacts. More evaluation of PBIS and RJ is needed for a deeper understanding of the impacts of these strategies on health.

For all three districts analyzed, PBIS would increase time in school for students, which would in turn improve health knowledge and behaviors, increase longevity, increase earning potential and thus access to resources, and increase access to social networks of support. Students who remain in school are less likely to become involved in a physical fight, carry a weapon, and use drugs. In addition, keeping students in school would prevent family stress and financial burdens associated with staying home to supervise children. Negative mental health conditions associated with exclusionary discipline, such as embarrassment, reticence, stress, and feelings of rejection and alienation, would be reduced as a result of PBIS implementation.

There is less robust research on the impacts of RJ than on the impacts of PBIS. However, based on the more limited sources and methods used in this HIA, as implemented in OUSD and Salinas schools, RJ would increase time in school for students, which would in turn support all of the benefits in the preceding paragraph. In addition, RJ may increase the development and sustainability of positive relationships throughout the school community, increase respect among students, improve conflict resolution skills, and prevent instances of violence, fights, and crime.

Summary of PBIS, RJ, and ESD Impacts on Health Determinants

Health Determinant	Impact	Magnitude	Severity	Strength of Evidence	Uncertainties
Education	+ (PBIS) + (RJ) - (ESD)	Mod–Major (PBIS) Moderate (RJ) Major (ESD)	Mod–Major	◆◆ (PBIS) ◆ (RJ) ◆◆◆ (ESD)	Varying degrees of discipline policy implementation will modify impacts Student vulnerability or trauma associated with factors outside of school play a role in all of these health determinants (i.e., school discipline policies are not the only contributor)
Misbehavior, Recurring Discipline Events, and Incarceration	+ (PBIS) + (RJ) - (ESD)	Mod-Major (PBIS) Mod-Major (RJ) Major (ESD)	Mod–Major	◆◆ (PBIS) ◆ (RJ) ◆◆◆ (ESD)	
Community Violence and Crime	+ (PBIS) + (RJ) - (ESD)	Minor (PBIS) Minor (RJ) Minor (ESD)	Major	◆ (PBIS) ◆ (RJ) ◆ (ESD)	
Drug Use	+ (PBIS) + (RJ) - (ESD)	Minor-Mod (PBIS) Minor –Mod (RJ) Minor–Mod (ESD)	Moderate	◆ (PBIS) ◆ (RJ) ◆ (ESD)	
Family, School and Community Cohesion	+ (PBIS) + (RJ) - (ESD)	Minor (PBIS) Moderate (RJ) Mod-Major (ESD)	Moderate	◆ (PBIS) ◆ (RJ) ◆ (ESD)	
Mental health conditions	+ (PBIS) + (RJ) - (ESD)	Moderate (PBIS) Moderate (RJ) Mod-Major (ESD)	Mod–Major	◆ (PBIS) ◆ (RJ) ◆◆ (ESD)	

Explanations:

- *Impact* refers to whether the proposal will improve health (+), harm health (-), or whether results are mixed (*).
- *Magnitude* reflects a qualitative judgment of the size of the anticipated change in health effect (e.g., the increase in the number of cases of disease, injury, adverse events): Negligible, Minor, Moderate, Major.
- *Severity* reflects the nature of the effect on function and life expectancy and its permanence: High = intense/severe; Mod = Moderate; Low = not intense or severe.
- *Strength of Evidence* refers to the strength of the research/evidence showing causal relationship between mobility and the health outcome: ◆ = plausible but insufficient evidence; ◆◆ = likely but more evidence needed; ◆◆◆ = causal relationship certain. A causal effect means that the effect is likely to occur, irrespective of the magnitude and severity.

Health Disparities

Black, and to a lesser extent Latino, males are suspended and expelled more frequently than students of other racial groups despite evidence showing that Black students are consistently disciplined for less serious or more subjective reasons than students of other racial groups. Black and Latino boys make up the majority of incarcerated juveniles and are vastly overrepresented in adult prison. Thus, the school to prison pipeline is particularly robust for Black and Latino men and boys. And although problem behaviors, such as drug use, are marginally higher among White youth, increased police presence in many Black and Latino neighborhoods increases the chances of police contact that results in arrests and subsequent incarcerations. Through these impacts, exclusionary discipline disproportionately leads to

poor short- and long-term health outcomes for Black and Latino males.

Low-income students and students with disabilities are also punished disproportionately.

Key Recommendations

Overall, this HIA found that ESD leads to negative health outcomes through educational attainment, recurring discipline events and incarceration, violence, drug use, and social cohesion, as well as direct mental health impacts. Based on results of this HIA, we recommend PBIS and/or RJ as alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices. However, importantly, since there is currently a dearth of research evidence on PBIS and RJ, we also recommend a rigorous system of school discipline events data collection and evaluation across all schools that are piloting these alternative programs.

Conclusion

Each school district where this HIA was conducted is in the midst of school discipline policy change. Restorative Justice and/or Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports are being practiced in Los Angeles, Oakland, and Salinas, but policies are not being fully implemented in all schools in these districts. As more schools implement PBIS and RJ, and as more years of data on disciplinary outcomes become more widely available for these schools, it will be possible to more robustly assess the effectiveness of these programs on improving health outcomes.

Case Study: Los Angeles Unified School District

High school graduation rates and test scores for LAUSD are lower than state averages, and dropout rates are higher than state averages. Suspension rates in LAUSD Local District 7 in South LA have been approximately 4 suspensions per 100 students, and disciplinary referrals disproportionately involve students of color. The violent crime rate in South LA is over twice that of the county, while the property crime rate is about equal to the county's rate. Many school staff have reported that drug use is a problem among students. About one-third of students reported that sadness or depression affects their normal daily activities.

LAUSD passed a School-Wide Positive Behavioral Supports (SWPBS) policy in 2007. However, not all district schools are doing a good job putting the policy into place. Based on an analysis of PBIS in schools in four states across the country, in 2009-10, if the middle and high schools in Local District 7 had increased their use of SWPBS by 50%:

- **741 (approximately 1/3)** out-of-school suspensions would have been prevented
- **At least 741** school days of student instructional time would have been saved
- **31** school days of teaching time would have been saved
- **93** school days of administrative time would have been saved

South Los Angeles parents expressed in focus groups and surveys that education for their children is a top priority. Based on their experiences, suspensions push kids towards delinquency, increase violence, increase drug and alcohol use, and increase the chances of their children coming into contact with law enforcement. Parents were also very concerned about mental health issues for their children, believing that poor mental health can spiral into other problems like drug use, violence, and disciplinary events and incarceration.

South LA youth, both those who had and had not been suspended in the past, were very opposed to exclusionary discipline practices overall. They felt that suspensions and expulsions are ineffective at preventing future misbehavior and set students up for academic failure. They also expressed that severe disciplinary actions can result in stress and harm psychological well-being of students. Students overwhelmingly agreed that suspensions encourage students to “hang out” and have fun at best, and engage in illicit and violent activities at worst. Some students acknowledged that disciplining chronically disruptive students was necessary.

Findings of this HIA support the following key recommendations at LAUSD:

- All LAUSD schools should fully implement the existing SWPBS policy.
- The Los Angeles School Police Department, the Los Angeles Police Department, and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department should prioritize and be trained in SWPBS as an intervention approach with South LA youth, community, and schools.
- LAUSD teachers and schools should engage parents to the highest degree possible, including within classrooms and in SWPBS implementation.
- LAUSD should concretely define the meaning of “willful defiance,” which is often cited as a reason for school exclusions, and stop suspending and expelling students for subjective reasons.

Case Study: Oakland Unified School District

High school graduation rates and test scores for OUSD are lower than, and dropout rates are higher than, state averages. Suspension rates have been approximately 15 suspensions per 100 students, and disciplinary referrals disproportionately involve students of color. Oakland is classified as one of the most violent cities in the state. Many juvenile arrests occur in OUSD schools. Many school staff report that drug use is a problem among students. About one-third of students reported that sadness or depression affects their normal daily activities.

In January 2010, the OUSD School Board passed a resolution to adopt a district-wide Restorative Justice (RJ) policy, and RJ is currently being piloted at 12 OUSD schools. District leadership hopes that in the future, all OUSD schools will implement RJ at full scale. OUSD has also started implementing a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program. By the end of the 2011-12 school year, a cohort of 10-12 pilot schools will be implementing PBIS in some form. Full PBIS implementation at these schools is expected to begin in the 2012-13 school year.

Based on a predictive analysis of PBIS in schools in four states around the country, in 2009-10, if the 36 middle and high schools that have publicly available suspension data from the California Department of Education's Dataquest website had increased their use of PBIS by 50%:

- **1,568 (approximately 1/3)** out-of-school suspensions would have been prevented
- At least **1,568** school days of student instructional time would have been saved
- **65** school days of teaching time would have been saved
- **196** school days of administrative time would have been saved

RJ is also anticipated to keep more kids in school rather than being suspended and expelled.

The general feeling of several Oakland high school students who participated in focus groups was that exclusionary discipline was completely ineffective, and that an RJ approach is more promising. One student said that in response to a disciplinary situation, misbehaving students should discuss and question the weight of and reasons for their harmful behavior, appropriate consequences, and how to prevent similar behavior in the future.

Some students who had experienced RJ circles themselves claimed that RJ can result in students involved in a conflict resolving their differences and even becoming friends. However, at least two other students expressed that they wouldn't feel comfortable participating in an RJ circle and becoming friends with someone who harmed them.

Findings of this HIA support the following key recommendations at OUSD:

- OUSD should continue the existing RJ and PBIS programs at OUSD pilot schools.
- OUSD should concurrently conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of the RJ and PBIS programs.
- As part of the evaluation, OUSD should implement a rigorous system of school discipline events data collection across all OUSD schools, with data cross-referenced with information on student and family demographics, academic performance and advancement, and health.
- OUSD should concretely define the meaning of "willful defiance," which is often cited as a reason for school exclusions, and stop suspending and expelling students for subjective reasons.

Case Study: Salinas City Elementary School District

Suspension rates at SCESD have been approximately 8 suspensions per 100 students, and disciplinary referrals disproportionately involve students of color. The homicide rate in the city of Salinas has recently increased steadily over the past several years, and is currently estimated to be around four times higher than the national rate. The rate of total violent crimes in Salinas is also higher than state and national rates.

Restorative Justice (RJ) practices have been piloted in some Salinas elementary schools since 2009. In Summer 2011, SCESD's school board unanimously passed a Restorative Justice resolution for the district. Today, advocates are pushing for RJ implementation in other districts in the county, such as Alisal Union School District. In addition to RJ, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) strategies have been implemented in three SCESD schools, and the district plans to expand their PBIS programs when funding allows.

The SCESD superintendent interviewed for this HIA emphasized the positive role of RJ in her district. She has anecdotally observed that RJ has reduced suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to police, and has helped student and teacher stress levels go down. She believes that students who learn RJ skills at school bring them into their homes and communities, and that this can result in decreased violence and crime in the community overall. She also supported the use of PBIS in schools.

Findings of this HIA support the following key recommendations for Salinas school districts:

- SCESD should continue supporting and developing its existing RJ and PBIS programs.
- SCESD should concurrently conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of RJ and PBIS programs.
- As part of the evaluation, SCESD should implement a rigorous system of school discipline events data collection across all SCESD schools, with data cross-referenced with information on student and family demographics, academic performance and advancement, and health.
- Additional Salinas school districts, including Alisal, should consider passing and implementing RJ and PBIS resolutions and programs.

2 Introduction

One major responsibility of the US school system is to provide a safe and hospitable “school climate” in which teachers can successfully teach and students can successfully learn. School discipline policies are one key driver for promoting safe, positive, and healthy school climates. Beyond the effects of school discipline on educational achievement, however, healthy school climates and the discipline policies that impact them can both model and enrich healthy communities, so that even outside school boundaries, respect, cooperation, and learning are behavioral norms. These healthy environments, whether in schools or in the broader communities schools represent, are intimately tied to the population’s educational, economic and health outcomes.

2.1 EXCLUSIONARY SCHOOL DISCIPLINE POLICIES

Today, in the era of “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB), schools face enormous pressures to target their resources towards achieving measureable academic outcomes, such as high standardized-test scores and graduation rates. The NCLB emphasis has created a culture of policy-making whereby educators feel compelled to push “standards-based accountability” reforms, which tend to emphasize individual-level interventions designed to remedy poor academic performance. In some cases, this comes at the cost of school-wide community building. Teaching behavioral norms and developing positive school climate are often afterthoughts, secondary to initiatives that seem more obviously linked to academic performance.

As a result, many schools have adopted a *reactive* approach to school discipline, where the goal is to treat symptoms of an unhealthy school climate, as opposed to addressing risk factors that may lead to that climate. To achieve quick returns, schools dispose of “bad seeds” from the community, so that the “good apples” can learn, undisturbed. This has contributed to a disciplinary approach that can be referred to as “Exclusionary School Discipline” (ESD).

In reality, school discipline policies exist on a spectrum that spans from severe exclusionary actions (generally referred to as “Zero Tolerance” policies), to school-wide systems that prioritize intervention and positive behavioral supports. While there are limited data on the proportion of schools in the United States that formally implement Zero Tolerance or ESD policies, there is consensus in the research community that the majority of U.S. public schools tend to rely heavily on ESD as their primary disciplinary strategy.¹ Therefore, for the purposes of this paper, ESD is treated as the school discipline *status quo*.

The aggressive exclusionary discipline reflected in Zero Tolerance policies, specifically, is intended to deter future “misbehavior” by punishing all offenses severely. In so doing, these policies typically enforce mandatory sentencing for specific student behaviors. These policies emerged as part of a federal mandate regarding weapons at school, but over the course of their widespread adoption in the 1990s, local school districts slowly broadened Zero Tolerance policies’ scope, eventually including drugs, alcohol, threats, insubordination, and even cursing to the list of behaviors that may now trigger severe

disciplinary actions. These policies might mandate automatic out-of-school suspension, expulsion, or even arrest as consequences for specific offenses.² For example, according to a 2009 story in the *New York Times*, a Delaware first-grade student was suspended and summoned to a disciplinary hearing after bringing a camping utensil to school. The utensil, awarded to the six-year-old as a Cub Scout honor, doubled as a knife and was therefore considered a threat to safety. School officials stated that any child who brings a weapon to school faces immediate disciplinary action — regardless of intent.³

Outside descriptions in the popular media, the academic literature describes no persuasive arguments supporting the effectiveness of the spectrum of ESD policies for promoting school safety.⁴ Furthermore, numerous studies of school discipline find that schools that use ESD are no more likely to implement discipline consistently than schools that have alternative discipline policies.⁵ In fact, studies have found that 30% to 50% of suspended students are repeat offenders, suggesting that suspensions, especially, do not deter future disruptive behavior. In one study, researchers concluded that “for some students, suspension functions as more of a reinforcer than a punisher,”¹ where it may be perceived as a reward by students, many of which constantly struggle in school.

Other literature on discipline points to the overrepresentation of minority students in school punishment⁶ as an illustration of how schools overuse exclusionary discipline towards certain student subgroups, excluding specific racial, ethnic or disabled groups of students, regardless of the severity or type of offense.⁶ Advocates for school discipline reform point to persistent racial and gender disparities in disciplinary referrals, suspensions, and expulsions as indications that the education community needs to re-evaluate school discipline practices and norms. Students of color (particularly, Black males) are punished more, and more severely, than White students. According to the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, for every White student suspended, nearly 3 Black students, 1.5 American Indian, and 1.2 Latino students are suspended.⁷ Studies have also found that high-needs, urban schools with large Black, low-income, and Latino student populations are more likely to resort to punitive approaches to discipline and less likely to use alternative disciplinary practices.⁸ Given the negative impact of school exclusions on academic achievement, disproportionate discipline for minority students might also contribute to disparities in academic achievement between White and minority students.⁹

2.2 ALTERNATIVE DISCIPLINE POLICIES

*Until school administrators become convinced of the efficacy and the feasibility of alternatives to school suspension and expulsion, there is little likelihood that there will be a wholesale abandonment of exclusionary discipline. Research on effective preventive alternatives....is thus critical in order to assist schools in development sound alternatives to exclusionary discipline.*⁴

The disconnect between exclusionary school discipline’s ubiquity and effectiveness has led groups of students, parents, teachers, administrators and others invested in schools to further examine the consequences of exclusionary discipline policies and to explore policy alternatives. Over the last ten years, groups including the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Advancement Project, and various state departments of education have issued reports on school

discipline challenges and opportunities. As a result of this spotlight, alternative approaches to exclusionary discipline—including predecessors of and programs like Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Practices in Schools (RPS)—have gained significant momentum in policy discussions across the country. In California, school districts looking to expand their disciplinary toolboxes have dedicated considerable resources to the implementation of PBIS and RPS, particularly.

POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS (PBIS)

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based method for improving student behavior and creating a safe and productive school culture. PBIS schools set clear expectations for behavior, acknowledge and reward appropriate behavior, and implement a consistent continuum of consequences for problem behavior. The PBIS design includes three tiers of supports, which include Tier I supports for the entire student population (often referred to as School-Wide PBIS) and Tier II interventions for students at higher risk of behavioral problems. Tier III supports offer students with serious or chronic behavior problems behavior assessments to determine the causes of their behavior, as well as individualized behavioral interventions. School-wide PBIS is employed throughout the entire school, including the cafeteria, the buses and the hallways. All school personnel are trained in PBIS and are continually supported in implementing it. Finally, PBIS schools are expected to rely on data, tracked most easily in the form of office referrals, to both develop and modify their PBIS implementation. Promising evidence for the implementation of PBIS in elementary schools has not been similarly replicated at the middle and high school levels.

SCHOOL-BASED RESTORATIVE JUSTICE (RJ)

The Restorative Justice approach to school discipline holds youth accountable to members of the school community for their negative behaviors. In a school setting, it shifts the focus away from rules and toward the relationships between people in the school community. Repairing damage caused by offending student behavior occurs by including all of the people involved to determine what happened and identifying responses that might make things better. This allows people who have harmed others to take responsibility for their behavior and for everyone to be involved in creating a safer community.¹⁰ As defined and practiced in Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) schools, for example, RJ operates under three core principles: (1) identifying harm, (2) involving all stakeholders to their desired comfort level, and (3) true accountability — taking steps to repair the harm and address its causes to the degree possible.¹⁰

Despite mounting evidence from the Juvenile Justice system that Restorative Justice approaches are effective for decreasing recidivism in juvenile delinquency, Restorative Justice in schools is relatively unexplored territory in the United States. While evaluations of school-based RJ are sparse, there is considerable information about the philosophy of school-based RJ, which emphasizes “prevention, intervention, and re-integration,”¹¹ as opposed to exclusion.

2.3 A ROLE FOR HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

HIA is a combination of procedures, methods and tools by which a policy or project may be judged for its potential health effects on a population, and the distribution of those effects within the population.¹²

HIA can be used to improve the quality of public policy decision making through evidence-based recommendations to enhance predicted positive health impacts and minimize negative ones.

In a recent Institute of Medicine report in the series “For the Public’s Health”, the expert committee recommends that, “State and federal governments evaluate the health effects and costs of major legislation, regulations, and policies that could have a meaningful impact on health. This evaluation should occur before and after enactment.”¹³ The idea that policy is itself a health determinant, and that social, economic and physical environments are shaped not only by individual choices but also by national, state and local policy decisions, has been under-explored.

This call to inter-sectoral action for health is perhaps most relevant to education, particularly because research consistently demonstrates that school achievement and health are inextricably linked. In 2009, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Commission to Build a Healthier America summarized a wide body of literature on this topic.

People with more education are likely to live longer, to experience better health outcomes, and to practice health-promoting behaviors such as exercising regularly, refraining from smoking, and obtaining timely health care check-ups and screenings. Educational attainment among adults is linked with children’s health as well, beginning early in life: babies of more-educated mothers are less likely to die before their first birthdays, and children of more- educated parents experience better health.¹⁴

Yet despite our awareness that education plays a critical role in shaping the health trajectories of American youth, decisions about specific school-based policies rarely weigh their potential health consequences. This is a missed opportunity to collaborate across sectors to improve the well-being of American youth.

In school discipline policy debates, particularly, a health perspective has the potential to make novel contributions regarding the health ramifications and long-term cost-effectiveness of various policy options. There are obvious ways that school disciplinary policies may affect the health and well-being of students. Mental health can be impacted directly. In 2010, 15-year-old student Nick Stuban was suspended from school in Fairfax, Virginia for a first-time behavioral offense involving possession of a marijuana look-alike substance. Following the event, Nick, a football player and avid Boy Scout, was not allowed on school grounds to participate in any of his daily activities. He subsequently plunged into a depression that resulted in suicide. A broader examination of zero tolerance policies in Fairfax, VA, documents similarly devastating stories regarding the direct effects of disciplinary policies on the health of disciplined students.¹⁵

Other health effects of school discipline are less obvious, and rarely, if ever, considered in decision-making around school or district discipline policies. For instance, students suspended from school are much more likely to engage in troublesome behavior. According to the Centers for Disease Control, “out of school” youth are significantly more likely than “in school youth” to become involved in physical fights, carry a weapon, smoke, use alcohol, marijuana and other drugs, and engage in sexual intercourse.¹⁶ Exclusionary discipline may also contribute to future disciplinary referrals,¹⁷⁻¹⁹ involvement

with the criminal justice system,^{20, 21} failure to complete school,²²⁻²⁴ lower levels of employment and income, and detract from family and community cohesion. Similarly, the contribution of discipline policies to students' perceptions of fairness and racial or ethnic discrimination has unique health effects. Identifying the effects of different policy options on the long-term health of students and their communities offers the potential to influence current policy discussions. While health is only one outcome influenced by school discipline decisions, its effects are potentially profound; incorporating an understanding of these health consequences contributes to fair, comprehensive and vigorous debate.

This report aims to identify the range of potential health effects that school discipline policy options may have in order to inform current policy discussions underway in three communities in California. The School Discipline Policy Health Impact Assessment was conceived of and led by Human Impact Partners—a non-profit agency dedicated to the use and promotion of health impact assessment in the United States—in collaboration with researchers at the University of California, San Francisco and University of California Berkeley's School of Public Health and Goldman School of Public Policy between March 2010 and December 2011. The project was funded by The California Endowment (TCE), in addition to support for individual researchers from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. A National Advisory Committee comprised of education and violence experts representing academic institutions, non-profit organizations, schools and government agencies offered counsel and support to these activities. A complete list of the National Advisory Committee and other contributing agencies and researchers is available in Appendix A.

This report structure follows the HIA process. We begin by presenting how the topic of school discipline was selected for analysis, followed by a discussion of the research scope. We then describe how school discipline policies lead to a variety of pathways that impact student and community health, and examine how existing PBIS and RJ models may be expected to differ from exclusionary disciplinary outcomes. Our findings are then applied to predictive analyses in case studies of three California locations: middle and high schools in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), middle and high schools in Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), and elementary schools in Salinas City Elementary School District, all of which are in various stages of reforming their school discipline contexts. Finally, we offer site-specific recommendations for improving school discipline, overall school climate, and the health of all students at these three sites. Broadly, we recommend that to promote healthy schools and communities, schools should adopt a public health approach to school-wide discipline. We recommend an emphasis on alternative disciplinary strategies that are focused on prevention, supportive of positive behavior, and that encourage learning from misbehavior.

3 Background and Screening

While there is no “typical” health impact assessment, best practice standards outline five steps in conducting an HIA:

- **Screening:** determines the need for and value of an HIA

- **Scoping:** identifies the potential health impacts to evaluate
- **Analysis:** Uses qualitative and quantitative data, expertise and experience to judge the magnitude and direction of potential health impacts
- **Reporting:** delivers results to stakeholders through reports and presentations
- **Monitoring:** tracks the effects of the HIA on the decision and critically reviews the HIA process

The screening process was conducted between March and November 2010. Human Impact Partners initially pursued incarceration as a topic for a prospective HIA due to its major impacts to individual and society health and wellbeing, as well as our understanding that these impacts are not commonly discussed in policy-making or advocacy contexts.

With the goal of gaining knowledge about policy angles and decision-making points appropriate for HIA, HIP staff reached out to incarceration policy advocates around the nation. Discussions with advocates revealed that school discipline would be a more impactful focus area for HIA. School suspensions and expulsions were acknowledged as upstream determinants of incarceration outcomes, and advocates perceived that momentum for policy change was growing in many school districts around the country. Initial research and brainstorming of potential health impacts of school discipline policies, which was visually illustrated by pathway diagrams (see Appendix B), yielded many serious and long-term hypothesized health impacts. However, these impacts were not being acknowledged in existing campaigns for policy change.

HIP coalesced these hypothesized impacts into distinct health determinant categories representing separate pathways to health:

- Educational attainment
- Discipline
- Violence
- Drug abuse
- Mental health
- Family and community cohesion

These pathways are discussed further in Section 4.

Because HIP had never before conducted an HIA on an education policy and didn't have the expertise or network to influence policy change alone, once deciding to pursue this HIA, the organization reached out to others to collaborate on this project. The following contributors guided and carried out the HIA process from start to finish:

- **Human Impact Partners staff** led the HIA process and facilitated the core HIA team.

- A **Robert Wood Johnson Health and Society Scholar** at the University of California, San Francisco and University of California, Berkeley School of Public Health was a member of the core HIA team.
- A **student researcher at the University of California Goldman School of Public Policy** was a member of the core HIA team.
- A **National School Discipline HIA Advisory Committee** composed of advocates, academic and other researchers, public health department staff, and school administrators (see Appendix A) was formed during the screening phase of the HIA and guided the entire HIA process, beginning with scoping (see Section 4).

In December 2010 the project received funding from The California Endowment (TCE). TCE focuses their funding on 14 communities within the State of California, and their own prior needs assessments in these communities identified school discipline as a priority health issue with opportunities for change in Los Angeles, Oakland and Salinas. School districts in each of these cities were found to be at various stages of reforming their discipline policies, and timelines for anticipated policy change allowed enough time for an HIA analysis. In Los Angeles, Oakland, and Salinas, there were already advocates working on advancing discipline policy change, and when HIP reached out to them they expressed interest in participating in an HIA. Thus, the HIA was funded in these three TCE sites.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation provided additional funding for the HIA to individual researchers on the HIA team.

4 HIA Scope

4.1 SCHOOL DISCIPLINE HIA OBJECTIVES

School disciplinary policies are likely to impact the health of students, families, and communities through several pathways. Students who are suspended, expelled, or sent to the juvenile justice system may have different educational, employment and income opportunities, all of which are important social determinants of health. The health of communities and subsequent generations also may be impacted when discipline policies affect criminal activity, education and incarceration.

One of the guiding values of HIA is equity. It is well documented that African American, Latino, Native American, and special-needs students are suspended or expelled at rates higher than those of their non-Hispanic white or non-special needs peers. The health disparity impacts of school disciplinary policies on students and their communities can inform debates about their consequences.

Given the likely impacts of different school discipline policies on health determinants and health disparities, our HIA aims to identify impacts of discipline policies on health determinants, which can then be linked to specific health outcomes. We anticipate that data on the impacts of these policies on individual and community health will be useful for school districts, as well as state and federal legislators considering changes to these policies. Furthermore, while health disparities are described extensively in

public health literature, interventions to prevent these disparities in educational arenas are understudied. This HIA of school disciplinary policies highlights opportunities for public health and education stakeholders to develop a shared agenda around educational success.

Specific objectives of this HIA included the following:

- Determine the health impacts of zero tolerance, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, and Restorative Justice on students and communities in Oakland, South Los Angeles and East Salinas school districts;
- Increase awareness among educators, school officials, teachers, parents, and students of the health implications of school disciplinary policies and thereby increase support for those that are found to be health-beneficial; and
- Increase awareness about HIA as a tool for identifying health impacts of public policy decision-making and build the capacity of others to conduct and participate in HIAs.

4.2 HIA SCOPING PROCESS

HIP and the National School Discipline HIA Advisory Committee (National Advisory Committee) conducted HIA scoping between May and December 2010. Scoping began by creating a series of pathway diagrams that illustrate hypothesized pathways between school discipline policies and health outcomes through educational attainment and achievement, disciplinary events and incarceration, mental health, violence, drug abuse, and family/community cohesion. Pathway diagrams for educational attainment, incarceration, and drug abuse are included in Appendix B.

HIA PARTNERS AND ROLES

While scoping for the overall HIA was led by the HIA Team with guidance from the National Advisory Committee, HIP and local partners collaboratively developed site-specific workplans in each of the three case study locations. These workplans included specific tasks, responsible parties, and timelines corresponding to local advocacy milestones.

The local HIA partner in Los Angeles was Community Asset Development Re-defining Education (CADRE), and in Salinas the local partner was Restorative Justice Partners (RJP). There was no formal partner in Oakland, however, various organizations contributed to specific stages of the HIA process and are cited later in this report.

Partner roles in the HIA scoping phase included:

- Educating the HIA team on the local school discipline context including on how discipline-related decisions are made, who the key players are, and what school discipline-related decisions the HIA could influence.
- Helping shape HIA scope and assessment to reflect priorities and needs of local partners.
- Reviewing the HIA scope and place-specific workplan.

- In some cases, sharing relevant quantitative data that they may have access to.
- In some cases, helping coordinate access to qualitative and quantitative data sources, including parents, administrators, and students.

4.3 DEVELOPMENT OF RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The pathway diagram and corresponding research questions to examine *educational outcomes*, and thus health outcomes associated with school discipline policies, included evaluating school performance with respect to:

- graduation rates
- academic performance and educational outcomes measures (standardized test scores)
- rates of truancy
- dropout rates
- relationships between school's discipline practices and the above indicators

The pathway diagram and corresponding research questions to examine *misbehavior, recurring discipline events, and incarceration* and thus health outcomes associated with school discipline policies, included evaluating school performance with respect to:

- suspension and expulsion rates and triggers
- student behavior
- relationships between school's discipline practices and the above indicators
- relationship between school discipline practices and later risk for incarceration
- relationship between parents and youth and law enforcement

The pathway diagram and corresponding research questions to examine *mental health outcomes* directly associated with school discipline policies included evaluating school performance with respect to:

- prevalence of depression
- prevalence of suicidal thought and tendencies
- prevalence of anxiety
- relationship between school discipline practices and the above indicators

The pathway diagram and corresponding research questions to examine *violence* and thus health outcomes associated with school discipline policies included evaluating school performance with respect to:

- rates and types of school violence
- community crime rates
- relationship between school discipline practices and risk for violence and crime

The pathway diagram and corresponding research questions to examine *drug use* and thus health outcomes associated with school discipline policies included evaluating school performance with respect to:

- rates of drug and alcohol use among students
- rates of drug-related offenses including suspensions/expulsions
- relationship between school discipline practices and the above indicators

The pathway diagram and corresponding research questions to examine *family and community cohesion* and thus health outcomes included comparing schools with different policies with respect to:

- student connectedness to schools, teachers, and peers
- parent and youth connectedness to their greater community and neighborhood
- family and community cohesion and stress
- relationship between school discipline practices and the above indicators

EXCLUSIONS DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACT MINORITY STUDENTS

A broad research theme that is weaved through all elements of the HIA scope (when possible) is the exploration of any disproportionate impact on minority students of discipline policies in Los Angeles, Oakland and Salinas.

Student behavior is only one variable that contributes to disciplinary outcomes. Teacher and administrator attitudes, school governance, and the racial make-up of schools also play crucial roles in determining the impact of disruptive behavior on students' educational trajectories.²⁵⁻²⁷ Taken together, school- and student-level factors explain the disproportionate use of disciplinary action across racial, cultural, disability, and socioeconomic status lines.²⁸⁻³³

Extensive research on disparate disciplinary outcomes suggests that racial disproportionality does not necessarily reflect authentic differences in student misconduct between minority and White students. In

fact, rich empirical research indicates that Black students, in particular, are referred to school administrative offices more often³⁴ and tend to receive harsher punishments than White students, even for less serious offenses.³⁵⁻³⁷

Research on racial disproportionality does indicate, however, that not *all* schools with low-income or minority student bodies record high suspension rates. This finding suggests that school-level interventions can successfully decrease racial disparities in school exclusions. For example, Raffaele Mendez et al. (2002)³⁸ found that schools that tended to emphasize prevention programs had lower out-of-school suspension rates, likely secondary to decreased disruptive behavior, and improved teacher classroom management. Other research on the positive relationship between administrator attitudes and school disciplinary action reinforces how school context and governance together drive rates of suspension and expulsion.³⁹

4.4 FINAL HIA SCOPE

Pathway diagrams, proposed research questions, and initial ideas for data sources were presented to the National Advisory Committee in a phone meeting in June 2010, during which the HIA Team received valuable feedback and additional resources. Following this meeting, the HIA scope was refined into a final scope detailing specific research questions, indicators, methods of analysis, and data sources. The final scope, divided into six sections representing each health determinant, is presented in Appendix C.

5 Assessment

We used a multiple-method approach to address research questions in this HIA, combining the experience and perspectives of stakeholders who daily experience the impacts of school discipline policies with quantitative data sources and methods. We conducted focus groups and interviews with OUSD, LAUSD, and Salinas students and administrators to learn local perspectives on school discipline. We created a survey that was administered by parent-members of CADRE to 120 South LA parents. We conducted an original multivariable regression analysis to determine effectiveness of PBIS on disciplinary and educational outcomes. We complemented these methods with a detailed review of empirical literature on school discipline and published reports from school districts and the California Department of Education (CDE). Additionally, we referenced the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and the California School Climate Survey (CSCS). This section summarizes general methods and findings before delving into case study analyses in Section 6.

5.1 Literature Reviews

Literature reviews were conducted by searching available scientific databases with terms related to school discipline, including: school discipline; school violence; suspension; expulsion; racial disproportionality; school achievement; school organizational health; restorative justice; and positive behavioral interventions and supports. Additional web searches using popular databases were subsequently examined for articles not appearing in the academic literature.

Literature review findings are presented in this section. First, evidence linking each of the six health determinants to health outcomes is described, followed by literature evidence on the impacts of ESD, PBIS, and RJ on health.

5.1.1 CONNECTION BETWEEN HEALTH DETERMINANTS AND HEALTH OUTCOMES

The six health determinants in this HIA scope were selected based on their likely impact on health outcomes (with the exception of mental health, which is a health outcome in itself) along with their connection with school discipline. The following table summarizes the literature evidence supporting each health determinant’s connection to health outcomes.

Table 5-1. Evidence linking select social determinants to health

Social Determinant	Health Effects	Further Resources
Education	<p>The more education people have, the better their health knowledge, behaviors, and outcomes.⁴⁰</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highly educated people have lower likelihoods of engaging in risky, health-detrimental behavior and are less likely to be overweight or obese.⁴¹ • Well-educated adults have better mortality outcomes than their less educated peers. • Educational attainment directly impacts people’s earnings potential. One year of education, for example, leads to roughly an 8% increase in earnings.⁴²⁻⁴⁴ • Education improves people’s access to social networks of support, reducing social stressors, improving community cohesion, and increasing social capital.⁴² • Attendance and grade point average are the two best predictors of whether incoming 9th grade students will graduate.⁴⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education and Health RWJ Report: (http://www.commissiononhealth.org/PDF/c270deb3-ba42-4fbd-baeb-2cd65956f00e/Issue%20Brief%206%20Sept%2009%20-%20Education%20and%20Health.pdf)
Misbehavior, Recurring Discipline Events, and Incarceration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some types of misbehavior, such as violence, are directly or indirectly related to health (see below). • Recurring discipline events can lead to school drop-out,⁴⁶ and when students drop out of school they are deprived above the health benefits listed above. • Juvenile and adult incarceration are associated with stress-related illnesses, psychiatric problems, suicide attempts, higher long-range recidivism rates, and increased HIV, Hepatitis C, and tuberculosis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burrell, S., DeMuro, P., Dunlap, E., Sanniti, C., & Warboys, L. (1998). <i>Crowding in Juvenile Detention Facilities: A Problem Solving Manual</i>. Richmond, KY: National Juvenile Detention Association and Youth Law Center. • Haggarty, M. F. (2000, Summer). <i>Incarcerated Populations & HIV</i>. Retrieved April 25, 2011, from <i>The Body: the Complete HIV/AIDS</i>: http://www.thebody.com/ • Farmer, P. (2003). <i>Pathologies of Power: Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Community Violence and Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The impacts of violence on health are both direct and indirect. In other words, violence can cause injury or death, but it also can affect health-related behaviors; create violence-related stress that has physiological affects on health; and can increase neighborhood and social adversity that are related to poor health.⁴⁷ • Child maltreatment, intimate partner violence, school, neighborhood and workplace violence all have both immediate and lasting effects on individuals and communities. • Neighborhood levels of violence are also linked to a population’s health. For instance, studies link neighborhood violent crime rates with adverse birth outcomes such as preterm birth and low birth weight, even when individual-level risk characteristics are taken into account.⁴⁸ • The effects of violence are cumulative; for instance, children who have experienced 5+ exposures to violence are 6x more likely to have low levels of self-rated health • There are strong associations between risk of violence and non-violent delinquency by both adolescent girls and boys⁴⁹ and exposure to violence in socially disadvantaged communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress and Health RWJ Report http://www.rwif.org/files/research/sdohseries2011violence.pdf
Drug Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alcohol use is linked to weight gain, high blood pressure, depressed immune system, cancer, liver disease, dementia, other brain disease and heart disease • Other drugs have been linked with a range of health outcomes, encompassing a range of acute and long-term effects. These effects include: mental health status deterioration, overdose and death, lung disease, violent behavior, unwanted pregnancies, transmission of HIV and other communicable diseases. • Alcohol and other substance use also are linked to poor school and work performance, increased numbers of accidental injuries and deaths, increased involvement in the justice system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Medicine, Bowles Center for Alcohol Studies http://www.med.unc.edu/alcohol/ • Center for Injury Research and Policy at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
Family, School, and Community Cohesion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social trust and other forms of social cohesion are important drivers of collective efficacy and key mechanisms linking inequality and health⁵⁰⁻⁵² • Low trust is significantly associated with lower self-rated health, suicide, homicide, assault, all-cause mortality, heart-disease mortality, and mortality from other causes⁵³ • Low levels of collective efficacy are associated with major depression⁵⁴ and violence⁵⁵ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bjornstrom EE. The neighborhood context of relative position, trust, and self-rated health. Soc Sci Med. 2011 May 27.⁵¹
Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress related to feeling unsafe in one’s neighborhood can have adverse health effects throughout life, and may influence subsequent generations. • Peer-to-peer bullying and educator-induced trauma aggravates stress symptoms and in some cases contribute to increased likelihood of developing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).⁵⁶ • Both early life⁵⁷ and chronic stress have been linked to poor birth outcomes; childhood illnesses like obesity;⁵⁸ and adult chronic disease, including mental health disorders,⁵⁹ diabetes, obesity, heart disease,⁶⁰ and substance abuse.⁶¹ 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress and Health RWJ Report: http://www.rwif.org/files/research/sdohstressandhealthissuebrief20110324.pdf

5.1.2 EXCLUSIONARY SCHOOL DISCIPLINE POLICIES

Now looking upstream of the health determinants, the following section presents literature evidence connecting exclusionary discipline to each of the six health determinants.

RESEARCH CONNECTING ESD TO EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Research has consistently shown that there is a negative association between rates of suspension/expulsion and both school-wide⁶²⁻⁶⁴ and individual academic achievement.⁶⁵ Out-of-school suspension has been linked to persistent academic failure, grade retention, negative school attitudes, increased Special Education referrals, and high early school dropout rates.^{5, 26, 66-69} On average, students who have been suspended more than once participate in fewer extracurricular activities, achieve lower grades, and have lower attendance rates than one-time suspendees or students who have never been suspended.^{26, 67}

A recent statewide longitudinal study in Texas⁴⁶ that tracked an entire cohort of students between 7th grade and graduation found that approximately 10% of students suspended or expelled during those years dropped out, and about 59% of students disciplined 11 times or more did not graduate from high school.

Furthermore, many studies show that even after controlling for rates of poverty, proportion of African-American students, school size, type, and locale, schools with high rates of suspension tend to achieve lower standardized test scores than schools with lower rates of suspension.⁷⁰ Studies offer a number of explanations for why exclusions lead to poor academic performance, including feelings of alienation, disenfranchisement from school, lack of trust, and considerable time spent out-of-school.

RESEARCH CONNECTING ESD TO MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

ESD and Recurring Discipline Events

While this section discusses ESD events as risk factors for additional misbehavior by the student and thus recurring discipline and incarceration, it is important to note that student misbehavior is not the only predictor of suspension and expulsion. Teacher and administrator attitudes about school discipline may be even more relevant: one researcher found that classroom and school characteristics are more predictive of an individual student's probability of being suspended than are student attitudes and behavior.³⁹ A statewide study conducted in Texas⁴⁶ found that of nearly 1 million students studied, nearly 60% of whom were suspended or expelled once between 7th and 12th grade, only 3% of the disciplinary actions were for conduct for which state law mandates suspensions and expulsions; the remainder were made at the discretion of school officials.

Most literature reports that suspension leads to increased rates of misbehavior and suspension among those suspended,^{17-19, 63} with repeat offenders causing between 30% and 50% of suspensions.⁷¹ However, this research is mixed, with some literature sources saying that ESD actually decreases incidents of misbehavior⁷² and aggressive behavior.⁷³

One reason for an increase in misbehavior may be that being suspended (or expelled) causes kids to be away from supervision provided at school. A Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention (CDC) study found that when youth are not in school, they are more likely to become involved in a physical fight, carry a weapon, use drugs (tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine), and engage in sexual intercourse.¹⁶

As reported in the introduction to this report, there are vast racial disparities in suspension and expulsion, with black males being punished more frequently and more severely than students of other racial groups.^{6, 18, 25, 36, 37, 74-77} Some research shows that Latino students also disproportionately disciplined, although this research is less consistent.^{37, 78}

ESD and Incarceration

The increased reliance on severe consequences in response to student disruption has resulted in an increase of referrals to the juvenile justice system for infractions that were once handled in school.^{21, 29} Most researchers have found the existence of a “school to prison pipeline,” in that exclusionary discipline practices at school lead to a higher risk of referral to juvenile justice and adult incarceration. One reason for this is that as of 2000, 41 states require that if a school removes a student for any criminal offense outlined in the state’s zero tolerance policy, the district is required to report that student to the juvenile authorities.⁷⁹ Another reason is that unsupervised youth are more likely to commit crimes: as many as 60% of daytime crimes are committed by truant youths,⁸⁰ and crimes outside of school are subject to consequences by law enforcement. Thus, the logical pathway between school and prison is that ESD leads to drop-out,^{23, 24} being out of school may lead to delinquent behavior, and this behavior may result in incarceration. A finding of the Texas longitudinal study cited previously was that a student who was suspended or expelled for a discretionary violation was nearly three times as likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system the following year.⁴⁶

Black and Latino boys are the most likely to be suspended and expelled in school, make up the majority of incarcerated juveniles,⁸¹ and also are vastly overrepresented in adult prison.⁸² Thus, the school to prison pipeline is particularly robust for Blacks and Latinos. In addition, there tends to be increased police presence in lower-income neighborhoods, many of which are heavily-populated with Blacks and Latinos, which increases the chances of police contact with youth in these neighborhoods. This may partly explain why the youth, and minority youth especially, who live in these neighborhoods may be subject to disproportionate amounts of arrests and subsequent incarcerations (A. Ruelas, personal communication, Nov. 17th, 2011).

RESEARCH CONNECTING ESD TO MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES

While the other five health determinants represent *indicators* of health influenced by school discipline, exclusionary discipline may *directly* impact health as well. A strong body of evidence suggests that ESD practices may actually be developmentally inappropriate for adolescents. While in certain instances, adolescent misbehavior results from individual poor choices, in many cases, adolescent delinquency — especially, acts of “defiance” and rebellion — may be expressions of developmental and neurological immaturity.²¹

ESD approaches have been found to increase post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD),⁵⁶ and may exacerbate students' tendencies towards disruption by arousing feelings of resentment and counter-coercion.⁸³ This is especially true for students with learning disabilities or exceptional mental or physical needs. These students are more prone to misbehavior, discipline, and referral to the juvenile justice system.^{84, 85}

Suspension and expulsion are not the lone culprits in harming mental health. More insidious disciplinary practices that pass without record legally and socially-sanctioned disciplinary practices, such as corporal punishment (still legal in 20 states) and so-called "motivational" public displays of disciplining, along with frequent use of alienating classroom management strategies, such as "time-outs,"⁸⁵ may lead to short- or long-term emotional damage among students.⁸⁵ These sorts of exclusionary disciplinary practices decrease students' feelings of "bondedness" to school, increasing the likelihood of delinquency⁸⁶ and inclinations towards aggressive and anti-social behaviors⁸⁷ and resulting behavioral disorders, such as Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD) and Conduct Disorder (CD).⁸⁸

RESEARCH CONNECTING ESD TO COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME

School violence has been relatively stable since 1985.²¹ However, there are mixed reports on whether critical violence, such as gun violence or other life-threatening violence, has changed, although research^{71, 89} and data agree that it remains a very small percentage of all school disruptions. Hahn et al cites various sources suggesting that gun violence declined over the 1990s after a peak in 1994, as did involvement in physical fights on school property.⁹⁰ However, the same authors indicated that the proportion of high school students reporting having been threatened or injured with a weapon on school property in the past 12 months remained steady over this period, at 7% to 9%.

There is no peer-reviewed literature evidence connecting ESD policies such as zero tolerance to actual direct measures of violence and disruption.^{4, 91} However, researchers have discovered that based on data from the National Center for Education Statistics, schools that use zero tolerance policies are still less safe than those without such policies.⁹²

RESEARCH CONNECTING ESD TO DRUG USE

As reported above, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) study found that when youth are not in school, they are more likely to use drugs (tobacco, alcohol, marijuana, and cocaine).¹⁶

RESEARCH CONNECTING ESD TO SCHOOL, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY COHESION

Little to no peer-reviewed research has been conducted on the impact of school discipline on school, family and community cohesion. However, one suggested family impact of ESD relates to family income and the costs associated with school exclusions. The American Psychological Association Task Force on Zero Tolerance reports that the costs of treatment associated with a student's contact with the juvenile justice system can negatively impact families.²¹

The same source notes that "no reports were found...indicating that [zero tolerance policies] have assisted parents in the difficult challenges of parenting or that family units have been strengthened through their use."

RESEARCH ON DISPARITIES IN ESD

An abundance of strong evidence shows that an overrepresentation in suspensions and expulsions has been found consistently for African American students,^{6, 18, 21, 25, 37, 38, 46, 74, 93, 94} and less consistently for Latino students.^{37, 46, 78} African American students may be disciplined more often and more severely for less serious or more subjective reasons.^{74, 76, 77, 94}

Low-income students are given more severe disciplinary consequences, such as suspension, than their higher income counterparts.^{25, 26} Both high- and low-income students agree that ESD policies are directed more towards poor students.^{6, 26, 33} Children with single parents are between two and four times as likely to be suspended or expelled from school as are children with both parents at home.⁹⁵

Students with disabilities also punished disproportionately.^{94, 96, 97} A recent statewide longitudinal study in Texas⁴⁶ that tracked an entire cohort of students between 7th grade and graduation found that nearly three quarters of students who qualified for special education services were suspended or expelled at least once. Students coded as having an “emotional disturbance” were especially susceptible to suspension and expulsion.

5.1.3 POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS

This section presents literature evidence connecting PBIS to each of the six health determinants.

RESEARCH CONNECTING PBIS TO EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Initial research from non-randomized studies indicate that implementation of PBIS was associated with improvements in student academic performance.⁹⁸ The developers of PBIS recently conducted a three-year randomized trial of school-wide PBIS using a waitlist design. Findings from this study indicated that PBIS was associated with an increase in third grade reading performance.⁹⁹ These are encouraging findings on the impact of PBIS on educational outcomes.

RESEARCH CONNECTING PBIS TO MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

Results of multiple studies indicate that implementation of school-wide PBIS is associated with a reduction in office discipline referrals and suspensions.¹⁰⁰⁻¹⁰⁴

RESEARCH CONNECTING PBIS TO MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES

Our literature review did not reveal any previous research on the effect of PBIS on mental health.

RESEARCH CONNECTING PBIS TO COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME

The three-year randomized trial of school-wide PBIS, conducted by the developers of PBIS, indicated that PBIS is associated with improvements in students’ perceptions of safety at school.⁹⁹ However, data on actual crime and violence occurrences was unavailable.

RESEARCH CONNECTING PBIS TO DRUG USE

Our literature review did not reveal any previous research on the effect of PBIS on drug use.

RESEARCH CONNECTING PBIS TO SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY COHESION

Preliminary findings from the ongoing five-year longitudinal randomized controlled trial of PBIS indicate that training in PBIS is associated with improvements in the school staff members' perceptions of the schools' organizational health.^{105, 106} Good organizational health was defined to include an emphasis on academic achievement, friendly and collegial relationships among staff, respect for all members of the school community, supportive administrative leadership, consistent discipline policies, attention to safety issues, and family and community involvement. "Organizational health" is an indicator assessed by staff and not students, and thus it is flawed as an indicator of students' connections with one another and with their school.

5.1.4 RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

This section presents literature evidence connecting RJ to each of the six health determinants. It is important to note that research suggests that successful implementation of RJ requires all adults within a school site — from custodial staff to school administrators — to be trained in restorative practices over a three-year period before RJ is fully effective (F. Davis, personal communication, Feb. 8, 2011). Appendix D includes a more comprehensive summary table of evaluations on school-based RJ to date.

RESEARCH CONNECTING RJ TO EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Research indicates that RJ practices in schools reduce suspensions and expulsions and helps create and sustain positive relationships throughout the school community (see below). These conditions are anticipated to lead to better educational outcomes such as attendance, academic performance, graduation, and test scores.

RESEARCH CONNECTING RJ TO MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

According to the report, "School-based restorative justice as an alternative to zero-tolerance policies: Lessons from West Oakland"¹⁰⁷ at Cole Middle School in Oakland, students and teachers felt that the implementation of RJ contributed to better behavior in the classroom. Some teachers reported that as a result of the RJ process there were fewer instances of harmful behavior, such as students acting out in the classroom or showing disrespect. This report also showed that astonishingly, expulsions were completely eliminated and suspensions were reduced by 87% after RJ was implemented at Cole Middle School. In the three years before RJ was implemented, there were 50 suspensions per 100 students, and in the two years after RJ was implemented, the rate fell to only six per 100 students.

However, many potentially confounding events could obscure the Cole Middle School data. Two main confounders are that a new principal started at the school at the same time that RJ implementation started, and student enrollment at the school reduced drastically in the same timeframe as RJ was implemented.^a

^a The report presents the following additional limitations to the Cole Middle School study:

- Cole Middle School was in the process of closing down and contained only one grade during the year of observation;

A study of RJ practices in Pennsylvania schools determined that RJ led to decreased suspensions, expulsions, disruptive behavior, recidivism, and discipline referrals in all six participating schools.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, a study of RJ in 19 Scottish schools found a measurable reduction of playground incidents, discipline referrals, exclusion and use of external behavior support.¹⁰⁹ A New Zealand study of RJ conferencing to address disciplinary problems in 34 New Zealand schools also saw a reduction in suspensions.¹¹⁰

RESEARCH CONNECTING RJ TO MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES

RJ has been found to have a positive effect on mental health outcomes in schools around the globe. Pre-post evaluations of student RJ programs in Australia,^{111, 112} Baltimore, Maryland,¹¹³ and New York City¹¹⁴ reported increased levels of respect and empathy, improved conflict resolution skills, and reduced antisocial behavior among students after they learned and implemented RJ practices. In addition to using them within their schools, students may also take these skills into their families and communities.

RESEARCH CONNECTING RJ TO COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME

Based on a report describing a pilot school-based RJ program at a West Oakland middle school, RJ was found to have contributed to making the school more peaceful, with fewer fights among students.¹⁰⁷ The study of the effects of RJ in six Pennsylvania schools documented reduced violence,¹⁰⁸ and an evaluation of school-based RJ in Australia reported increased perceptions of safety.^{111, 112, 115} A pre-post evaluation of a series of workshops on restorative practices for 5,000 students, 300 teachers, and 15 elementary schools in New York City¹¹⁴ found reduced crime among participants after participating in the workshops.

RESEARCH CONNECTING RJ TO DRUG USE

Our literature review did not reveal any previous research on the effect of RJ on drug use.

RESEARCH CONNECTING RJ TO SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY COHESION

A study of school-wide RJ in 19 Scottish schools determined a “positive disciplinary culture shift” though also indicated that greatest success was achieved where schools were successful in creating and sustaining positive relationships throughout the school community.¹¹⁶ Another study reported that when RJ was introduced with commitment, enthusiasm, leadership and significant staff development, there was a clear positive impact on all relationships in school.¹¹⁷

A pre-post evaluation of a school-based RJ program in Australia found increased student participation in the school community as a result of RJ. Increased respect among students was also observed.

-
- Programs besides RJ, including a mediation program, also existed and may have influenced student behavior and the number of suspensions.
 - As with all studies using direct observation and interviewing techniques, the presence of the interviewer and observer may have affected responses and behaviors; teachers mentioned that students may have been less disruptive when an observer was present, as another adult was in the classroom.

5.2 PBIS Effectiveness Study

To estimate the effectiveness of PBIS on disciplinary and educational outcomes, we combined data from the California Department of Education, the University of Oregon and the National Center for Education Statistics. Our objective was to monitor how changes in the degree of implementation or “fidelity” to the PBIS model coincided with changes in the number of school suspensions, major office disciplinary referrals (ODRs), recidivism rates for ODRs, truancy rates, and English and math test scores. We also looked at whether the racial disproportionality of ODRs (whether or not certain racial groups of students were affected more than others) changed with increased PBIS implementation. For a more detailed explanation of the methodology used for this analysis, please see Appendix E.

The major finding of this study was that middle and high schools, after controlling for student demographics, would see a 34% reduction in out-of-school suspensions if they were to increase their implementation of PBIS by 50% (scored using a commonly used PBIS implementation survey). The resulting reduction in out-of-school suspensions could then be translated to time-savings for student learning, teaching time in the classroom, and administrative tasks.

5.3 California Healthy Kids Survey and California School Climate Survey

The California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) and the California School Climate Survey (CSCS) were both obtained from WestEd, the designers and administrators of the surveys, for the 2005-06 and 2007-08 school years. The data request for both surveys included non-alternative, non-charter middle and high schools in Los Angeles Unified School District (CHKS n=85, CSCS n=42), and Oakland Unified School District (CHKS n=55, CSCS n=31). Unlike LAUSD and OUSD, elementary school data for Salinas City Elementary School District, for the years 2007-08 and 2009-10, were obtained via official WestEd technical reports, as the raw data files were unavailable.

The goals of the CHKS are to provide needs assessment data on school climate and student health and behavioral issues. The survey is administered to participating schools on odd-numbered years for grades 5, 7, 9 and 11. These grades were chosen because they were identified as important transitional years for youth. Seventh graders are administered a “Middle School” version of the questionnaire while 9th and 11th graders are given the “High School” version. School staff are trained to administer the survey to students during a selected school period. Selected questions to analyze on the CHKS include demographics, smoking, tobacco and drug use, school and domestic violence, gang involvement and resiliency.

The CSCS is an elective web-based survey that is offered to most staff working in grades 5 through 12 in the same schools that participate in the CHKS survey. Selected questions to analyze on the CSCS include perceptions of school-wide staff-to-student support, student academic performance, student and staff safety (including prevalence of violence), student alcohol and drug use, and school discipline policy enforcement.

Relevant questions on the CHKS and CSCS were first identified on survey questionnaires, and all non-selected questions in the data set were dropped. All variables were aggregated to percentages to represent the percent of respondents who answered with a non-zero response. Then, the data from both surveys were merged based on their unique California Department of Education school identification code and the school year.

For both of these data sets, only two data points (2005-06 and 2007-08 school years) could be obtained and compiled. The original intention for the analysis of these surveys was a longitudinal analysis of associations between staff perceptions of zero tolerance implementation and student behaviors, attitudes and health indicators. However, the availability of only two data points does not allow for a true longitudinal analysis, and thus it would be inappropriate to draw conclusions about any accidental relationships between various survey indicators. This HIA reports relevant CHKS and CSCS survey results only to provide context within the existing conditions profiles for the three case study sites.

FINDINGS

Findings from the CHKS and CSCS were very mixed, both within districts and between districts. For example, between the two survey years (2005-06 and 2007-08), an increasing percentage of LAUSD staff perceived that zero tolerance policies were enforced, while a lower percentage of OUSD staff perceived this. Further details of staff and student responses are included in each individual site's case study chapter.

A selection of CHKS and CSCS results for both LAUSD and OUSD are included in Appendices F and G, respectively. Appendix H includes a summary of select CHKS and CSCS results for SCESD.

5.4 Focus Groups

We facilitated several focus groups on the topic of school discipline with students and parents from Oakland Unified School District and Los Angeles Unified School District. These focus groups incorporate often “unheard” voices into the school discipline dialogue, and we believe that these voices are essential parts of the school discipline story. Focus group questions, included as Appendix I, addressed research questions in the scope and were tailored to each specific age group.

With support from local organization Youth Alive!, Human Impact Partners completed three focus groups with high school students in grades 9 through 12 at Castlemont Campus High Schools in East Oakland.¹¹⁸ These students were members of Youth Alive's Teens on Target (TNT) program, which gives youth from high-violence neighborhoods a chance to develop leadership skills in violence prevention. Students were split up into three groups of approximately 10 students each. All focus groups were approximately 1.5 hours in length, and were audio recorded.

HIP and CADRE conducted two focus groups of South LA parents (one in English with 13 participants, and one in Spanish with seven participants) and another with seven students in grades 5 through 12, conducted in English.¹¹⁹ All focus groups were approximately 1.5 hours in length and were audio recorded.

FINDINGS

South LA focus groups covered participants' personal experiences with school suspension and expulsion, school discipline practices, consequences of out-of-school time, connectedness to school, community cohesion, and alternatives to exclusions. While parents and students expressed a range of opinions on school discipline policies, overall, participants agreed that school exclusions are ineffective in preventing future misbehavior. Rather than an opportunity to reflect on their behavior, students consider school exclusions to be time off for having fun. Participants also emphasized that unsupervised time spent out of school due to suspension increases youth's likelihood of engaging in risky and illicit behavior. Parents and youth also shared deep concerns about pervasive community violence and its impact on the culture of schools — especially for young, Black men. Finally, parents and students stressed the value of healthy school climate, highlighting the importance of teacher-student bonds. Parents of LAUSD students added that safe schools necessitate high levels of parent engagement and participation.

In Oakland, Castlemont students disagreed with a zero tolerance approach to school discipline. They feel that time out of school due to suspensions and expulsions is like a “vacation,” and that kids don't want to be in school anyway. In addition, rather than punish students severely for all types of offenses, students in all three focus groups overwhelmingly agreed that different severities of discipline should be assigned to various types of misbehavior. Many youth cited “disrespecting adults” as the major cause for suspensions, and felt that suspensions as punishment were ineffective at preventing future offenses in school. Participants in one group noted the failure of school staff to take action against drug use on campus. One topic of discussion was the RJ “peace circles” that were beginning to be used in their schools after the recent RJ resolution was passed. Students reported having mixed feelings about the peace circles, with some citing that they would feel uncomfortable or worried about opening up their feelings to their peers or “appearing weak.” Others said that students would not take what is discussed in those circles seriously, “because people are immature.” On the other hand, a few students expressed that they would like to be able to explain their feelings and thoughts to others in case they were going through similar experiences.

For detailed accounts of two of the CADRE focus groups, please see Appendix J. While notes for the third CADRE focus group and the three Oakland focus groups were not summarized, audio recordings and written transcriptions are on file at HIP's office.

5.5 Interviews

We conducted interviews with the Salinas City Elementary School District superintendent, Donna Vaughan, as well as Elizabeth Husby, Executive Director of Restorative Justice Partners in Salinas. Both interviews (D. Vaughan, personal communication, 9/20/2011; E. Husby, personal communication, 6/6/2011) informed our understanding of RJ implementation in Salinas schools and provided anecdotal evidence on impacts of RJ on educational attainment and other health determinants in our HIA scope. Interview questions were prepared in advance and addressed research questions in the scope. Interview summaries are included in Appendix K.

FINDINGS

Donna Vaughan discussed her strong belief in Restorative Justice as a strategy for teaching life skills, encouraging youth to learn from mistakes, and helping students stay in school. Based on her own experience, she believes that “drop-outs are made in elementary school,” and thus focusing RJ efforts on the elementary school age group has long-lasting value. Ms. Vaughan said that in her experience, both RJ and PBIS result in fewer referrals to law enforcement. She feels that while impulsive behavior will always happen among youth, RJ holds promise in preventing repeat incidents as students become aware of the complexity of conflicts and the value of conflict resolution.

Addressing some of our other research questions, Ms. Vaughan reported having observed declines in student and teacher stress levels in schools that have implemented RJ, and she shared that there are counseling resources at each of her schools for children that come from violent homes. She feels that RJ in schools leads to reduced crime in the community, given that youth learn to repair and recognize harm at a young age, and also because kids take RJ home and teach RJ skills to their parents. She also believes that “schools are hubs of the community, and sometimes they reflect the pain that the community is experiencing.” She anticipates that drug use would decline with RJ, because RJ’s ability to prevent and reduce stress makes students less needy of the escape that drugs provide. She thinks reduced drug use among students could even lead to a “ripple effect” of decreased drug use in the greater community over time.

5.6 Parent Survey in Los Angeles

Collaboratively, HIP and CADRE developed a survey with the goal of gaining insight from South LA parents on HIA research questions. The final survey is included as Appendix L. The survey was verbally administered by parent-members of CADRE to 120 local parents who have youth in grades 6 through 12. Parent-members of CADRE administered surveys in both Spanish and English. Survey administrators targeted neighborhoods where youth attend South LA’s Fremont High School or elementary and middle schools that feed into Fremont High School.^b CADRE parents administered surveys by:

- visiting these schools during hours when parents dropped off or picked up their kids and asking them to complete the survey, and
- going door-to-door to households on streets where they personally knew parents and/or students and knew that students attended one of these schools.

FINDINGS

Survey findings are presented in Appendix M.

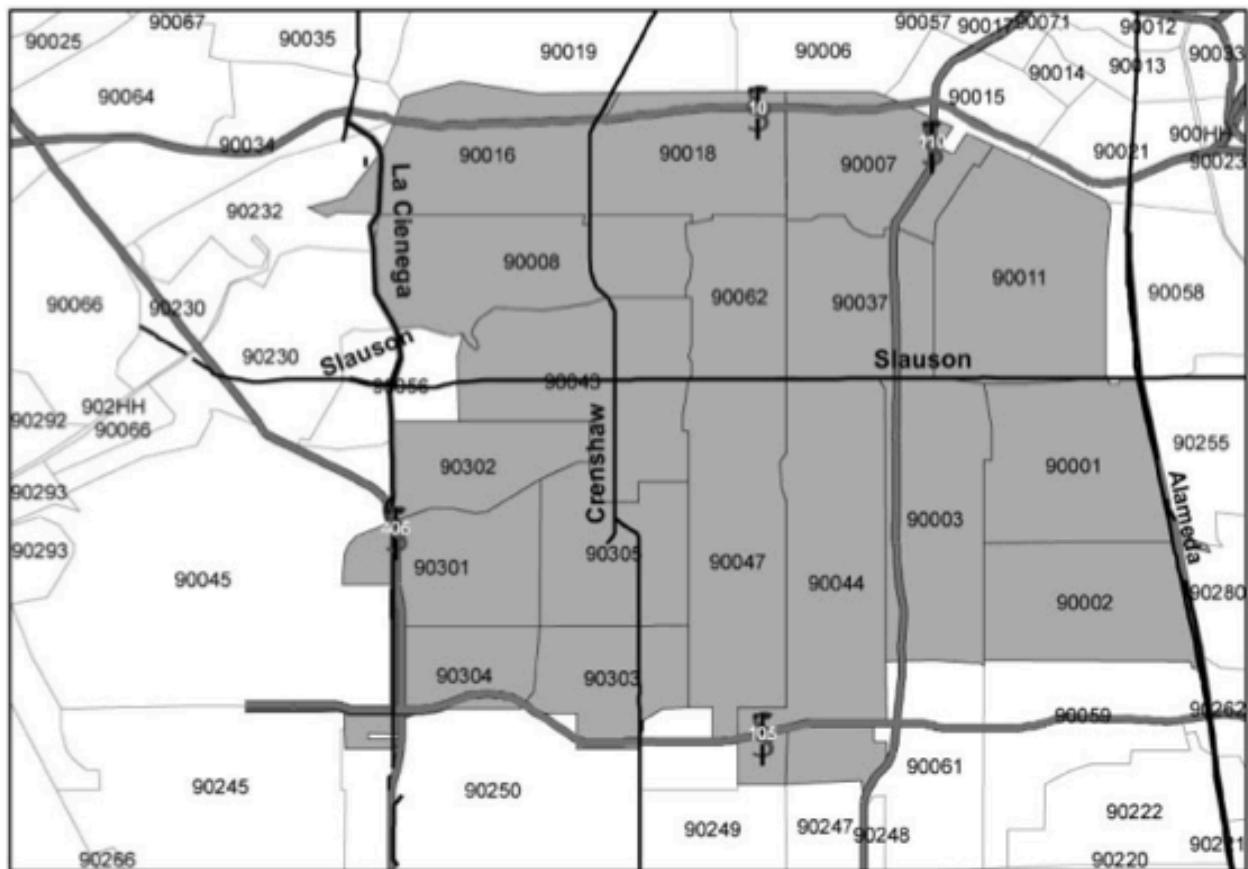
^b Fremont High School was targeted because its one of only two remaining local public high schools in LD7 (and the other high school is fairly new), and because most parent members of CADRE have children who go to or have gone to Fremont High. In addition, Fremont High School is the closest high school to CADRE.

6 HIA Location 1: South Los Angeles

6.1 INTRODUCTION

South Los Angeles is loosely defined as the area of the city of Los Angeles and some small pockets of unincorporated Los Angeles County that lie south of the Santa Monica Freeway (I-10), east of La Cienega Boulevard, north of the Century Freeway and west of Alameda Street. Its distinct demographic, socioeconomic, and geographic characteristics have all played a part in shaping its current school environment. See Figure 6-1 for a map of South LA and the ZIP codes that are included in its geographic area (boundaries in this figure are defined by zip codes; however, many analyses in this report [e.g., Figure 6-3] define South LA by census tract boundaries).

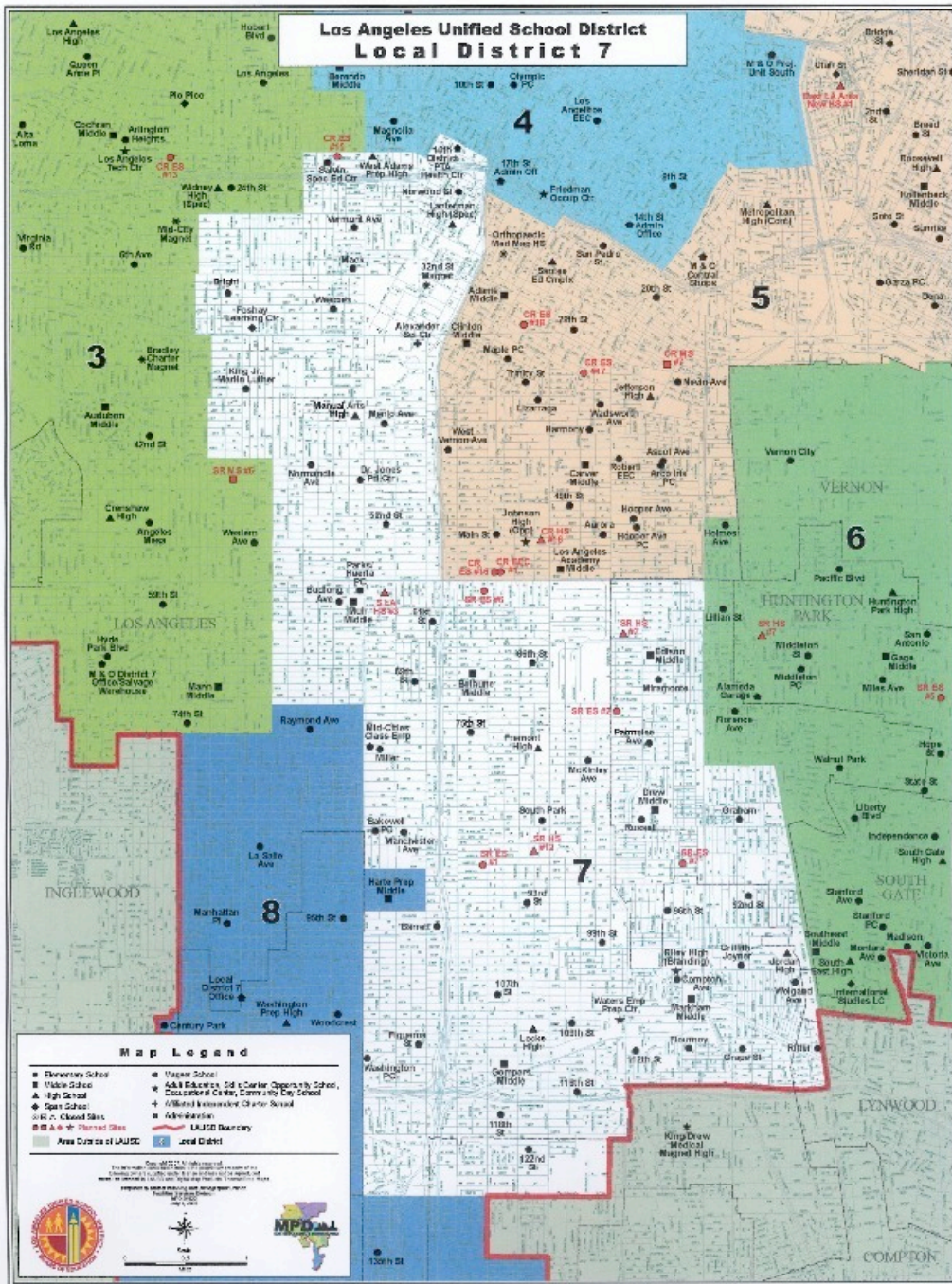
Figure 6-1. ZIP codes of South Los Angeles



Source: Ong et al 2008¹²⁰

Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) Local District 7 (LD7), which is also referred to in this HIA case study, is a smaller subset of the shaded area in Figure 6-1, and is portrayed in Figure 6-2 below.

Figure 6-2. LAUSD Local District 7



Source: Los Angeles Unified School District, Local District 7¹²¹

Therefore, the terms “South LA” and “Local District 7” are not fully interchangeable, and each has a separate list of schools in their catchment area. Table 6-1 shows overlaps between the South LA and

Local District Schools. Eight schools are included in both designations. **Data used for this report refer to “Local District 7” schools rather than South LA schools, except when clearly noted otherwise.**

Table 6-1. Comparison list of schools within South LA versus schools within Local District 7

	South Los Angeles ¹	Local District 7 ²
Middle Schools:		
32nd Street USC Performing Arts Magnet (Middle)	Green	Green
Bethune	Green	Green
Drew	Green	Green
Edison	Green	Green
Foshay Learning Center (Middle)	Green	Green
Markham	Green	Green
Muir	Green	Green
High Schools:		
32nd Street USC Performing Arts Magnet (High)	Green	Green
Foshay Learning Center (High)	Green	Green
Fremont	Green	Green
Jordan (David Starr)	Green	Green
King Drew Medical Magnet	Green	Green
Manual Arts	Green	Green
New Technology (Jordan)	Green	Green
West Adams Preparatory	Green	Green

¹ Source: List of schools in South LA ZIP codes

² Source: LAUSD Report Cards¹²²

Green indicates that school’s inclusion in the category with the corresponding column heading

This chapter will examine the policy context that is the impetus of our HIA in South LA, present the existing conditions of the region for education, discipline, drug abuse, violence, mental health, and community cohesion, and describe predicted changes in these conditions and their associated health effects as a result of the implementation of alternative school discipline policies.

6.2 POLICY CONTEXT

LAUSD’S ROAD TO SCHOOL-WIDE POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS

LAUSD as a whole has had one of the highest dropout (or “pushout”) rates in the country; at its worst, half of all students who started high school in the district failed to graduate. During the 2005-2006 academic year, students of color accounted for approximately 92% of all suspensions, and the rate for African American students was nearly twice their enrollment rate in the district.¹²³

Community Asset Development Re-defining Education (CADRE) is a community-based, membership parent organization in South Los Angeles. CADRE works for systemic change by supporting grassroots South LA parents as the leaders in stopping the pushout crisis in schools serving low-income neighborhoods of color.¹²⁴ With the mission to end school pushout in Los Angeles schools, CADRE’s 2006 “Call to Action” demanded that the LAUSD remedy its violations of the human rights of students and parents by modifying their discipline policy. It demanded that each school in the district have a School-

Wide Positive Behavior Support plan in place requiring it to significantly reduce the use of exclusionary and aversive punishment mechanisms. Since then, CADRE and other Los Angeles organizations have vigorously continued the campaign to end the pushout crisis and human rights violations in LA schools by making presentations at public hearings, holding demonstrations, collecting letters of support, and meeting repeatedly with LAUSD and United Teachers of Los Angeles (UTLA) staff.¹²³

In 2007, the LAUSD Board of Education unanimously approved adoption of “school-wide positive behavior support” (SWPBS) as the discipline model for every school in the district. The policy mandates staff and parent training in the teaching and the reinforcing of the skills necessary for implementation of this policy.¹²⁵

SWPBS IMPLEMENTATION IN LAUSD

The SWPBS policy has played a big role in a significant drop (43%¹²⁶) in the district-wide suspension rate between 2004-05 and 2010-11. In schools that have implemented SWPBS fully and intentionally, there have been increases in achievement and attendance. However, racial disparities are still persistent: Black students are still suspended at three times the rate of White students.

While the passage of the SWPBS policy was considered a momentous victory, it must be properly implemented to achieve changes in human rights, educational, and other health-related outcomes. CADRE released a shadow report in 2010 documenting their in-depth analysis of LAUSD’s implementation of SWPBS. CADRE investigated the district’s level of SWPBS implementation by conducting individual interviews, door-to-door canvassing, surveys, and other means of hearing directly from students and parents in South LA about their experiences with school discipline. CADRE found “lackluster implementation in many schools coupled with, among other things, continued unacceptably high and disproportionate disciplinary rates for African American students.” CADRE’s report also offers recommendations to LAUSD for improving its implementation going forward.¹²³

CADRE discovered violations of the students’ right to dignity. According to the report, suspension was the disciplinary method of first resort and was often given even for minor misbehavior. Many students and parents perceived that students were mistreated during the suspension process through the use of name-calling and hostility, and that school staff often used excessive physical force, even where the situation posed no risk of harm. CADRE also found that students’ rights to due process were regularly violated. Among students who dropped out of high school, 23% said that the way in which the school treated them was one of the reasons that they left.

CADRE found violations of the students’ right to education. They discovered that parents were not notified when students were suspended. Suspension reportedly entailed being sent to a counselor’s or dean’s office, waiting for long periods of time with no academic work or instructional support, missing out on classroom assignments and tests, and falling behind in schoolwork. CADRE’s investigation concluded that so-called “opportunity transfers” (OTs), which are transfers from one district school to another, are actually a method of pushout. Rather than follow proper OT policy and procedures that restrict transfers and monitor progress of transferred students, many schools reportedly ask students to leave the schools and 33% of students were told that they had to leave schools.

Violations of the parents' right to participation were also documented. The CADRE team uncovered many stories of parents who had been barred from participating in significant decisions about their child's education. In particular, parents were not notified about a child's suspension from school and the right to appeal. Parents also had a hard time setting up conferences with teachers to discuss behavioral and other important issues; even when such meetings occurred, translation services were not provided for non-English-speaking parents. Of students who were asked to leave school, 65% of parents were not provided with any written notice about this decision, and 76% were not told that they could challenge it.

CADRE'S RIGHT TO EDUCATION CAMPAIGN TODAY

CADRE's ongoing Right to Education Campaign is proceeding into its 6th year. The overall long-term goal of their Right to Education Campaign is to end the school-to-prison pipeline, which would be demonstrated first by a dramatic decline in suspensions and overall discipline incidents in their public schools serving primarily low-income communities of color. Their overarching strategy is community organizing, with their primary leaders being the grassroots parents/caregivers of the low-income youth of color most affected by over-criminalization and over-incarceration, for institutional accountability in eradicating the policies and practices that are contributing to it. For full implementation to take effect, they have adopted simultaneous campaign strategies for multiple targets, including the Board of Education, regional LD7, the Central Office, Fremont High School, and the teachers union, United Teachers of Los Angeles.

Based on the shadow report recommendations, their parent leaders and attorney partners negotiated and secured an agreement from LD7 to significantly scale up SWPBS implementation, specifically parent engagement and data-based decision-making, en route to a commitment to reducing suspensions by 50 percent by June 2012, overall and for African American students especially. CADRE is leveraging their accountability work in LD7 and gaining initial agreement from the Board of Education President to initiate a District-wide administrative directive to intensify SWPBS implementation. In October 2011, CADRE and coalition partners in the Dignity in Schools (DSC) Campaign presented the LAUSD Board and Superintendent with a set of demands that were developed collaboratively with parent participation. Demands included the following:(A. Ruelas, personal communication, Nov. 17, 2011)

- By January 15, 2012, develop a 3-5 year action plan with "teeth" and timelines for full implementation of SWPBS and ensure real parent and community participation in the development process;
- Require all schools in LD7 and the "bottom" 33% of schools in LAUSD – those with the highest disproportionality and/or highest suspension rates – to immediately convene the SWPBS team or a similar group with full parent participation and a youth team member to review school-site discipline numbers and develop goals for reducing disproportionality and suspension;
- Because 40% of all suspensions in LAUSD are for the highly subjective categories of "disruption" and "defiance," develop a policy and campaign with parent and community participation to address these issues at school with intervention and support instead of out of school exclusions; and
- To ensure SWPBS policy implementation remains a priority, hold quarterly LAUSD Board Meetings at which disaggregated district and school discipline data is reviewed, policy

implementation is assessed, and parents and community can share concerns and recommendations.

The LAUSD board committed to all of these demands.

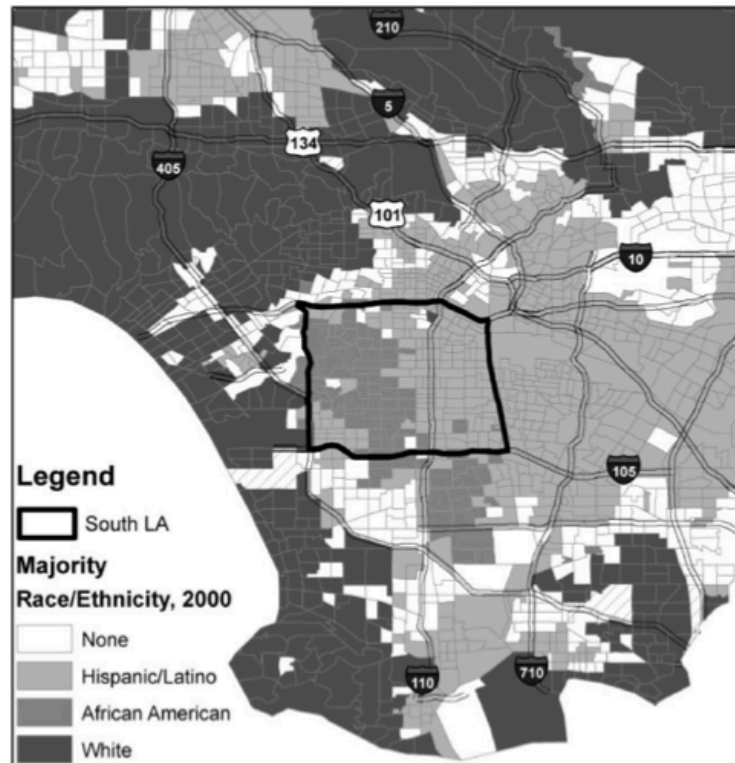
6.3 SOUTH LOS ANGELES DEMOGRAPHICS

South LA has unique demographic characteristics as compared to the county as a whole, and since this HIA examines discipline disparities based on race, demographic differences are introduced here. For the most comprehensive demographic data collected on South Los Angeles, we referred to a 2008 report published by the UCLA School of Public Affairs.¹²⁰ South Los Angeles contains less than 10% of the total population in Los Angeles County, but is younger, less White, less educated, and lower income compared to the rest of the County. The area also has lower home ownership rates compared to the County.

Figure N-1 in Appendix N compares the proportions of residents in each racial group of South LA and LA County. South LA has proportionally far more minority residents compared to LA County, with the exception of Asian/Pacific Islander residents. To see where the prevailing ethnic groups are distributed throughout South LA, see Figure 6-3 below. The map shows the majority racial/ethnic groups for each census tract, as well as the boundaries for South LA used in UCLA's report.^c

^c Boundaries in Figure 6-1 and 6-3 appear to vary slightly, however, data reported in each is assumed to reflect the same geographic area.

Figure 6-3. Geographic distribution of racial groups from the 2000 US Census



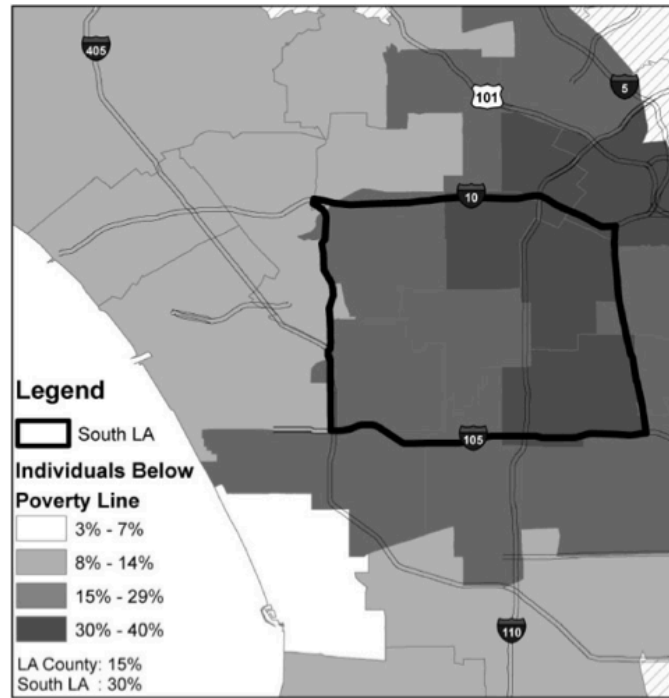
Source: Ong et al. 2008¹²⁰

The division between where non-White minorities and non-minorities live in Los Angeles is clear: Whites form the majority of census tracts on the coasts while minorities are the majority in inland census tracts (with the exception of San Pedro/Wilmington at the Southern coast between I-110 and I-710). Within South LA, much of the western census tracts are majority African American, while the tracts that are directly adjacent to the I-110 freeway and the vast majority of the tracts east of the I-110 freeway have a Hispanic majority.

South LA also has different levels of educational attainment compared to the rest of the County. Figure N-2 in Appendix N shows the percentages of residents who have achieved five different levels of educational attainment. There are lower percentages of South LA residents who have attended some college, or have obtained a Bachelor's or graduate degree, compared to the County as a whole.

South LA also has higher levels of poverty compared to the rest of the County, with the eastern half of the South LA community having even higher poverty levels (between 30-40% of individuals living below the poverty line) compared to the western half (where 15-29% of individuals are living below the poverty line) as shown in Figure 6-4.

Figure 6-4. Poverty rates in South LA, by Service Planning Area, 2006



6.4 SELECT HEALTH STATUS INDICATORS IN SOUTH LOS ANGELES

The following health status data is from LA County Department of Public Health’s LA HealthDataNow! query datasets.¹²⁷ Table 5-1 above discusses connections between school discipline policies and these health outcomes through the six health determinants studied in this HIA.

Life Expectancy

Each of the six health determinants is linked to life expectancy. Within the general South LA area,^d Asian/Pacific Islanders and Hispanics have the longest life expectancy of 82 years, while the Black and White populations have much lower life expectancies at 72 and 67 years, respectively. Life expectancies in the county are relatively similar for all groups except Whites, who have a much lower life expectancy in South LA than they do countywide (see Table N-1 in Appendix N).

Adult and Child Health Status

As Table N-2 in Appendix N indicates, children’s (age 0-17) general health status in South LA was lower than in the county overall in 2007. Fifty-six percent of South LA children reported excellent or very good health status, while in LA County the proportion was 68%.

^d South LA is defined as LA Service Planning Area 6 (South) and Health Districts “South,” “Southeast,” and “Southwest” by LA County Public Health Department.

Likewise, more South LA adults had fair or poor health status in 2007 (27%) compared to adults countywide (19%).

Heart Disease

Stress, a health outcome considered in this HIA, is one risk factor for heart disease. A very similar proportion of adults in South LA have been diagnosed with heart disease (7.7%) as in the county (7.5%).

Hypertension

Stress is also a risk factor for hypertension. A slightly higher proportion of adults in South LA have been diagnosed with hypertension (28%) as compared with the county (25%).

Adult Depression

Youth mental health impacts associated with school policies can affect adult mental health, as well as mental health of a young person's family and community. Adults in South LA have a very similar rate of depression (13.9%), as do adults in the county overall (13.6%). Depression data are not available for children from this source.

6.5 EXISTING CONDITIONS IN SOUTH LOS ANGELES

In this section we present existing conditions in South LA schools and the South LA community related to the six determinants of health.

METHODS

California Healthy Kids Survey and California School Climate Survey

Methods for the analysis of these surveys are described in Section 5.3. CHKS and CSCS data for the entire LAUSD district was used, rather than only looking at these data for LD7 or South LA schools. This was done to improve statistical power, as data for schools in the South LA area were sparse. All LAUSD CHKS and CSCS survey results discussed in this report are summarized in Appendix F and G, respectively.

Focus Groups and Surveys with South LA Parents and Students

Methods and citations for South LA focus groups and surveys are included in Sections 5.4 and 5.6.

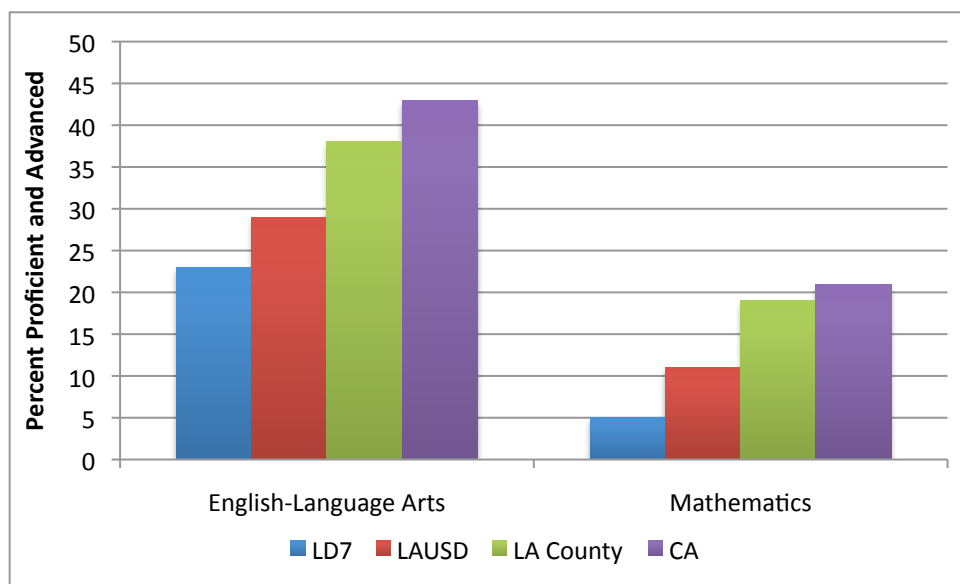
6.5.1 EDUCATION

For educational outcomes, this section will present statistics from two separate data sources. Reported percentages that are not in parentheses are from the California Department of Education, and those in parentheses are from LAUSD's Local District 7 Report Card.

For the 2007-08 school year, the unweighted average high school graduation rate for Local District 7's six high schools was 40%.^{e, f, 128} This is much lower than the rate for LAUSD as a whole (72%) and also lower than the state graduation rate (80%).¹²⁶

In this same time period, the percentage of these high school students scoring either "Proficient" or "Advanced" on the California standardized reading and math tests were 23% and 5%,^g respectively. For middle schoolers, 18% achieved these scores in reading and 14% achieved these scores in math.^{h, 126} These test scores are drastically lower than those of LAUSD, LA County, and the State of California, which increase in that order (see Figures 6-5 and 6-6 below).

Figure 6-5. Percent proficient and advanced in reading and math in Local District 7 high schools, 2007-08



Source for LD7 scores: LAUSD Report Card, 2007-08¹²²
 Source for other geographical areas: CA Department of Education, Dataquest, 2007-08¹²⁶

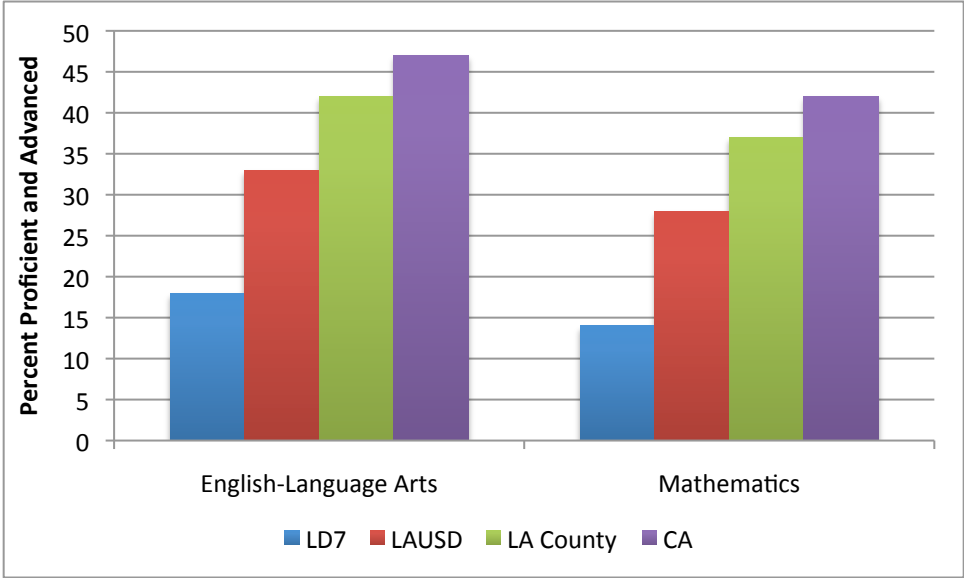
^e Only three of these six high schools are currently open today.

^f For South LA high schools (see Table 6-1), the graduation rate was 71%, according to the CA Department of Education.

^g For South LA high schools (see Table 6-1), these test scores were 17% and 4%, respectively, according to the CA Department of Education.

^h For South LA middle schools (see Table 6-1), these test scores were 16% and 11%, respectively, according to the CA Department of Education.

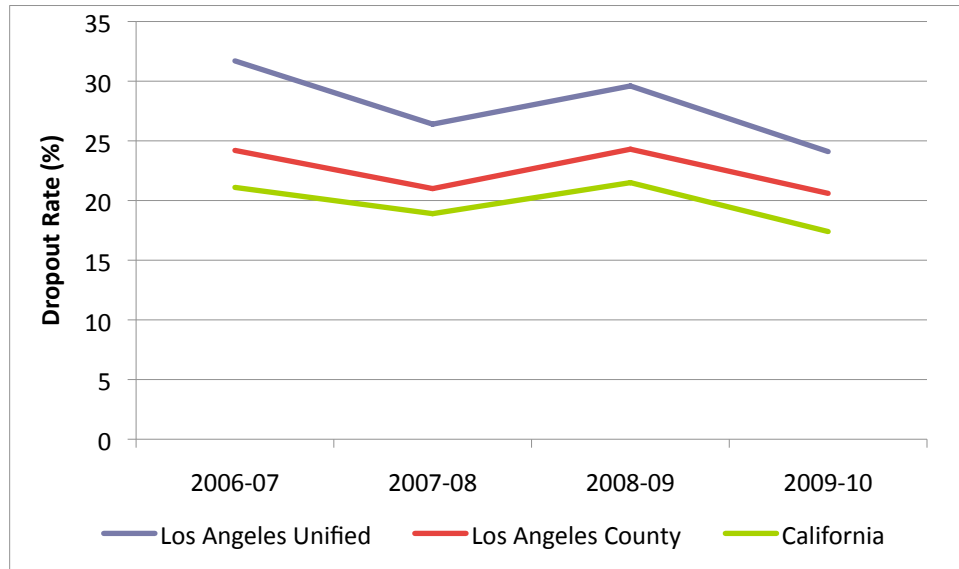
Figure 6-6. Percent proficient and advanced in reading and math in Local District 7 middle schools, 2007-08



Source for LD7 scores: LAUSD Report Card, 2007-08¹²²
Source for other geographical areas: CA Department of Education, Dataquest, 2007-08¹²⁶

As shown in Figure 6-7 below, LAUSD high school dropout rates have been higher than statewide and countywide trends.¹²⁹

Figure 6-7. Grade 9-12 4-year derivedⁱ high school dropout rates in LAUSD, LA County, and California, 2006-07 to 2009-10^j



Source: KidsData.org, 2011¹²⁹

Furthermore, according to 2009-10 data, in California and especially in LAUSD, Black, American Indian, Pacific Islander, and Latino students are more likely to drop out of high school than White students.¹²⁶ LAUSD reported that, among the students that reported their race in 2009-10, the adjusted Grade 9-12 one-year dropout rate^k for Pacific Islander students was highest among all students (8.3%), followed by

ⁱ The 4-year derived dropout rate is an estimate of the percent of students who would drop out in a four year period based on data collected for a single year.

Adjusted grade 9-12 4-year derived dropout rate formula = $(1 - ((1 - (\text{Reported or Adjusted Gr. 9 Dropouts} / \text{Gr. 9 Enrollment})) * (1 - (\text{Reported or Adjusted Gr. 10 Dropouts} / \text{Gr. 10 Enrollment})) * (1 - (\text{Reported or Adjusted Gr. 11 Dropouts} / \text{Gr. 11 Enrollment})) * (1 - (\text{Reported or Adjusted Gr. 12 Dropouts} / \text{Gr. 12 Enrollment})))) * 100$

^j Dropout Spikes in dropout rates since 2004-5 may actually be somewhat misleading. It is possible that dramatic increases in school dropout are attributable to California's improved capacity to track student data before the 2006-07 school year was available, but not presented. In 2004-5, California launched the California Information System (CSIS), which records individual students' school enrollment across all school districts in California. Consequently, starting in 2007, CDE and all school districts across the state, have more accurate means to report enrollment, graduation rates, and dropout rates in all school districts. It was not advisable, therefore, to compare dropout rates pre-2007 with those post-2007. Nonetheless, OUSD's dropout rates are consistently much higher than the county's and state's, indicating a need for serious intervention.

^k It is inappropriate to compare 4-year derived dropout rates with 1-year dropout rates.

Adjusted grade 9-12 1-year dropout rate formula = $\text{Dropouts} - \text{Reported Grade 9-12 Dropout Total} - \text{Reenrolled Grade 9-12 Dropouts} + \text{Grade 9-12 Lost Transfers}$. 1-year Rate Formula: $(\text{Adjusted Gr. 9-12 Dropouts} / \text{Gr. 9-12 Enrollment}) * 100$

American Indian students (8.1%) and African American students (8.0%). White students dropped out of school at a rate of 3.9%, while Asian Americans recorded the lowest dropout rate of 2.6%.¹²⁶

Truancy rates^l were significantly lower in LAUSD than in any other school district within LA County until the 2009-10 school year. In 2009-10, there was an odd and sudden shift in truancy (defined as missing more than 30 minutes of instruction without an excuse three or more times during the school year) rates for LAUSD, LA County, and the state, bringing all three locations to a rate of 28% (see Figure N-3 in Appendix N).¹²⁶ The cause of this shift is unknown and speculations are discussed in Appendix N.

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN LAUSD SCHOOLS

According to the CSCS survey, only about one-third of LAUSD staff reported that students arrived at school alert and rested between 2005 and 2008, and only approximately one-quarter of staff thought that students were motivated to learn. CHKS responses indicated that skipping school becomes more common as LAUSD students progress through grades 7, 9, and 11.

PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE AND EDUCATION

In CADRE's parent survey, there was a question about which educational issues the parents were most concerned about for their children. Out of six issues, the following three rose to the top:

- 91% said that doing well in school was a top educational issue
- 90% said that their children graduating was a top educational issue
- 75% said that going to college was a top educational issue

In parent focus groups, one parent mentioned that suspensions push kids towards delinquency. By not allowing kids in the classroom, the kids end up on the streets. A parent said, "If he's only in first grade and he already wants to quit school, what's going to happen in the future? Basically, they don't help students."

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE AND EDUCATION

In the youth focus group, student participants commented that naturally, when students are excluded from school, they miss a considerable amount of instructional time, setting suspendees up for academic failure.

However, while participants did characterize school exclusions as harmful for disciplined students, they agreed that sometimes excluding chronically disruptive students could benefit other students. One middle school student shared that suspending a "really, really loud" student from her class helped her "get better grades, because there were no interruptions." The participant explained that when her

^l It is important to note that the District's measure of truancy accounts neither for unexcused absences resulting from out-of-school suspensions nor for excused absences. Therefore, these data actually *understate* the prevalence of truancy in OUSD.

teacher devotes the majority of instructional time to managing one student and “saying stuff like, ‘stop doing that,’” it is very difficult for other students to learn. Excluding disruptive peers from class can help students “sit [in class] actually doing work and paying attention and listening to the teacher instead of listening to [disruptive students’] big ol’ mouth[s].”

IN CONCLUSION, South LA parents and youth that are affiliated with CADRE and who took part in this HIA greatly value education. While students acknowledged that disciplining chronically disruptive students was necessary, for the most part, parents and youth believe that exclusionary discipline sets students up for delinquency and academic failure. Students in LD7 achieve much lower reading and math scores than the rest of LAUSD, LA County, and the state. Their graduation rate is much lower than both LAUSD and statewide averages. As a whole, LAUSD staff observe that most students are not well rested and motivated to learn at school. Skipping classes becomes more prevalent as students progress through middle and high school.

6.5.2 MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

Discipline Events

Suspension and Office Disciplinary Referral (ODR) data were available from the LAUSD Local District 7 Office for the 2010-2011 school year. While most of the data in this case study pertain to only the middle and high schools in Local District 7, the best available data source included data from elementary schools as well. Hispanic students made up the majority (81.2%) of the Local District 7 student population, with African American students as the next major group (17.9%) in LD7. However, African American students shared a disproportionate burden of the suspensions (51.1%) compared to Hispanic students. Both groups of students had a higher average length of suspension compared to the students of other racial groups. See Table N-3 in Appendix N for a summary of suspensions in LD7 by race and ethnicity.

According to office disciplinary referrals based on the primary problem behavior for all of Local District 7 (see Table N-4 in Appendix N for summary table), defiance and disruption were the most common types of problem behavior for all students referred to a school administrator for discipline, regardless of race/ethnicity. This reflects national trends (D. Osher, personal communication, March 2nd, 2012). Both disruption and defiance are defined in the same clause of the California Education Code as when a student has, "Disrupted school activities or otherwise willfully defied the valid authority of supervisors, teachers, administrators, school officials, or other school personnel engaged in the performance of their duties."¹³⁰ These classifications are determined subjectively by the superintendent or principal of the school. More serious, dangerous and impartially determined threats such as possessing a firearm, brandishing a knife, selling a controlled substance, sexual assault, and possession of an explosive, which are legally mandated by state and federal zero tolerance laws to result in either suspensions or expulsions, were extremely rare.

Based on this data, it is impossible to determine which individual “problem behavior” events resulted in suspensions and expulsions; however, the take-away message from Table F-4 is that there is a wide

range in types of “problem behavior,” and school exclusions are determined subjectively by a school superintendent or principal. In a strict zero tolerance disciplinary context, theoretically, all of the problem behavior episodes in this table would result in suspension or expulsion.

Another interesting finding related to the office disciplinary referrals is that African-American students were much more likely to be disciplined for the vast majority of problem behavior categories (see Table N-4 in Appendix N). One limitation of this analysis is that there’s a potential that the same students are being counted more than once in this ODR data set. In other words, we are unsure of the extent to which referrals are predominantly involving a smaller group with multiple referrals, or if the referrals are spread out more or less evenly amongst the student population.

Incarceration

As mentioned in Section 5.1.2, there tends to be increased police presence in lower-income neighborhoods, such as many parts of South LA, which increases the chances of police contact with youth in these neighborhoods. Subsequently, youth who live in these neighborhoods may be subject to disproportionate amounts of arrests and incarcerations simply due to the increased exposure to law enforcement units. Unfortunately, access to local data on incarceration was not obtained for this report, and so a statistical analysis on existing levels of incarceration in South LA was not conducted.

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

Between 2005-06 and 2007-08, approximately half of LAUSD staff reported in the CSCS that zero tolerance policies were enforced at school. A majority (79-81%) of staff perceived that disruptive student behavior was a moderate or severe problem, while incongruously, over half of staff reported that students were well behaved.

PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE AND MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

In CADRE’s parent survey, 44% of parents think that suspension leads to more misbehavior in school. In addition, 68% of parents agree or strongly agree that suspension and expulsion practices increase the chances of their child coming into contact with law enforcement.

In focus groups, parents reported that suspensions and expulsions most likely lead to continued misbehavior related to their students being frustrated at getting the help they need and their apparent inability to manage the school environment. New English language learners are even more sensitive to this phenomenon: “I think it’s likely that they will continue misbehaving because I have a child that...he’s a bit disobedient...he doesn’t like doing homework and even more so because of the change in language...they really don’t offer ESL classes anymore. For him it’s very difficult.”

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE AND MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

Students' perceptions of the most common reasons for suspension are theft, fighting, insolence, defiance (e.g. "cursing and mouthing off") to teachers and to one another, and "creating rumbles and riots."

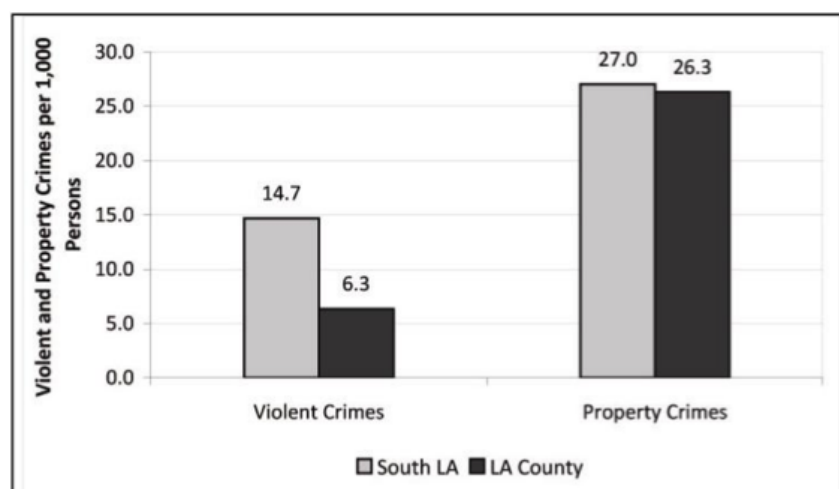
Students reported that out-of-school time (from suspensions or expulsions) encourages youth to engage in additional delinquent activities or to simply "hang out" and have fun. Most students in the focus group believed that suspensions were ineffective in preventing future delinquency. Only two participants agreed that suspension prevents future suspension; their rationale was that suspension jeopardizes permanent records.

IN CONCLUSION, exclusionary practices disproportionately affect minority students in Local District 7 much like the rest of the nation, and many exclusions are determined subjectively by teachers and school administrators in reaction to non-violent problem behaviors. Time spent outside of school due to suspensions and expulsions results in leisure time for students and may encourage them to engage in more delinquent behavior. Many parents agree that exclusionary practices increase the chances of their child running into problems with law enforcement, which coincides with the findings of some peer-reviewed research.

6.5.3 COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME

Violent crimes and property crimes in South LA are shown on Figures N-4 and N-5 in Appendix N. As Figure 6-8 illustrates below, the overall property crime rate in South LA closely mirrored the County rate, whereas violent crimes per 1,000 persons in South LA are twice as high with significant variation within the community.

Figure 6-8. Comparison of violent and property crime rates in South LA and LA County, 2006



Source: Ong et al. 2008¹²⁰

Perceptions of safety in South LA are lower than those in the entire county. According to LA County Public Health Department health survey results, 51% of South LA^m residents perceive their neighborhood to be safe. For comparison, 82% of LA County adult residents perceive their neighborhood to be safe.¹²⁷

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME IN LAUSD SCHOOLS

The majority of LAUSD staff reported in the CSCS survey that their schools were safe for staff (77-83%) and for students (66-78%). However, fairly large proportions of staff reported harassment among students (52-65%) and physical fighting between students (40-57%), with a slightly smaller proportion (27-39%) reporting racial/ethnic conflict among students.

In the CHKS survey, student perceptions of the prevalence of physical violence, harassment (physical and sexual), and fighting were mixed depending on grade level.

PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE AND COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME

The parent survey found that 46% of parents responded that physical assault was a top concern for their child. This was the 4th biggest concern among survey respondents. In addition, 68% of parents agreed or strongly agreed that suspension and expulsion practices increase violence at school, and 60% of parents disagreed or strongly disagreed that suspension and expulsion practices create safer learning environments.

In a focus group with South LA parents, one parent mentioned, “Campuses are dangerous. Society has made it okay to end a conflict by fighting. In the community we live in now, that’s how things are settled.”

These focus groups with Los Angeles parents revealed that pervasive community violence impacts the culture of neighborhood schools. In particular, the topic of violence sparked passionate discussion among participants. One parent began: “All of our stories are the same. I live in South Central. There’s gang violence all the time. There are two-to-three shootings easily [every week]. There are homeless people who live in the area. They are always bothering young kids or young ladies.”

Parents agreed that community violence severely limits families’ capacities to maintain safe, healthy homes. As one participant explained, “People really try to take care of their homes, but the gang violence is just overwhelming.” Several of the parents who participated had been victims of home burglary, car theft, or collateral violence.

According to some parents, community members and law enforcement have even become complacent, turning a blind eye to daily violence. “The sad part is that the violence that goes on, you never see it. It

^m South LA is defined as LA Service Planning Area 6 (South) and Health Districts “South,” “Southeast,” and “Southwest” by LA County Public Health Department.

goes unreported.” Most distressing to parents is that community violence cannot be self-contained. The culture of conflict seeps into the schools and school systems, one parent explained.

Community violence also weakens community cohesion. Participants described how rampant violence creates a culture of self-preservation, whereby families self-isolate in order to stave off negative influences from the outside community. One parent commented: “I feel like I don’t fit in with my community. I have a front and a back door. I keep my front door closed. I notice the people ahead sell drugs, shootings. I don’t let my kids go out. I take them out of the community.”

Parents described a stark division between those community members who celebrate violence and those who teach youth to resolve conflict non-violently. One participant declared that it is the community’s responsibility to lead efforts to reduce violence. “We have to change [the current] mentality,” one parent emphasized.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE AND COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME

In a focus group of South LA students, youth overwhelmingly agreed that they do not feel safe when school “gates” are open into the community. All participants described the communities surrounding their schools as “very dangerous,” rife with violent crime and drug trafficking. Several participants shared stories about instances in which community members disrupted school campus peace by shooting guns and engaging in violence outside of the school. One student described an incident in which a community member infiltrated her school campus and shot a gun; the school was put on “lockdown” until police apprehended the intruder. Students also added that there is a pervasive lack of supervision on school playgrounds, where many fights erupt during recess and after school.

Student participants described how suspended youth take part in further illicit activities when they are out of school. Several participants shared that suspended youth band together to “go robbing” in local neighborhoods; other suspended youth return to their schools to “start fights.”

IN CONCLUSION, violent crimes are much higher in South LA than the rest of LA County, and violence negatively impacts families, communities, and school environments in South LA. Statewide survey results found that LAUSD staff perceives their schools to generally be safe, but that harassment, fighting and racial/ethnic conflicts are also present. South LA parents and children are deeply concerned about violence in their communities, and feel that higher numbers of suspensions and expulsions fail to make schools safer.

6.5.4 DRUG USE

The South LA region was found in 2003 to have more participants in alcohol and drug programs, and a higher percent of total population in alcohol and drug programs, than all other regions in LA County, with exception of the Antelope Valley region, which has a similar pattern.¹³¹

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: DRUG USE IN LAUSD SCHOOLS

Between 24% and 44% of staff felt that alcohol or drug use was at least a moderate problem among students. In the CHKS survey, many students reported using alcohol, marijuana and tobacco within the last 30 days.

PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE AND DRUG USE

Respondents to CADRE's parent survey reported that out of nine choices for top health issues they're concerned about for their children, 48% selected drug and alcohol use as a top health issue. In addition:

- 68% of parents agree or strongly agree that suspension and expulsion practices increase the chances of their child using drugs or alcohol
- 42% of parents suspect that kids who are not in school due to suspension or expulsion are doing or selling drugs and alcohol

In a focus group with South LA parents, they reported that drug use is overt on school campuses. One parent said, "There is one side of the school where the youth from inside the school are smoking drugs because when you are walking by you can smell it. And I think, if I can smell it from out here, I don't think the teachers won't smell it from inside. One is just walking by and you can smell it and now those that are inside, how can they not notice what the kids are doing?"

Their testimonies suggest that school staff do not actively pursue drug users; instead, they turn a blind eye and fail to respond to these students.

When students are not in schools, parent participants said that they have a higher likelihood of using drugs and engaging in other illicit or illegal activities. As one parent remarked, the impact of time spent out of school is that children are "pushed towards delinquency."

In addition, parents acknowledged that drugs are pervasive in the community, and that some students know where to obtain drugs near school.

IN CONCLUSION, statewide survey results for LAUSD as a whole indicate moderate drug and alcohol use among students. Public health literature and feedback from South LA parents indicate that being out of school due to exclusionary discipline leads to increased drug use.

6.5.5 FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY COHESION

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: SCHOOL/COMMUNITY COHESION IN LAUSD SCHOOLS

According to the CSCS survey, LAUSD staff members perceive that most adults at schools really care about students. However, they reported that only about half believe that every student can be a success. Approximately 40% of staff thought that lack of respect of staff by students was at least a moderate problem. Roughly half of students reported in the CHKS that they feel close to people at their school, they're happy to be at their school, they feel that they are part of their school. Most (64-83%) students answered affirmatively when asked whether teachers or other adults tell them when they do a good job, want them to do their best, and believe they will be successful.

PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE AND SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY COHESION

In the focus group with South LA parents, participants said that:

- Teachers model weak inter-personal skills by not respecting one another or students.
- Excluding kids from school leads to financial burdens for parents and families who incur additional childcare costs and might have to take time off of work. In turn, this leads to family stress.
- Strong parent engagement is a key ingredient in maintaining school safety. Many parents believe that it's enough to simply drop their kids off at school; however, in order to truly engage in a school, parents must go a step farther and attend school events in order to get to know their child's school community. This deeper engagement raises their children's motivation to work hard in school.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNITY COHESION

In a focus group with South LA students, youth reported that they highly value relationships with teachers whom they can trust. They characterized trusting teachers as having strong senses of humor, being willing to talk about problems, and generally “understanding” youth.

Students also reported that their schools are deeply racially/ethnically divided. One high school freshman described how she and her friends voluntarily isolate themselves from certain peers in order to avoid intermingling with badly behaved cliques. Students spoke frequently about how different racial/ethnic cliques have distinct behavioral reputations. Participants also described how each social group congregates in certain areas in school buildings, enabling students to avoid certain locales that are prone to “fighting.”

IN CONCLUSION, connectedness to schools and particularly teachers is highly valued by South LA students. In the CHKS survey, about half of LAUSD students reported feeling connected to their schools, and slightly higher percentages responded positively about relationships with teachers and other adults at their schools.

Family and community cohesion is greatly affected by community violence. For families, financial burdens caused by suspending and expelling students cause a great degree of family stress. Parent engagement in schools may help increase school, family, and community cohesion.

6.5.6 MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

As reported in Section 6.4, depression data for South LA children was not available for this analysis, and adults in South LA have a very similar rate of depression as adults in the county overall. However, there are many other aspects of mental health besides a depression diagnosis. One particularly prevalent mental health ailment is chronic stress, and one cause of stress is violence and conflict in one's school or residential community.

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: MENTAL HEALTH IN LAUSD SCHOOLS

According to the CSCS survey, approximately one-third (33-38%) of LAUSD staff perceived that depression or other mental health problems among students were at least a moderate problem among their students, and about the same percentage (32%-35%) of students said that sadness and depression affected some of their normal activities.

PARENT PERSPECTIVES ON EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE AND MENTAL HEALTH

The parent survey found that out of nine choices for top health issues they're concerned about for their children, parents were *most* concerned about mental health issues. Sixty-three percent of survey respondents selected stress/anxiety/depression.

Based on their experiences, parent members of CADRE overwhelmingly feel that mental health is of extreme importance to youth because poor mental health can spiral into other problems. For example, they sense that poor mental health can lead to drug use, which can then lead to violence, which can result in disciplinary events at school and/or law enforcement consequences. Parents expressed that suspended students can inherit a reputation as "bad kids," leading to intense feelings of rejection and alienation both inside and outside of school. However, they did not condone all in-school disciplinary alternatives as categorically better than exclusions. In fact, they felt that certain disciplinary alternatives, such as having students pick up trash and humiliating them can cause students to feel exploited and exhibited as trouble-makers, which could be damaging to mental health.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE AND MENTAL HEALTH

LAUSD students remarked that severe disciplinary action, including suspension from school, "embarrass" disciplined students, making them feel "shy" and reticent to interact with authority figures thereafter. Youth described feeling "alone" and "stressed" after facing disciplinary actions. One participant explained that school suspensions cause stress, in part because parents incur additional childcare costs and might have to take time off of work.

Participants noted that out-of-school suspension is not the only disciplinary strategy that impacts students' psychological well-being. According to youth, less formalized in-school practices, such as "sending kids to younger classes," serve only to demoralize and "embarrass" students, lending little educational value to misbehaving youth.

IN CONCLUSION, while its unclear how mental health among South LA students compares to that of students in the rest of LA County, depression and other poor mental health outcomes are prevalent among students in LAUSD schools. Statewide survey data shows that for LAUSD as a whole, about one-third of students are depressed or sad. Based on their experience, South LA parents feel that suspension can lead their children to feel rejected and alienated, and that a poor state of mental health can lead to a chain of other serious events in youth. Students confirmed literature findings that exclusionary discipline can lead to or exacerbate stress, PTSD, tendencies toward disruption, and other negative mental health outcomes.

6.6 PREDICTED HEALTH IMPACTS OF PBIS IN SOUTH LOS ANGELES

LAUSD passed a SWPBIS policy in 2007. However, not all schools are effectively putting the policy into place. Because PBIS has not been implemented long enough for post-implementation data to be obtained, it is difficult to find conclusive evidence about its effectiveness and for answering all of the research questions in this HIA. Once post-implementation data begins to become available, researchers will be able to better track, longitudinally, how educational and health outcomes change as PBIS implementation changes.

In the absence of robust data on the effectiveness of PBIS, this HIA has developed conclusions based on the best available evidence. Based on the findings of this HIA, predicted health impacts of PBIS in South Los Angeles, through the six health determinants, are presented below.

METHODS

To predict impacts of PBIS on the six health determinants, we drew upon many of the same methods described in Section 5 and Section 6.5. An additional method used in the predictive analysis was the PBIS Effectiveness Study, which is described in Section 5.2 and further detailed in Appendix E. Briefly, this PBIS effectiveness study developed a model for estimating the effectiveness of PBIS on disciplinary and educational outcomes.

6.6.1 PREDICTED IMPACTS ON EDUCATION

Based on a predictive analysis of PBIS in schools in four states around the country (not including California), and application of results to schools in Local District 7, in 2009-10, if the middle and high schools in Local District 7 (see Table 6-1)ⁿ had increased their use of PBIS by 50%:^o

- **741** out-of-school suspensions would have been prevented
- **At least 741** school days of student instructional time would have been saved
- **31** school days of teaching time would have been saved (based on an estimate of 15 minutes of teaching time used per suspension)¹³²
- **93** school days of administrative time (time school staff spends on managing discipline issues) would have been saved (based on an estimate of 45 minutes of administrator leadership time used per suspension)¹³²

Educational attainment may increase if PBIS implementation is successful at reducing the number of dropouts. As summarized in Table 5-1 in Section 5.1.1, attendance and grade point average are the two *best* predictors of whether incoming 9th grade students will graduate.

CADRE's parent survey found that, among their sample of South LA parents:

ⁿ Jordan New Technology High School had closed by 2009-10, so it is not included in these calculations.

^o As measured by the Effective Behavioral Support (EBS) Survey.

- **73%** of parents *agree* or *strongly agree* that suspension and expulsion practices decrease the chances of their child graduating from high school
- **72%** of parents *agree* or *strongly agree* that suspension and expulsion practices decrease the chances of their child going to college

A parent said that the school their daughter attends punishes students, not by kicking them off campus, but by sending them to detention afterschool, where they receive tutoring from a teacher. The parent thought that this was a better way to punish students rather than excluding them from school to be left at home.

Some South Los Angeles students shared an alternative view on exclusionary discipline. In a focus group with South LA youth, while students characterized school exclusions as harmful for disciplined students, they also agreed that sometimes excluding chronically disruptive students benefits other students by improving the learning environment.

CONCLUSION: Education is an important determinant of a healthy life. PBIS would increase time in school for students of South LA schools, which would in turn improve health knowledge and behaviors, increase longevity, increase earning potential and thus access to resources, and increase access to social networks of support.

6.6.2 PREDICTED IMPACTS ON MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

As mentioned in Section 6.6.1, according to the estimated effectiveness of PBIS at reducing time spent on disciplinary referrals, a 50% increase in PBIS implementation in all LD7 middle and high schools would prevent 946 suspensions and 118 school days of administrative time spent handling suspensions.

In addition to preventing suspensions and expulsions, we conclude that PBIS implementation reduces misbehavior and “getting in trouble.” Research literature cited in Section 5.1.2 shows that when youth are not in school, they are more likely to become involved in a physical fight, carry a weapon, and use illegal substances. Thus, if PBIS keeps students in school, they are less likely to have these behaviors. South LA parents echoed these sentiments, and recommended that staff give positive reinforcements and rewards for good behavior to well-behaved students.

We also determined through literature review (see Section 5.1.2) that exclusionary discipline leads to incarceration (i.e., a “school-to-prison pipeline”). Thus, by keeping kids in school, PBIS has great potential to reduce incarceration of residents of South LA.

CONCLUSION: PBIS has the potential to improve health outcomes by preventing student misbehavior, disciplinary events, and future incarceration. Certain misbehaviors cause harm to others (i.e., fighting, theft, violence), and can also lead to recurring discipline by schools and even incarceration, which are associated with reduced earnings, violence, and poor mental health for the individual, family and community.

6.6.3 PREDICTED IMPACTS ON COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME

The status quo discipline policy, zero tolerance, has been found to be ineffective at decreasing violence in schools in the literature.

CONCLUSION: If PBIS implementation in South LA schools is successful at improving attendance and educational outcomes, then it is expected to decrease violence and crime in the community, as there will be fewer students with unsupervised out-of-school time due to exclusionary punishments. In turn, injuries, death, and stress are expected to decrease. A reduction in stress can, in turn, reduce heart disease, hypertension, adverse birth outcomes, and negative mental health impacts.

6.6.4 PREDICTED IMPACTS ON DRUG USE

CONCLUSION: Drug use can be harmful to students' health and can also lead to poor school performance and increased likelihood of getting in trouble with the law. When children are not in school, they are more likely to use drugs. In addition to literature showing this association, South LA parents have observed this to be true: in a focus group, a parent reported that her child's behavior improved once the school contacted her about her child's class cutting, and arranged the student to meet with a social worker. The situation began improving after the parent started communicating better and more frequently about school issues with her child. This lack of communication between parent and child, she inferred, is part of what drives students to drug use and other poor activities.

Thus, since our PBIS analysis predicted that PBIS would reduce exclusions from LD7 schools (see Section 6.6.2), we conclude that implementation of PBIS would prevent drug use and associated health hazards among youth in South L.A.

6.6.5 PREDICTED IMPACTS ON FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY COHESION

CONCLUSION: One documented benefit of PBIS is that it improves the organizational health of schools.^p In addition, this HIA found that excluding kids from school leads to financial burdens for parents and families who incur additional childcare costs and might have to take time off of work. In turn, this leads to family stress. PBIS implementation would prevent this stress by keeping youth in school.

^p Good organizational health is defined in the referenced study to include an emphasis on academic achievement, friendly and collegial relationships among staff, respect for all members of the school community, supportive administrative leadership, consistent discipline policies, attention to safety issues, and family and community involvement.

6.6.6 PREDICTED IMPACTS ON MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

CONCLUSION: South LA students and parents feel that severe disciplinary actions, including suspension from schools, cause negative mental health conditions such as embarrassment, reticence, stress, and feelings of rejection and alienation. This is in line with research evidence (cited in Section 5.1.1 of this report) illustrating that exclusionary discipline can lead to stress, short- or long-term emotional damage and even behavioral disorders among students, decrease students' feelings of "bondedness" to school, and increase the likelihood of delinquency and inclinations toward aggressive and anti-social behaviors.

Thus, if PBIS implementation is successful in South LA schools, it is expected that these negative mental health outcomes associated with exclusionary discipline policies will decrease.

6.7 CONCLUSIONS

Based on this analysis, implementing alternative school discipline policies in South Los Angeles, such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, may help students gain health benefits associated with increased educational attainment; connectedness to school, family and community; and improved conditions for mental health. PBIS would also prevent many students from hazardous conditions for health associated with not being in school, incarceration, drug abuse, and violence.

Table 6-2 below summarizes the impacts of PBIS implementation in LD7 schools on health determinants prioritized in this HIA. Included is information on the direction, magnitude, and severity of impacts, as well as the strength of the evidence and any uncertainties regarding predictions.

Table 6-2. LAUSD summary of PBIS impacts on health determinants

Health Determinant	Impact	Magnitude	Severity	Strength of Evidence	Uncertainties
Education	+	Moderate - Major	Moderate - Major	◆◆	Varying degrees of PBIS implementation between LAUSD schools will modify impacts Student vulnerability or trauma associated with factors outside of school play a role in all of these health determinants (i.e., school discipline policies are not the only contributor)
Misbehavior, Recurring Discipline Events, and Incarceration	+	Moderate	Moderate	◆◆	
Community Violence and Crime	+	Minor	Moderate	◆	
Drug Use	+	Minor	Moderate	◆	
Family, School and Community Cohesion	+	Minor	Moderate	◆	
Mental health conditions	+	Moderate	Moderate	◆	

Explanations:

- *Impact* refers to whether the proposal will improve health (+), harm health (-), or whether results are mixed (~).
- *Magnitude* reflects a qualitative judgment of the size of the anticipated change in health effect (e.g., the increase in the number of cases of disease, injury, adverse events): Negligible, Minor, Moderate, Major.
- *Severity* reflects the nature of the effect on function and life-expectancy and its permanence: High = intense/severe; Mod = Moderate; Low = not intense or severe.
- *Strength of Evidence* refers to the strength of the research/evidence showing causal relationship between mobility and the health outcome: ◆ = plausible but insufficient evidence; ◆◆ = likely but more evidence needed; ◆◆◆ = causal relationship certain. A causal effect means that the effect is likely to occur, irrespective of the magnitude and severity.

6.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

In response to HIA findings related to exclusionary discipline and SWPBS implementation at South LA schools, the following recommendations were developed by CADRE parent members and Human Impact Partners:

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

In order to improve educational outcomes, we recommend that LAUSD and Local District 7 fully implement the SWPBS policy. Implementation of PBIS will reduce student exclusion from school, and thus improve their opportunities to learn, as well as graduate from high school.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PREVENTING AND MITIGATING STUDENT’S ENGAGEMENT WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND INCARCERATION

This study found that exclusionary discipline in school leads to future incarceration as an adult, and that incarceration is associated with negative mental and physical health impacts. Because students come into contact with all levels of law enforcement, from school police to city and county officers, a community-wide mitigation to these problems should involve law enforcement at all levels. To prevent and mitigate South LA children’s engagement with law enforcement, we recommend that the Los Angeles School Police Department, the Los Angeles Police Department, and the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department dedicate a meaningful amount of their professional development over the next three years to be trained in:

- School-Wide Positive Behavior Support as an alternative intervention approach with South LA youth, community, and schools.
- International Human Rights standards to understand how to treat youth and community members with dignity and respect, and the role this plays in transforming community-law enforcement relationships.

A community review team, consisting of youth, parents, psychologists, residents, teachers, and school counselors, should be established jointly by the above three law enforcement agencies to generate feedback and guidance on community relationships and interactions with each agency, and to improve accountability.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR REDUCING VIOLENCE IN SCHOOLS

This study concluded that implementation of SWPBS shows promise for decreasing violence, while the status quo discipline policy, zero tolerance, has been found to be ineffective at decreasing violence in schools. To reduce the direct (i.e., injuries and death) and indirect (i.e., stress and mental health) health impacts of violence on our children, we recommend that LAUSD and Local District 7:

- Reduce violence by fully complying with, defining, and modeling behavior expectations as mandated in its Discipline Foundation SWPBS Policy
- Track all instances of violence so that parents and school personnel can make better informed decisions when issues arise
- Fully comply with its Discipline Foundation SWPBS Policy and put in place a system of intensive and non-exclusionary interventions for students
- Redirect and seek out new funding to bring back after-school programs that keep youth engaged and less likely to encounter violence

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING SCHOOL, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY COHESION

We recommend that LAUSD teachers and schools engage parents to the highest degree possible. One potential example of this would be to invite parents to do classroom observation. This would allow them to witness the learning environment in the classroom, as well as the various classroom management challenges that exist. In addition, parents of LAUSD students should engage with teachers and school activities to the best extent that they can given their time and financial constraints. Schools should

involve parents in SWPBS implementation teams, as well. This relationship-building may increase school, family, and community, and cohesion.

Finally, schools should apply culturally-responsive community engagement in order to understand the culture and context of the community by regularly interfacing with community members, opening up their campuses and hosting community events.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS RELATED TO SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

This HIA found that exclusionary discipline is related to stress, emotional and behavioral disorders, increased delinquency, and aggressive and anti-social behaviors. To address the health impacts of South LA children’s mental health issues going unacknowledged and unaddressed, we recommend that LAUSD reverse the harmful practices of suspending students for “willful defiance” and other relatively minor offenses by:

- Implement SWPBS in all schools, and in accordance with the existing SWPBS policy, include the consideration of student mental health status before suspensions.
- Concretely and measurably define the meaning and parameters of suspensions based on “willful defiance” so that they are concrete and can be monitored.
- Integrate and ensure that this definition and the parameters are reflected in LAUSD’s Discipline Foundation SWPBS Policy.

Other recommendations for improving mental health are:

- Conduct trainings to help LAUSD staff recognize red flags concerning student mental health behavior.
- Examine the mental health of all students who have been suspended or expelled from school, and all students in Individualized Education Programs (IEP), to decrease negative health conditions (stress, depression, anxiety) going undetected and unaddressed.
- Request additional funding from the Federal Government to create more school-based health centers in communities like South LA, where there is a high demand for mental health services.
- Develop a system to track student mental health data and trends.

6.9 MONITORING

An HIA monitoring plan, both to track the impact of this HIA on school discipline practices in LD7 and South LA schools and also to measure the impact of school discipline on health outcomes, is included in Appendix O. This monitoring plan is intended to be a “living” document, in that it can be further developed and revised as necessary during the monitoring period.

7 HIA Location 2: Oakland

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Oakland, California is the largest city on the eastern side (“East Bay”) of the San Francisco Bay. The city’s abundant natural resources, attractive location, and the presence of the Port of Oakland, which is now Northern California’s largest and the nation’s fifth busiest^q port,¹³³ have played large roles in fueling its growth and character. While labeled in recent decades for its high crime rates, Oakland is now also undergoing a renaissance of arts, culture, revitalization, and declining violent crime rates.

OAKLAND UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

Public schools in Oakland, operated by the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), have performed poorly in recent history. Test scores in OUSD schools are below the state average, as are graduation rates, particularly for students of color. Due to financial troubles and administrative failures, OUSD was in receivership by the state of California from 2003 to 2009.¹³⁴ However, in spite of these challenges, over the past six years, OUSD’s cumulative increase in Academic Performance Index (API) score of 116 points has made OUSD the most improved large, urban school district in the state of California.¹³⁵

Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) serves approximately 39,000 students in 65 elementary schools, 20 middle schools, 24 high schools, and 32 District authorized charter schools.¹³⁵ The ethnic majority of OUSD students is Hispanic/Latino (39.8%), followed closely by African-American/Black (31.5%), and then Asian American (13.0%) and Caucasian/White (8.0%).¹²⁶ Nearly 30% of the student body are English Language Learners, and 64% qualify for free or reduced price meals. See Table P-1 in Appendix P for more details on OUSD’s student demographics.

Since 2003-04, OUSD has made steady improvements in its Academic Performance Index (API) score, California’s main metric for evaluating student achievement. Last year, the District’s API score increased by 26 points, which was more than two times the average growth rate of the entire state. Correspondingly, the District’s four-year high school graduation rate increased from 58% to 69%. In this time period, the District also opened 31 new small schools in low-income neighborhoods with community input, expanded summer school services from 2,000 to 8,000 students, and increased after-school programs from 34 to 91 schools, serving more than 17,500 students. However, due to budgetary and personnel issues stemming in part from the district’s recent shift towards smaller schools, OUSD has been forced to close 5 elementary schools for the 2012-13 school year, with more closures likely to occur in the near future.¹³⁶

ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITY GAP FOR STUDENTS OF COLOR

While the District is moving in the right direction, it continues to under-serve a significant proportion of its students. Subgroup analyses by race/ethnicity, socioeconomic, English language learner, and

^q According to the number of Twenty-foot Equivalent Units (TEUs) moved annually.

disability status show that all OUSD subgroups have made academic gains over the last decade. However, persistent disparities in academic achievement between aggregated student populations and specific subgroups are cause for serious concern. In 2008-09, for example, White OUSD students achieved an average API score of 901, which is considered “Advanced” by the state of California. By comparison, Latino and Black students achieved average API scores of 650 and 625, respectively, both scores considered “Below Basic.”^f

7.2 POLICY CONTEXT

OUSD’S ROAD TO RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

In recent years, OUSD has demonstrated a firm commitment to addressing inequities among students. In January 2010, the OUSD School Board passed a resolution to adopt a district-wide Restorative Justice policy. The three-year Restorative Justice initiative “include[d] professional development of administrators and school site staff redesign of District discipline structures and practices and promote[d] alternatives to suspension at every school.”¹³⁷

The RJ Resolution prioritizes the following key goals:

- to offer alternatives to suspension/expulsion;
- to [create] and [support] a culture shift in the way the District systematically responds to student discipline problems in District schools by moving toward restorative approaches, not inconsistent with law, which re-integrate rather than exclude;
- to reduce racial, ethnic, and any other protected class disparities in school discipline, especially suspension and expulsion; and
- to address the alarming rate of disproportionate contact with students of color.¹³⁷

The District’s decision to adopt RJ was, in large part, an outgrowth of a civil lawsuit filed in the early 1990s by a group of OUSD parents. The lawsuit alleged that OUSD’s resource allocation decisions, academic tracking policies, and exclusionary discipline practices disproportionately burdened historically under-achieving students of color (B. McClung, personal communication, Feb 1, 2011). In 1993, OUSD entered into a voluntary agreement with the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights to reduce racial disparities in terms of school discipline actions, among other outcomes (B. McClung, personal communication, Feb 1, 2011). What resulted was a “Voluntary Resolution Plan” (VRP), which stipulated a host of conditions to which the District must adhere in order to ensure equal access to learning opportunities for all students.

^f In California, the API is a single number ranging from 200 to 1000 that reflects a school’s performance level based on the results of statewide testing. The API is used as a ranking tool that measures (1) the academic growth of a school relative to its own performance from the prior year, and (2) compares schools statewide and to 100 other schools that have similar demographic characteristics, whereby a score of 1000 signifies “Advanced” status, 875 “Proficient,” 700 “Basic,” 500 “Below Basic,” and 200 “Far Below Basic.”

RJ IN OUSD TODAY

In 2010, The California Endowment (TCE) awarded an \$850,000 grant to Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth (RJOY), an advocacy group dedicated to seeding restorative practices in schools, over three years to provide site-based RJ coordination in four small high schools on East Oakland's Castlemont campus. The District also selected six other schools in which to pilot RJ over the next three years. Additionally, The City of Oakland funded RJ Coordinators under Measure Y⁵ at McClymonds and Street Academy in 2010-11, and Ralph Bunche High School and West Oakland Middle School in 2011-12. Schools were chosen on the basis that their principals demonstrated a full commitment to implementing restorative practices.

In OUSD schools, RJ operates under three core principles: (1) identifying harm, (2) involving all stakeholders to their desired comfort level, and (3) true accountability — taking steps to repair the harm and address its causes to the degree possible.¹³⁵ In addition, OUSD has placed a strong focus on community-building and building relationships among students and school staff, as well as with the surrounding neighborhoods in which the schools are located; and increasing empathy and encouraging students to bring their cultural values into the classroom are of the highest importance (D. Yusem, personal communication, Jan. 17, 2012). The hallmark of RJ in OUSD is the use of conferencing “circles.” Circles bring together victims, perpetrators, and community members to engage in a collaborative process of reparation. Often, circle conferences guide offenders to make formal apologies to victims or to reach consensus about what actions should be taken to repair harm.

Today, there are twelve schools in OUSD that are implementing RJ through a variety of funding sources. While some schools have brought on dedicated RJ coordinators, others have reassigned existing staff as coordinators. Despite considerable political support for RJ among District and school leaders, major financial constraints have stymied efforts to roll out RJ District-wide. The lack of funding is particularly problematic, because RJ necessitates a dedicated coordinator to train school staff, engage the community, and manage RJ caseloads (B. McClung, personal communication, Feb 1, 2011). Moreover, research suggests that successful implementation of RJ requires all adults within a school site to be trained in restorative practices over a three-year period (see Section 5.1.4).

OUSD's RJ Resolution explicitly encourages schools to continue to engage in their current discipline processes, so long as they do not conflict with RJ. The District deliberately granted schools this semi-autonomy after researching other large school districts' unsuccessful efforts to impose “top-down” discipline mandates on schools (B. McClung, personal communication, Feb 1, 2011). OUSD's highly decentralized structure makes it especially challenging to prescribe mandatory District-wide discipline policies; historically in Oakland, school discipline has fallen under the purview of principals. Consequently, discipline practices vary widely at the school level. District leadership recognizes that

⁵ Measure Y, or the Violence Prevention and Public Safety Act of 2004, supports social services, nonprofits, police, employment, schools, criminal justice, faith-based agencies and community members at the neighborhood level to address the symptoms of violence.

inconsistent application of restorative practices threatens to dilute the effectiveness of the RJ model. The District hopes that the RJ Resolution resonates in schools as a symbol of solidarity, signaling a new era for school discipline in Oakland.

OUSD'S LONG-TERM RESTORATIVE JUSTICE VISION

District leadership hopes that in the future, all OUSD schools will implement RJ full-scale, facilitating a District-wide culture shift from status quo discipline to a restorative paradigm. Absent adequate funding, however, the District has had to devise strategies to disseminate its restorative message indirectly. Therefore, OUSD has taken measures to coordinate efforts across District departments and among community-based partners to reinforce the core principles of the RJ model. Many local partner organizations now practice RJ in some capacity, including Youth Alive, Our Kids, Catholic Charities of the East Bay, East Bay Agency for Children, Family Violence Law Center, Seneca Center, Leadership Excellence, Bay Area Community Resources, and more. Furthermore, the District's own newly formed African-American Male Achievement (AAMA) Task Force, dedicated to improving academic and health outcomes for African-American males across OUSD, recently set a goal to reduce disparities for African-American males in terms of suspensions — an outcome measure of RJ. Coordination and collaboration among District departments are essential in order to align the whole District with the mission of reducing school exclusions (B. McClung, personal communication, Feb 1, 2011).

OUSD'S IMPLEMENTATION OF POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS AND SUPPORTS

While OUSD has been on a policy path to implementing RJ, the district has also begun implementing, concurrently, a program of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). The main objective of PBIS at OUSD was to lower suspensions and racial disproportionality in suspensions (D. Yusem, personal communication, Jan 17, 2012). While RJ and PBIS implementation were not intended to be implemented together, the two practices are considered to be complementary (B. McClug, personal communication, Feb 1, 2011).

By the end of the 2011-12 school year, a cohort of 10-12 pilot schools will be implementing PBIS in some form. All of the pilot schools will have coaches, and OUSD is working with site teams to develop behavior matrices and then rolling them out to staff. Full PBIS implementation at these schools will begin in the 2012-13 school year (D. Yusem, personal communication, Jan. 17, 2012). At this time it is uncertain whether PBIS will be implemented district-wide in the future.

7.3 OAKLAND DEMOGRAPHICS

This section provides a demographic context of Oakland, the broader community in which OUSD is located.

According to the 2010 Decennial Census, Oakland's population was 390,724. Oakland is located in Alameda County, where it is the county seat and most populous city with about 26% of the county's population. In 2010, approximately 21% of the population was under 18 years of age. The racial makeup was approximately 35% white, 28% African American, 17% Asian, and 1% Native American. The Latino population of any race was approximately 25%.¹³⁸ As illustrated in Figure P-1 in Appendix P, Oakland has

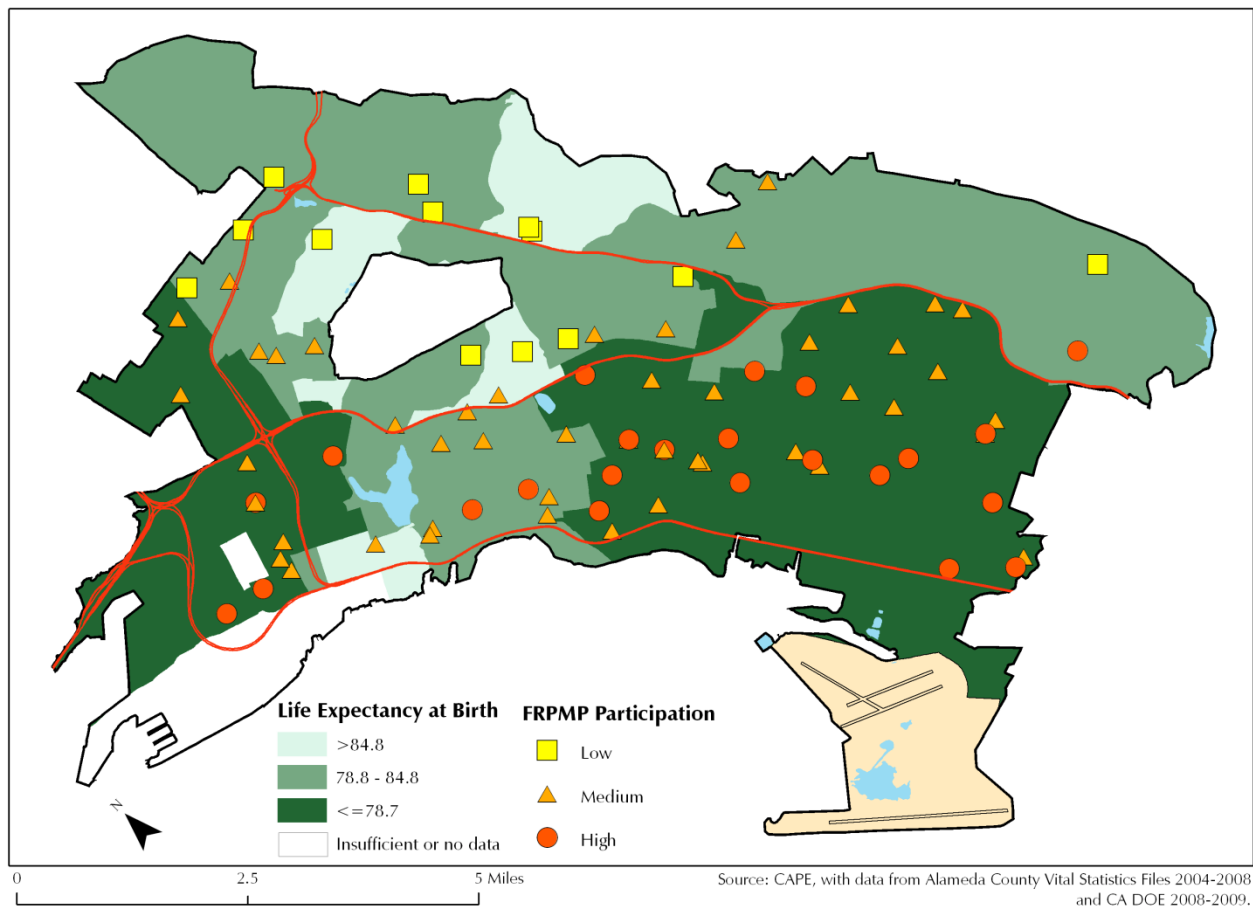
a higher African American, slightly higher Hispanic/Latino population, and lower Asian/Pacific Islander and White populations compared to the county as a whole.

As shown in Figure P-2 in Appendix P, Oakland has a slightly higher percentage of residents that have less than a high school education compared to Alameda County as a whole.

Oakland had an unemployment rate of 12.9% in 2010, compared to 12.1% for Alameda County. However, the median household income was much lower in Oakland (\$49,190) compared to Alameda County (\$67,169).¹³⁹

Income has been shown in the literature to be associated with health outcomes, including life expectancy. Figure 7-1 shows where low-income student populations are (as identified by participation in a free and reduced price meal program, or FRPMP) in relation to life expectancy in the city.

Figure 7-1. Oakland life expectancy and school poverty levels



Source: Alameda County Department of Public Health CAPE unit, Vital Statistics 2004-2008, CA Dept. of Education, 2008-2009

Based on this map, it seems that 100% of the schools with low FRPMP participation are located in areas with life expectancies of at least 78.7 years, while the vast majority of schools with high FRPMP participation are located in areas with lower life expectancies than 78.7 years. It should be noted that

many of the schools shown in the map are now closed or reorganized, due to policy changes in the district since 2009.

7.4 SELECT HEALTH STATUS INDICATORS IN OAKLAND

This section reports existing conditions of health indicators that belong to pathways beginning with school discipline. Table 5-1 discusses connections between school discipline policies and these health outcomes through the six health determinants studied in this HIA.

LIFE EXPECTANCY

Each of the six health determinants is linked to life expectancy. Life expectancy in East Oakland as of 2003 was 72 years.¹⁴⁰ In the wealthier and more privileged Oakland hills communities, life expectancy is much higher at 83, while in the county the average life expectancy is 80 years.¹⁴¹

HEART DISEASE

Stress, a health outcome considered in this HIA, is one risk factor for heart disease. Heart disease is the leading cause of death for Oakland residents, causing 23.8% of all deaths, as well as for Alameda County residents, causing 24.5% of all deaths in the county.¹⁴² Hospitalization rates for coronary heart disease in Oakland are lower than the county average, where the Oakland rate is 815.3 per 100,000 people and Alameda County rate is 924.6. Countywide African Americans have the highest rate of hospitalization from coronary heart disease at 1,098.6 per 100,000.¹⁴²

MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES

Youth mental health impacts associated with school policies can affect adult mental health, as well as mental health of a young person's family and community. ACPHD reports that 3% of Oakland's population received inpatient or emergency room care for mental disorders in 2010—a rate of 1,087 visits per 100,000 population. Alameda County had a similar percentage with a rate of 925 visits per 100,000 population. Generally, for both areas, the rates for men were higher than the rates for women. In Oakland, emergency department visit rates for African Americans were 65% higher than the total rate, while all other racial/ethnic groups had lower rates than the citywide rate.¹⁴²

TEEN BIRTH RATE

Oakland's city-wide teen birth rate of 45.7 births per 1,000 girls age 15-19 is 72% higher than the 26.5 rate nation-wide.¹⁴³

7.5 EXISTING CONDITIONS IN OAKLAND

This section reports existing conditions related to the six determinants of health (identified as key health determinants along the pathway between school discipline policies and health outcomes; see Section 4.3 and Table 5-1) in Oakland schools and the City of Oakland.

METHODS

California Healthy Kids Survey and California School Climate Survey

Methods for the analysis of these surveys are described in Section 5.3. Data was collected for all OUSD schools that participate in these surveys. All CHKS and CSCS survey results for OUSD that are discussed in this report are summarized in Appendix F and G, respectively.

Focus Groups with East Oakland High School Students

Methods and citations for Oakland focus groups are included in Section 5.4.

7.5.1 EDUCATION

For the 2007-08 school year, the unweighted average high school graduation rate for OUSD was 69%. This is lower than the rate for Alameda County as a whole (83%) and also lower than the state graduation rate (80%).¹²⁶

In this same time period, the percentage of these high school students scoring either “Proficient” or “Advanced” on the California standardized reading and math tests were 24% and 9%, respectively. For middle schoolers, 28% achieved these scores in reading and 25% achieved these scores in math.¹²⁶ These test scores are drastically lower than those of Alameda County and the State of California (see Figures 7-2 and 7-3 below).

Figure 7-2. Percent proficient and advanced in reading and math in OUSD high schools, 2007-08

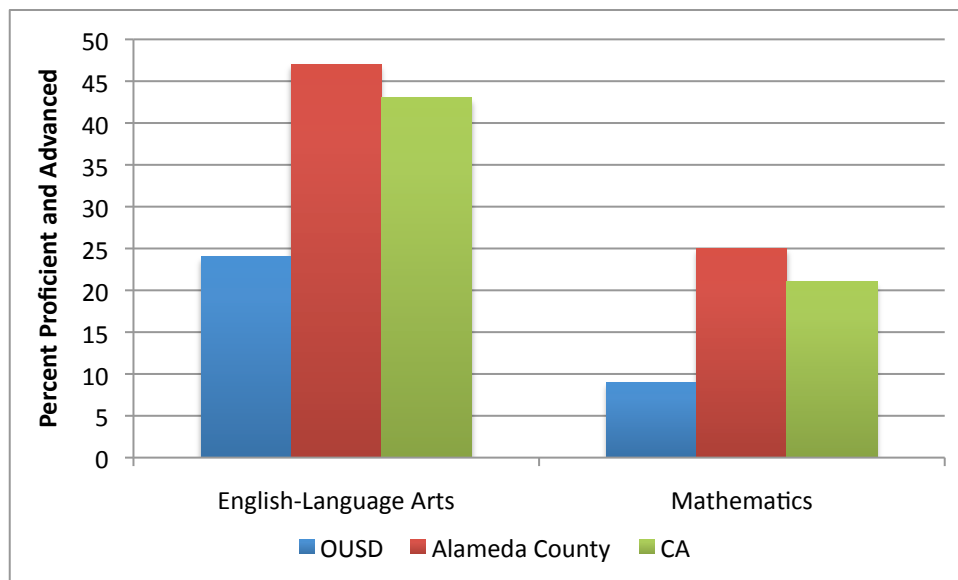
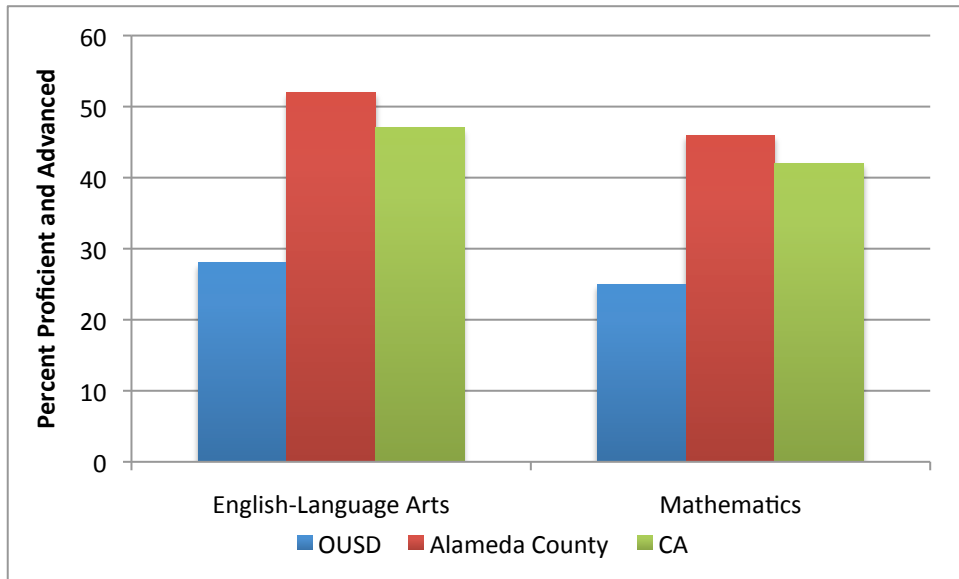
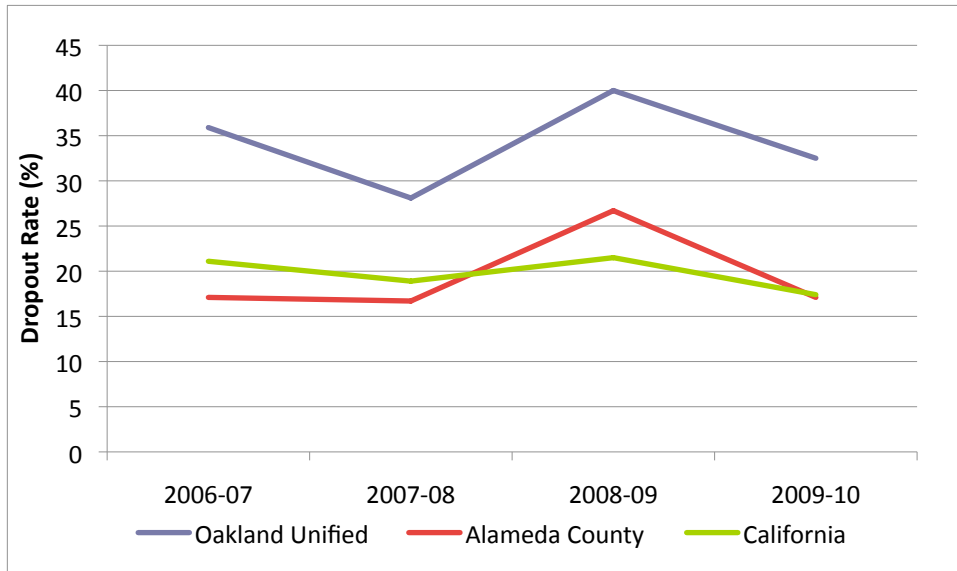


Figure 7-3. Percent proficient and advanced in reading and math in OUSD middle schools, 2007-08



For at least the last two decades, OUSD high school dropout rates have been higher than statewide and countywide trends. OUSD's 2009-10 dropout rate was still significantly higher than in any other school district within Alameda County; in that year, 32.5% of OUSD students dropped out of school, compared to 17.1% in the County, and 17.4% in the state (see Figure 7-4).¹²⁹

Figure 7-4. Grade 9-12 4-year derived^t high school dropout rates in OUSD, Alameda County, and California, 2006-07 to 2009-10^u



Source: KidsData.org, 2011¹²⁹

Furthermore, according to 2009-10 data, in California and especially in OUSD, Black, American Indian, Pacific Islander, and Latino students are more likely to drop out of high school than White students.¹²⁶ OUSD reported that, among the students that reported their race in 2009-10, the adjusted Grade 9-12 one-year dropout rate^v for American Indian students was highest among all students (12.5%), followed by African American students (11.4%) and Filipino students (11.2%). White students dropped out of school at a rate of 6.0%, while Asian Americans recorded the lowest dropout rate of 4.1%.¹²⁶

^t The 4-year derived dropout rate is an estimate of the percent of students who would drop out in a four year period based on data collected for a single year.

Adjusted grade 9-12 4-year derived dropout rate formula = $(1 - ((1 - (\text{Reported or Adjusted Gr. 9 Dropouts} / \text{Gr. 9 Enrollment})) * (1 - (\text{Reported or Adjusted Gr. 10 Dropouts} / \text{Gr. 10 Enrollment})) * (1 - (\text{Reported or Adjusted Gr. 11 Dropouts} / \text{Gr. 11 Enrollment})) * (1 - (\text{Reported or Adjusted Gr. 12 Dropouts} / \text{Gr. 12 Enrollment})))) * 100$

^u Dropout Spikes in dropout rates since 2004-5 may actually be somewhat misleading. It is possible that dramatic increases in school dropout are attributable to California's improved capacity to track student data before the 2006-07 school year was available, but not presented. In 2004-5, California launched the California Information System (CSIS), which records individual students' school enrollment across all school districts in California. Consequently, starting in 2007, CDE and all school districts across the state, have more accurate means to report enrollment, graduation rates, and dropout rates in all school districts. It is not advisable, therefore, to compare dropout rates pre-2007 with those post-2007. Nonetheless, OUSD's dropout rates are consistently much higher than the county's and state's, indicating a need for serious intervention.

^v It is inappropriate to compare 4-year derived dropout rates with 1-year dropout rates.

Adjusted grade 9-12 1-year dropout rate formula = $(\text{Adjusted Gr. 9-12 Dropouts} / \text{Gr. 9-12 Enrollment}) * 100$

As shown in Figure P-3 in Appendix P, truancy rates^w were significantly higher in OUSD than in any other school district within Alameda County until the 2009-10 school year. During the 2009-10 school year, a change in the reporting system may have skewed results (see Appendix P).

EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN OUSD SCHOOLS: CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS

During the 2005-06 and 2007-08 school years, OUSD staff reported that only 36-41% of students arrived at school alert and rested, and 36-43% of students were motivated to learn. CHKS responses indicated that skipping school becomes more common as OUSD students progress through grades 7, 9, and 11.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE AND EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Focus group participants expressed that time away from school due to suspensions causes students to fall behind. One student said:

Honestly, all it does is not prepare them for when they come back. When they come back, they're not going to know what's going on at school/class. They're going to be inadequate, and they're going to have to go around and ask so many questions and get all the make-up work and it just makes the kid unprepared. It doesn't help them. Suspending the kid doesn't do anything. They just sit at home and play videogames. It does nothing for the child.

IN CONCLUSION, dropout and truancy rates are higher in OUSD compared to other school districts in Alameda County. OUSD staff observe that most students are not well rested and motivated to learn at school. Skipping classes becomes more prevalent as students progress through middle and high school. Students expressed that time at home due to suspensions is generally unproductive, and forces them to catch up to the rest of class upon returning to school.

7.5.2 MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

Discipline Events

OUSD resorts to suspension and expulsion more frequently than most school districts within Alameda County and California. OUSD's suspension rate of 14.8 suspensions per 100 students exceeds Alameda County's rate of 12.2 and the state's rate of 12.5.¹²⁶ In 2009-10, according to the California Department of Education (CDE), OUSD issued 6,882 suspensions, 41% of which were a result of "violence and/or drugs."¹²⁶ Although CDE does not provide reasons for the remaining 59% of suspensions, historically, according to school officials and students themselves, the vast majority of suspensions in OUSD occur as a result of injury to another person or violence not in self-defense, followed by "defiance" or disruption (B. McClung, personal communication, Feb. 1, 2011). "Defiance" and "disruption" are determined subjectively by the superintendent or principal of the school.

Both disruption and defiance are defined in the same clause of the California Education Code as when a student "Disrupted school activities or otherwise willfully defied the valid authority of supervisors, teachers, administrators, school officials, or other school personnel engaged in the performance of their duties."¹³⁰ This lack of a consistent definition is one reason why punishments for defiance vary so widely, and may also be a hidden source of discrimination and inequity regarding how and who gets excluded from school. For example, because the definition is vague, it allows teachers great leeway to apply different standards to different students, which may contribute to certain groups, such as African-American males, being over-represented in those who are disciplined under "defiance."

Within OUSD, there are huge disparities in suspension rates between racial/ethnic groups. While the total number of suspensions has decreased in the last several years, the rate of suspension among Black students is significantly higher than that of Latino, Asian, and White students in the District. Although Black students represent only one-third of OUSD's student population, they make up two out of every three suspensions in the District.¹⁴⁴ A recent analysis of OUSD suspensions revealed that between August 2009 and February 2010, Black students accounted for exactly 70% of all OUSD high school suspensions.¹⁴⁴ Suspensions among OUSD's Latino students are also increasing. In 2008-09, Latino students accounted for 21% of the District's total suspensions, compared to roughly 18% in prior years.¹⁴⁴

Incarceration

Unfortunately, access to local data on incarceration was not obtained for this report, and so a statistical analysis on existing levels of incarceration in Oakland was not conducted.

OUSD, along with many local community-based organizations, has launched various initiatives to reduce disproportionate contact of students of color with the juvenile justice system. The District recently set a goal to reduce all OUSD student involvement in the criminal justice system by 50 percent. Health impacts associated with incarceration are described in Table 5-1.

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

Between 2005-06 and 2007-08, approximately half of OUSD staff reported in the CSCS that zero tolerance policies were enforced at school. A majority (78-83%) of staff perceived that disruptive student behavior was a moderate or severe problem, while just over half (57-58%) of staff reported that students were well behaved.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

One of the central questions underlying the school exclusions debate is whether or not students genuinely seize the opportunity to reflect upon their transgressions when they are absent from school. In a focus group of 21 East Oakland high school students, grades 9-12, interviewed students characterized out-of-school time (either due to mandated suspension or voluntary "hooky") as an opportunity "to take a vacation," "hang out with friends," "get high," "play videogames," "steal stuff, do

drugs, get in trouble, and get fat,” [and] “eat pizza.”¹¹⁸ Not a single youth among all 21 interviewees agreed that out-of-school suspension encourages students to “learn from their mistakes.” One student reported his/her opinion about the value of suspensions on fighting: “I don’t think it would stop them from fighting because apparently they grew up in that type of situation where they knew to fight when they got upset. They knew they had to fight if someone crossed them or got at them the wrong way.”

This evidence indicates that students are not likely to benefit from school exclusions by learning from their mistakes and preventing future misbehavior and discipline events.

Youth also expressed in focus groups that the majority of suspensions are due to the student exhibiting some form of disrespect to an adult at the school. Other youth reported that mouthing off and fighting were the most common reasons.

IN CONCLUSION, more OUSD students are suspended and expelled compared to students in other districts in the county and state, and school exclusions disproportionately affect students of color in OUSD. From students, there is little evidence that exclusionary policies prevent future recurrence of misbehavior, and many students suggest that time spent out of school leads to additional misbehavior.

7.5.3 COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME

In Oakland, violence, arrests, and incarceration disproportionately impact youth of color, and especially African-American males. Youth living in West and East Oakland, where the homicide rate is between 37.2 and 74.3 per 100,000 youth,¹⁴⁵ are most burdened by violence. Between 2001 and 2003 in Alameda County, 78% of all young African-American male victims of homicide and 52% of all young Latino male victims of homicide resided in Oakland.¹⁴⁶

In the last four years, the number of juvenile felony, violent, and misdemeanor arrests has skyrocketed by more than 100%. A sizeable proportion of these arrests occur in OUSD schools. According to OUSD officials, the most common reasons for suspension and expulsion today are violence, defiance, and possession of controlled substances, all offenses increasingly prosecuted by the Oakland Police Department over the last several years (B. McClung, personal communication, Feb 1, 2011).

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME IN OUSD SCHOOLS

The majority of staff reported that their schools were safe for staff (84-85%) and for students (76-83%). However, fairly large proportions of staff reported harassment among students (62-70%) and physical fighting between students (55-55%), with a slightly smaller proportion (32-39%) reporting racial/ethnic conflict among students.

Many students reported in the CHKS survey that within the previous year they had been in a physical fight (19-41%), had their property stolen or deliberately damaged (21-37%), carried a gun on school property (8-20%), and had seen someone else carrying a gun, knife, or other weapon on school property (35-51%).

YOUTH PERCEPTIONS ON COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME

In the focus group of OUSD students, the students characterized violent behavior as a personal problem that depends on the “type” of the student and whom they hang out with (e.g. membership in gangs). One student attributed fighting to issues at home, and claimed that suspension won’t help solve these issues and will only harm the student: “I don’t think suspension would stop them from fighting because apparently they grew up in that type of situation where they knew to fight when they got upset. They knew they had to fight if someone crossed them or got at them the wrong way.”

As described in the previous section, other students claimed that exclusionary discipline encourages students to steal and get in trouble, among other things.

Students also mentioned that violence, particularly gang-related violence, affects everyone. One student said, “It’s like collateral damage. You suffer and you’re less safe because of the situations other people put you in by your environment.” Students described feeling generally safe at school, but unsafe in the area around their campus, which they described as very violent. Some students talked about being “afraid to walk to school” and planning routes to and from school to avoid violent areas.

IN CONCLUSION, violence and incarceration of youth in Oakland disproportionately affect children of color, and arrest rates for juvenile crime incidences have been increasing in recent years. CHKS and CSCS survey results show that fighting, harassment, and carrying weapons is prevalent in Oakland schools. Some students who attend OUSD felt that the risk of being involved in school crime and violence was primarily a personal characteristic, but that the effects of criminal incidences affect everyone in school. Some expressed that suspension does not do anything to prevent fighting, and others claimed that suspension encourages students to engage in crime and violence.

7.5.4 DRUG USE

Possession of controlled substances is one of the most common reasons for suspension and expulsion in OUSD today (B. McClung, personal communication, Feb 1, 2011).

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: DRUG USE IN OUSD SCHOOLS

In the latest CSCS survey reviewed (from 2007-09), 25% of staff felt that student alcohol use was at least a moderate problem, and 42% felt that student drug use was at least a moderate problem. In the CHKS survey, many students reported using alcohol, marijuana and tobacco within the last 30 days.

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE AND DRUG USE

As described above, Castlemont High School students characterized out-of-school time (either due to mandated suspension or voluntary “hooky”) as an opportunity to “get high,” among other things. They felt that suspensions and expulsions did not encourage them to “learn from their mistakes.”

Students in Oakland schools reported that very little is done to punish drug offenders on campus. One student reported that:

I was a [teacher’s assistant] for this one teacher. She was the ninth grade English teacher, and this boy actually pulled out a blunt in class and started rolling it. Like he wasn’t trying to hide it or anything. He just pulled it out and started rolling it. They took it. The teacher asked for it and he refused to give it up, and he felt like he wasn’t doing anything wrong. He was like ‘I’m not interrupting the class, so why are you trying to take my weed?’ So he refused to give it up and the principal showed up and they talked to him. He finally gave it up. He did not get suspended though.

Another student in this focus group reported:

Countless times in my second period, this boy would always walk in smelling like weed. And the teacher won’t do nothing. She would be like ‘Oh, well, go get some spray.’ And he would put on some spray or lotion. And nothing changed. And then one day, she said ‘just get out of my class’ and he went to the office and they didn’t do nothing, so he went to the bathroom and started smoking. All the security did was lock the bathroom door. They didn’t do nothing. It was crazy.

It seems that drug use, even on school grounds, is tolerated to some extent, and when students are actually sent out of class because of offenses, the students involved receive no serious consequences.

IN CONCLUSION, a significant percentage of OUSD students use drugs and alcohol. High school students participating in focus groups agreed that enforcement of drug use on their campus is extremely lax, even while school staff has strong evidence that students are using them. Many students in focus groups reported that suspension leads students to do drugs during their time away from school.

7.5.5 FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY COHESION

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY COHESION IN OUSD

SCHOOLS

Between 2005 and 2008, a vast majority of OUSD staff felt that adults at school acknowledge, listen to, and believe in students. A significant number (average of 35% between the two survey years) thought that lack of respect of staff by students was a moderate or severe problem.

Approximately half of students reported in the CHKS that they feel close to people at their school, they’re happy to be at their school, and they feel that they are part of their school. Most (61-79%) students answered affirmatively when asked whether teachers or other adults tell them when they do a good job, want them to do their best, and believe they will be successful.

According to CHKS surveys from 2005-07, the majority of OUSD students feel a “medium” connection to school, followed by those who feel a “high” connection. Less than 20% of students reported feeling a “low” connection. Figure P-4 in Appendix P illustrates these survey results.

Adults within schools play a critical role in influencing students’ feelings of connectedness to the school environment. According to the 2008-09 CSCS, OUSD teachers, administrators, and staff believe that the overwhelming majority (~94%) of adults within the school community are quite effective at promoting high expectations for students, engaging in caring relationships, and providing meaningful opportunities for student participation — all characteristics that define school connectedness.

Despite relatively high levels of school connectedness, OUSD students are somewhat more likely, on average, to engage in acts of violence (i.e. carrying guns to school, or partaking in physical fights)¹⁴⁷ than their peers across the state. In all school violence and safety measures, however, students that reported higher connectedness^x to school were much less likely to engage in unsafe behavior than students that reported low connectedness to school. In 2008-09, 2.7% of surveyed 7th, 9th, and 11th-grade OUSD students that felt a strong connection to school reported carrying a gun to school once, compared to 5.4% of students who felt a weak connection to school.¹⁴⁷

Moreover, students who report high connectedness to school use less drugs and alcohol. For example, in 2007-08 CHKS survey data for OUSD, 80.7% of 7th-, 9th-, and 11th-grade students who felt a high connection to school did not use drugs, compared to 63.5% of students who felt a low connection to school.¹⁴⁷ Students exhibited the same patterns in terms of alcohol consumption and cigarette smoking.

OUSD YOUTH PERCEPTIONS OF FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY COHESION

Students don't perceive there to be any trust between students and adults. One student mentioned there being a students-versus-teachers sentiment that is borne from a lack of respect for some of the teachers. Students felt that teachers were treating them negatively in response to long histories of negative behavior and treatment of teachers by students. As a result, teachers are perceived to treat students in a harsh way: "Sometimes, they could be in the wrong in the way they treated you. It's not what you do or say but how you say it or how you do it."

OUSD STAFF PERCEPTIONS OF FAIRNESS OF SCHOOL RULES

Another critical component of school climate, aside from "school connectedness," concerns student and staff's shared perceptions of the fairness of school rules. This metric is particularly important, since attitudes about the reasonableness of rules motivate behavior. While students are the most central objects of school rules, teachers also share a vested interest in implementing rules fairly and consistently. Inconsistent application of school rules can give rise to resentful feelings among staff, confusion, and ultimately, ineffective school discipline.

According to the 2008-09 CSCS, the majority of OUSD staff felt that schools handle disciplinary issues fairly and clearly. In 2008-09, roughly 80% of staff agreed that schools clearly communicate to students the consequences of breaking school rules. However, staff was markedly less satisfied with the level of professional development offered around positive behavioral support strategies. Nearly half of all survey participants felt inadequately prepared to implement positive behavioral supports and classroom management effectively.¹⁴⁸ This chasm between fairness of rules and ability to carry out positive school discipline presents a major opportunity for improvement in OUSD.

IN CONCLUSION, family, school and community cohesion are important in that they all play a role in explaining student behavior, including violent behavior and academic performance. OUSD students

^x School connectedness includes being treated fairly, feeling close to people, feeling happy, feeling part of, and feeling safe at school.

observe a lack of trust between students and teachers. The majority of OUSD staff reported in 2008-09 that they believe there are clear and open lines of communication between schools and students regarding rules, however, there is a lack of professional support around PBIS.

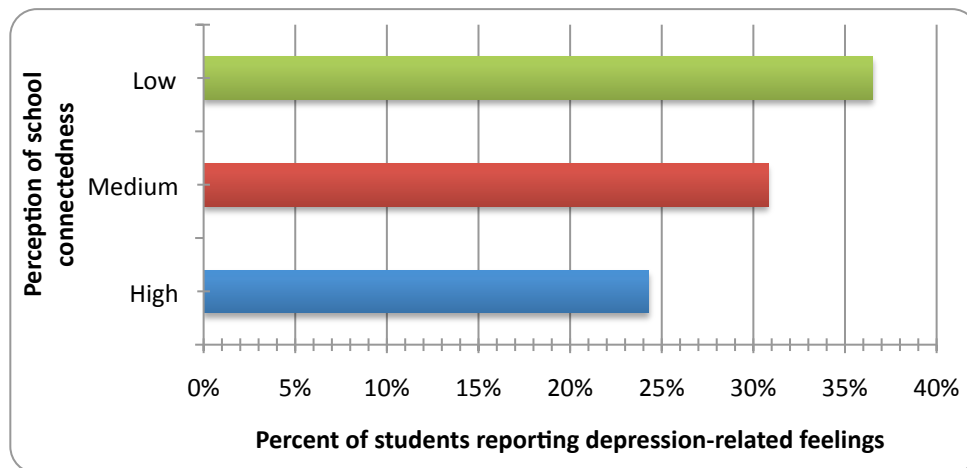
7.5.6 MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: MENTAL HEALTH

According to the CSCS survey, between 2005 and 2009 up to 57% of OUSD staff perceived that depression or other mental health problems among students were moderate or severe problems, and up to 35% of students said that sadness and depression affected some of their normal activities. An average of 45% of students in these years responded that they are happy to be a part of their schools.

OUSD students who feel a strong connection to school struggle less with depression than students who feel weaker connections to school¹⁴⁷ (see Figure 7-5 below).

Figure 7-5. OUSD students' depression-related feelings by level of school connectedness, 2005-07



Source: CHKS, 2005-07¹⁴⁷

YOUTH PERSPECTIVES ON EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE AND MENTAL HEALTH

In a focus group at Castlemont High School, students made connections between school exclusions and mental health. They felt that suspensions affect students' mental health by depriving them of opportunities to engage in a social world (versus their home world) and develop essential social skills, which damage their chances at finding and keeping well-paying jobs.

Other students characterized mental health as students' attitudes about their educational responsibilities. Out-of-school suspension, students observed, often leads to apathy. One high school student commented: "If someone goes home, plays games and eats, talks on the phone, is on the computer, they're going to have a mentality where they won't care if they get suspended. So it's really not going to be a punishment. They're going to keep acting up, because they know they'll just get suspended."

IN CONCLUSION, a significant proportion of OUSD students experience depression and sadness. Students' mental health improves when they feel more connected to their school, teachers, and fellow students. Exclusionary practices, such as suspensions, do not foster feelings of school connectedness within affected students, and therefore have contributed to those students' negative mental health outcomes. Youth also expressed that suspensions deprive students of gaining valuable social skills needed for life. Research literature shows that exclusionary discipline can lead to or exacerbate stress, PTSD, tendencies toward disruption, and other negative mental health outcomes.

7.6 PREDICTED HEALTH IMPACTS OF RJ AND PBIS IN OAKLAND

Restorative Justice is being piloted in 12 OUSD schools, and the district intends to expand the program to other schools when financially feasible. As of November 2011, five additional schools were interested in an RJ program on their campus. PBIS is also practiced in some OUSD schools and may be expanded. This HIA predicts the impact of district-wide RJ and PBIS implementation in OUSD schools on health outcomes, based on the six health determinants. While we cannot make highly specific predictions about how RJ and PBIS at OUSD would impact health, we have developed conclusions based on the best available evidence.

It is important to note that OUSD's RJ resolution applies to all schools in the district, but for this report, only middle and high schools were examined.

METHODS

To predict impacts of RJ and PBIS on the six health determinants, we drew upon many of the same methods introduced in Section 7.5 above. An additional method used in the predictive analysis was the PBIS Effectiveness Study, which is described in Section 5.2 and further detailed in Appendix E. Briefly, this PBIS effectiveness study developed a model for estimating the effectiveness of PBIS on disciplinary and educational outcomes. The PBIS effectiveness study included 10 high schools and 50 middle schools; alternative schools were excluded.

7.6.1 PREDICTED CHANGES TO EDUCATION

As described in more detail in Section 5.1.4, a recent RJ program in an OUSD middle school eliminated expulsions and reduced suspensions by 87%. In addition, RJ has been found to decrease misbehavior. Thus, with a comprehensive RJ program at OUSD schools, more students will stay in school to learn and potentially graduate.

Based on a predictive analysis of PBIS in schools in four states around the country (not including California), and application of results to schools in OUSD, in 2009-10, if the 36 middle and high schools that have publicly available suspension data from the California Department of Education's Dataquest website had increased their use of PBIS by 50%:

- 1,568 out-of-school suspensions would have been prevented (approximately a 34% reduction in the number of suspensions that actually occurred that year)

- At least 1,568 school days of student instructional time would have been saved
- 65 school days of teaching time would have been saved (based on an estimate of 15 minutes of teaching time used per suspension)¹³²
- 196 school days of administrative time (time school staff spends on managing discipline issues) would have been saved (based on an estimate of 45 minutes of administrator leadership time used per suspension)¹³²

CONCLUSION: Because RJ implementation is expected to keep more students in the classroom rather than being suspended or expelled, which can lead to eventual dropout, it would give students a chance to actually complete school and graduate.

Based on the analysis of national PBIS data, PBIS implementation in OUSD would have a similar outcome of keeping more students in school.

Both RJ and PBIS implementation are thus expected to encourage school attendance and completion, which would in turn improve health knowledge and behaviors, increase longevity, increase earning potential and thus access to resources, and increase access to social networks of support.

7.6.2 PREDICTED CHANGES TO MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

As stated above and in Section 5.1.4, an evaluation of RJ in OUSD’s Cole Middle School found that RJ implementation eliminated expulsions and drastically reduced suspensions. In addition, RJ has been found to decrease disruptive classroom behavior.

When asked how the school should react in a disciplinary situation, a student participating in an OUSD focus group alluded to the RJ principles of repairing harm and involving all stakeholders in a disciplinary response: “Instead of taking them to the office and telling them they’re suspended, they should ask, ‘What do you think the consequence should be? What do you think we should do,’ instead of jumping and saying you’re suspended. They should ask, ‘What made you do this? What can we do to help prevent this?’”

According to the PBIS model, if every OUSD middle and high school was able to increase their PBIS implementation score by 50% in 2009-10, 1,568 suspensions would have been prevented and correspondingly, there would have been a time savings of at least 1,568 days of instructional time, 65 days of teaching time, and 196 days of administrator leadership time during that year.

RJ and PBIS are both promising policies simply because they are alternatives to exclusionary discipline. As reported in Section 5.1.2, teachers themselves view suspensions and expulsions as ineffective disciplinary tools. Research indicates that when youth are not in school, they are more likely to become involved in a physical fight, carry a weapon, and use illegal substances. Furthermore, they are more likely to be incarcerated. Thus, if RJ and PBIS keep students in school, they are less likely to have harmful behaviors and become incarcerated.

CONCLUSION: Based on objective data and the standpoint of OUSD students, suspensions are not an effective method of preventing future misbehavior or suspensions. Rather than automatic suspension or expulsion, RJ implementation would allow victims and offenders to discuss what they perceive to be the cause of offenses, as well as appropriate and fair punishments for the offender. PBIS is also predicted to reduce suspensions.

Both RJ and PBIS are anticipated to improve health outcomes by preventing student misbehavior. Student misbehavior can cause harm to others (i.e., fighting, theft, violence), and can also lead to recurring discipline by schools and even incarceration, which are associated with reduced earnings, violence, and poor mental health for the individual, family and community.

As mentioned in Section 7.4.3, violence, defiance, and possession of controlled substances are the top reasons for juvenile referrals to the police in OUSD. Because RJ is expected to reduce the incidence of all three of these behaviors, it is also expected to reduce the rate of juvenile arrests due to these behaviors.

7.6.3 PREDICTED CHANGES TO COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME

Based on a report describing a pilot school-based RJ program at a West Oakland middle school, RJ was found to have contributed to making the school more peaceful, with fewer fights among students.¹⁰⁷ The study of the effects of RJ in six Pennsylvania schools documented reduced violence,¹⁰⁸ and an evaluation of school-based RJ in Australia reported increased perceptions of safety.^{111, 112, 115}

CONCLUSION: A comprehensive RJ program in OUSD schools would result in reduced violence overall with fewer fights among students, and increase perceptions of safety at school.

Since both RJ and PBIS implementation in Oakland schools are expected to improve attendance and educational outcomes, then it is expected to decrease violence and crime in the community, as there will be fewer students with unsupervised out-of-school time due to exclusionary punishments. In turn, injuries, death, and stress are expected to decrease. A reduction in stress can, in turn, reduce heart disease, hypertension, adverse birth outcomes, and negative mental health impacts.

7.6.4 PREDICTED CHANGES TO DRUG USE

Drug use can be harmful to students' health and can also lead to poor school performance and increased likelihood of getting in trouble with the law (see Table 5-1).

CONCLUSION: When children are not in school, they are more likely to use drugs (see section 5.1.2). Since our analysis indicates that both RJ and PBIS would reduce exclusions from OUSD schools (see Section 7.6.2), we conclude that implementation of both RJ and PBIS may help to decrease drug use and associated health hazards among Oakland youth.

However, reducing drug use during school exclusions may not be the most significant impact that of RJ on drug use. According to some OUSD high school students, there is a lack of meaningful responsiveness to drug use among adults and students at school. Perhaps the most important impact of an RJ program

on drug use is that it will encourage a dialogue among students and staff around drug use, rather than ignoring or marginalizing the issue. This may influence student knowledge about risks of drug abuse, which may impact their use of drugs and in turn have positive impacts on health.

7.6.5 PREDICTED CHANGES TO FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY COHESION

RJ is intended to engage students and staff to come together to work out conflicts.

In an OUSD focus group with some students who had experienced RJ circles themselves, at least one student claimed that RJ holds promise for people involved in a conflict to “end up being friends or apologizing.” However, at least two other students had the opposing view, saying that they wouldn’t feel comfortable participating in an RJ circle and becoming friends with someone who harmed them. One of these students even said, “I wouldn’t even want to sit in the same room as that person. I’d want retaliation.”

One student expressed an anecdote about how RJ led to better student-teacher relationships. Because there were problems with students ganging up on her, a teacher requested that the entire classroom engage in an RJ exercise. During the exercise, all students were allowed to take turns and bring up things they didn’t like about the teacher and her teaching. This student concluded, “the outcome of that was good because based on what she heard from the students, she changed how she was teaching, and the students like her now.”

CONCLUSION: RJ is expected to change the apparent perception of students that teachers and staff don’t care about their well-being and success. RJ is anticipated to be a positive force for improving school climate, respect, and cohesion. These positive impacts, which can improve mental health, may extend out to communities beyond school borders. On the other hand, some students are wary of RJ because it seems unrealistic to face other students who caused them harm.

By keeping youth in school, implementation of both RJ and/or PBIS would prevent family stress associated with financial burdens that come along with parents needing to supervise kids at home. A reduction in stress can, in turn, reduce heart disease, hypertension, adverse birth outcomes, and negative mental health impacts.

7.6.6 PREDICTED CHANGES TO MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

Research evidence (cited in Section 5.1.1 of this report) illustrates that exclusionary discipline can lead to stress, short- or long-term emotional damage and even behavioral disorders among students, decrease students’ feelings of “bondedness” to school, and increase the likelihood of delinquency and inclinations toward aggressive and anti-social behaviors. In focus groups, students confirmed that they experience negative impacts of ESD on mental health in the context of OUSD.

CONCLUSION: Restorative Justice implementation in OUSD schools is expected to result in improved mental health outcomes, for both students who receive suspensions, as well as for the student and school staff community at-large. Restorative Justice will increase the dialogue between victims and

offenders, and will aim to repair the harm done by the offender(s) in a way that may help address the underlying reasons for the incident. As a result, the victims will feel satisfied that their damages were resolved, the offenders will be able to confront their victims and take responsibility for their actions, and the affected communities will feel empowered through the process.

Because they are alternatives to exclusionary discipline, RJ and PBIS both hold promise for reducing negative mental health outcomes associated with exclusionary discipline policies.

7.7 CONCLUSIONS

Implementing alternative school discipline policies in OUSD, such as Restorative Justice and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, may help students gain health benefits associated with the six determinants of health studied in this HIA.

RJ is anticipated to decrease suspensions and expulsions and thus encourage school attendance and completion, and educational attainment is strongly linked to health. RJ was also found to prevent and reduce student misbehavior and eventual incarceration, which are associated with reduced earnings, violence, and poor mental health. Violence and drug use outside of schools may also decrease as a result of RJ, because fewer students will be suspended and expelled and be unsupervised in the community; in turn, injuries, stress and even deaths may decrease. RJ holds promise for improving school climate, as well as school-wide cohesion, respect, and mental health.

District-wide commitment to PBIS is anticipated to help students gain health benefits associated with increased educational attainment and improved conditions for mental health. PBIS would reduce misbehavior, drug use, violence, disciplinary events, and even incarceration.

Tables 7-1 and 7-2 summarize the impacts of RJ and PBIS on health determinants prioritized in this HIA. Included is information on the direction, magnitude, and severity of impacts, as well as the strength of the evidence and any uncertainties regarding predictions.

Table 7-1. OUSD summary of RJ impacts on health determinants

Health Determinant	Impact	Magnitude	Severity	Strength of Evidence	Uncertainties
Education	+	Moderate	Mod/Major	◆	Varying degrees of RJ implementation between OUSD schools will modify impacts Student vulnerability or trauma associated with factors outside of school play a role in all of these health determinants (i.e., school discipline policies are not the only contributor)
Misbehavior, recurring discipline events, and incarceration	+	Moderate/Major	Mod	◆◆	
Community violence and crime	+	Minor/Moderate	Mod	◆	
Drug use	+	Minor/Moderate	Low	◆	
Family, school, and community cohesion	+	Moderate	Low	◆	
Mental health	+	Moderate	Moderate	◆	

Table 7-2. OUSD summary of PBIS impacts on health determinants

Health Determinant	Impact	Magnitude	Severity	Strength of Evidence	Uncertainties
Education	+	Moderate - Major	Moderate - Major	◆◆	Varying degrees of PBIS implementation between OUSD schools will modify impacts Student vulnerability or trauma associated with factors outside of school play a role in all of these health determinants (i.e., school discipline policies are not the only contributor)
Misbehavior, Recurring Discipline Events, and Incarceration	+	Moderate	Moderate	◆◆	
Community Violence and Crime	+	Minor	Moderate	◆	
Drug Use	+	Minor	Moderate	◆	
Family, School and Community Cohesion	+	Minor	Moderate	◆	
Mental health conditions	+	Moderate	Moderate	◆	

Explanations:

- *Impact* refers to whether the proposal will improve health (+), harm health (-), or whether results are mixed (~).
- *Magnitude* reflects a qualitative judgment of the size of the anticipated change in health effect (e.g., the increase in the number of cases of disease, injury, adverse events): Negligible, Minor, Moderate, Major.
- *Severity* reflects the nature of the effect on function and life-expectancy and its permanence: High = intense/severe; Mod = Moderate; Low = not intense or severe.
- *Strength of Evidence* refers to the strength of the research/evidence showing causal relationship between mobility and the health outcome: ◆ = plausible but insufficient evidence; ◆◆ = likely but more evidence needed; ◆◆◆ = causal relationship certain. A causal effect means that the effect is likely to occur, irrespective of the magnitude and severity.

7.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, we recommend the continuation of existing RJ and PBIS programs at OUSD pilot schools, while concurrently conducting evaluation of their effectiveness. Based on findings of this HIA, both RJ and PBIS are promising alternatives to exclusionary discipline policies for the protection and promotion of student, family, and community health and wellness at OUSD. However, importantly, we also recommend a more rigorous system of school discipline events data collection across all OUSD schools.

A rigorous, comprehensive data collection system would allow a better understanding of the way that school discipline is being used throughout the system, and potentially facilitate a comparison between RJ and PBIS pilot schools and non-pilot schools. Ideally, that data would be cross-referenced with information on student and family demographics, academic performance and advancement, and health.

Finally, we realize that the implementation of RJ at the school level requires institutional commitment that is not consistent with a randomized control trial, which in some contexts become the gold standard for evaluating the effectiveness of intervention work. In lieu of a randomized control trial, we recommend a comprehensive evaluation of both programs.

The following additional recommendations were developed in response to HIA findings related to exclusionary discipline, RJ, and PBIS implementation at OUSD schools.

Restorative Justice Recommendations

In addition to a full evaluation as discussed above, in order to maximize the positive impacts of RJ implementation, we recommend the following:

- All adults within pilot schools, across all levels of authority, should be trained in RJ.
- The implementation of RJ should be closely monitored and evaluated throughout the implementation process in pilot schools, and in areas where gaps in implementation fidelity are found, consensus should be reached on how to improve implementation.
- The district should achieve as much buy-in as possible among administrative and teaching staff at pilot schools.
- The RJ pilot schools should regularly engage and include community members, including parents, students, and local residents, in the comprehensive evaluation.

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

- Similarly to RJ, an evaluation of PBIS at select pilot schools is recommended.
- PBIS implementation should engage parents, teachers and students, and an ongoing monitoring process should be established to ensure full compliance with its protocols.

Other recommendations

- “Defiance” is one of the most common reasons why OUSD students are suspended or expelled. The term is subjective and vaguely defined, and therefore its application to measuring student discipline severity is not standardized. We recommend that OUSD concretely and measurably define the meaning and parameters of suspensions based on “willful defiance” so that they are concrete and can be monitored.

7.9 MONITORING

An HIA monitoring plan, to track the impact of this HIA on school discipline practices in OUSD schools, as well as measure the impact of school discipline on health outcomes, is included in Appendix Q. This monitoring plan is intended to be a “living” document, in that it can be further developed and revised as necessary during the monitoring period.

8 HIA Location 3: Salinas

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will examine the policy context that is the impetus of our HIA in Salinas, present the existing conditions of the region for education, discipline, drug abuse, violence, mental health, and community cohesion, and describe predicted changes in these conditions and their associated health effects as a result of the implementation of alternative school discipline policies.

Salinas is the county seat and the largest city of Monterey County, California. While the coastal areas of the county draw tourists from around the world and have been ranked among the nation’s most expensive places to live, there exists a large disparity in socioeconomic status throughout the county.¹⁴⁹

Agriculture drives the Salinas economy, and the city attracts a large migrant worker population due to seasonally available agriculture jobs. However, despite the strong agricultural base for the economy, this seasonal work is not lucrative or consistent: some neighborhoods have a per capita income as low as \$5,519—far below the poverty line and the per capita income of Monterey County,¹⁵⁰ which, in 2010, was \$24,950.¹⁵¹

A recent influx of new, wealthier residents moving from Silicon Valley, 60 miles to the north, has driven housing costs up. Unaffordable housing combined with a high unemployment rate (10.9% in 2010¹⁵²) and low-paying jobs has led to many families having to share small residential spaces. In 2010, 22% of Salinas residents were living below the poverty line.¹⁵²

Within this economic and housing context, along with overcrowded schools and a lack of jobs for youth, youth violence is a major concern for Salinas residents. Crime rates in Salinas are considerably higher than national averages, and the violent crime rate in particular is one of the highest in the nation, across communities of all sizes (i.e., even higher than that of larger cities).¹⁵³

SALINAS CITY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Salinas city schools are broken into the following four separate districts:

Elementary School Districts

- Alisal Union School District (AUSD) – serves grades K-7
- Salinas City Elementary School District (SCESD) – serves grades K-6

Elementary and Middle School District

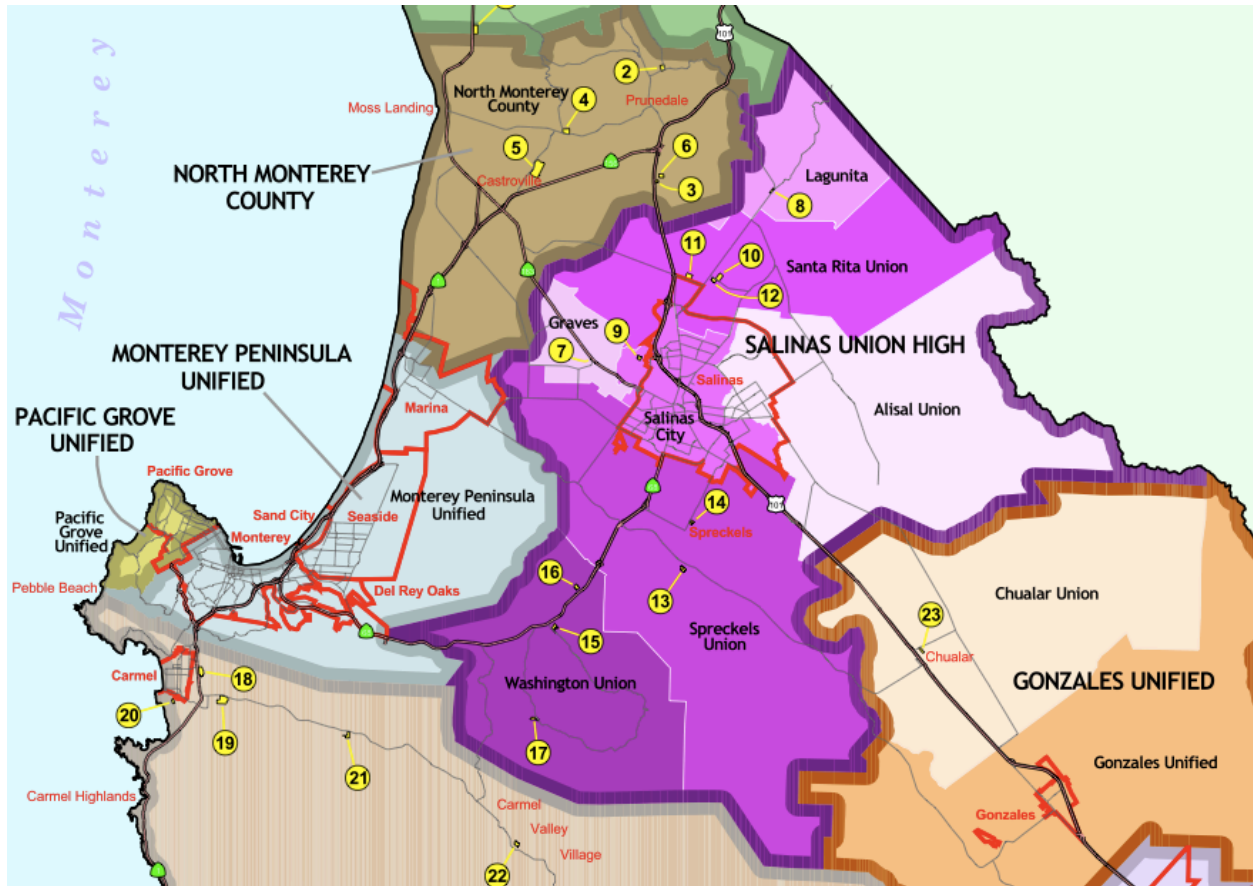
- Santa Rita Union School District (SRUSD) – serves grades K-8

Middle and High School District

- Salinas Union High School District (SUHSD) – serves grades 7-12

Figure 8-1 shows a map of Salinas (center, outlined in red), the boundaries of SUHSD in bold purple, the elementary/middle school districts that feed into it, as well as neighboring school districts.

Figure 8-1. Map of schools and districts in Monterey County (adapted)



Source: Monterey County Office of Education, 2011¹⁵⁴

Salinas City Elementary School District (SCESD) is the largest primary school district, in terms of enrollment, in the city¹²⁶ and is the focus of this case study.

As mentioned above, this district serves grades K-6, and feeds into SUHSD. SCESD is home to 13 schools and had a 2010-11 enrollment of 8,268 students. Schools in this district generally have a grade range of Kindergarten through 6th grade. As shown in Figure R-1 in Appendix R, SCESD has a significant majority of Hispanic students (86%), but lower proportions of all other ethnic and racial groups, and this is similar to the racial/ethnic composition of the city.

8.2 POLICY CONTEXT

SCESD'S ROAD TO RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Restorative Justice has been practiced in Monterey County since 1987 to address growing violence in Salinas and the rest of the county. RJ was initially used as a mediation strategy between juvenile offenders and victims. The program was very successful from the outset, with 87% of juvenile offenders not re-offending within the first year (E. Husby, personal communication, June 6th, 2011). However, until recently, RJ was not implemented in Salinas schools.

Restorative Justice Partners, Inc. (RJP) is the administrator and fundraising arm of various RJ programs in Monterey County. RJP provides and oversees RJ for the prevention of and response to a variety of offenses in Monterey County, including conflict management programs in juvenile justice, merchant accountability, and schools.¹⁵⁵

In 2009, Dr. Donna Alonso Vaughan, Superintendent of SCESD, spearheaded an RJ program in that school district after attending a conference put on by RJP entitled “RJ City.” The conference brought speaker Dan Van Ness, executive director of the Centre for Justice and Reconciliation at Prison Fellowship International, to county stakeholders to discuss RJ practices.

RJP was instrumental in bringing RJ principles into the first Salinas school, Sherwood Elementary School, in 2009. RJ implementation at Sherwood was based on the RJ resolution passed in Oakland Unified School District in 2009 (D. Vaughan, personal communication, Sept. 20th, 2011). The pilot at Sherwood had limited success for various reasons.

In 2010, a peer mediation program was piloted at Kammann Elementary School, based upon Ron and Roxanne Claassen’s “Discipline That Restores” curriculum. With this model, 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students were trained to help other students solve problems. The goal of this program was to give kids life skills to be able to mediate in their neighborhoods and in their families. While improvements have already been noticeable in the pilot schools, the district will have much better outcome data in 2012, including changes in student discipline referrals and attendance, to gauge progress and point to areas needing improvement.

During the rest of 2010, probation officers, school administrators, and students from all SCESD schools were trained in RJ.

To build a low-cost district-wide approach in 2010, SCESD worked with Ron Claassen at Fresno Pacific University, who trained district staff on mediation principles and tools. These trainings were built upon Respect Agreements, which are formed between several groups within the district: the Board and District leaders, the district superintendent and principals, principals and their staff, staff and students, and finally, between all students. Initially, only a few schools adopted Respect Agreements, but now these agreements are adopted district-wide.¹⁵⁶ In Summer 2011, the district’s school board unanimously passed a resolution that was based on the RJ resolution that Oakland Unified School District passed in 2009, and declared that SCESD was a Restorative Justice district (D. Vaughan, personal communication, Sept. 20th, 2011).

RJP’S SCHOOL DISCIPLINE CAMPAIGNS TODAY

While currently overseeing the RJ program in SCESD, RJP is also advocating for RJ implementation in other Monterey County school districts, such as Alisal Union School District (AUSD) in Salinas. Their strategy is to target the elementary school level first, in order for children to learn effective conflict management skills from a young age.

RJP developed an *RJ in the Schools* program in which they partner with school districts to implement RJ programs in a three-step policy process:

a) District passes School Board Resolution;

b) RJ in the Schools training for teachers, administrators and classified staff (such as Ron and Roxanne Claassen's Discipline That Restores); and

c) RJP then works as community partner within the district to assure training application and implementation process is conducted efficiently and equitably for all stakeholders toward successful outcomes.

Currently, RJP is working with SCESD toward creating a restorative environment at all of that district's 13 schools. Specifically, RJP has been working as a policy implementation manager for Laurel Wood and Boranda Meadows Schools to support their "RJ in the Schools" processes. As a result, the schools have successfully created respect agreements for all classrooms, and all staff have been trained on the language of the Claassen's 4-Options Model. Los Padres and Natividad Schools have more recently been added to RJP's caseload for systemic support of RJ in the Schools policy. The four schools reported various levels of implementation during a recent site visit by RJP and the Claassen's. Further, all four schools are showing progress due to RJP's systemically focused support that helps guide their process and meet the diverse needs of each school as requested by administration.

RJP plans to target RJ implementation in the Alisal Union School District next, and has also received interest from, and will be working with, other Monterey County Schools (Spreckels Unified School District, Soledad Unified School District and Marina Schools).

In addition to RJ, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) strategies have been implemented in three SCESD schools, and the district plans to expand their PBIS programs when funding allows.¹⁵⁶

8.3 SALINAS DEMOGRAPHICS

The population of Salinas, according to the 2010 US Census, is 151,031.¹⁵⁷ The racial/ethnic make-up of the city is 75% Hispanic/Latino, 15.5% White (non-Hispanic/Latino), 5.8% Asian, 1.6% African American, 1.5% Two or More Races, 0.3% American Indian/Alaskan Native, and 0.3% Pacific Islander.¹⁵⁸

Salinas residents have a median age of 28.8 years, which is lower than Monterey County (33.9 years) and California (38.5 years).¹⁵⁸

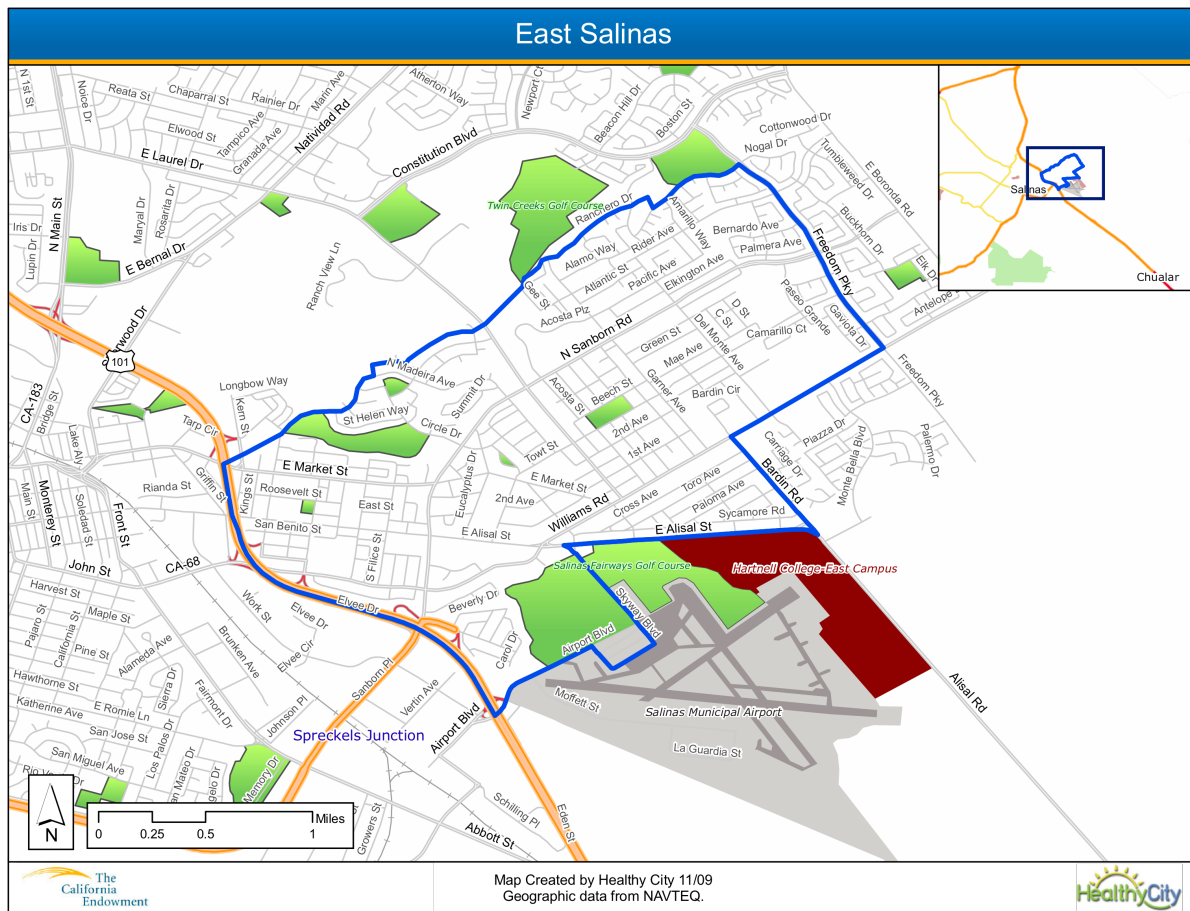
Comparisons of educational attainment between Salinas, Monterey County, and California are shown in Figure R-2 in Appendix R. Salinas, and to a lower extent, Monterey County as a whole, appears to have a greater proportion of residents over 25 years of age who have less than a high school diploma or equivalent certification, and a lower proportion of its residents with advanced degrees.

The 2010 median household income in Salinas was \$47,738 and 22.1% of residents lived below the poverty line.¹⁵⁷

EAST SALINAS

The East Salinas neighborhood (see Figures 8-1 and 8-2), known as Alisal, is a working class neighborhood with a large proportion of relatively underprivileged immigrant families. With a population of approximately 32,000, the vast majority of workers are employed in the agricultural, food processing and hospitality industries. This community has the fifth highest number of uninsured residents in the state. Nearly one-third of all residents in the community are school-aged children, and with the high cost of housing in Monterey County, many of these families are forced to live in cramped, unhealthy conditions. This neighborhood is one of the densest in the state.¹⁵⁹

Figure 8-2. Map of Boundaries of East Salinas



Source: www.calendow.org/healthycommunities/pdfs/East%20Salinas_111211.pdf

Separated from the rest of Salinas by Interstate 101, Alisal has a strong identity, both positive and negative, among local residents. Challenges include high rates of unemployment, low educational attainment, and crime and blight, which are balanced by a growing sense of community pride and a desire to improve the social and economic conditions in the neighborhood.¹⁵⁹

This sense of community pride, combined with a strong and committed political leadership in Monterey County and Salinas that is committed to improving the conditions within Alisal, make this a community poised for change.¹⁵⁹

East Salinas primary school students are served by Alisal Union School District (AUSD), which has 12 schools and, in 2010-11, had 8,087 students.¹²⁶

8.4 SELECT HEALTH STATUS INDICATORS IN SALINAS

Unless otherwise cited, most of the data in this section comes from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). BRFSS is a national telephone survey that primarily measures risk factors to health, including nutritional habits, drug use, mental health outcomes, and a host of physical health outcomes. This data was analyzed by the Monterey County Health Department and Steps to a Healthier Salinas, who then released a data sheet of Salinas responses for the years of 2004 through 2008.¹⁶⁰

General Health Status

In Monterey County in 2009, the majority of people (all ages and genders) reported being in Good health (36%), while approximately 25% reported having very good health and 24% reported excellent health status. Twelve percent of the population reported being in fair health and 4% reported being in poor health.¹⁶¹ General health responses in a different survey of Salinas residents were similar, however the racial disparities in this other survey are noteworthy: among white respondents, 62% reported excellent or very good general health and only 15% reported fair or poor health. Among Mexican American respondents, only 26% reported excellent or very good health and 32% reported fair or poor health.¹⁶⁰

Access to Health Care

Another racial disparity in Salinas is access to health care: 88% of white residents have health insurance while only 57% of Mexican American residents do. At the time of this survey's (Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey) data collection, 89% of white residents had visited a health care provider within the past year while 68% of Mexican American residents had.¹⁶⁰

Obesity, Diabetes, Cholesterol, and Hypertension

Seventy-one percent of Salinas residents are overweight or obese, and percentages among white and Mexican American residents are similar. Approximately 10% of the surveyed population reported having been diagnosed with diabetes. More white residents (47%) than Mexican-American residents (33%) have been told by a health professional that they have high cholesterol. Over twice as many white residents (35%) have high blood pressure than Mexican-American residents (17%).¹⁶⁰

Asthma

Approximately 12% of Salinas residents have been diagnosed with asthma, and this proportion is much higher for white residents (17%) than Mexican-American residents (7%).

8.5 EXISTING CONDITIONS IN SALINAS

METHODS

California Healthy Kids Survey and California School Climate Survey

Methods for the analysis of these surveys are described in Section 5.3. All CHKS and CSCS survey results for SCESD that are discussed in this report are summarized in Appendix H.

Suspension Data

Suspension data for Sherwood Elementary School and Kammann Elementary School, two RJ pilot schools in Salinas, were obtained from the California Department of Education's Dataquest website.

Interview with SCESD Superintendent

Finally, Dr. Donna Alonso Vaughan, the SCESD superintendent, was interviewed in order to obtain insights on that district's discipline landscape as well as its implementation programs for RJ. This interview is cited in Section 5.5 and summarized in Appendix K.

8.5.1 EDUCATION

As SCESD is an elementary-level school district only, there are no statistics on graduation or student dropout rates.

As shown on Figures R-3 and R-4 in Appendix R, Sherwood and Kammann Elementary Schools outperform the SCESD average for both English Language Arts and math standardized test scores. An upward trend in test scores was observed between the 2007-08 and 2008-09 school years, while test scores remained the same between the 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years. RJ was implemented at Sherwood Elementary in 2009 and at Kammann Elementary in 2010; it appears that test scores remained the same immediately before and after RJ was implemented at Sherwood. Post-RJ data is not available for Kammann Elementary.

Truancy rates in SCESD have been steadily decreasing each year since 2005-06 when 47% of students in the district were found to have had at least one truancy that year. In 2009-10, the truancy rate was down for the district to about 30%.

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN SALINAS SCHOOLS

According to the CSCS survey, between 2008-09 and 2009-10 an average of 59% of students at Salinas schools are motivated to learn, and an average of 55% arrive at school alert and rested. CHKS responses about educational opportunities in the classroom are mixed: an average of 57% of SCESD elementary students expressed that there are high expectations of them from adults at school, and only an average of 14% gave a "high" response to the question of whether there are opportunities for meaningful participation in the classroom.

SCHOOL DISTRICT ADMINISTRATOR PERSPECTIVES ON EDUCATION

Based on her experience as superintendent of Salinas City Elementary School District, Dr. Vaughan feels strongly that the path to school dropouts begins in elementary school. Disciplinary strategies that exclude students (i.e., zero tolerance) in elementary school may prevent those students from obtaining an education.

IN CONCLUSION, Sherwood and Kamman schools outperformed SCESD in test scores before RJ was implemented, and post-RJ data is not yet available. Truancy rates have been decreasing at SCESD since 2005-06. Elementary school students did not score high when asked on the CHKS survey whether they are given opportunities for meaningful participation in the classroom. The SCESD superintendent anecdotally suggested that zero tolerance policies are sources of school exclusion for students.

8.5.2 MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

Suspension rates were obtained for Sherwood and Kammann Elementary Schools. Rates declined between 2007-08 and the most recent year that data was available (2009-10), for both schools. Most recent rates for Sherwood and Kammann Elementary Schools, respectively, are approximately 7 and 4 suspensions per 100 students. Suspension rates were also obtained for Monterey County and the state as a whole; however, these rates are for all grades in those jurisdictions, and thus they are not comparable to the elementary school rates. Figure R-5 in Appendix R shows rates for the two elementary schools, and rates for all grades in Monterey County and California.

We were not able to obtain post-implementation suspension data for RJ pilot schools. But according to a recent Opinion article in the Sacramento Bee, since RJ was launched in Salinas city schools, expulsions have dropped to zero and the suspension rate has dropped to 3.9 percent – far below the average of 13.8 percent for all of Monterey County.¹⁶² However, because of the SCESD superintendent’s explicit use of expulsion as only a last resort, there were also zero expulsions in the years before RJ was implemented as well.

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

Between 2008-09 and 2009-10 school years, an average of 70% of staff agreed or strongly agreed that zero tolerance policies were enforced in SCESD elementary schools. Between 48% and 66% of staff thought that disruptive behavior was a problem at their school. Seventy-three percent of staff reported that students were well behaved.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR PERSPECTIVES ON MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

Dr. Vaughan has observed that under status quo discipline, more students are referred to the police, while RJ and PBIS, on the other hand, are associated with fewer police referrals. She also explained that many Salinas police officers can’t speak Spanish, which is a big disconnect in this particular city because Spanish is the language that most residents speak (D. Vaughan, personal communication, 2011).¹⁵⁸

IN CONCLUSION, data obtained for this analysis showed that suspension rates at RJ pilot schools are declining in recent years. Data reported from The Sacramento Bee found that after RJ implementation, the SCESD suspension rate had dropped to 3.9 percent – a percentage that’s 3.5 times lower than the Monterey County average. The district superintendent has observed more police referrals under zero tolerance policies than under RJ and PBIS policies.

8.5.3 COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME

As described above, community violence is an ongoing problem in Salinas (D. Vaughan, personal communication, Sept. 20th, 2011). As shown in Figure R-6 in Appendix R, it seems that both Salinas and California had similar violent crime rates in the 1980s, which were higher than the nation. In 1992 Salinas experienced an increase in its violent crime rate while California experienced a decrease. Salinas eventually saw a similar decrease beginning about four years after the state’s rate began decreasing, but the city’s current rate (approximately 789 per 100,000 residents in 2009) remains higher than both California (approximately 472 per 100,000 in 2009) and the nation as a whole (approximately 429 per 100,000 in 2009).

While the US homicide rate has generally declined since 2006 (and arguably, since 1993), the rate in Salinas doubled in two consecutive years (2008 and 2009), and now stands almost four times the national rate. As of 2009, the national rate was approximately 5 homicides per 100,000 residents, and the Salinas rate was approximately 20 per 100,000 residents (see Figure R-7 in Appendix R).

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME IN SCESD SCHOOLS

The majority (92% to 94%) of staff reported that their school was a safe place for students, and about the same amount (91% - 94%) thought their school was safe for staff. Less than half (43% to 45%) of staff thought that harassment or bullying was a problem, and an even lower percentage (23% to 28%) of staff thought that physical fighting was an issue. Between 29% and 33% of staff thought that gang-related violence was an issue, and between 32% to 51% thought that vandalism and graffiti were problems. About 30% thought that theft was a problem.

Among students, less than half (44% to 47%) said they felt safe at school all the time and even fewer (26% to 29%) said they felt safe outside of school all the time. About half of students reported having been hit or pushed at school.

BRFSS ANALYSIS: COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME IN SCESD SCHOOLS

According to the BRFSS survey,¹⁶⁰ 35% of the Salinas population strongly agreed or agreed that there’s a lot of crime in their neighborhood in 2008, up from 24% in 2004. The majority of surveyed residents in 2008 reported having lived in Salinas for over 20 years, and only 4% have lived in Salinas for less than one year.

IN CONCLUSION, Salinas has higher crime and homicide rates than the state or the country. CHKS and CSCS survey results show that within SCESD, staff and students generally consider their schools to be safe, but there are also perceptions of harassment, bullying, fighting, gang-related violence, vandalism,

graffiti, and theft. In recent years, increasing percentages of Salinas residents have reported the perception of high crime rates in their community.

8.5.4 DRUG USE

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: DRUG USE IN SCESD SCHOOLS

During 2007-08 to 2009-10 CSCS survey years, almost no school staff indicated that alcohol or drug use was a moderate/severe problem in their school.

Because the CHKS used an elementary school module for 5th graders, there were few questions asked regarding alcohol, tobacco and other drug use. However, it was found that during the 2007-08 and 2009-10 survey years, an average of 9% of students reported drinking any alcohol and 2% of students reported smoking cigarettes in the past month.

IN CONCLUSION, it seems that drug and alcohol use is not very prevalent in SCESD schools, according to both students and staff.

8.5.5 FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY COHESION

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY COHESION IN SCESD SCHOOLS

According to CSCS survey results from 2008-09 and 2009-10, SCESD staff members perceive that most adults at schools really care about students, they believe that every student can be a success, and they believe that the school is a supportive and inviting place for students to learn and for staff to work. According to the CHKS survey for the same years, only about half of students answered “high” when asked whether there are caring relationships with adults in school, and when asked about school connectedness. Between the two survey years, an average of 76% of students scored “high” when asked whether they have caring relationships with adults at home.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR PERSPECTIVES ON FAMILY, SCHOOL, AND COMMUNITY COHESION

Dr. Vaughan reported that there is a large transient population in Salinas that consists mainly of farm workers. In addition, there is a large homeless population: out of approximately 8,500 students in her elementary school district, 1,050 are homeless. In her eyes, while RJ may not directly contribute to solving these issues of community, it may help to bring hurt people together (D. Vaughan, personal communication, Sept. 20th, 2011).

IN CONCLUSION, according to the CHKS and CSCS surveys, most staff at SCESD schools perceive high levels of connectedness and support at their schools. However, only about half of surveyed students scored “high” on measures of connectedness to schools. The large transient and homeless populations in Salinas are challenges for community cohesion, and RJ may have the potential to bring people together on common ground.

8.5.6 MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

CHKS AND CSCS ANALYSIS: MENTAL HEALTH IN SCESD SCHOOLS

In the 2008-09 school year, 21% of SCEDS staff reported that depression and other mental health issues were either a moderate or severe problem at their schools, and in the 2009-10 school year, this proportion was 7%.

SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR PERSPECTIVES ON MENTAL HEALTH

Dr. Vaughan claims that by creating a less toxic and negative environment in which people tend to cooperate better, RJ can help student and teacher stress levels go down. She has also observed that an RJ program can help staff identify students with serious mental imbalances.

IN CONCLUSION, between 7 and 21% of SCESD staff reported that depression and other mental health issues were a moderate or severe problem at their schools. Anecdotal evidence suggests that RJ may support better mental health outcomes than zero tolerance. Research literature shows that exclusionary discipline can lead to or exacerbate stress, PTSD, tendencies toward disruption, and other negative mental health outcomes.

8.6 PREDICTED HEALTH IMPACTS OF RJ IN SALINAS

Because RJ has not been implemented long enough for post-implementation data to be obtained (for all of our research questions), it is difficult to find conclusive evidence about its effectiveness and impact on our outcomes. Once post-implementation data begins to become available (literature on RJ effectiveness has shown that it takes about three years for noticeable improvements in educational outcomes to take place), researchers will be able to better track, longitudinally, how educational and health outcomes change in relation to changes in RJ implementation.

METHODS

To predict impacts of RJ on the six health determinants, we mainly drew upon literature evidence and the interview with Dr. Vaughan. We did not conduct the PBIS effectiveness study (that was conducted for Los Angeles and Oakland case studies) for Salinas, as the data set on which it is based does not include the elementary school level.

8.6.1 PREDICTED CHANGES TO EDUCATION

There are little data and research findings on RJ's impact on educational attainment. As described above in Section 8.5.2, since RJ was launched in Salinas city schools, expulsions have dropped to zero and the suspension rate has dropped to 3.9 percent – far below the average of 13.8 percent for all of Monterey County.¹⁶² As reported in more detail in Section 5.1.4, a recent RJ program in an Oakland Unified School District middle school eliminated expulsions and reduced suspensions by 87% and decreased misbehavior.¹⁰⁷

CONCLUSION: The above evidence suggests that with a comprehensive RJ program at AUSD, SCESD and other Salinas school districts, more students may stay in school to learn and potentially graduate.

Because RJ implementation is expected to encourage school attendance and completion, it is also expected to improve health knowledge and behaviors, increase longevity, increase earning potential and thus access to resources, and increase access to social networks of support.

8.6.2 PREDICTED CHANGES TO MISBEHAVIOR, RECURRING DISCIPLINE EVENTS, AND INCARCERATION

As stated above and in Section 5.1.4, student misbehavior, suspensions, and expulsions all decreased in response to RJ implementation at an Oakland middle school and at Salinas elementary schools.

Drawing upon additional evidence collected for the Oakland case study (Section 7 of this report), when asked how the school should react in a disciplinary situation, a student participating in an OUSD focus group alluded to the RJ principles of repairing harm and involving all stakeholders in a disciplinary response: “Instead of taking them to the office and telling them they’re suspended, they should ask, ‘What do you think the consequence should be? What do you think we should do,’ instead of jumping and saying you’re suspended. They should ask, ‘What made you do this? What can we do to help prevent this?’”

CONCLUSION: The above evidence indicates that an RJ program at AUSD and other Salinas school districts would reduce expulsions and suspensions. Furthermore, based on the standpoint of Oakland high school students, suspensions are not an effective method of preventing future misbehavior or suspensions. Rather than automatic suspension or expulsion, RJ implementation would allow victims and offenders to discuss what they perceive to be the cause of offenses, as well as appropriate and fair punishments for the offender.

RJ is anticipated to improve health outcomes by preventing student misbehavior. Student misbehavior can cause harm to others (i.e., fighting, theft, violence), and can also lead to recurring discipline by schools and even incarceration, which are associated with reduced earnings, violence, and poor mental health for the individual, family and community.

8.6.3 PREDICTED CHANGES TO COMMUNITY VIOLENCE AND CRIME

Based on a report describing a pilot school-based RJ program at a West Oakland middle school, RJ was found to have contributed to making the school more peaceful, with fewer fights among students.¹⁰⁷ The study of the effects of RJ in six Pennsylvania schools documented reduced violence,¹⁰⁸ and an evaluation of school-based RJ in Australia reported increased perceptions of safety.^{111, 112, 115}

In Salinas, Dr. Vaughan reported that schools are hubs of communities and that they reflect the concerns of the community. If students are learning RJ skills at school, they may also use their RJ skills at home and in their community. Use of RJ skills at home and in the community may decrease violence and

crime. It is also intended that RJ implementation in Salinas schools will actually include adults, further reinforcing its messages of mutual respect and peaceful conflict mediation even outside the school community (D. Vaughan, personal communication, Sept. 20th, 2011).

CONCLUSION: An RJ program in AUSD and other Salinas school districts would result in reduced violence overall with fewer fights among students, and increase perceptions of safety at school.

Since RJ implementation in Salinas schools are expected to improve attendance and educational outcomes, then it is expected to decrease violence and crime in the community, as there will be fewer students with unsupervised out-of-school time due to exclusionary punishments. In turn, injuries, death, and stress are expected to decrease. A reduction in stress can, in turn, reduce heart disease, hypertension, adverse birth outcomes, and negative mental health impacts.

8.6.4 PREDICTED CHANGES TO DRUG USE

CONCLUSION: Drug and alcohol use is not very prevalent in SCESD schools, according to both students and staff. Thus, RJ isn't anticipated to reduce drug use by a great degree.

When children are not in school, they are more likely to use drugs (see section 5.1.2). Since our analysis indicates that RJ would reduce exclusions from SCESD schools (see Section 8.6.2), we conclude that implementation of RJ may help to decrease drug use and associated health hazards among Salinas youth.

In addition, Dr. Vaughan reported that students often use drugs as an escape from various personal or academic problems, and that RJ can provide a way to give those students skills to deal with, or even prevent, these problems instead of having them turn to drugs. As this skill- and relationship-building becomes more institutionalized at schools, a ripple effect out into the community may be seen where drug use is discouraged and its prevalence decreased among young people. (D. Vaughan, personal communication, Sept. 20th, 2011).

8.6.5 PREDICTED CHANGES TO FAMILY, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY COHESION

CONCLUSION: By encouraging discussion and open communication between school staff and students, RJ has the potential to improve school and community cohesion. RJ is anticipated to be a positive force for improving school climate, respect, and cohesion. These positive impacts, which can improve mental health, may extend out to communities beyond school borders.

By keeping youth in school, implementation of RJ would also prevent family stress associated with financial burdens that come along with parents needing to supervise kids at home. A reduction in stress can, in turn, reduce heart disease, hypertension, adverse birth outcomes, and negative mental health impacts.

8.6.6 PREDICTED CHANGES TO MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS

Research evidence (cited in Section 5.1.1 of this report) illustrates that exclusionary discipline can lead to stress, short- or long-term emotional damage and even behavioral disorders among students, decrease students' feelings of "bondedness" to school, and increase the likelihood of delinquency and inclinations toward aggressive and anti-social behaviors.

CONCLUSION: Restorative Justice implementation in AUSD and other Salinas school districts is expected to result in improved mental health outcomes, for both students who receive suspensions, as well as for the student and school staff community at large. Restorative Justice will increase the dialogue between students embroiled in conflict, and will aim to repair the harm done in a way that may help address the underlying reasons for the incident. As a result, those involved will feel satisfied that the damages were resolved and the students will take responsibility for their actions. The affected communities will feel empowered through the process.

Because it is an alternative to exclusionary discipline, RJ holds promise for reducing negative mental health outcomes associated with exclusionary discipline policies.

8.7 CONCLUSIONS

Restorative justice programs are new to Salinas school districts, and it may take several more years of dedicated implementation before its impact can be properly evaluated. Nevertheless, we conclude that implementation of Restorative Justice at AUSD and other Salinas school districts is likely help students gain health benefits associated with the six determinants of health studied in this HIA.

As an alternative to zero tolerance, restorative justice at AUSD and other Salinas school districts is anticipated to decrease suspensions and expulsions and thus encourage school attendance and completion, and educational attainment is strongly linked to health. RJ was also found to prevent and reduce student misbehavior and eventual incarceration, which are associated with reduced earnings, violence, and poor mental health. Violence and drug use outside of schools may also decrease as a result of RJ, because fewer students will be suspended and expelled and be unsupervised in the community; in turn, injuries, stress and even deaths may decrease. RJ holds promise for improving school climate, as well as school-wide cohesion, respect, and mental health.

Table 8-1 summarizes the impacts of RJ on health determinants prioritized in this HIA. Included is information on the direction, magnitude, and severity of impacts, as well as the strength of the evidence and any uncertainties regarding predictions.

Table 8-1. Salinas schools: summary of RJ impacts on health determinants

Health Determinant	Impact	Magnitude	Severity	Strength of Evidence	Uncertainties
Education	+	Moderate	Mod/Major	◆	Varying degrees of RJ implementation between OUSD schools will modify impacts
Misbehavior, recurring discipline events, and incarceration	+	Moderate/Major	Mod	◆◆	
Community violence and crime	+	Minor/Moderate	Mod	◆	Student vulnerability or trauma associated with factors outside of school play a role in all of these health determinants (i.e., school discipline policies are not the only contributor)
Drug use	+	Minor/Moderate	Low	◆	
Family, school, and community cohesion	+	Moderate/Major	Low	◆	
Mental health conditions	+	Moderate	Moderate	◆	

Explanations:

- *Impact* refers to whether the proposal will improve health (+), harm health (-), or whether results are mixed (~).
- *Magnitude* reflects a qualitative judgment of the size of the anticipated change in health effect (e.g., the increase in the number of cases of disease, injury, adverse events): Negligible, Minor, Moderate, Major.
- *Severity* reflects the nature of the effect on function and life-expectancy and its permanence: High = intense/severe; Mod = Moderate; Low = not intense or severe.
- *Strength of Evidence* refers to the strength of the research/evidence showing causal relationship between mobility and the health outcome: ◆ = plausible but insufficient evidence; ◆◆ = likely but more evidence needed; ◆◆◆ = causal relationship certain. A causal effect means that the effect is likely to occur, irrespective of the magnitude and severity.

8.8 RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, we recommend expanding RJ into pilot schools within AUSD and other Salinas school districts, while concurrently conducting evaluation of its effectiveness at SCESD and other districts. Based on findings of this HIA, RJ is a promising alternative to exclusionary discipline policies for the protection and promotion of student, family, and community health and wellness. However, importantly, we also recommend a more rigorous system of school discipline events data collection across all Salinas schools.

A rigorous, comprehensive data collection system would allow a better understanding of the way that school discipline is being used throughout the system, and potentially facilitate a comparison between RJ pilot schools and non-pilot schools. Salinas City Elementary School District is working with RJP to set up an appropriate data collection system and ideally, this will allow data to be cross-referenced with information on student and family demographics, academic performance and advancement, and health. In order to implement an effective system capable of recording and reporting quality data, the district would need to secure funders who are willing to provide the resources and funds, as the districts already find themselves overloaded with their current data tracking responsibilities.

Finally, we realize that the implementation of RJ at the school level requires institutional commitment that is not consistent with a randomized control trial, which in some contexts become the gold standard

for evaluating the effectiveness of intervention work. In lieu of a randomized control trial, we recommend a comprehensive evaluation.

The following additional recommendations were developed in response to HIA findings related to exclusionary discipline and RJ at Salinas schools.

Restorative Justice Recommendations

In addition to pilot programs and concurrent data collection and evaluation as described above, in order to maximize the positive impacts of RJ implementation, we recommend the following:

- If pilot programs at individual schools prove successful and districts seek formal, high-level support for RJ, district-wide Restorative Justice resolutions, such as that passed at Salinas City Elementary School District in 2011, could be passed at AUSD and other Salinas districts.
- All adults within pilot schools, across all levels of authority, should be trained in RJ. Initially, trainers from Fresno Pacific University, such as Ron Claassen, are recommended to train district staff on mediation principles and other RJ tools. To assure sustainability and district-wide implementation of RJ in the Schools, we recommend subsequent inter-district trainings and/or working with a partnering organization, such as RJP. Eventually, when schools are able to train other internal stakeholders, cost will be kept to a minimum and school climate commitment to RJ principles to a maximum.
- The implementation of RJ should be closely monitored by an outside organization (or individuals from multiple organizations) throughout the implementation process in pilot schools. In areas where gaps in implementation fidelity are identified, consensus should be reached on how to improve implementation.
- The RJ pilot schools should regularly engage and include community members, including parents, students, and local residents, in the comprehensive evaluation.

8.9 MONITORING

An HIA monitoring plan, to track the impact of this HIA on school discipline practices in SCESD schools, as well as measure the impact of school discipline on health outcomes, is included in Appendix S. This monitoring plan is intended to be a “living” document, in that it can be further developed and revised as necessary during the monitoring period.

9 Conclusion

The findings of this HIA indicate that exclusionary discipline practices can have negative impacts on students' mental and physical health and well-being. This HIA also suggests that implementing alternative school discipline policies in schools, such as Restorative Justice and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, may help students gain significant health benefits. Site-specific conclusions are included in case studies for Los Angeles, Oakland, and Salinas.

Each school district where this HIA was conducted is in the midst of school discipline policy change. Restorative Justice and/or Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports are being practiced in Los Angeles, Oakland, and Salinas, but policies are not being fully implemented in all schools in these districts. As more schools implement PBIS and RJ, and as more years of data on disciplinary outcomes becomes more widely available for these schools, it will be possible to more robustly assess the effectiveness of these programs on improving health outcomes.

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