

# Public Act 103-0896

## Guidance for Evidence-Based Intervention Procedures



### Introduction

Pursuant to Public [Act 103-0896](#) (otherwise known as Senate Bill 1400), the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE), in consultation with behavioral health experts, has prepared this guidance to provide schools with evidence-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline. ISBE would like to thank the following stakeholders for their involvement in the development of this guidance:

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*This document is provided as a resource. ISBE does not specifically endorse or recommend any of the entities or programs identified.*

### Student Discipline in Illinois by the Numbers

A total of 111,577 public school students in Illinois experienced 253,314 discipline incidents, according to the 2023-24 Illinois Report Card. These incidents included in- and out-of-school suspensions, expulsions (both with and without educational services), and removals to alternative settings. The table below breaks down the numbers for each type of incident:

	Expulsion --Received Educational Services	Expulsion -- Did Not Receive Educational Services	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension	Removal to an Alternative Setting
Total Students	455	103	71,095	63,510	1,670
Total Incidents	459	103	148,096	102,584	2,072

The data shows significant disparities in student discipline with regard to students' race, with Black students and students of two or more races experiencing higher rates of school discipline when compared to other racial and ethnic subgroups. Black students received over three times as many disciplinary consequences as White students.

	Rate per 10,000				
	Expulsion-Received Educational Services	Expulsion-Did Not Receive Educational Services	In-School Suspension	Out-of-School Suspension	Removal to an Alternative Setting
<b>Am. Indian</b>	-	-	921.40	580.79	10.92
<b>Asian</b>	0.10	0.10	151.77	84.17	1.64
<b>Black</b>	6.16	1.18	1476.00	1420.45	43.46
<b>Hispanic</b>	1.73	0.62	837.18	426.85	4.39
<b>Pacific Islander</b>	-	-	661.55	419.37	-
<b>Two or More</b>	5.60	1.15	1252.75	887.13	19.36
<b>White</b>	1.62	0.30	565.65	343.27	4.11

Students experience exclusionary discipline for a variety of reasons. Over half (64%) of all incidents had "Other Reason" selected as the reasoning behind the decision to implement discipline. The second most common reason (20%) was "violence without physical injury." "Tobacco", "alcohol", "drug offenses", "violence with physical injury", "dangerous weapon: firearm," and "dangerous weapon: other" accounted for the remaining 16% of incidents.

There does not appear to be a significant disparity between the number of discipline incidents and students' grade level. Forty-nine percent of all disciplinary incidents implemented were given to students in Grades K-8, while the remaining 51% occurred in Grades 9-12. Low-income students experienced a significantly higher rate of disciplinary incidents per 10,000 students (2,038.89) compared to students who are not low-income (681.38). Male students made up the majority of student experiencing these incidents with 68% of all incidents. Similarly, students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) experienced nearly double the rate of exclusionary discipline per 10,000 students (2,253.62) when compared to students without an IEP (1,200.30).

## The Effectiveness of Exclusionary Discipline

Research has found no evidence that exclusionary disciplinary responses reduced future reported behavioral incidents, and they may exacerbate behavior for younger students. Furthermore, research has indicated that students who have experienced exclusionary discipline are more likely to experience it again in the future.<sup>1</sup> Research has also shown that experiencing an incident of exclusionary discipline was associated with an overall decrease in a student's average grade-point average (GPA) over time. Black and Latino students experienced an additional decrease in average GPA when compared to their White peers.<sup>2</sup> Exclusionary discipline practices increase the likelihood of grade retention, school dropout, and entry into the juvenile and adult criminal legal systems.<sup>3</sup> Use of exclusionary discipline also has been found to increase students' rates of depression and anxiety.<sup>4</sup> Further, research shows that it is not only the students who are suspended that are negatively impacted by the use of exclusionary discipline. A 2019 study found that for *all* students who attend a school with high suspension rates, there are large, negative impacts on later life outcomes.<sup>5</sup>

There is a long-standing body of research that indicates that Black students and students with disabilities experience a disproportionate number of disciplinary incidents in comparison to their peers.<sup>6</sup> Data from the [Civil Rights Data Collection](#) for the 2017-18 school year showed that Black students represented only 15% of students enrolled in school but over 30% of students suspended and expelled and 42.9% of students transferred to alternative schools.<sup>7</sup> Boys experience greater exclusionary discipline than girls, but increasing attention is being paid to the discipline of Black girls. In the 2017-18 school year, Black girls comprised 15% of all girls in public school but received almost half of the suspensions and expulsions received by girls and were disciplined more severely than White girls, even for similar infractions.<sup>8</sup> Racial disparities begin in preschool, with Black children representing 18% of enrollment and 43% of preschool children receiving suspensions in the 2017-18 school year.<sup>9</sup> Despite federal and state legal protections intended to protect students with disabilities, students with disabilities were suspended out of school at five times the rate of their school enrollment. One in 11 students with disabilities was suspended in the 2017-18 school year, and Black students with disabilities consistently have the highest suspension rates (one in five or 19% in 2017-18).<sup>10</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See [An Empirical Examination of the Effects of Suspension and Suspension Severity on Behavioral and Academic Outcomes](#).

<sup>2</sup> See [Exclusionary School Discipline and School Achievement for Middle and High School Students, by Race and Ethnicity](#).

<sup>3</sup> See [Literature Review – School Discipline](#).

<sup>4</sup> See [Exclusionary Discipline Threatens Youth Mental Health, but Protective Factors Can Help](#).

<sup>5</sup> See [The School to Prison Pipeline: Long-Run Impacts of School Suspensions on Adult Crime](#).

<sup>6</sup> See [K-12 Education: Discipline Disparities for Black Students, Boys, and Students with Disabilities](#).

<sup>7</sup> See [An Overview of Exclusionary Discipline Practices in Public Schools for the 2017-18 School Year](#).

<sup>8</sup> See [K-12 Education: Nationally, Black Girls Receive More Frequent and More Severe Discipline in School Than Other Girls](#).

<sup>9</sup> See [An Overview of Exclusionary Discipline Practices in Public Schools for the 2017-18 School Year](#).

<sup>10</sup> See [Pushed Out: Trends and Disparities in Out-of-School Suspension](#).

Research has further consistently shown that the disproportionate discipline and exclusionary responses Black students face are not due to higher rates of disruptive behavior compared to their non-Black peers.<sup>11</sup> Rather, higher rates of discipline and exclusionary responses for Black students are likely caused by school-level variables, such as climate and culture, teacher representativeness of the student body, implicit bias, and student discipline processes and procedures.<sup>12</sup> The toll of discipline on Black students is particularly steep and deeply impactful for their academic success. Black students who received a suspension for minor infractions had lower grades one and two years later.<sup>13</sup>

## Evidence-Based Alternatives to Exclusionary Discipline

The purpose of this guidance is to provide an overview of evidence-based behavior interventions for school settings. The efficacy and sufficiency of these interventions, as to a school district as a whole and any individual student, requires analysis of the school district's fidelity to best practices and districtwide commitment. The stakeholders consulted in the writing of this guidance emphasize that this guidance should be used as a starting point, not as a comprehensive guide for implementation. Comprehensive systems change, thorough sustained administrative leadership, systemwide buy-in, professional development and post-training supports for teachers and other school staff, engagement of parents and guardians, and ongoing monitoring and evaluation are required for each of the interventions listed below.<sup>14</sup> Any factual determination of the appropriateness and/or exhaustion of a specific non-exclusionary behavioral intervention must also take into account the degree of fidelity to evidence-based practices.

### a. Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) is an evidence-based, tiered framework for supporting students' behavioral, academic, social, emotional, and mental health. Nearly 30,000 schools across all 50 states implemented PBIS in 2023 to support their efforts in improving their students' social emotional competence and academic success and school climates.<sup>15</sup> Research shows many positive effects associated with PBIS in:

- **School Culture and Climate:** Studies have found positive improvements in school effectiveness ratings, school climate, and the rates of exclusionary discipline for schools implementing PBIS programs when compared to schools that did not implement these programs.<sup>16</sup>
- **Student Engagement:** There is strong evidence that students within classrooms implementing PBIS are more engaged and on-task when compared to their peers in classrooms not using PBIS.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>11</sup> See Skiba, R. J., and Williams, N.T., *Are Black Kids Worse? Myths and Facts About Racial Differences in Behavior: A Summary of the Literature*, Indiana University (2014). See also [A Holistic Approach to Ending Exclusionary Discipline for Young Learners](#).

<sup>12</sup> See *id.*

<sup>13</sup> See [The Roles of Suspensions for Minor Infractions and School Climate in Predicting Academic Performance Among Adolescents](#).

<sup>14</sup> See [Implementation Science and Practice in the Education Sector](#).

<sup>15</sup> See [Center on PBIS](#).

<sup>16</sup> See [Effects of an equity-focused PBIS approach to school improvement on exclusionary discipline and school climate](#).

<sup>17</sup> See [Classroom Instructional Ecology and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support](#).

- **Racial Disproportionality in Student Discipline:** When implemented with fidelity, PBIS practices are associated with reductions in racial disparities in school discipline.<sup>18</sup> Further reductions in racial disproportionality require adopting an equity-focused approach to PBIS.<sup>19</sup>

Effective implementation of PBIS involves five interrelated elements:

- 1. Systems:** Foundational structures to support long-term implementation, including teaming structures, ongoing professional development, coaching, and support for school staff.
- 2. Data:** Use of data by school teams to identify appropriate practices and monitor progress and fidelity of implementation.
- 3. Practices:** A tiered continuum of school and classroom practices that support students' academic, behavioral, social, and emotional growth and foster a positive school climate.
- 4. Outcomes:** Collaboration by families, students, and educators in the identification and achievement of goals.
- 5. Equity:** Building culturally affirming school climates with a focus on connectedness and belonging. Practices should be adapted to meet students' needs, and teams should regularly review and adjust practices based on disaggregated discipline data by race/ethnicity, disability, and gender to ensure that the model is working for different student groups.<sup>20</sup>

PBIS is stronger and more efficient when mental health supports are integrated. Robust mental health supports, delivered along a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) continuum and integrated with PBIS behavior systems, are essential to respond to students' mental and behavioral health needs. The interconnected systems framework offers school district teams a systematic model for integration of PBIS and mental health practices through MTSS systems that efficiently combine systems, data, teaming, and practices.<sup>21</sup>

**Target Population:** PBIS is a multi-tiered framework that is intended to be implemented schoolwide. Interventions can be tailored to the individual needs of students or groups of students.

**More information:** The [Center on PBIS](#) maintains a [library](#) of free resources with more information on PBIS practices. Among the resources provided are [information](#) on School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS), [guidance](#) for districts seeking to address racial disparities in school discipline, a [guide](#) on aligning school-based mental health systems with PBIS, a [fidelity inventory](#) to assess implementation of PBIS, and [information](#) on implementation of PBIS in early childhood settings (e.g., the Pyramid Model). Also available is a [spreadsheet](#) listing hundreds of peer-reviewed studies related to PBIS.

<sup>18</sup> See [Effects of an equity-focused PBIS approach to school improvement on exclusionary discipline and school climate](#).

<sup>19</sup> [Centering Equity within the PBIS Framework: Overview and Evidence of Effectiveness](#); see also [Equitable Supports](#).

<sup>20</sup> See [What Is PBIS?](#) See also [Equitable Supports](#) and [PBIS Cultural Responsiveness Field Guide: Resources for Trainers and Coaches](#).

<sup>21</sup> See [Fact Sheet — Interconnected Systems Framework 101: An Introduction](#); see also [Advancing Education Effectiveness: Interconnecting School Mental Health and School-Wide Positive Behavior Support](#); and [Embedding Mental Health into SWPBIS ISF Practice Guide](#).

## b. Restorative Justice and Restorative Practices

Restorative justice and restorative practices are an approach to student culture and student discipline that creates and reinforces safe, inclusive, and supportive spaces in schools.<sup>22</sup> Restorative approaches focus on:

1. Proactively building community and strengthening the relationships between students, teachers, and administrators.
2. Addressing student discipline issues by focusing on who or what was impacted and how harm can be repaired. Through restorative approaches, students are supported to address and take accountability for their behavior, and to resolve conflicts. Instead of focusing on punishing students for their misbehavior, student behaviors are viewed as opportunities to teach social-emotional and conflict resolution skills.<sup>23</sup>

The University of Chicago Education Lab (2018–present) analyzed data from 239 Chicago high schools from the 2008–09 through 2018–19 school years. Chicago Public Schools first implemented restorative practice programs in the 2013–14 school year. The [Education Lab study](#) found a 35% reduction in arrests in school, a 15% reduction in out-of-school arrests, and an 18% reduction in out-of-school suspensions in schools that implemented restorative practices policies. Another study in 2023 found that restorative practices improved students' achievement in English language arts and math, reduced the probability of suspensions and number of days students were suspended, and improved school safety overall.<sup>24</sup> There is a growing body of research that highlights many positive outcomes associated with these practices.

Restorative approaches can be grouped by tiers<sup>25</sup>:

- **Universal (Tier 1):** These restorative approaches are implemented with all students across the entire school. They are proactive and include practices such as classroom community building, explicitly teaching social emotional and conflict resolution skills, and the use of empathetic, relational language when staff interact with students.
- **Targeted (Tier 2):** These restorative approaches are used to respond to discipline infractions. Practices could include peace circles, restorative conversations, or mediations.
- **Intensive, Individualized (Tier 3):** These restorative approaches are for students who need highly individualized support in taking accountability for and being reintegrated into the school community. Example practices include reentry (or Welcome Back) circles for students who are returning to school from a suspension or an accountability circle for a student who engaged in a discipline action that caused harm to multiple members of the school community — such as a student writing hate language on a bathroom stall.

<sup>22</sup> See [The Restorative Approach and its Strategies](#).

<sup>23</sup> See [School-Wide Restorative Practices: Step-by-Step](#).

<sup>24</sup> See [Fostering Belonging, Transforming Schools: The Impact of Restorative Practices](#).

<sup>25</sup> See [Building a Positive School Climate Through Restorative Practices](#).

Include the following tenets to effectively use restorative practices to improve school climate and reduce the use of exclusionary school discipline:

- 1. Sustainable whole school approach:** Restorative approaches should be embedded throughout all aspects of school culture — not reserved solely for responding to specific incidents or something implemented by specific staff or partners. Tier 1 strategies,<sup>26</sup> including relational language, affective statements, active listening, community-building circles, and restorative conversations, should be consistently practiced by all school staff. School policies, procedures, and systems for addressing student behavior and discipline — including student handbooks, codes of conduct, and incident reporting systems — should integrate restorative approaches throughout.<sup>27</sup> Attention should be paid to developing a safe, supportive and culturally affirming learning environment in which the cultures, experiences, and identities of students and their families are understood and valued.<sup>28</sup>
- 2. A multiyear, contextualized implementation plan:**<sup>29</sup> Shifting to a restorative approach to school discipline is a long-term (three to five years) process and will look different for each school. Schools may engage in a readiness assessment to determine how to prepare their school community to implement a multiyear system change process and how they can most effectively engage students, staff, and families in learning and utilizing a restorative approach.<sup>30</sup>
- 3. Restorative approaches drive how student behavior is addressed:**<sup>31</sup> Responses to student behavior at Tiers 2 and 3 should focus on understanding what harm occurred, the underlying causes of the behavior, and how the student can be supported in taking responsibility and repairing the harm. Accountability should not be framed as punishment for breaking a rule, but rather as the student's active participation in conversations and actions that promote reflection, restoration, and positive behavior change.

Depending on the underlying cause of the student behavior, accountability may have a student:

- Participating in skill or competency building activities,
- Receiving mental health or trauma-informed supports,
- Engaging in problem-solving pertaining to how to avoid the same behavior in the future, or
- Resolving interpersonal conflict with a peer or teacher via restorative practices such as a circle or mediation.

If a student is removed from the classroom or school environment for safety reasons, a welcoming and restorative reentry process should be provided to support harm repair and long-term success.

<sup>26</sup> See [Restorative Practices in the Classroom](#).

<sup>27</sup> See [The Starts and Stumbles of Restorative Justice in Education: Where Do We Go From Here?](#); see also [Building a Positive School Climate Through Restorative Practices](#).

<sup>28</sup> See [A Restorative Approach for Equitable Education](#).

<sup>29</sup> See [The Starts and Stumbles of Restorative Justice in Education: Where Do We Go From Here?](#).

<sup>30</sup> See [Ready4RP](#).

<sup>31</sup> See [Restorative Justice Implementation Guide: A Whole School Approach](#).

**4. Ongoing professional development:**<sup>32</sup> All school staff should receive initial and ongoing professional development on Tier 1 restorative practices, with more intensive, sustained training, coaching, and support provided to those directly responsible for student discipline.

**Target Population:** Restorative practices can be implemented schoolwide to improve the relationships between students, staff, and administrators. These techniques are generally more useful when dealing with more person-centered infractions, such as peer conflict and student and staff conflict.

**More Information:** The following list includes entities with resources, guidance, and research related to the implementation of restorative practices:

- [International Institute for Restorative Practices](#)
- [National Association of Community and Restorative Justice](#)
- [University of Chicago Education Lab](#)
- [Learning Policy Institute](#)
- [RAND Corp.](#)
- [National Center for School Safety](#)
- [SchoolSafety.gov](#)
- [Oakland Unified School District, California](#)
- [Denver School-Based Restorative Practices Partnership](#)
- Transforming School Discipline Collaborative: [The Restorative Approach and its Strategies](#) and [Strategies for Parent Engagement](#)
- [Reimagine Justice](#)

### **c. Trauma-Informed Practices**

Experiencing trauma can have significant impacts on a child's physical and mental health, emotional well-being, and academic achievement. Children who have been exposed to trauma may have difficulty expressing and managing emotions, and they may have difficulty forming relationships with teachers. They may exhibit hypervigilance, and their response to triggers can manifest as behavioral incidents during school.<sup>33</sup> Implementing trauma-informed practices can enable schools to improve staff relationships with students and can take steps to support students in dealing with their trauma before students exhibit behaviors that typically result in suspension or expulsion. Children who have experienced trauma may need support in developing skills in emotional regulation and executive function, and they benefit from positive attention from trusted and caring adults.<sup>34</sup> Students of color are disproportionately likely to have experienced trauma due to greater exposure to chronic and acute individual and community stressors as

<sup>32</sup> See [The Starts and Stumbles of Restorative Justice in Education: Where Do We Go From Here?](#); see also [Socializing Schools: Addressing Racial Disparities in Discipline Through Restorative Justice](#).

<sup>33</sup> See [How Trauma Effects Kids in School](#).

<sup>34</sup> See *id.*

well as racial discrimination.<sup>35</sup> Being bullied at school also can cause students to experience trauma,<sup>36</sup> and students who have experienced trauma may be more likely to be bullied and to bully others.<sup>37</sup>

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) identifies four assumptions that are indicative of a trauma-informed approach:

- 1.** The school realizes the impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery.
- 2.** The school recognizes the signs and reactions of trauma in students, families, and staff.
- 3.** The school responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices.
- 4.** The school resists re-traumatization.<sup>38</sup>

Furthermore, SAMHSA identifies six key principles of a trauma-informed approach:

- 5.** Safety – Everyone in the organization feels safe, both physically and psychologically. The physical environment is safe and interpersonal interactions promote a sense of safety.
- 6.** Trustworthiness and Transparency – Building and maintaining trust are established and maintained through transparency in organizational decisions and operations.
- 7.** Peer Support – The utilization of peer stories and lived experiences promote healing and recovery. Peer support and mutual self-help are necessary to establish safety and hope, build trust, and enhance collaboration. The term “peers” refers to individuals with lived experiences of trauma, and “peers” have also been referred to as “trauma survivors”.
- 8.** Collaboration and Mutuality – Everyone has a role to play in this process. Healing occurs through relationships, leveling power, and the distribution of decision-making.
- 9.** Empowerment, Voice, and Choice – Recognizing and building upon individuals’ strengths and experiences is a vital element in this approach. Staff feel safe and are empowered to do their work with support provided. Empowerment for staff and stakeholders are fostered through operations, workforce development, and services. Organizations understand power differentials and support stakeholders utilizing their voice and choice in the healing process.
- 10.** Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues – The organization recognizes and addresses historical trauma and policies, protocols, and processes that are responsive to the racial, ethnic, and cultural needs of individuals served.<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> See [Trauma and U.S. Minority Children and Youth](#).

<sup>36</sup> See [Bullying as an ACE](#).

<sup>37</sup> See [Bullying: Effects](#).

<sup>38</sup> See [SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](#).

<sup>39</sup> See *id.*

A trauma-sensitive school should be a safe and welcoming environment for students, families, and staff in which all staff (from the principal to the janitor) understand and respond to students' behaviors with an understanding that they may be an indication that they have been exposed to trauma.<sup>40</sup> Trauma-informed practices should be implemented schoolwide through an MTSS framework.<sup>41</sup> Schoolwide approaches to support students' social-emotional wellbeing and to build skills in self-regulation and executive functioning should be integrated with other Tier 1 (universal) strategies, like SWPBIS, social and emotional learning, restorative practices, and equity-oriented approaches. Trauma-informed approaches and treatment should be implemented into school-based mental health programs.<sup>42</sup> All aspects of the school environment, including staff professional development, engagement with students and families, and school policies and procedures should be grounded in an understanding of trauma and its impact and aimed at promoting resilience and avoiding re-traumatization.<sup>43</sup> Schools should foster an environment that supports staff self-care and equips staff to understand and address secondary trauma and its impacts.<sup>44</sup>

Students who are building on a strong foundation of schoolwide trauma-informed school practices should additionally have access to group and individualized supports. Tier 2 (targeted) supports can include small group interventions that focus on specific skill areas, such as coping with anxiety and managing anger. At the Tier 3 (intensive, individualized) level, interventions utilizing cognitive behavioral therapy are considered the gold standard for evidence-based treatment for trauma-related stress. Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools and Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy are evidence-based clinical programs for youth who have experienced trauma that have been implemented at schools across the country.<sup>45</sup> Schools also should establish partnerships with community mental health providers to provide wrap-around services and help students and families access individualized treatment for trauma-related mental health conditions such as Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).<sup>46</sup>

Within classrooms, teachers can create a more trauma-responsive atmosphere by integrating strategies to reduce stress and increase attention like providing a designated space for de-escalation, offering calming tools such as fidgets and stress balls, creating classroom norms, establishing routine classroom schedules, and integrating movement breaks.<sup>47</sup> Teachers can support students' healing and resilience by demonstrating honesty and reliability, displaying empathy, actively listening without judgment, and providing guidance and support to empower students who have experienced trauma.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> See [Bullying as an ACE](#).

<sup>41</sup> See [Toward a Blueprint for Trauma-Informed Service Delivery in Schools](#); see also [Creating, Supporting, and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools: A System Framework](#).

<sup>42</sup> See [Schools and Trauma](#).

<sup>43</sup> See [Trauma-Sensitive Schools](#).

<sup>44</sup> See [Essential Elements](#).

<sup>45</sup> See [A Scoping Review of School-Based Efforts to Support Students Who Have Experienced Trauma](#); see also [Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools](#).

<sup>46</sup> See [Toward a Blueprint for Trauma-Informed Service Delivery in Schools](#); see also [Creating, Supporting, and Sustaining Trauma-Informed Schools: A System Framework](#).

<sup>47</sup> See [Strategies and Resources to Support Trauma-Informed Schools](#).

<sup>48</sup> See *id.*

Schools also should implement a trauma-informed approach to disciplinary policies and practices as well as emergency management and crisis response.<sup>49</sup> Policies and practices should be implemented to prevent and respond to bullying in a trauma-informed way.<sup>50</sup>

**Target Population:** Trauma-Informed practices are implemented by school staff and administrators, with support offered to all students. An understanding of every student's past traumatic experience can help schools prepare appropriate supports to address the underlying causes of negative behavior.

**More Information:** The following list includes entities with resources, guidance, and research related to the implementation of trauma-informed practices:

- [National Child Traumatic Stress Network](#), including free online trainings available through the [NTCSN Learning Center on Schools and Trauma](#)
- [National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments](#)
- [Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative](#)
- [Rand Corp.](#)
- [The National Center for School Safety](#)
- [American Institutes for Research](#)
- [SchoolSafety.gov](#)
- [Center for Safe and Resilient Schools and Workplaces](#)
- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#)
- [Transforming School Discipline Collaborative](#)
- [Resilience Education to Advance Community Healing \(REACH\)](#)
- [Illinois ACEs Response Collaborative](#)
- [Illinois Childhood Trauma Coalition](#)

#### **d. Social-Emotional Learning**

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is an evidence-based approach supporting students to learn and apply the skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain healthy relationships, and make responsible decisions.<sup>51</sup> Numerous studies have shown that implementing SEL in schools not only improves social and emotional development but also contributes to better academic performance; improved classroom behavior; increased ability to manage stress and depression; and long-term benefits, such as higher graduation rates and career readiness.<sup>52</sup>

<sup>49</sup> See [Essential Elements](#).

<sup>50</sup> See [Preventing Bullying Through Science, Policy, and Practice](#).

<sup>51</sup> See [CASEL – Fundamentals of SEL](#).

<sup>52</sup> See [The Impact of Enhancing Students' Social and Emotional Learning: A Meta-Analysis of School-Based Universal Interventions](#); see also [Promoting Positive Youth Development Through School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Interventions: A Meta-Analysis of Follow-Up Effects](#).

**Target Population:** SEL is a schoolwide approach geared toward addressing the individual needs of each student, while also nurturing the social competency of school staff.

**More Information:** The following list includes entities with resources, guidance, and research related to the implementation of SEL:

- ISBE, School Wellness, [Social and Emotional Learning](#)
- [Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#)
- [National Center for School Safety](#)
- [UChicago Consortium on School Research](#)
- [RAND Corp.](#)
- [Pennsylvania State University](#) (on integrating SEL and trauma-sensitive schools)

### **e. Functional Behavioral Analysis, Behavioral Intervention Plans, and School Safety Plans**

A Functional Behavioral Analysis (FBA) is an individualized process to improve a school or team's understanding of behaviors that impact a student's learning or the learning of others, identify related areas for skills development, and support school teams in developing an effective Behavioral Intervention Plan (BIP). Understanding the function of the behavior can enable educators to identify specific supports to address the underlying causes of that behavior and teach students proactive strategies to get their needs met in a manner that does not disrupt the student's or others' learning. FBAs should include a clear, specific, measurable, and objective description of the behavior that is interfering with the student's learning or the learning of others. Development of an FBA requires a structured data collection process that includes direct observation across various settings and informal assessments, such as rating scales and parent/teacher/student interviews and reports, to determine where, when, and why specific behaviors are occurring.<sup>53</sup> An FBA should detail the prior interventions that have been implemented and the success rate for those interventions across different settings.<sup>54</sup>

A BIP is a plan to teach replacement behaviors, make changes to the situations that contribute to target behaviors, and teach other missing skills.<sup>55</sup> For BIPs to be effective, they should:

- Identify the replacement behaviors that will replace the target behavior and the positive supports staff will implement to teach students to use the appropriate, defined replacement behavior (such as modeling, practicing, teaching, feedback, cues, and patterns of reinforcement);
- Document additional supports that will be provided or adjustments to the student's learning environment;
- Describe how behavior will be measured and data collected, and

<sup>53</sup> See ISBE Guidance, [Behavioral Interventions in Schools: Guidelines for the Development of District Policies for Students with Disabilities](#).

<sup>54</sup> See *id.*

<sup>55</sup> See ISBE Parent Guide, [Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois](#).

- Identify a plan for communicating the BIP to relevant school staff and for communicating data and progress to the student's parent or guardian.

School staff should be equipped with the skills and support needed to teach positive behavioral strategies and replacement behavior to ensure effective implementation of a BIP.<sup>56</sup> FBAs and BIPs are typically associated with students with disabilities, but they can be used for any student whose behavior is impacting the learning of themselves and/or others. There is much evidence that supports FBAs and BIPs as effective approaches to addressing students' behavior.<sup>57</sup>

A safety plan is a tool to ensure the safety and well-being of students when their behaviors may be dangerous to themselves or others. Safety plans should specifically address these dangerous behaviors. School staff, school administrators, parents, and community agency staff (when appropriate) should be involved in the development of the safety plan.<sup>58</sup> These plans provide support and resources to the individual student. This [Safety Plan Overview](#) from Chicago Public Schools provides a sample safety plan template.

**Target Population:** FBAs, BIPs, and safety plans are individualized based on a specific student's needs. If a student's behavior is persistently impacting their learning or the learning of others, and/or their behavior poses dangers to themselves or others, an FBA, BIP, and safety plan may be useful in addressing those behaviors.

**More Information:** The following list includes entities with resources, guidance, and research related to the implementation of FBAs and BIPs:

- ISBE Guidance, [Behavioral Interventions in Schools: Guidelines for the Development of District Policies for Students with Disabilities](#)
- [Center on PBIS, Practice Guides – Tier 3 Comprehensive FBA Guide](#)
- [Guidance from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Elementary and Secondary Education & Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services](#)
- [IRIS Center, Vanderbilt Peabody College of Education and Human Development](#)
- [Transforming School Discipline Collaborative](#)

<sup>56</sup> See [Behavioral Interventions in Schools: Guidelines for the Development of District Policies for Students with Disabilities](#); see also [Educational Rights and Responsibilities: Understanding Special Education in Illinois](#); and [Validity of Functional Behavior Assessment Within a Response to Intervention Framework: Evidence, Recommended Practice, and Future Directions](#).

<sup>57</sup> See [Functional Behavioral Assessment and Students at Risk for or with Emotional Disabilities: Current Issues and Considerations](#).

<sup>58</sup> See [Workplace Violence in School Boards \[-\] A Guide to the Law, Student Safety Plan](#).

## f. Culturally Responsive Teaching

Pedagogical theorist and teacher educator Gloria Ladson-Billings defines “culturally responsive teaching” as:

*[A] pedagogy of opposition . . . not unlike critical pedagogy but specifically committed to collective, not merely individual, empowerment. Culturally relevant pedagogy rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) Students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness through which they challenge the status quo of the current social order.<sup>59</sup>*

Students have a need to feel connected to others in the school environment. When students do not feel connected to others, disciplinary infractions are likely to occur at higher levels. In [Promoting Cultural Responsivity and Student Engagement Through Double Check Coaching of Classroom Teachers: An Efficacy Study](#), the researchers examined cultural responsiveness through the lens of PBIS. This study showed a decrease in student referrals through the use of culturally responsive practices and PBIS. Research also has shown that the use of culturally responsive teaching can help students’ psychological well-being. Promoting the psychological well-being of students can help to decrease student disciplinary infractions.<sup>60</sup>

**Target Population:** Culturally responsive teaching can be implemented schoolwide to help all students reach their full potential.

**More Information:** The following list provides resources, guidance, and research related to the implementation of culturally responsive teaching:

- [Research and Evidence-Based Best Practices for Preparing Educators for Culturally Responsive Teaching and Leading](#)
- [Culturally Responsive Teaching: A Guide to Evidence-Based Practices for Teaching All Students Equitably](#)
- [Teaching Diverse Learners Using Culturally Responsive Pedagogy](#)
- [Culturally Responsive Teaching](#)
- [Culturally Responsive Teaching and Inclusion](#)

<sup>59</sup> [But That’s Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy.](#)

<sup>60</sup> See [A Qualitative Examination of the Impact of Culturally Responsive Educational Practices on the Psychological Well-Being of Students of Color.](#)

## g. Empathic Instruction

An increasing number of studies suggest that teacher professional learning related to empathy, perspective-taking, and growth mindset reduces racial disproportionality in school discipline.<sup>61</sup> Empathic Instruction is an intervention designed to encourage teachers to take time to see situations from the perspective of students and to respond empathically to perceived misbehaviors. Teachers complete a 35–50-minute online session twice per school year, once in the fall and once the spring. Research has found that this intervention significantly lowers school suspension<sup>62</sup> and reduces racial disparities for Black and Hispanic/Latino students.<sup>63</sup> Reductions in suspension rates continued into the following school year when students had different teachers,<sup>64</sup> supporting the value of enhancing teacher-student relationships to improve students' trajectories.

**Target Population:** Teachers in schools with high discipline disproportionality.

**More Information:** The following list includes entities with resources, guidance, and research related to Empathic Instruction:

- [Institute of Education Sciences](#)
- [Empathic Instruction](#)

## h. Early Childhood Mental Health Consultants

Infant/Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (I/ECMHC) is an evidence-based practice that is used in early childhood settings by districts operating preschool and prekindergarten programs.<sup>65</sup> Early childhood mental health consultants are professionals with specific training in childhood development, the impact of stress and trauma on families, the importance of attachment for young children, and the impacts of adult mental health on children.<sup>66</sup> Consultants are a resource for staff to build their capacity to promote children's mental health and social-emotional development through reflective consultation, training, and technical assistance.<sup>67</sup> Use of I/ECMHCs is associated with positive outcomes for young children and the adults working with them, including improvements in children's social-emotional well-being, improvements in staff social-emotional support for young children, and improvements to classroom climate and programmatic quality.<sup>68</sup>

I/ECMHCs should be engaged proactively with programs *before* challenging situations emerge. Consultants are a resource for staff to build their capacity to promote mental health and social emotional development through reflective consultation, training, and technical assistance. Consultation is most effective when the I/ECMHC establishes a relationship with a program for over six months.

<sup>61</sup> See [Empathic Instruction: A Powerful Tool for Addressing Inequitable Disciplinary Actions](#); see also [Small 'Nudges' Can Push Students in the Right Direction](#).

<sup>62</sup> See [Brief intervention to encourage empathic discipline cuts suspension rates in half among adolescents](#).

<sup>63</sup> See [A scalable empathic-mindset intervention reduces group disparities in school suspensions](#).

<sup>64</sup> See *id.*

<sup>65</sup> See [Status of the Evidence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation](#).

<sup>66</sup> See [IECMHC Basics](#).

<sup>67</sup> See *id.*

<sup>68</sup> See [Status of the Evidence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation](#).

**Target Population:** Staff in preschool and prekindergarten programs.

**More Information:** The following list includes entities with resources, guidance, and research related to early childhood mental health consultants:

- [Illinois Department of Early Childhood](#)
- [Illinois Action for Children](#)
- [Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies \(INCCRRA\)](#), including [online training](#) on Mental Health Consultation in Illinois
- [Gateways to Opportunity](#)
- [Center of Excellence for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation](#)

## 5. Additional Resources

Districts should review and, if necessary, update their policies and practices to ensure they are meeting the needs of all students. Below are two practice guides that can assist with this process:

- [Creating Trauma-Informed Policies: A Practice Guide for School and Mental Health Leadership](#) from the Pacific Southwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network addresses the four leadership choice points that influence the creation, development, and implementation of trauma-informed practices and approaches.
- [Key Elements of Policies to Address Discipline Disproportionality: A Guide for District and School Teams](#) from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education Programs Technical Assistance Center was designed to provide resources for districts and schools as they develop policies and procedures to reduce racial and ethnic disproportionality in school discipline.

School board members should regularly review data related to the implementation of discipline policies in order to make informed decisions about these policies. This would include data on suspension and expulsion rates disaggregated by race/ethnicity and other demographic categories as well as data on alternative discipline approaches. The Center on PBIS developed [Discipline Disproportionality Problem Solving: A Data Guide for School Teams](#) to assist school teams in using exclusionary disciplinary data to address inequities in school discipline.

Another crucial consideration is the student handbook, which is a comprehensive guide to school and district rules and regulations. A student handbook that is trauma-informed will focus on expectations as well as support and safety for all students. The [Trauma-Informed, Resilience-Oriented Schools Toolkit](#), developed by the National Council for Mental Wellbeing, in partnership with the National Center for School Safety, outlines a framework for implementing trauma-informed, resilience-oriented approaches in any school or school district. Trauma-informed schools are inclusive and position students for success. Information in this toolkit can be used to support a school's or district's development of trauma-informed practices as well as a trauma-informed handbook.

Medicaid is an essential resource to provide mental-health services to students. An [Illinois Medicaid School-Based Health Services Program Changes](#) Frequently Asked Questions document pertaining to school health and mental health service providers includes an explanation of the fee-for-services expansion. Service eligibility reimbursement expanded from services only included in an IEP/Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) to services included in an IEP, IFSP, 504 Plan, an individualized plan of care, or where medical necessity has been otherwise established. Personal care and specialized transportation services continue to be limited to IEP/IFSP services only. Student eligibility reimbursement expanded from Medicaid-enrolled students with an IEP/IFSP only to any Medicaid-enrolled student for any allowable service for which medical necessity has been established. The requirements for documenting medical necessity are the same for the expansion as the requirements for IEPs/IFSPs.