



# Disparities in Days Assigned to an Exclusionary Discipline Consequence by the At-Risk Status of Texas Middle School Girls: A Statewide Multiyear Investigation

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**Abstract:** Examined in this study was the extent to which differences occurred in the assignment to and in the number of days assigned to an in-school suspension for Grades 6, 7, and 8 girls in the State of Texas as a function of their at-risk status in the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2020-2021 school years. Similar percentages of girls were assigned to an in-school suspension, regardless of their at-risk status. Across all three grade levels and all four school years, however, clear inequities were documented in the average number of days girls who were at-risk were assigned to an in-school suspension. Grades 6, 7, and 8 girls who were at-risk were assigned a statistically significantly higher average number of days to an in-school suspension than were Grades 6, 7, and 8 girls who were not at-risk. Implications of these findings and recommendations for future research were discussed.

### Research Paper

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## INTRODUCTION

Well documented in the existing research literature are disparities in the assignment of exclusionary discipline consequences based upon student ethnicity/race (Annamma *et al.*, 2019; Harkrider, 2020; Hilberth & Slate, 2014; Morris & Perry, 2017; Skiba *et al.*, 2002; Slate *et al.*, 2016). For example, Black girls are six times more likely to be suspended than are White girls (Angton, 2020; Barnes *et al.*, 2017). Also well-established are clear inequities in the assignment of exclusionary discipline consequences based upon student economic status (Annamma *et al.*, 2019; Cholewa *et al.*, 2018; Khan & Slate, 2016; Latimore *et al.*, 2018; Mizel *et al.*, 2016; Skiba *et al.*, 2002; Skiba *et al.*, 1997; Sullivan *et al.*, 2013). For example, Khan and Slate (2016) revealed that students in poverty had statistically significantly higher rates of being assigned to an in-school suspension, being expelled from school, being at-risk for not graduating from high school, and receiving fewer opportunities to be exposed to quality

teaching than White students. These persistent disparities in exclusionary discipline consequences increase the chances for school dropouts and academic failure within elementary, middle, and high school grade levels (Harkrider, 2020; Khan & Slate, 2016; Smith *et al.*, 2021). Limited research investigations, however, could be located about relationships between exclusionary discipline consequences and students determined to be at-risk.

The sample of students of interest for this article are students who have been labeled as being at-risk. Students designated as at-risk are identified as having a high probability of not completing high school (Texas Education Agency, 2021d). For more detailed information about the 13 indicators for at-risk status, readers are directed to the Texas Education Agency website. Between October 2016 and October 2017, the number of 15- to 24-year-olds who dropped out of school prior to obtaining a high school degree was approximately 523,000. These dropouts accounted for

4.7% of the 11.1 million youth enrolled in Grades 10 through 12 in 2016 (United States Department of Education, 2020). In 2017, the dropout rate for Hispanic 15- to 24-year-olds was higher than the rate for White 15- to 24-year-olds (6.5% vs. 3.9%), and a 5.5% difference from the dropout rate for Black 15- to 24-year-olds (United States Department of Education, 2020).

Texas secondary school completion and dropout rates in Texas public schools in the 2012-2013 school year revealed the presence of 3,187 Grade 7-8 students who were at-risk as a result of dropping out of school prior to high school completion. Of these numbers, 30.3% were girls. Black students were 11.4% of student dropouts in the 2012-2013 school year, and Hispanic students were 72.5% of student dropouts. Notably, the average dropout rate of Hispanic students in Grade 7-8 was nearly 10 times higher than the average dropout rate of Black students (Texas Education Agency, 2014b).

In a recent 2019-2020 school year research analysis of secondary school completion and dropouts in Texas public schools, the Texas Education Agency (2021d) revealed statewide yearly dropout rates for Grade 7-8 students. An increase of Texas student dropout rates increased from 3,579 in the prior school year 2018-2019 to 4,295 in the 2019-2020 school year, a 20% increase. Of the 4,295 students who dropped out of Grade 7-8, 58.2% dropped out of Grade 8 and 1,827 were girls. Grade 7 girls who dropped out during 2018-2019 totaled 0.4%, and Grade 8 girls who dropped out was 0.5%. Programs indicative of at-risk indicators in this research analysis included Grade 7-8 At-risk 56.3%, Emergent Bilingual (26.9%), English Learner (28.6%), Foster Care (0.7%), and Homeless (7.3%). These statistics may have been counted in more than one category.

A total of 2.6 million students were assigned to at least one in-school suspension in the 2017-2018 school year. Of that 2.6 million, girls comprised over 800,000 of the total of in-school suspension assignments (Office of Civil Rights, 2021). Of the over 800,000 girls assigned an in-school suspension in the United States, 1,563 were Grade 7-8 middle school girls who became dropouts in the 2017-2018 school year in Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2021c). In the 2017-2018 school year, a total of 27,710 (27.2%) girls who were identified as being at-risk were expelled from public schools in the United States (Office of Civil Rights, 2021). Of that 27%, 1,222 (4.4%) were Emergent Bilingual expelled girls.

Young girls who are identified as being at-risk are more likely to have higher numbers of suspensions and expulsions (Patrick & Chaudhry, 2017). Of particular relevance to the Patrick and Chaudhry (2017) report, 25% of students in the care of the state were suspended, in contrast to 10% of students not in the care of the state. Patrick and Chaudhry (2017) documented that

girls in foster care experience higher rates of exclusionary discipline consequences, have lower achievement performance, and lower graduation rates.

Throughout the United States substantial numbers of children have one or more at-risk indicators, indicators that are connected to maladaptive behavior (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2021; Parent *et al.*, 2011). Middle school girls who are at-risk are subjected to a disproportionate number of challenges that contribute to increased levels of school failure and school behavioral concerns (Mann, 2013). Schools with high exclusionary disciplinary consequences tend to have high dropout rates, analogous to high at-risk rates (Lee *et al.*, 2011). Schools with larger percentages of students of color and students of low economic status also have higher dropout rates (Lee *et al.*, 2011) than schools with lower percentages of these students.

In a recent study, Smith *et al.*, (2021) addressed the degree to which in-school suspension was related to performance on the state-mandated assessment. Students who were assigned to just one in-school suspension had a 57% increase in anticipated number of state standardized test failures than students who had not been assigned to an in-school suspension (Smith *et al.*, 2021). With each additional assignment to an in-school suspension, the possibility for exam failure increased. Students assigned to five or more in-school suspensions had a 120% higher anticipated number of standardized test failures than students without a single in-school suspension.

Also of interest for this article are students who are Emergent Bilingual, because they are coded as being at-risk by the TEC § 29.052 (Texas Education Agency, 2011). At-risk Emergent Bilingual girls who were assigned to one or more in-school suspension accounted for 51,240 or 6.3% of students (Office of Civil Rights, 2021). Noted in the Office of Civil Rights (2021) report was that 1,222 or 4.4% Emergent Bilingual girls were expelled from school in the 2017-2018 school year. Expulsions are an at-risk indicator that meet the standards for § TEC 37.007 during a proceeding or current school year (Texas Education Agency, 2011).

Within the State of Texas, the state of interest in this article, students who have been retained at least one year are also considered to be at-risk. Emergent Bilingual students are more than twice as likely as their peers to be retained, twice as likely to not graduate from high school, and likely to have lower scores on State of Texas Assessments of Academic Readiness (STAAR) End-of-Course exams than their peers. All of the aforementioned categories including dropouts, retentions, and state-mandated exam failures are at-risk indicators (Texas Education Agency, 2014b).

In a recent investigation conducted in Texas, Pohl and Slate (2021) documented that almost 500

Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements occurred for Grade 8 Black girls who were in poverty. Grade 8 Black girls who were economically disadvantaged were assigned a substantially higher rate to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement than were Grade 8 Black girls who were not economically disadvantaged. As such, a clear lack of equity was established by student at-risk status, with respect to Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements. Of note, Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placements are one of the 13 at risk indicators which are of particular interest to this article. In a related investigation, Henkel (2015) established that Grade 6 White, Black, and Hispanic girls who were assigned to a Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement had statistically significantly lower reading test scores on the state-mandated assessment than did Grades 6, 7, and 8 White, Black, and Hispanic girls who had not been assigned to such an exclusionary discipline consequence.

In an extensive search of the existing literature, no published articles could be located in which the at-risk status of girls was examined in relation to the assignment of exclusionary discipline consequences. Given the relationship between at-risk status and poor academic achievement and a similar relationship for exclusionary discipline consequence assignment and poor academic achievement, research studies are clearly warranted. Accordingly, the gap that is present in the existing literature regarding at-risk status and assignment to an in-school suspension were addressed in this multiyear investigation.

### Statement of the Problem

Excursionary disciplinary consequences have been investigated on the basis of ethnicity/race and economic status by numerous researchers (Skiba *et al.*, 2011; Slate *et al.*, 2016; White, 2019; White & Slate, 2017). Few published articles could be located in which researchers addressed whether differences were present in the number of days assigned to an in-school suspension based on middle school girl at-risk status. Emergent Bilingual students are more than two times as likely as their classmates to remain in the same grade again, two times as likely to dropout prior to graduating from high school, and highly likely to have lower scores on state exams than their peers. All of the aforementioned categories including dropouts, retentions, and state mandated exam failures are at-risk indicators (Texas Education Agency, 2014b). Failure to graduate from high school has negative consequences for individual students, their immediate family, and society (Lynch *et al.*, 2014). Students who fail to graduate from high school have been shown to have higher rates of illness, substance abuse, and an inability to interact with others well through feelings thoughts, and behaviors. Moreover, students who remain at-risk and dropout of school place themselves at a higher chance of being unemployed, or if they are employed, to earn less money than students not at risk or that graduate from high school

(Lynch *et al.*, 2014). Lynch *et al.*, (2014) revealed approximately 1.3 million high school dropouts in 2010 cost the United States more than \$336 million in lost wages and taxes. The culmination of these specific concerns emphasizes the need for resolution for the problems. With respect to assignments to exclusionary discipline consequences for girls and their performance on Texas state-mandated assessments, Grades 6 and 7 girls have historically had poor academic performance than their peers who were not assigned to such a discipline consequence.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this article was to determine the extent to which inequities existed in the assignment to an in-school suspension for Grades 6, 7, and 8 girls by their at-risk status (e.g., Emergent Bilingual, retention, Disciplinary Alternative Education Program placement, failure to perform satisfactorily on an assessment under TEC Subchapter B and Chapter 39, and failure to maintain an average of 70 or more in a core class). A second purpose was to ascertain the degree to which disparities were present in the number of days assigned to an in-school suspension for Grades 6, 7, and 8 girls by their at-risk status. The third purpose was to discover whether trends were present in the assignment to an in-school suspension and in the number of days assigned across the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020 school years.

### Significance of the Study

Only a few published articles could be located about students who were at risk and their assignment to an in-school suspension. No published articles could be located regarding the number of days students who were at-risk were assigned to an in-school suspension. However, it is clear school administrators use exclusionary consequences in an inequitable and disproportionate manner to provide consequences for student misbehaviors. As a result, for more than 30 years, the use of in-school suspensions has increased in public schools in the United States (Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Cholewa, 2018; Harkrider, 2020; Hilberth & Slate, 2014; Khan & Slate, 2016; Slate *et al.*, 2016). Given the already documented inequities of ethnicity/race and economic status, a need exists to determine whether inequities are also present by at-risk status. Pohl and Slate (2021) have contributed to the existing research literature by analyzing exclusionary consequence assignment by the economic status of Black students who were at-risk. This study was conducted to extend the existing limited research literature regarding the assignment of middle school girls to in-school suspensions by their at-risk status.

### Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this investigation: (a) What is the difference in the number of days Grade 6 girls are assigned to an in-school suspension by their at-risk status?; (b) What is the

difference in the number of days Grade 7 girls are assigned to an in-school suspension by their at-risk status?; (c) What is the difference in the number of days Grade 8 girls are assigned to an in-school suspension by their at-risk status?; and (d) What trend is present in the number of days assigned to an in-school suspension by the at-risk status of middle school girls from the 2016-2017 school year through the 2019-2020 school year?.

## METHOD

### Research Design

A causal-comparative research design was present in this article (Johnson & Christensen, 2020). A single independent variable, student at-risk status, was present. Two groups were present: (a) At-Risk and (b) Not At-Risk. The first dependent variable was the rate at which Grades 6, 7, and 8 girls were assigned to an in-school suspension in the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 school years. The second dependent variable was the number of days Grades 6, 7, and 8 girls were assigned to an in-school suspension in the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 school years.

### Participants and Instrumentation

Participants in this research investigation were Grades 6, 7, and 8 girls who were assigned to an in-school suspension in the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 school years in the State of Texas. Participants were derived from the three largest ethnic/racial groups of girls in Texas (i.e., Black, Hispanic, and White) who were identified as being at-risk. As such, discipline data for Asian girls and for Native-American girls who were at-risk were not examined in this study. Data were analyzed to determine the extent to which disparities were present in the number of days girls were assigned to an in-school suspension by their at-risk status.

Students designated as at-risk are identified as having a high probability of not completing high school

(Texas Education Agency, 2021d). The Texas Education Code §37 (2021) states the stipulations schools must adhere to when assigning an in-school or out-of-school suspension. In-school suspension is the removal of a student from the normal classroom setting as a disciplinary consequence by placing the student in a different and separate classroom during the school day (Texas Education Code, 2021). The discipline data were retrieved from the Public Education Information Management System that is submitted to the Texas Education Agency.

## RESULTS

To answer the research questions regarding assignment of Grades 6, 7, and 8 girls to an in-school suspension by their at-risk status, Pearson chi-square analyses were conducted. This statistical procedure was used because dichotomous data were present for in-school suspension (i.e., assigned or not assigned) and for at-risk status (i.e., at-risk or not at-risk). As such, chi-squares are appropriate to use when variables are nominal in nature (Slate & Rojas-LeBouef, 2011). With a large statewide sample size, the available sample size per cell was met. The assumptions for using Pearson chi-square procedures were met.

### Results for In-School Suspension for At-Risk Status and Grade 6 Girls

In this research investigation, the assignment to and the number of days Grade 6 girls were assigned to an in-school suspension by their at-risk status were determined. Results will be presented for the first research question by the school year. Concerning the 2016-2017 school year, a statistically significant difference was not present in the assignment of Grade 6 girls to an in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 2.46$ ,  $p = .12$ , with respect to their at-risk status. In this school year, similar percentages, within 1%, of Grade 6 girls were assigned to an in-school suspension, regardless of their at-risk status. Table 1 contains the descriptive statistics for this school year.

**Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for Assignment to an In-School Suspension to Grade 6 Girls by Their At-Risk Status for the 2016-2017 through the 2019-2020 School Years**

School Year and At-Risk Status	<i>n</i>	% Not Assigned	% Assigned
2016-2017			
Not At-Risk	6,189	16.3	83.7
At-Risk	14,621	17.2	82.8
2017-2018			
Not At-Risk	6,619	17.5	82.5
At-Risk	14,005	18.9	81.1
2018-2019			
Not At-Risk	7,738	18.4	81.9
At-Risk	15,838	18.1	81.6
2019-2020			
Not At-Risk	5,505	17.3	82.7
At-Risk	11,664	18.8	81.2

With respect to the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the

assignment of Grade 6 girls to an in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 6.13$ ,  $p = .01$ , by their at-risk status, a below small

effect size, Cramer's V of .02 (Cohen, 1988). In this school year, the percentages of Grade 6 girls who were assigned to an in-school suspension were within 1.5% of each other, regardless of their at-risk status. Descriptive statistics for this school year are presented in Table 1.

Regarding the 2018-2019 school year, a statistically significant difference was not present in the assignment of Grade 6 girls to an in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 0.32, p = .57$ . Similar percentages of Grade 6 girls were assigned to an in-school suspension, regardless of their at-risk status. Revealed in Table 1 are the descriptive statistics for this school year. For the 2019-2020 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of Grade 6 girls to an in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 5.11, p = .02$ , by their at-risk status, below small effect size, Cramer's V of .02

(Cohen, 1988). In this school year, the percentages of Grade 6 girls who were assigned to an in-school suspension were within 1.5% of each other, regardless of their at-risk status. Descriptive statistics for this analysis are presented in Table 1.

### Results for In-School Suspension for At-Risk Status and Grade 7 Girls

In the 2016-2017 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of Grade 7 girls to an in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 11.89, p < .001$ , with respect to their at-risk status. The effect size, Cramer's V, was below small, .02 (Cohen, 1988). In this school year, the percentage of Grade 7 girls who were assigned to an in-school suspension were within 2% of each other, regardless of their at-risk status. Table 2 contains the descriptive statistics for this school year.

**Table 2: Descriptive Statistics for Assignment to an In-School Suspension to Grade 7 Girls by Their At-Risk Status for the for 2016-2017 through the 2019-2020 School Years**

School Year and At-Risk Status	<i>n</i>	% Not Assigned	% Assigned
2016-2017			
Not At-Risk	6,648	15.9	84.1
At-Risk	18,447	17.8	82.2
2017-2018			
Not At-Risk	6,791	17.1	82.9
At-Risk	17,820	18.4	81.6
2018-2019			
Not At-Risk	7,895	18.0	82.0
At-Risk	19,585	19.15	80.9
2019-2020			
Not At-Risk	6,186	17.3	82.7
At-Risk	15,699	18.1	81.9

With respect to the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of Grade 7 girls to an in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 6.25, p = .01$ , by their at-risk status, a below small effect size, Cramer's V of .02 (Cohen, 1988). In this school year, the percentage of Grade 7 girls who assigned to an in-school suspension were within 1.5% of each other, regardless of their at-risk status. Revealed in Table 2 are descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2017-2018 school year.

Concerning the 2018-2019 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of Grade 7 girls to an in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 4.36, p = .04$ , by their at-risk status, a below small effect size, Cramer's V of .01 (Cohen, 1988). The percentages of Grade 7 girls who were assigned to an in-school suspension were within 1% of each other, regardless of their at-risk status. Table 2 contains the descriptive statistics for this 2018-2019 school year. For

the 2019-2020 school year, a statistically significant difference was not yielded present in the assignment of Grade 7 girls to an in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 1.68, p = .19$ . Similar percentages of Grade 7 girls were assigned to an in-school suspension, regardless of their at-risk status. Descriptive statistics for this analysis are presented in Table 2.

### Results for In-School Suspension for At-Risk Status and Grade 8 Girls

Regarding the 2016-2017 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of Grade 8 girls to an in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 17.30, p < .01$ , with respect to their at-risk status. The effect size, Cramer's V, was below small, .03 (Cohen, 1988). In this school year, the percentage of Grade 8 girls who were assigned to an in-school suspension were within 3% of each other, regardless of their at-risk status. Table 3 contains the descriptive statistics for this school year.

**Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for Assignment to an In-School Suspension to Grade 8 Girls by Their At-Risk Status for the 2016-2017 through the 2019-2020 School Years**

School Year and At-Risk Status	<i>n</i>	% Not Assigned	% Assigned
2016-2017			
Not At-Risk	6,425	17.0	83.0
At-Risk	18,583	19.4	80.6
2017-2018			
Not At-Risk	6,453	19.0	81.0
At-Risk	18,487	20.5	79.5
2018-2019			
Not At-Risk	7,657	20.4	79.6
At-Risk	19,912	21.4	78.6
2019-2020			
Not At-Risk	5,950	19.9	80.1
At-Risk	16,479	21.2	78.8

With respect to the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was present in the assignment of Grade 8 girls to an in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 6.34$ ,  $p = .01$ , with respect to their at-risk status. The effect size, Cramer's V, was below small, .03 (Cohen, 1988). In this school year, the percentage of Grade 8 girls who were assigned to an in-school suspension were within 1.5% of each other, regardless of their at-risk status. Revealed in Table 3 are the descriptive statistics for this analysis.

For the 2018-2019 school year, a statistically significant difference was not present in the assignment of Grade 8 girls to an in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 3.06$ ,  $p = .08$ , with respect to their at-risk status. In this school year, the percentage of Grade 8 girls who were assigned to an in-school suspension were within 1.1% of each other, regardless of their at-risk status. Table 3 contains the descriptive statistics for this school year. With respect to the 2019-2020 school year, a statistically

significant difference was present in the assignment of Grade 8 girls to an in-school suspension,  $\chi^2(1) = 4.00$ ,  $p = .045$ , with respect to their at-risk status. The effect size, Cramer's V, was below small, .01 (Cohen, 1988). In this school year, the percentage of Grade 8 girls who were assigned to an in-school suspension were within 1.4% of each other, regardless of their at-risk status. Table 3 contains the descriptive statistics for this school year.

#### Results for Number of Days Grade 6 Girls Were Assigned to an In-School Suspension

With respect to the number of days Grade 6 girls were assigned to an in-school suspension during the 2016-2017 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $t(12686.10) = -13.19$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.20$ , a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Grade 6 girls who were at-risk were assigned an average of 0.80 more days to an in-school suspension than were Grade 6 girls who were not at-risk. Descriptive statistics for this school year are delineated in Table 4.

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Number of Days Assigned to In-School Suspension for Grade 6 Girls as a Function of Their At-Risk Status for the 2016-2017 through the 2019-2020 School Years**

School Year and Ethnicity/Race	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
2016-2017			
Not At-Risk	5,178	2.92	3.31
At-Risk	12,102	3.72	4.35
2017-2018			
Not At-Risk	5,460	3.04	3.36
At-Risk	11,352	3.76	4.43
2018-2019			
Not At-Risk	6,341	3.04	3.55
At-Risk	12,931	3.91	4.82
2019-2020			
Not-At Risk	4,551	2.77	2.97
At-Risk	9,476	3.37	3.97

Concerning the number of days Grade 6 girls were assigned to an in-school suspension during the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $t(13757.92) = -11.69$ ,  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.18$ , a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Grade 6 girls who were at-risk were assigned an average

of almost 0.72 more days to an in-school suspension than were Grade 6 girls who were not at-risk. Revealed in Table 4 are descriptive statistics for the 2017-2018 school year.

Regarding Grade 6 girls who were assigned to an in-school suspension during the 2018-2019 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $t(16404.27) = 14.17, p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.20$ , a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Grade 6 girls who were at-risk were assigned an average of 0.87 more days to an in-school suspension than were Grade 6 girls who were not at-risk. Table 4 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2018-2019 school year. With respect to Grade 6 girls who were assigned to an in-school suspension during the 2019-2020 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $t(11626.60) = 9.95, p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.16$ , a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Grade 6 girls who were at-risk were assigned an average of 0.60 more days to an in-

school suspension than were Grade 6 girls who were not at-risk. Table 4 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2019-2020 school year.

**Results for Number of Days Grade 7 Girls Were Assigned to an In-School Suspension**

With respect to the number of days Grade 7 girls were assigned to an in-school suspension during the 2016-2017 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $t(13540.24) = -15.94, p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.22$ , a small size (Cohen, 1988). Grade 7 girls who were at-risk were assigned an average of 1.02 more days to an in-school suspension than were Grade 7 girls who were not at-risk. Descriptive statistics for this school year are delineated in Table 5.

**Table 5: Descriptive Statistics for Number of Days Assigned to In-School Suspension for Grade 7 Girls as a Function of Their At-Risk Status for the 2016-2017 through the 2019-2020 School Years**

School Year and At-Risk Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
2016-2017			
Not At-Risk	5,591	3.20	3.66
At-Risk	15,170	4.21	5.00
2017-2018			
Not At-Risk	5,633	3.13	3.66
At-Risk	14,537	4.09	4.86
2018-2019			
Not At-Risk	6,474	3.10	3.43
At-Risk	15,847	4.15	4.83
2019-2020			
Not At-Risk	5,113	2.80	3.06
At-Risk	12,859	3.56	4.23

Concerning the number of days Grade 7 girls were assigned to an in-school suspension during the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $t(13538.24) = -15.17, p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.21$ , a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Grade 7 girls who were at-risk were assigned an average of almost one more day to an in-school suspension than were Grade 7 girls who were not at-risk. Revealed in Table 5 are descriptive statistics for the 2017-2018 school year.

Regarding Grade 7 girls who were assigned to an in-school suspension during the 2018-2019 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $t(16725.27) = 18.16, p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.23$ , a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Grade 7 girls who were at-risk were assigned an average of more than one day to an in-school suspension than were Grade 7 girls who were not at-risk. Table 5 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2018-2019 school year. With respect to Grade 7 girls who were assigned to an in-school

suspension during the 2019-2020 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $t(12816.47) = 13.42, p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.19$ , a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Grade 7 girls who were at-risk were assigned an average of 0.76 more days to an in-school suspension than were Grade 7 girls who were not at-risk. Table 5 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2019-2020 school year.

**Results for Number of Days Grade 8 Girls Were Assigned to an In-School Suspension**

With respect to the number of days Grade 8 girls were assigned to an in-school suspension during the 2016-2017 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $t(12222.03) = -15.29, p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.22$ , a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Grade 8 girls who were at-risk were assigned an average of 0.93 more days to an in-school suspension than were Grade 8 girls who were not at-risk. Descriptive statistics for this school year are delineated in Table 6.

**Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for Number of Days Assigned to In-School Suspension for Grade 8 Girls as a Function of Their At-Risk Status for the 2016-2017 through the 2019-2020 School Years**

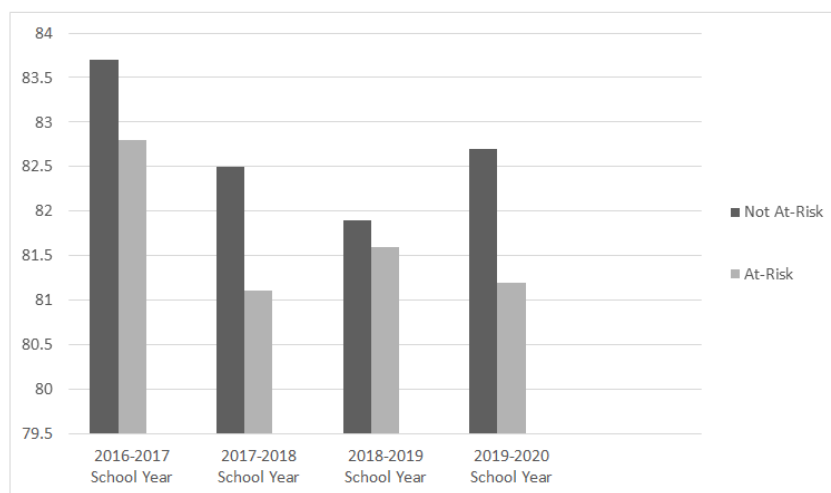
School Year and At-Risk Status	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
2016-2017			
Not At-Risk	5,332	3.03	3.51

At-Risk	14,985	3.96	4.60
2017-2018			
Not At-Risk	5,227	2.91	3.08
At-Risk	14,705	3.93	4.65
2018-2019			
Not At-Risk	5,120	3.14	5.24
At-Risk	15,651	4.06	3.53
2019-2020			
Not At-Risk	6,092	3.14	3.54
At-Risk	15,651	4.06	4.95

Concerning the number of days Grade 8 girls were assigned to an in-school suspension during the 2017-2018 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $t(13863.52) = -17.76, p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.24$ , a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Grade 8 girls who were at-risk were assigned an average of more than one day to an in-school suspension than were Grade 8 girls who were not at-risk. Revealed in Table 6 are descriptive statistics for the 2017-2018 school year.

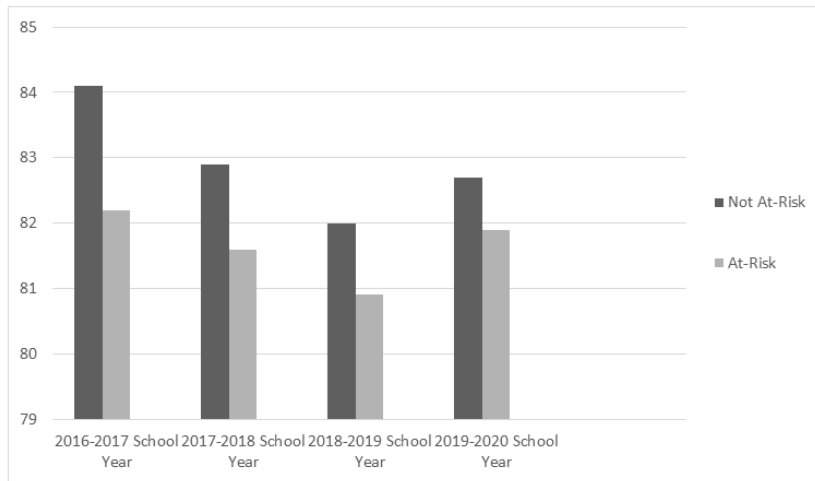
Regarding Grade 8 girls who were assigned to an in-school suspension during the 2018-2019 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $t(15405.61) = 15.19, p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.20$ , a small

effect size (Cohen, 1988). Grade 8 girls who were at-risk were assigned an average of 0.91 more days to an in-school suspension than were Grade 8 girls who were not at-risk. Table 6 contains the descriptive statistics for this analysis for the 2018-2019 school year. With respect to Grade 8 girls who were assigned to an in-school suspension during the 2019-2020 school year, a statistically significant difference was revealed,  $t(12279.13) = 16.33, p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 0.23$ , a small effect size (Cohen, 1988). Grade 8 girls who were at-risk were assigned an average of 0.83 more days to an in-school suspension than were Grade 8 girls who were not at-risk. Descriptive statistics for this analysis are delineated in Table 6.

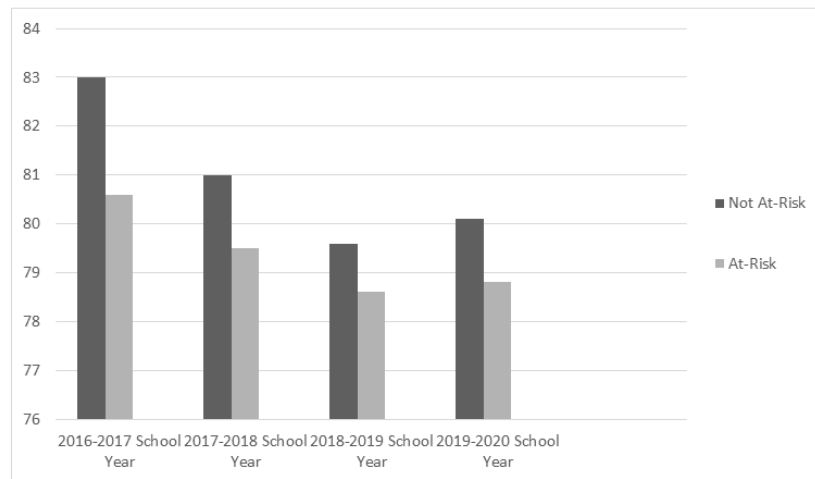


**Figure 1: Rate of In-School Suspension Assignments to Grade 6 Girls by Their At-Risk Status for the 2016-2017 through the 2019-2020 School Years**

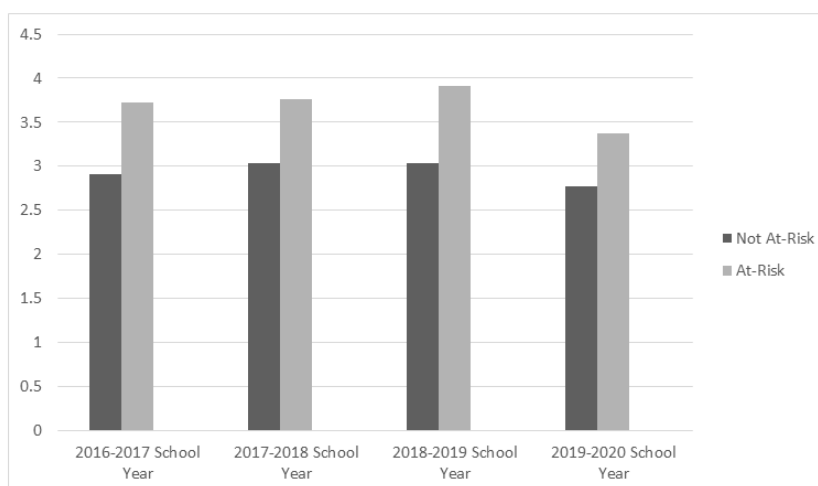




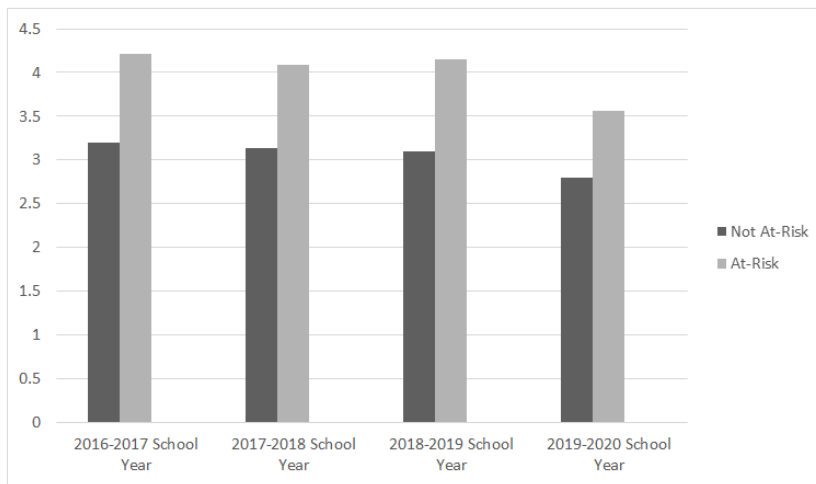
**Figure 2: Rate of In-School Suspension Assignments to Grade 7 Girls by Their At-Risk Status for the 2016-2017 through the 2019-2020 School Years**



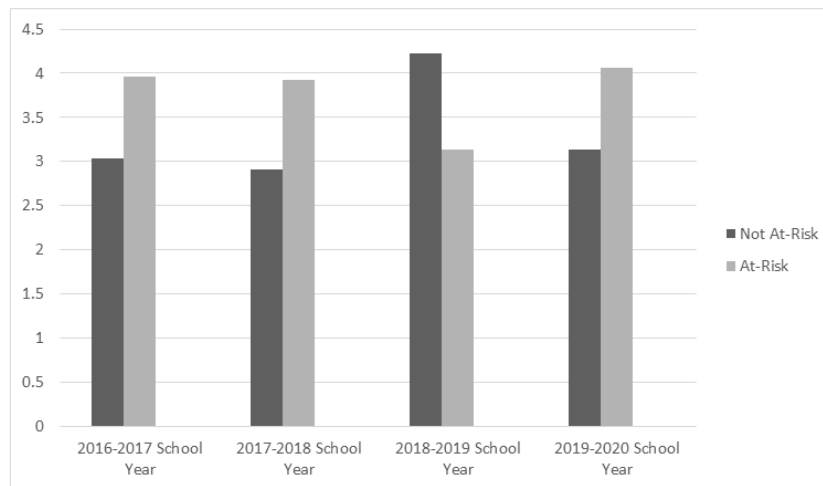
**Figure 3: Rate of In-School Suspension Assignments to Grade 8 Girls by Their At-Risk Status for the 2016-2017 through the 2019-2020 School Years**



**Figure 4: Average Number of Days Assigned to an In-School Suspension for Grade 6 Girls by Their At-Risk Status for the 2016-2017 through the 2019-2020 School Years**



**Figure 5: Average Number of Days Assigned to an In-School Suspension for Grade 7 Girls by Their At-Risk Status for the 2016-2017 through the 2019-2020 School Years**



**Figure 6: Average Number of Days Assigned to an In-School Suspension for Grade 8 Girls by Their At-Risk Status for the 2016-2017 through the 2019-2020 School Years**

## DISCUSSION

In this multiyear investigation, the degree to which differences were present in the assignment to and in the number of days assigned to an in-school suspension by the at-risk status of Grades 6, 7, and 8 girls was investigated for the 2016-2017, 2017-2018, 2018-2019, and 2019-2020 school years. Inferential statistical procedures revealed that similar percentages of girls were assigned to an in-school suspension, regardless of their at-risk status. Concerning the number of days Grade 6, 7, and 8 girls who were at-risk were assigned to in-school suspension, girls who were at-risk were assigned to a statistically significantly higher average of days to an in-school suspension at each grade level and in each school year than girls who were not at-risk.

### Connections with Existing Literature

In this investigation, the extent to which student at-risk status was related to the assignment to and in the number of days assigned was addressed for Grades 6, 7, and 8 girls. Few published articles could be located in

which researchers had examined the number of days students were assigned to an in-school suspension. Emergent Bilingual students are more than two times as likely as their classmates to remain in the same grade again, two times as likely to dropout prior to graduating from high school, and highly likely to have lower scores on state exams than their peers. All of the aforementioned categories including drop-outs, retentions, and state mandated exam failures are at-risk indicators (Texas Education Agency, 2014b).

With respect to the number of days, White (2019) determined in the 2012-2013 school year that Grade 8 Black girls were assigned an average of more than half a day more to an in-school suspension than Grade 8 White girls and an average of half a day more than Grade 8 Hispanic girls. In all four school years and at all three grade levels in this statewide investigation, girls who were at-risks were assigned the greatest number of days in an in-school suspension, followed by girls who were not at-risk. Black girls who were economically disadvantaged were assigned an average of

0.89 more days to an in-school suspension than were Black girls who were not economically disadvantaged. Hispanic girls who were economically disadvantaged were assigned an average of 0.57 more days to an in-school suspension in comparison to Hispanic girls who were not economically disadvantaged. White girls who were economically disadvantaged were assigned an average of 0.44 more days to an in-school suspension than were White girls who were not economically disadvantaged. Although the aforementioned researchers investigated different exclusionary consequences among different categories for ethnicity/race, economic status, grade levels, and gender than this study, clear connections are present to the increased number of days assigned to students as a function of ethnicity/race and economic status.

### Implications for Policy and Practice

The results of this research study should be considered as support to promote policy change. School districts should analyze policy that exists to determine what might be altered to ensure the greatest number of students are able to graduate each year. Committees should be formed to discuss the data surrounding the frequency and number of days students who are at-risk are assigned to in-school suspension and create a bulleted list of ways to curtail the concern. School districts would benefit themselves to eradicate the overrepresentation of at-risk students prior to state sanctions.

Findings from this multiyear investigation have implications for practices within school districts and administrators. School administrators should ensure students who are among special population such as at-risk students, are provided with all discipline alternatives available prior to assigning an exclusionary consequence to a student demographic who are at risk of not graduating. Campus leaders should inform all teachers of at-risk indicators and how important it is to promote the success of at-risk students. Additionally, campus administrators should discuss in regular administrative campus meetings their personal discipline data of at-risk students and percentages in excess of 10% should warrant a discussion among other administrators and a discussion to mitigate the practice.

### Recommendations for Future Research

From the findings of this multiyear analysis, several recommendations for future research studies can be made. First, researchers are encouraged to extend this investigation to other demographic characteristics. That is, the relationship between the economic status of girls with assignment to exclusionary discipline consequences should be addressed. Second, the extent to which the ethnicity/race of girls is related to their assignment to exclusionary discipline consequences should be determined. Third, the data analyzed in this study were only on Texas middle school girls. Researchers are encouraged to extend this investigation to other states so that the generalizability of the results previously

discussed can be determined. A final recommendation would be for a qualitative study to be conducted to address the reasons underlying the disparities that were documented to be present.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of this Texas statewide multiyear study was to address the extent to which a relationship was present by the at-risk status of Grades 6, 7, and 8 girls with the assignment to and in the number of days assigned to an in-school suspension. Similar percentages of girls were assigned to an in-school suspension, regardless of their at-risk status. With respect to the number of days assigned, however, statistically significant differences were yielded. Girls who were at-risk were assigned more days on average to an in-school suspension in all four school years and in all three grade levels. Clear inequities were revealed in the number of days assigned to an in-school suspension by the at-risk status of these girls. Days removed from the regular classroom environment results in a loss of instructional time and contributes to well-established achievement gaps.

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