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California Race, Education, and Community Healing (REACH) Network

BASELINE REPORT

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CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON EXPANDING EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY | Berkeley

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UTILIZING THIS REPORT

This baseline report offers a comprehensive overview of the REACH Network's initial efforts to address discipline disparities in California schools. It is structured to provide both broad insights and detailed school-specific information:

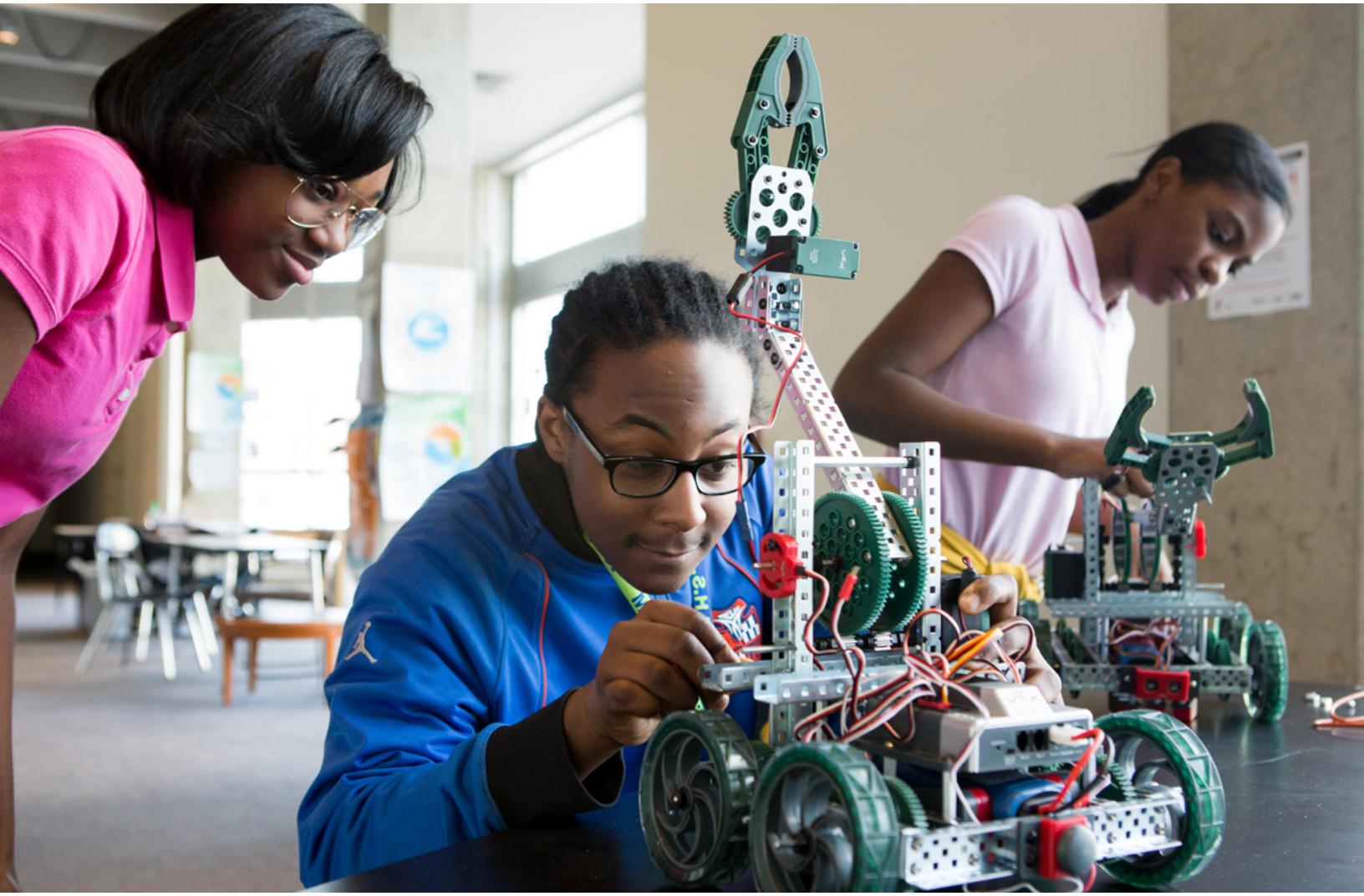
Summary Analysis: We present aggregated data from the 10 participating REACH Network school sites, including:

- Identified discipline challenges
- Implemented strategies and any initial outcomes
- Common implementation barriers
- Self-assessed progress in adopting alternative disciplinary approaches

Individual School Profiles: For each REACH Network school site, we provide:

- Detailed description of site-specific initiatives
- School demographic data
- Discipline statistics, including suspension rates and ethnoracial disparities
- Academic achievement indicators
- Chronic absenteeism rates

By examining both the collective trends and individual school experiences, policymakers, educators, and advocates can gain valuable insights to inform their own efforts in creating more equitable disciplinary practices and supportive learning environments.



INTRODUCTION, BACKGROUND AND LONG TERM VISION

UNIFIED MISSION: UCLA CTS, UC BERKELEY CREEO AND THE REACH NETWORK

The California Race, Education, and Community Healing (REACH) Network combines the strengths of UCLA's Center for the Transformation of Schools (CTS) and UC Berkeley's Center for Research on Expanding Educational Opportunity (CREEO). This collaboration harnesses our shared resources, expertise, and commitment to groundbreaking research on educational equity. Together, we are dedicated to addressing persistent disparities in California's K-12 education system. Our partnership ensures that research is effectively translated into practical strategies that ground educational policies in rigorous evidence and respond directly to the needs of California's diverse and highest-need student populations.

CONTEXT: CALIFORNIA'S EVOLVING APPROACH TO SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AND THE REACH NETWORK

Over the past decade, California has undergone significant shifts in school discipline practices, driven by a growing recognition of the racial inequities embedded within punitive approaches. This evolution reflects a broader commitment to creating educational systems that prioritize restorative justice, equity, and the holistic well-being of all students, especially young people of color.

Several key trends characterize California's evolving approach to school discipline:

- **Restorative justice practices:** A growing number of districts are replacing zero-tolerance policies with restorative approaches that emphasize repairing harm, building relationships, and fostering positive school climates *(Gregory et al., 2018)*.
- **Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS):** The adoption of PBIS has expanded from approximately 500 schools in 2011–12 to over 3,000 in 2018–19, underscoring a statewide shift toward proactive, positive behavioral reinforcement *(Wang, 2022)*.
- **Limiting exclusionary discipline:** Several large districts, such as San Francisco, Oakland, and Los Angeles, have moved to restrict suspensions for "willful defiance," a category often applied disproportionately to students of color *(Wang, 2022)*.
- **Enhanced teacher training:** Innovative professional development initiatives focusing on implicit bias, cultural responsiveness, and de-escalation techniques have been implemented across the state *(Okonofua et al., 2022)*.



- **Data-driven approaches:** Schools are increasingly using disaggregated discipline data to identify disparities, monitor progress, and inform equitable practices *(Losen et al., 2015)*.

Within this progressive landscape, the REACH Network was established in late 2023, building on foundational work from the California Scale-Up MTSS Statewide (SUMS) pilot, an initiative co-led by UCLA CTS for Phase II. Championed by Senator Nancy Skinner's Senate Bill 274, which requires schools to promote alternatives to suspensions, the REACH Network brings together 10 Local Education Agencies (LEAs) committed to reforming discipline practices through data-driven, equity-centered strategies. The Network's aim is to cultivate systemic change that not only addresses immediate disciplinary disparities but also tackles the deep-seated biases contributing to these inequities. By building local capacity, the Network aims to help California meet its policy goals of moving away from punitive discipline. However, policy change doesn't create new capacity overnight to shift harmful practices and behaviors. That's why the REACH Network is critical: it offers a testing ground for bridging the gap between policy and practice.

REACH NETWORK: A STRATEGIC, EQUITY CENTERED GRANT PROCESS

In October 2023, UCLA's CTS and UC Berkeley's CREEO launched a statewide Request for Proposals for the California REACH Network, inviting LEAs to submit plans that centered on equity to address racial disparities in school discipline. The response was robust, with over 30 applications from LEAs across the state, reflecting widespread interest in discipline reform.

After a comprehensive review, 10 LEAs were awarded onetime $25,000 grants to fund their proposed initiatives, with a commitment to participate in the REACH Network from January 2024 through July 2025. These LEAs were selected for their clear understanding of local discipline disparities, particularly those affecting students of color, and for presenting compelling theories of action to address these inequities. The selection criteria also emphasized the inclusion of detailed implementation plans with specific milestones and a strong commitment to data-driven decision-making. Participation in the REACH Network offers more than just funding; it provides LEAs with access to collaborative learning opportunities and expert guidance in implementing evidence-based alternatives to exclusionary discipline, all aimed at fostering more equitable and supportive learning environments.

In the first year, each LEA focused on one or two school sites to pilot their initiatives. This targeted approach allowed for concentrated implementation, providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of the proposed strategies. The data and findings in this report are derived from these pilot sites, offering a detailed, context-specific understanding of the challenges and successes encountered in Year 1.

The strategic, pilot-based approach of the REACH Network is designed to generate rich, actionable data that can inform the scaling of successful practices across the state, potentially influencing future educational policies and practices on a broader scale aimed at building school capacity for positive, healthy learning conditions.

Figure 1. Table of Participating LEAs and Selected School Sites

Participating LEA	Selected School Site	County
Claremont Unified School District	El Roble Intermediate School	Los Angeles
Crete Academy	Crete Academy	Los Angeles
East Side Union High School District	James Lick High School	Santa Clara
Hayward Unified School District	Longwood Elementary	Alameda
Kings County Office of Education	J.C. Montgomery School at the Kings County Juvenile Center	Kings
La Mesa-Spring Valley School District	STEAM at La Presa	San Diego
Leadership Public Schools	Leadership Public Schools Richmond	Contra Costa
Para Los Niños Charter Middle School	Para Los Niños Charter Middle School	Los Angeles
Vista Unified School District	Major General Murray High School	San Diego
Washington Unified School District	Elkhorn Village Elementary	Yolo

Figure 2. Map of REACH Network Participating LEAs and Selected School Sites



BUILDING A COLLABORATIVE LEARNING COMMUNITY: THE REACH NETWORK COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE (COP)

The REACH Network leadership team recognizes that sustainable change requires more than isolated interventions; it demands ongoing collaboration, shared learning, and collective problem-solving. To foster this environment, the REACH Network established a Community of Practice (CoP) that brings together participating LEAs to engage in continuous learning and mutual support.

From January to June 2024, the CoP convened for six monthly network meetings. These sessions were structured to promote active engagement, allowing participants to share progress, exchange feedback, and collaboratively address common challenges. Each meeting provided opportunities for in-depth discussions, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose among the network members.

Two key frameworks guided the CoP's activities:

1. The Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) Cycle: This four-stage problem-solving model, widely used across various sectors, including education, provided a systematic approach to improvement efforts *(Russell et al, 2021).* Within the REACH Network, the PDSA cycle served as both a tool for local implementation and an organizing framework for the CoP sessions:

- **Plan:** The first two meetings focused on developing aim statements and mapping initial implementation efforts.
- **Do:** The next two sessions centered on executing and troubleshooting these plans.
- **Study:** The fifth meeting was dedicated to assessing the outcomes and impact of the interventions.
- **Act:** The final session synthesized lessons learned and planned for future directions. Each meeting included virtual breakout sessions, allowing participants to engage in deep, peer-to-peer thought partnership around their specific improvement efforts.

2. Adapted Consultancy Protocol: Leveraging the expertise within the network, we implemented a modified version of the National School Reform Faculty Consultancy Protocol. This process enabled participants to present updates on their initiatives, pose specific challenges, and receive real-time feedback from peers. The protocol was adapted to encourage ongoing dialogue, with participants continuing discussions through virtual platforms between sessions.

This collaborative learning model has been instrumental in building a supportive network of educators committed to equity-driven discipline reform. By creating a space for honest reflection and shared learning, the CoP has empowered LEAs to refine their strategies and make meaningful progress toward their goals.

DATA USED TO GENERATE BASELINE REPORT

This baseline report draws from a comprehensive range of data sources to provide an in-depth analysis of the REACH Network's first-year outcomes. Our data collection and analysis were designed to capture a holistic view of school performance, discipline policies, and student outcomes across the selected school sites of the participating LEAs.

- **Artifacts From Grantees:** We reviewed proposals, Theories of Action, CoP presentations, and notes/observations from grantees. These artifacts provide valuable context and insights into the goals, strategies, and progress of each LEA.
- **CDE Dashboard Data:** This data includes key performance indicators such as attendance, suspensions, expulsions, academic benchmarks, and enrollment statistics. The CDE Dashboard data allows us to track trends and disparities at both the school and district levels.
- **LEA Student/Family Handbooks:** We conducted a thorough review of discipline policies as outlined in student and family handbooks across the participating LEAs. This review helped us understand the context and implementation of various disciplinary practices, as well as the alignment of these practices with the goals of the REACH Network.

Our analysis of these data sources is guided by a commitment to equity and a focus on understanding the unique challenges and opportunities at each participating school site. The findings in this report are intended to inform the ongoing work of the REACH Network, providing a foundation for continuous improvement and the scaling of successful practices.

REACH NETWORK'S VISION

The REACH Network envisions a future where every school in California is a model of equity, inclusion, and transformative learning. Our long-term vision is anchored in three core aspirations:

1. Systematic Transformation. We aim to integrate restorative practices into the fabric of California's K-12 public education system. This shift will move schools away from punitive measures, fostering a culture of restoration and healing at all levels—from classroom interactions to district policies. Our goal is to create environments where every student feels heard, valued, and supported.

2. Equity and Academic Success. We strive to eliminate disparities along lines of race and other demographic categories in school discipline while improving academic outcomes. We envision schools that celebrate diversity, where students from all backgrounds thrive both academically and socioemotionally. By addressing systemic inequities, we aim to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline and close opportunity gaps, particularly for historically underserved populations that include, but are not limited to, low-income background students of color, students with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ students.

3. Community and Policy Impact. The influence of the REACH Network will extend beyond school walls, fostering stronger school-community partnerships and inspiring policy changes at state and national levels. We envision restorative practices learned in schools positively impacting family dynamics and community interactions. By demonstrating the effectiveness of restorative over punitive discipline and behavior approaches, REACH aims to shape education policies that prioritize equity, student well-being, and positive school climates across California and beyond.

Through these interconnected goals, the REACH Network aspires to create a more just, empathetic, and inclusive education system that prepares all students for meaningful and fulfilling lives.



KEY FINDINGS: YEAR 1

Finding 1: Persistent and multifaceted disparities in discipline practices and policies exist across REACH Network sites.

Data from REACH Network school sites reveals persistent and multifaceted disparities in disciplinary practices. These disparities, while showing some signs of improvement, continue to disproportionately impact specific student groups along lines of race, disability status, gender, and socioeconomic background.

Ethnoracial Disparities in Suspension Rates Are Evident Across REACH Network Sites

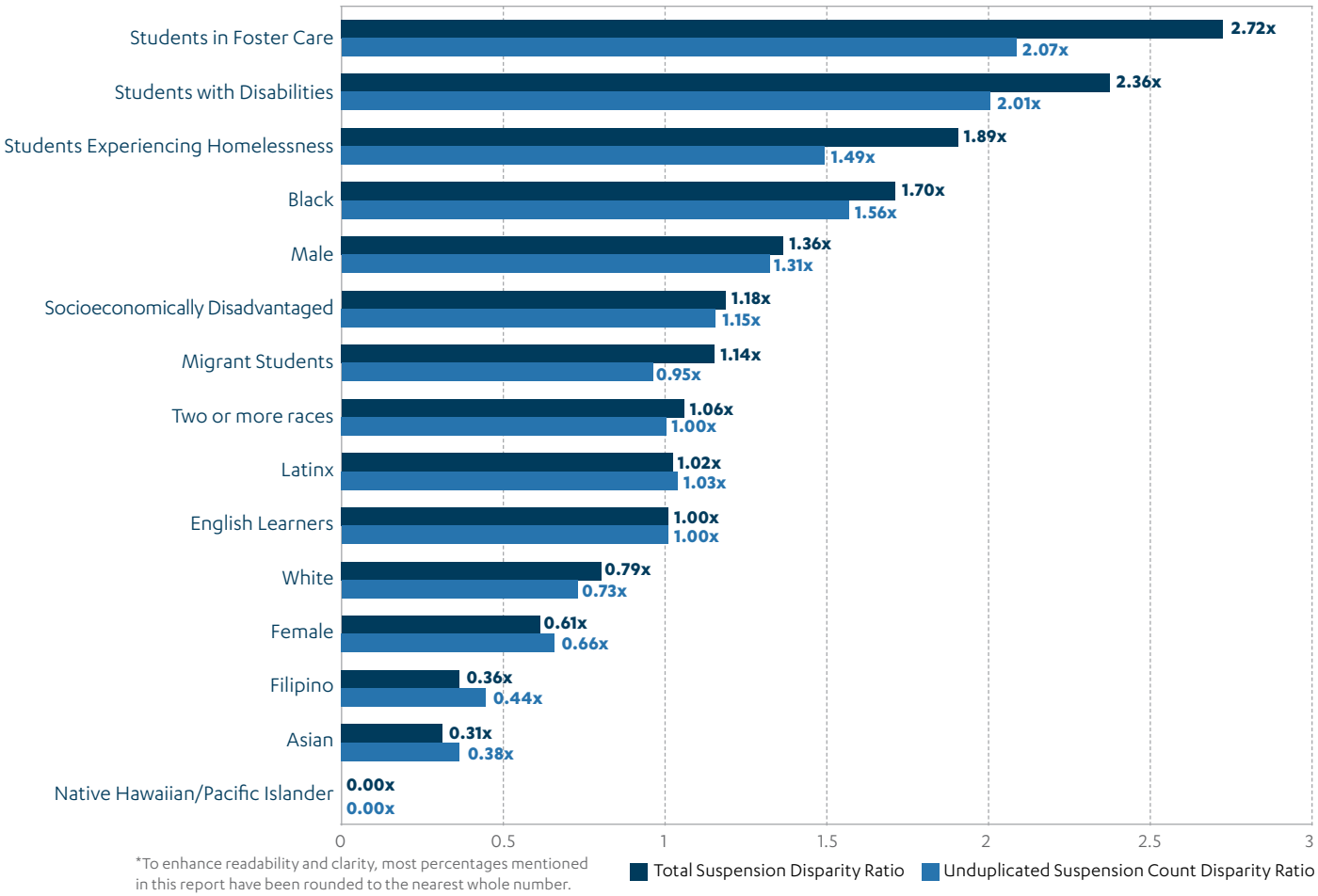
- Black students faced the highest unduplicated suspension rate at 8%*, well above the overall rate of 5%. This is particularly concerning given that Black students make up only 7% of the total student population during this period, yet accounted for 11% of all unduplicated suspensions.
- Latinx students, the largest demographic group at 72% of enrollment, experienced an unduplicated suspension rate of 5%, slightly above the overall average.
- White students (10% of enrollment) had a below-average unduplicated suspension rate of 4%.
- Asian students (4% of enrollment) experienced a notably low unduplicated suspension rate of 2%.
- Filipino students (2% of enrollment) had an unduplicated suspension rate of 2%.
- Students of Two or More Races (2% of enrollment) faced an above-average unduplicated suspension rate of 5%.
- No suspensions were recorded for American Indian/Alaska Native or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander students, though this may be partly due to their small population sizes.

Students With Disabilities Experience Significant Suspension Disparities

Students with disabilities, who made up 14% of the student population, accounted for 28% of unduplicated suspensions, a discipline disparity ratio of 2.01.

Figure 3. Consolidated REACH Network School Site Suspension Data, 2022-23

Bars show how many times more likely students are to be suspended (total and unduplicated) compared to their enrollment representation. A value of 1 means equal representation. Higher values indicate overrepresentation in suspensions.



*To enhance readability and clarity, most percentages mentioned in this report have been rounded to the nearest whole number.

Notable Gender Disparities in Disciplinary Actions Persist

Male students, who represent 52% of the student population, accounted for 68% of unduplicated suspensions, while female students, making up 46% of the population, accounted for only 30%.

Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students Face Disproportionate Suspension Rates

Socioeconomically disadvantaged students, representing 76% of the student population, were responsible for 87% of all unduplicated suspensions.

Students in Foster Care Are Significantly Overrepresented in Disciplinary Actions

Students in foster care, though comprising only 0.57% of the student population, accounted for 1.18% of unduplicated suspensions, a discipline disparity ratio of 2.07.

Students Experiencing Homelessness Face Disproportionate Rates of Disciplinary Action

Students experiencing homelessness, making up 5% of the student population, accounted for 7% of unduplicated suspensions, a ratio of 1.49.

These patterns highlight the complex interplay of factors contributing to disciplinary disparities. Black students and students with disabilities face disproportionate disciplinary actions despite their smaller population share. Importantly, these disparities likely intensify when multiple identities intersect—such as race, ability status, gender, and socioeconomic background. This intersectional perspective, informed by Crenshaw et al. *(2015),* suggests that students with multiple marginalized identities are at compounded risk within the school disciplinary system.

Finding 2: The impact of COVID-19 on discipline rates reveals both disruptions and reversions to pre-pandemic patterns.

Examination of discipline rates before, during, and after the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the resilience of systemic disparities in school discipline practices. Despite an unprecedented disruption, pre-existing patterns quickly re-emerged as schools returned to in-person operations.

Dramatic Decrease in Suspensions During Initial Pandemic Period

- Suspension rates at REACH Network school sites decreased from 6% in 2018-19 to 4% in 2019-20, reflecting a 2.34 percentage point drop.
- This sharp decline coincided with nationwide school closures beginning in March 2020.
- The decrease was observed across all student groups, reflecting the universal impact of remote learning on traditional disciplinary practices.

Figure 4. Consolidated REACH Network School Site Racial/Ethnic Suspension Rates and Signs of Disproportionality, 2017-18–2022-23

Racial/Ethnic Group	2017-18		2018-19 (Pre-pandemic baseline)		2019-20		2021-22 (First full year post-pandemic)		2022-23 (Most recent data)	
	Population	Suspension Rate	Population	Suspension Rate	Population	Suspension Rate	Population	Suspension Rate	Population	Suspension Rate
American Indian/AK Native	0%	N/A	0%	N/A	0%	N/A	0%	N/A	0%	N/A
Asian	4.4%	2.3%	3.4%	2.7%	4.5%	1.1%	4.6%	2.2%	4.1%	1.7%
Black	6.9%	13.2%	7.4%	8.9%	6.7%	5.1%	7.4%	8.1%	8.2%	5.6%
Filipino	2.8%	0%	2.5%	4.4%	2.4%	2.0%	2.4%	4.2%	1.8%	1%
Latinx	70.8%	6.4%	71.6%	6.5%	71.4%	4.3%	70.7%	4.9%	73.2%	4.8%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.3%	0%	0.4%	0%	0.5%	0%	0.3%	0%	0%	N/A
Two or more races	2.4%	6.3%	2.2%	5.6%	2.6%	3.2%	2.3%	3.4%	2.3%	7.9%
White	10.7%	3.8%	9.8%	5.2%	9.6%	3.1%	9.9%	3.2%	8%	3.6%
Overall	100%	6.3%	100%	6.3%	100%	4.0%	100%	4.7%	100%	4.7%

Legend

- > 50%
- 20% - 50%
- 10% - 20%
- 5% - 10%
- < 5%
- N/A or No Data
- > 10%
- 7.5% - 10%
- 5% - 7.5%
- 2.5% - 5%
- < 2.5%

Rapid Return to Pre-Pandemic Suspension Levels as Schools Reopened

- As schools resumed regular operations, suspension rates at REACH Network sites increased from 4% in 2019–20 to 5% in 2021–22, a 0.75 percentage point increase.
- This change suggests a partial return to pre-pandemic disciplinary patterns as in-person interactions resumed.

Persistence of Pre-Existing Disparities Post-Pandemic

- Suspension rates at REACH Network sites slightly decreased from above 5% in 2021–22 to below 5% in 2022–23, a change of 0.05 percentage points.
- This minor adjustment indicates that suspension rates remained close to early post-pandemic levels, without fully returning to pre-pandemic highs.

This consistency in suspension rates, even with a temporary decrease during the pandemic, is both telling and concerning. It reveals that despite the disruption and the opportunity to reset school discipline practices, systemic issues driving disciplinary disparities quickly reasserted themselves as schools returned to in-person learning. The data shows that while suspension rates slightly decreased post-pandemic, the underlying patterns of inequity remained largely unchanged. This persistence of pre-existing disparities underscores the deeply rooted nature of these challenges and emphasizes the urgent need for systemic, transformative change in our approach to school discipline.

Figure 5. Consolidated REACH Network Comprehensive Suspension Data and Disproportionality, 2017-18–2022-23

		Enrollment	Total Suspensions*	Unduplicated Rate†	Violent Incident (Injury)	Violent Incident (No Injury)	Weapons Possession	Illicit Drug-Related	Defiance-Only	Other Reasons
Race	American Indian/AK Native	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
	Asian	4.2%	1.3%	1.6%	3.3%	0.8%	2.2%	1.4%	0.8%	1.5%
	Black	7.3%	12.4%	11.3%	9.6%	17.3%	12.1%	6.1%	10.3%	10%
	Filipino	2.4%	0.9%	1.1%	1%	0.8%	2.2%	0.9%	0.6%	0.8%
	Latinx	71.6%	72.7%	73.6%	74.8%	67.1%	64.8%	79.%	76.1%	80.8%
	Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
	Two or more races	2.4%	2.5%	2.4%	1.3%	3.7%	3.3%	1.9%	1.4%	1.5%
	White	9.6%	7.6%	7.0%	6.0%	7.3%	12.1%	7.8%	8.9%	5.4%
Student Group	English Learners	23.8%	23.7%	23.9%	26.2%	22.8%	12.1%	26.2%	22.7%	28.5%
	Students in Foster Care	0.6%	1.6%	1.2%	1.3%	2.3%	2.2%	0.9%	1.0%	0.0%
	Students Experiencing Homelessness	4.9%	9.2%	7.3%	8.9%	10.2%	15.4%	7.1%	9.5%	3.9%
	Migrant Students	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	1.0%	0.1%	0.0%	0.5%	0.0%	0.0%
	Socioeconomically Disadvantaged	75.8%	89.2%	87.4%	85.1%	88.4%	89.0%	88.9%	92.9%	91.5%
	Students with Disabilities	14.0%	33.0%	28.1%	34.8%	35.9%	25.3%	26.9%	34.0%	27.7%
Gender	Male	51.8%	70.3%	67.9%	54.0%	76.9%	73.6%	62.5%	72.3%	71.5%
	Female	45.8%	27.9%	30.1%	46.0%	19.9%	20.9%	37.3%	26.5%	27.7%
	Not Reported	0.3%	0.1%	0.2%	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Legend

- Highly overrepresented (>2x enrollment %)
- Significantly overrepresented (1.5x-2x enrollment %)
- Moderately overrepresented (1.2x-1.5x enrollment %)
- Slightly overrepresented (1.1x-1.2x enrollment %)
- Proportionate representation (0.9x-1.1x enrollment %)
- Slightly underrepresented (0.8x-0.9x enrollment %)
- Moderately underrepresented (0.5x-0.8x enrollment %)
- Significantly underrepresented (<0.5x enrollment %)

*Total suspensions: represents the total number of suspensions, including counts of students that were suspended multiple times, against the total number of overall suspensions for all students including counts for multiple suspensions.
†Unduplicated rate: represents the count of unduplicated suspension against the total number of unduplicated suspensions



Finding 3: Patterns of suspension disproportionality, particularly affecting Black students, persist across REACH Network sites.

Suspension data from 2017-18 to 2022-23 demonstrates clear patterns of disproportionality in disciplinary actions, with Black students consistently overrepresented across all suspension categories.

Disproportionate Suspension Rates for Black Students Across All Categories

As Figure 5 illustrates, Black students, comprising 7% of enrollment, face disproportionate suspension rates across all categories, though the extent varies:

- Violent Incidents (Injury): 10% - moderately higher
- Violent Incidents (No Injury): 17% - substantially higher
- Weapons Possession: 12% - notably higher, despite low overall numbers
- Illicit Drug-Related: 6% - slightly lower, an exception to the trend
- Defiance-Only: 10% - markedly higher, a category often subject to subjective interpretation
- Other Reasons: 10% - consistently higher even in this catch-all category

Persistent Overrepresentation Across Time

The disproportionality in suspension rates for Black students remains consistent across the years analyzed, indicating a systemic issue.

Varying Patterns for Other Racial/Ethnic Groups

Latinx students show varying patterns of representation across categories, sometimes over- and sometimes underrepresented relative to their population share. White students generally show lower representation in suspensions across most categories relative to their population share.

Disproportionate Suspension Patterns for Non-Ethnoracial Groups

- Students with disabilities face higher suspension rates across most categories, particularly for defiance and violent incidents.
- Socioeconomically disadvantaged students show overrepresentation in suspensions, especially for drug-related incidents and defiance.
- English Learners experience higher suspension rates for certain categories, notably defiance and violent incidents without injury.
- Male students consistently face higher suspension rates across all categories compared to female students.

These patterns clearly show persistent disproportionalities in disciplinary actions. Black students consistently face higher rates of suspension across all categories relative to their population share. This data demonstrates the urgent need for targeted interventions addressing specific educator mindsets towards different student groups. It also underscores the necessity of urgently addressing systemic factors contributing to the overrepresentation of Black students in disciplinary actions.

Finding 4: REACH Network schools serve predominantly nonaffluent, historically marginalized student populations.

REACH Network school sites encompass a range of cultural backgrounds, with significant representation from Latinx communities and students from varied socioeconomic backgrounds. These schools confront tangible challenges, including below-average academic proficiency rates and high levels of chronic absenteeism.

Demographic Profile Reflects Historically Marginalized Communities

- Latinx students make up 36% to 94% of enrollments across REACH Network sites.
- Socioeconomically disadvantaged students, as defined by California's multifaceted criteria—including factors





such as parental education, free/reduced meal eligibility, and homelessness—represent 66% to 100% of student populations *(California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System, n.d.)*.
- These demographics align with statewide trends of increasing Latinx and economically disadvantaged student enrollments *(Hough & Chavez, 2024)*. While California has experienced overall enrollment declines *(CDE, 2023a)*, REACH schools show varied enrollment patterns, reflecting unique local demographic shifts and community needs.

Chronic Absenteeism Presents a Pervasive Challenge

- Absenteeism rates range from 7% to 75% across REACH Network school sites, often exceeding state averages.
- Students with disabilities, English Learners, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students are disproportionately represented in rates of chronic absenteeism.
- These trends mirror statewide attendance and engagement concerns, particularly post-COVID-19 pandemic *(Chang, Chavez, & Hough, 2024; Hough & Chavez, 2024; Myung & Hough, 2023)*.
- Some sites, like Major General Murray High School with a 75% absenteeism rate, face particularly urgent challenges.

Academic Achievement Presents Opportunities for Further Development

- Most REACH Network sites report below-average proficiency rates in English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics.
- ELA proficiency rates span from 0% to 60%, while Mathematics proficiency rates range from 0% to 48%.
- These patterns reflect broader statewide challenges, with California showing minimal improvement in test scores post-pandemic *(Fensterwald & Willis, 2023; Ugo & Prunty, 2023; CDE, 2023b)*.

Despite significant challenges, REACH Network schools demonstrate a strong commitment to equity, recognizing both systemic barriers and the resilience within their communities. This positioning uniquely qualifies them to contribute to California's broader efforts in creating more equitable and supportive learning environments. The network's focus on restorative practices and trauma-informed approaches offers critical insights for addressing statewide challenges in student achievement, engagement, and equity, positioning REACH Network schools as potential models for other school systems facing similar challenges. The observed trends in academic achievement, demographics, and absenteeism rates underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive approach that addresses the interconnectedness of these factors.

APPROACHES TO ADDRESS EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE

REACH Network members implement common strategies to address exclusionary approaches.

The REACH Network LEAs and their school site leadership teams have proposed and begun adopting innovative approaches to address disciplinary challenges, demonstrating a shared commitment to fostering positive, equitable learning environments. These approaches were developed through a combination of internal efforts within each LEA, expert guidance from faculty and staff advocating for restorative practices, and collaborative learning through the REACH Network CoP.

While each school site tailors its approach to meet the needs of its unique context, several common themes have emerged across the network. This section outlines these key approaches, highlighting specific examples from various REACH Network sites.

REACH schools are cultivating a culture of empathy and support.

- **Restorative Practices and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):** The shift from punitive discipline models to supportive approaches is underway across the REACH Network. Longwood Elementary (Hayward Unified School District) is implementing comprehensive teacher training on restorative practices, while J.C. Montgomery School (Kings County Office of Education) is focusing on culturally responsive pedagogy tailored to the needs of their incarcerated youth population.
- **Mentorship Programs:** Recognizing the power of personalized support, several REACH Network schools are establishing mentorship initiatives. Crete Academy (Los Angeles) and El Roble Intermediate (Claremont Unified School District) are developing one-on-one mentorship programs to intervene before disciplinary issues escalate.



Family and community engagement strengthens the village.

- **Building Stronger Connections:** As observed through REACH Network CoP meetings, many REACH Network LEAs are extending education beyond the classroom by actively engaging families and communities. La Mesa-Spring Valley School District's STEAM Academy at La Presa has proposed a teacher home visit program to strengthen family connections. Leadership Public Schools Richmond is partnering with the National Compadres Network to leverage community resources for student success.

REACH Network LEAs are committing to data-driven decision-making.

- **Using Data to Inform Practices:** Across the REACH Network, LEAs are committed to using data to guide their practices and measure impact. Major General Murray High School (Vista Unified School District) is collecting and analyzing data on its "Why Try" curriculum to focus on building student resilience. Para Los Niños Charter Middle School (Los Angeles) is utilizing the Panorama platform for comprehensive tracking and analysis of disciplinary data to enable more targeted interventions.

Educators are empowered through targeted professional development.

- **Equipping Educators for Success:** The REACH Network is built on the fundamental belief that systemic improvements in equity and education depend on equipping educators with the knowledge and skills to implement innovative approaches. Longwood Elementary proposes regular training sessions on restorative practices, while J.C. Montgomery School emphasizes culturally responsive teaching methods. These initiatives aim to equip educators with the skills needed to implement innovative, equity-focused approaches effectively.

As these strategies take root and begin to transform school cultures, REACH Network schools are setting the stage for broader, more sustainable changes. Beyond the above core approaches, several observations underscore the transformative potential of the REACH Network:

Equity remains at the forefront.

- Every REACH Network school prioritizes reducing disciplinary actions and suspensions, particularly for historically marginalized students. Longwood Elementary has implemented a comprehensive restorative justice program to reduce suspensions among Black and LGBTQIA+ students, while James Lick High School (East Side Union High School District) is focused on decreasing suspensions by 10% and expulsions by 5% by June 2025, with special support for first-generation high school students from low-income families.

Inclusive environments foster belonging.

- Schools across the REACH Network emphasize relationship-building and proactive behavior interventions to create environments where every student feels safe, respected, and valued. El Roble Intermediate's Panther P.A.L.S. Program provides mentorship and support to "at-promise" students, while J.C. Montgomery's commitment to culturally sustaining pedagogy and restorative practices promotes a positive classroom culture that honors diverse cultural backgrounds.

Long-term vision drives sustainable change.

- REACH Network LEAs and school site leadership teams are dedicated to achieving both immediate and long-term outcomes that enhance school climate and student success. Major General Murray's comprehensive Restorative Practices initiative aims to decrease suspensions, increase the use of restorative justice practices, and improve students' overall school experience by May 2025. Meanwhile, Leadership Public Schools Richmond's allocation of REACH grant funds for professional development and enhanced family engagement reflects a forward-thinking approach to systemic change.

The strategies proposed by REACH Network LEA and school-site leadership teams reflect a holistic approach to school discipline and equity. By focusing on restorative practices, family engagement, data-driven decision-making, and professional development, these schools are laying the groundwork for meaningful and sustainable change. The emphasis on equity and inclusion, combined with a commitment to long-term vision, positions REACH Network LEAs and their selected school sites as potential leaders in transforming school discipline practices and creating supportive learning environments for all students.

LESSONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: FROM YEAR 1 TO YEAR 2

Drawing on our Year 1 findings, a systematic literature review, innovative strategies proposed by participating schools, thorough analysis of data and artifacts, and reflections from our CoP sessions, we offer the following lessons and recommendations to guide the REACH Network's second year of implementation:

KEY LESSONS FROM YEAR 1:

Lesson 1: REACH LEAs demonstrate a strong commitment to transformation.

- **Insight:** Participants demonstrate remarkable dedication to creating equitable learning environments, despite competing priorities.
- **Implication:** This commitment provides a strong foundation for continued progress and suggests that the REACH Network's goals align well with local needs and values.
- **Considerations for REACH Leadership:** Leverage this commitment by providing more opportunities for participants to share their successes and challenges, fostering a sense of community and shared purpose.

Lesson 2: Data has untapped potential as a catalyst for change.

- **Insight:** While LEAs are collecting valuable data, many struggle with analysis and application.
- **Implication:** The potential of data-driven decision-making is not being fully realized across the network.
- **Considerations for REACH Leadership:** Enhance data management capacity through targeted training sessions, user-friendly data analysis tools, and ongoing support. Consider partnering with local universities or data analytics firms to provide expertise and resources.

Lesson 3: Strong leadership is essential for successful implementation.

- **Insight:** Strong district leadership support correlates with more effective REACH initiative implementation.
- **Implication:** Leadership buy-in and active involvement are vital for success.
- **Considerations for REACH Leadership:** Develop leadership-specific resources and training. Facilitate peer mentoring between district leaders to share best practices and problem-solving strategies.





Lesson 4: Sustaining momentum requires ongoing support.

- **Insight:** Participants express valid concerns about maintaining long-term impact.
- **Implication:** There's a risk of initiative fatigue or regression to old practices without ongoing support and motivation.
- **Considerations for REACH Leadership:** Develop a long-term sustainability plan that includes regular check-ins, refresher training, and a system for recognizing and rewarding progress. Consider creating a "REACH Network Champion" role within each district to maintain focus and enthusiasm.

Lesson 5: Consistency in deliverables is critical for measuring progress.

- **Insight:** Many sites face challenges with timely submission of data and completion of implementation tasks.
- **Implication:** Inconsistent data and feedback hamper our ability to assess progress and provide targeted support.
- **Considerations for REACH Leadership:** Streamline reporting processes, provide clear timelines and expectations, and offer additional support for sites struggling with consistency. Consider implementing a user-friendly digital platform for data submission and tracking.

Lesson 6: Collaboration is a valued and strengthening asset.

- **Insight:** Feedback indicates that participants find significant value in the network.
- **Implication:** The collaborative nature of the REACH Network is a key strength that should be further developed.
- **Considerations for REACH Leadership:** Expand opportunities for collaboration through more frequent, accessible, and engaging virtual meetups, a digital forum for ongoing discussion, and potentially regional in-person gatherings when feasible.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YEAR 2:

Recommendation 1: Secure multiyear funding and expand resources to sustain and scale the REACH Network's impact.

- **Rationale:** The REACH Network's ability to achieve long-term success and broaden its impact across California relies on consistent, multiyear funding and additional resources. Stable financial support is essential for continuing key initiatives, such as restorative practices and culturally responsive professional development, and for leveraging the network's position to drive systemic change at both state and local levels.
- **Example Implementation Strategy:** Pursue multiyear funding commitments from state and local governments, foundations, and private donors. Build strategic partnerships with philanthropic organizations and educational institutions to enhance resources. Develop a resource management plan to ensure funds are allocated equitably, prioritizing schools with the greatest need.

Recommendation 2: Implement comprehensive, whole-school restorative practices.

- **Rationale:** Whole-school approaches have shown promising results in districts like Oakland Unified and Denver Public Schools *(Jain et al., 2014; Gonzalez, 2015).*
- **Example Implementation Strategy:** Develop a phased implementation plan tailored to each school's unique context. Establish restorative practice leadership teams within each school. Regularly assess and adjust practices based on feedback and data.

Recommendation 3: Invest in robust, culturally responsive professional development for all school staff.

- **Rationale:** The success of restorative justice initiatives hinges on the skills, understanding, and buy-in of all school staff *(Mayworm et al., 2016; Okonofua et al., 2022).*
- **Example Implementation Strategy:** Conduct a needs assessment to identify specific areas for professional development. Develop a yearlong professional development calendar with a mix of in-person and virtual sessions. Include experiential learning components, such as role-playing and case studies.

Recommendation 4: Leverage data-driven decision-making.

- **Rationale:** Effective use of data is pivotal for identifying disparities, tracking progress, and informing targeted interventions *(Gregory et al., 2018).*
- **Example Implementation Strategy:** Standardize data collection methods across the network for comparability. Provide training on data analysis and interpretation for

school leaders. Implement regular data review sessions at both school and network levels.

Recommendation 5: Enhance family and community engagement.

- **Rationale:** Strong partnerships with families and community organizations are essential for the success and sustainability of restorative practices *(Darling-Hammond et al., 2020).*
- **Example Implementation Strategy:** Conduct family and community education sessions on restorative practices. Involve families and community members in school restorative circles when appropriate. Establish a family and community advisory board for the REACH Network.

Recommendation 6: Align with and enhance state initiatives.

- **Rationale:** Working within existing frameworks while pushing for transformative change can maximize impact and sustainability *(California Senate Bill 274, 2023).*
- **Example Implementation Strategy:** Map REACH Network goals to existing state initiatives (e.g., Local Control Accountability Plan, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Suports, Multi-Tiered System of Support). Engage with state policymakers to share REACH Network insights and advocate for supportive policies.

Recommendation 7: Address implementation challenges.

- **Rationale:** Navigating tensions between restorative approaches and existing systems is imperative for successful implementation *(Vaandering, 2014; Sandwick et al., 2019).*
- **Example Implementation Strategy:** Conduct a thorough assessment of existing disciplinary systems in each school. Develop transition plans that gradually shift from punitive to restorative approaches. Provide targeted support for staff members struggling with the paradigm shift.

Recommendation 8: Focus on equity and cultural responsiveness.

- **Rationale:** California's diverse student population requires practices that are culturally relevant and responsive to the needs of historically marginalized communities *(Gregory et al., 2018).*
- **Example Implementation Strategy:** Conduct cultural competency assessments in each school. Develop school-specific equity action plans. Ensure diverse representation in all aspects of REACH Network leadership and decision-making.

Recommendation 9: Commit to long-term, systemic change.

- **Rationale:** Meaningful change in school discipline practices requires a sustained, multiyear approach *(Skiba, Arredondo, & Williams, 2014).*
- **Example Implementation Strategy:** Develop three-to-five-year strategic plans for each participating school and the network as a whole. Establish clear, measurable milestones for each year of implementation. Secure long-term funding commitments to support sustained efforts.



CONCLUSION

The REACH Network's first year has revealed both persistent challenges and promising opportunities in addressing racial disparities in school discipline across California. While overall suspension rates have decreased, significant disparities remain, particularly for Black students, students with disabilities, and those from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds.

REACH Network LEAs have proposed innovative, human-centered strategies that demonstrate a strong commitment to equity and systemic transformation. These approaches, ranging from restorative justice programs to enhanced family engagement, offer a blueprint for creating more inclusive learning environments.

Moving forward, the REACH Network will focus on implementing whole-school restorative practices, investing in culturally responsive professional development, leveraging data-driven decision-making, and strengthening family and community engagement. These strategies have the potential to drive meaningful, lasting change in school discipline practices and outcomes for historically marginalized students.

It's important to recognize that the REACH Network's efforts are part of a larger ecosystem of change. Our partners, including community organizations, advocacy groups, and other educational institutions, have been doing phenomenal work in this space for many years. Their ongoing efforts and expertise have been instrumental in shaping our approach and will continue to be integral in our collective pursuit of educational equity.

With continued commitment, innovation, and partnership—both within and beyond the REACH Network—we are poised to play a pivotal role in reshaping school discipline practices and advancing educational equity across California. Together, we are working toward our shared vision of schools as vibrant hubs of support where every student can thrive, building on the foundation of those who have long been dedicated to this vital work.



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