

SUPPORTING CHILD WELL-BEING THROUGH **IMPROVING SCHOOL OUTCOMES**

AUGUST 2020

**WHY THIS MATTERS**

Providing all children with the opportunity for lifelong success starts at birth. Students who struggle with mental health issues are at especially high risk for expulsion, perform lower on academic achievement tests, and have decreased graduation rates.<sup>1</sup>

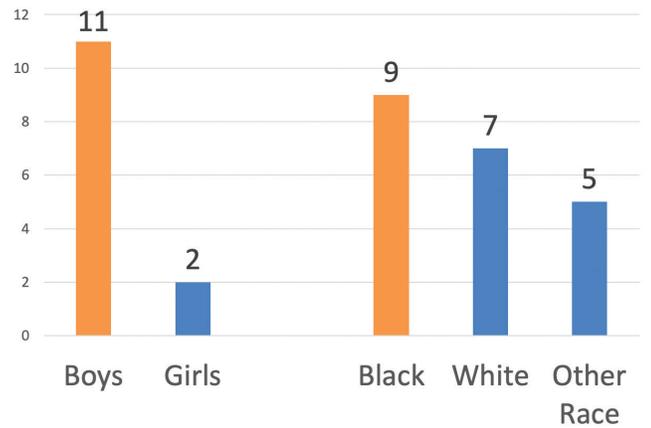
**WHAT THE RESEARCH SAYS**

What do boys, children with disabilities, black children, those from disadvantaged backgrounds, and children age 5 all have in common?

Preschoolers are suspended and expelled at a significantly higher rate<sup>2</sup> and much more likely to be introduced into the criminal justice system. This relationship between preschool disciplinary practices and increased risk of contact with the justice system is known as the school-to-prison pipeline.



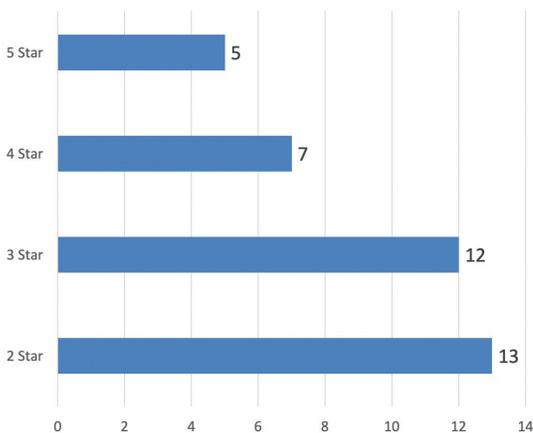
Wisconsin Expulsion Rates per 1,000, by Race and Gender<sup>3</sup>




**Black men ages 20-24 who didn't finish high school have a greater chance of going to prison than being employed.<sup>4</sup>**

**WHAT'S HAPPENING IN WISCONSIN?**

Expulsion Rates per 1,000 enrolled, by Program Quality<sup>5</sup>



Providers in early child care and education settings who understand the importance of using trauma-informed principles and addressing their own racial and gender implicit biases may be better equipped to address behavioral challenges and find alternative solutions with the family in order to prevent expulsions.

One way parents can ensure their child is receiving quality care is through searching the [Wisconsin Department of Children and Families YoungStar database](#). The YoungStar quality rating and improvement system provides parents with a method to choose quality preschools and a variety of other early child education providers.<sup>6</sup> The YoungStar program ensures providers are delivering high quality care by setting consistent standards and offering trainings and assistance from technical consultants in order to achieve the highest possible rating.

The graph to the left shows that in Wisconsin higher rated early child education providers had lower expulsion rates.

## IMPACT OF ONLINE COURSEWORK<sup>7</sup>

Elementary, middle and high school students accustomed to in-person learning have suddenly been forced to learn online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The long-term social and emotional consequences of online learning are not yet known.



A Wisconsin study provides some insight into how many online hours on each class are necessary to achieve academic success:

- Students who engaged in their online course for at least 2 hours per week had better school outcomes.
- There is little difference in academic performance in one semester whether a student spends 2, 4, or 6 hours per class per week engaging in online coursework.
- Students who spend 1.5 hours a week or less per class are at risk of poor school outcomes.

## WHAT WE CAN DO

### PARENTS

- ➔ Talk to your child's school or childcare provider about their discipline policies, and work together to prevent any possible suspensions or expulsions.
- ➔ Set expectations about time spent on each class per week, and regularly check in with your child's teacher to gain a better understanding of the areas in which your child may be struggling.

### EARLY CHILD EDUCATION PROVIDERS

- ➔ Prevent expulsions by increasing family engagement to address challenging behaviors and implement a curriculum like the Pyramid Model to build children's social and emotional skills. (For more, see our June 2020 Fact Sheet on Building Social and Emotional Skills at [www.children.wi.gov](http://www.children.wi.gov).)
- ➔ Apply principles of trauma-informed care to support the well-being of staff.
- ➔ Encourage staff discussion and training on exploring implicit bias.
- ➔ Seek support through the YoungStar quality rating system.

### TEACHERS AND DISTRICTS

- ➔ Increase the use of positive behavior interventions and supports, and establish limits on the use of law enforcement in schools.
- ➔ Identify students who are spending less than 2 hours per online class, per week, especially those students with a disability or who are economically disadvantaged.
- ➔ Retain specialized instructional personnel such as social workers and career counselors who assist students to prepare for their career.

### POLICYMAKERS

- ➔ Prioritize spending on early care and education to reduce the school-to-prison pipeline.

*Over the last 3 decades, Wisconsin has increased spending on the corrections system by 351%, which is more than the national average, but only increased spending on PreK-12 education by 72%, which is 35% less than the national average.<sup>8</sup>*

#### REFERENCES:

<sup>1</sup> Murphy, J. et al (2015). Mental health predicts better academic outcomes: a longitudinal study of elementary school students in Chile. *Child psychiatry and human development*, 46(2), 245-256.

<sup>2</sup> Gilliam, W. S. (2005). *Prekindergartners left behind: Expulsion rates in state prekindergarten systems*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Child Study Center.

<sup>3</sup> Supporting Families Together Association (SFTA). In Brief: Enrollment, Expulsion and Resources Use in Wisconsin Child Care. December 2017. Retrieved from: <https://supportingfamilies.together.org/communities/visit-our-online-media-center/>

<sup>4</sup> U.S. Department of Education, State and Local Expenditures on Corrections and Education (2016), available at <https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/other/expenditures-corrections-education/brief.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> SFTA. In Brief: Enrollment, Expulsion and Resources Use, 7.

<sup>6</sup> Wisconsin Department of Children and Families. What is YoungStar? Retrieved from: <https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/youngstar>

<sup>7</sup> Pazzaglia, M., et al. (2016). An analysis of student engagement patterns and online course outcomes in Wisconsin (REL 2016-147). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Midwest. Retrieved from <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs>.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Education, State and Local Expenditures on Corrections and Education (2016).

