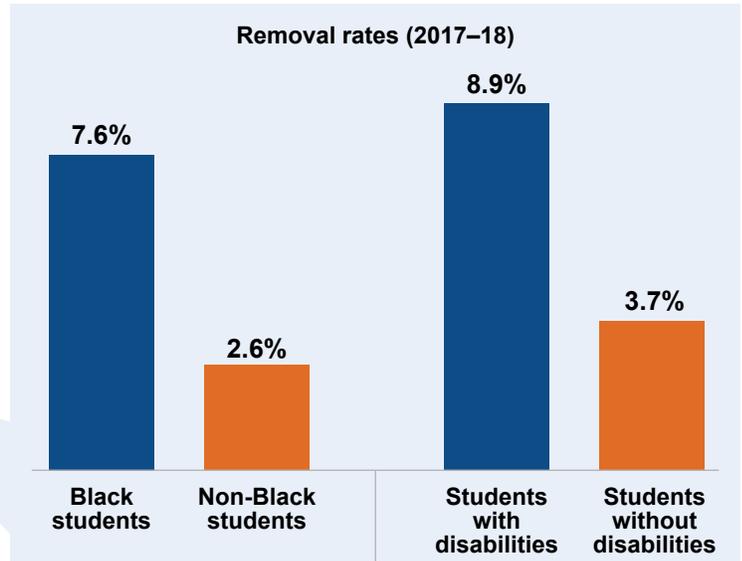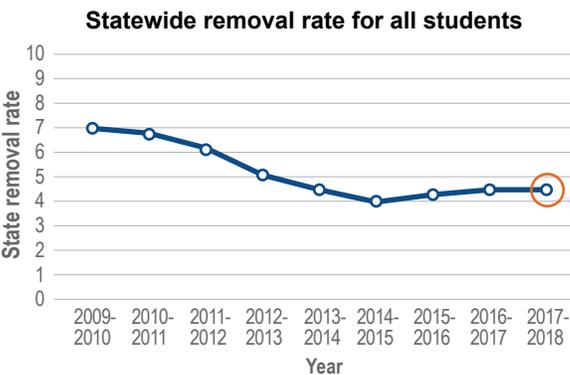# RESEARCH REVIEW:
Understanding discipline disparities in Maryland

Although disciplinary removals—out-of-school suspensions and expulsions—have declined in Maryland over the past 10 years, discipline disparities persist.

Black students and **students with disabilities** are removed from the school setting at more than **TWICE the rates** of their peers.[1]

Statewide removal rate for all students

Removal rates (2017–18)

- Black students: 7.6%
- Non-Black students: 2.6%
- Students with disabilities: 8.9%
- Students without disabilities: 3.7%

Why is this a problem?
Even when they commit the same infraction, in the same school, Black students and students with disabilities are more likely to be removed.[2] This is a national issue that is not confined to Maryland.[3] Removing students from the classroom is associated with an increased risk of poor academic performance and dropping out.[4]

How do schools identified with discipline disparities differ from schools without disparities?

Schools with discipline disparities shared some characteristics.[5]

Elementary Schools	Middle and High Schools
↑ • % of inexperienced teachers • % of Black students • Student mobility rate[6]	↑ • % of inexperienced teachers • Student promotion rate[7]
↓ • % of Asian and White students • Performance on state end-of-year English language arts assessments[8]	↓ • % of Asian students • Performance on state end-of-year English language arts assessments[8]

These similarities can provide insight into the kinds of support they might need to eliminate disproportionality, such as:

- **Implicit bias training** for school staff to improve classroom management
- **Social-emotional learning programming** to help newly enrolled students make a positive and supportive transition into the school community
- Implementation of **culturally relevant and evidence-based instructional and behavioral interventions**

REL MID-ATLANTIC Regional Educational Laboratory at Mathematica

What is Maryland doing to address this?

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is taking steps to ensure that removals are used as a *last resort* and are *applied equitably*, including:

- **Identifying schools** that are disproportionately removing students.

- **Providing technical assistance** to help identified schools implement corrective action plans that address root causes of disproportionate discipline and create a safe and supportive environment for all students.

- **Using research and data** on disciplinary trends to identify supports schools might need to improve, such as professional development on restorative practices.

- **Disseminating resources** on social-emotional learning, preventive strategies, and alternatives to disciplinary removals such as Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports.

To learn more, visit MSDE's Student Discipline and State Board of Education Task Force information pages.

How the REL is helping MSDE

MSDE is working in partnership with the Regional Educational Laboratory (REL) Mid-Atlantic to drive an evidence-based approach to improving disciplinary policy and practice by:

- **Conducting analyses of MSDE's school discipline data** to identify trends in, and school characteristics associated with, disproportionate rates of exclusionary discipline for students based on race/ethnicity and disability status.

  These analyses can help Maryland:

  1. prioritize and differentiate technical support to school districts
  2. determine what types of supports might be necessary to address disparities

- **Supporting disproportionality action plan implementation** through coaching and consultation in assessing the implementation of district-developed action plans for reducing disproportionalities in exclusionary discipline.

Watch the video

Watch the Video: MSDE Discusses the Partnership

[1] Lacoe, J., & Manley, M. (2019). Disproportionality in school discipline: An assessment in Maryland through 2018. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED598820

[2] By 4 percentage points compared to white students and students without disabilities, respectively.

[3] Losen, D. J., & Gillespie, J. (2012). *Opportunities suspended: The disparate impact of disciplinary exclusion from school*. Los Angeles, CA: Civil Rights Project/ Proyecto Derechos Civiles. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED534184; U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2018, March). K-12 education: Discipline disparities for black students, boys, and students with disabilities. (Publication No. GAO-18-258). Retrieved from https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-18-258; Barrett N., McEachin, A., Mills, J., & Valant, J. (2019). Disparities in Student Discipline by Race and Family Income (EdWorkingPaper No.19-53). Retrieved from Annenberg Institute at Brown University: http://edworkingpapers.com/ai19-53

[4] Lacoe, J., & Steinberg, M. P. (2019, March). Do suspensions affect student outcomes? *Education Evaluation and Policy Analysis*. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1204837; Gregory, A., Skiba, R. J., & Noguera, P. A. (2010). The achievement gap and the discipline gap: Two sides of the same coin? *Educational Researcher, 39*(1), 59–68. https://eric.ed.gov /?id=EJ886500; Fabelo, T., Thompson, M. D., Plotkin, M., Carmichael, D., Marchbanks, M. P., & Booth, E. A. (2011). *Breaking schools' rules: A statewide study of how school discipline relates to students' success and juvenile justice involvement*. New York: Council of State Governments Justice Center.

[5] Lacoe, J., & Manley, M. (2019). Disproportionality in school discipline: An assessment in Maryland through 2018 (REL 2019-XXX). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory Mid-Atlantic. Retrieved from http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs

[6] Percentage of students entering (transferring in or re-entering) school during school year after the first day of school. Learn More

[7] Percentage of students that advanced from one grade to a higher level at the end of the school year. Learn More

[8] Performance data reflect 2016 PARCC proficiency scores on English language arts and math assessments. MSDE transitioned from PARCC to the Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP)and a new report card in 2018.