

Day 15 - Disparities in School Discipline

“Knowing that one may be subject to bias is one thing; being able to correct is another.” - Jon Elster, social and political theorist

More than 60 years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court in *Brown v. Board of Education* wrote: “Education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments.” Today, we see evidence of disproportionate outcomes in academic achievement and discipline that suggest we are failing to achieve this ideal. Major racial disparities in student discipline rates have been documented for decades. Black students represent 15.5% of all public-school students but make up about 39% of students suspended from school, according to one report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office in 2018. In Virginia, Black students comprise 22% of total student enrollment, but 52% of all students suspended. With every school suspension, a student moves farther down the school-to-prison pipeline, and it begins as early as preschool.

Why? Is it because they come from low-income, crime-stricken neighborhoods and are raised by single mothers? No! This pervasive problem goes beyond socioeconomic status, education levels, marital status and household composition. It starts with unconscious or implicit bias. According to the [Perception Institute](#), we use the term “implicit bias” to describe when we have attitudes toward people or associate stereotypes with them without our conscious knowledge. The [Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity](#) at Ohio State University explains that such biases are favorable and unfavorable assessments deep in our subconscious, and we tend to favor our own ingroup—the social group to which we psychologically identify as belonging.

Today’s Challenge

OPTION 1: Listen to the education segment [Disparities Persist in School Discipline, Says Government Watchdog](#) from All Things Considered by NPR, which highlights racial disparities in school discipline. **(1 minute)**

OPTION 2: [Watch this video](#) that centers around a young boy of color as he navigates bias in the classroom and its impact on his future. **(2 minutes)**

OPTION 3: Read the article [“Black Students 'Face Racial Bias' In School Discipline.”](#) **(3 minutes)**

OPTION 4: Think about the implicit biases you have held, experienced or witnessed about your peers when you were in school. How are these ideas and experiences relevant to your life today? **(3 minutes)**

For further education, check out the podcast [“Nice White Parents”](#) by the New York Times