

EDUCATION

FINANCE

AND POLICY

EFP Takeaways

Peer Disruption and Learning: Links Between Suspensions and the Educational Achievement of Non-Suspended Students

Background

Existing evidence around suspensions and other forms of exclusionary discipline suggest a host of short-term and longer-term negative effects for the disciplined students. Yet, there is little research that explores the effects of suspensions on non-suspended students' academic achievement. Using both schoolmate suspensions and classmate suspensions, NaYoung Hwang of the University of Missouri and Thurston Domina of the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill seek to close this gap in the literature by examining the effects of peer suspensions on academic outcomes. Their work is published in vol. 16 issue 3 of *EFP*.

The Study

Hwang and Domina estimate the link between peer suspensions and non-suspended students' learning trajectories using data from a single mid-sized school district in California. Their outcomes data come from quarterly math and ELA scores. They also examine variations in the links between peer suspensions and achievement by infraction type: major, disruptive, and minor infractions.

Findings

Results indicate that Hispanic students, students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, English language learners, students enrolled in special education, and low-achieving students are disproportionately exposed to classmate suspensions.

Non-suspended student achievement in mathematics increases when their classmates receive suspensions, particularly suspensions attributed to disruptive behavior. The authors find no relationship between classmate suspensions and ELA achievement. Based on these findings, the authors conclude that suspensions, when used appropriately, can improve the academic achievement of non-suspended students, particularly for students from vulnerable populations.

However, the authors caution that these results come from schools in which suspensions are relatively rare events. As such, they may not generalize to settings with more draconian disciplinary cultures.

For more details:

- View the [full issue](#).
- See the [full article in *Education Finance and Policy*](#).
- [Sign up here to receive future *EFP Takeaways*](#).
- Summary of:
Hwang, N. & Domina, T. (2021). Peer Disruption and Learning: Links between Suspensions and the Educational Achievement of Non-Suspended Students. *Education Finance and Policy*, 16 (3): 443-463.