

# Maryland Schools' Codes of Conduct

Comparing Discipline Policy across Districts



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THE SCHOOL OF  
PUBLIC POLICY AT **UMBC**

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# Exclusionary discipline practices & policy shifts

- There is a negative relationship between suspension and learning (Rausch & Skiba, 2006)
- Zero tolerance laws are related to increases in district suspension rates (Curran, 2016)
- 24.3% suspension rate for Black students compared to 7.1% for White students (Martinez & Losen, 2013)
- APA Task Force
- Supportive School Discipline Initiative
- By 2015, 22 states and D.C. revised laws limiting the use of exclusionary practices (Steinberg & Lacoë, 2017)

# Background

- The Maryland Guidelines for a State Code of Discipline released in 2014.
- Defined
  - 27 infractions
  - 31 responses
  - Infraction-response combinations in a five tier system

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Class cutting				
Disrespect				
Harassment				
False alarm				
Academic dishonesty				
Fighting				
	Trespassing			
Theft				
Alcohol				
				Firearms
Tardiness				

Figure 1. State guidelines tiers illustration

# Our Study

- Collected and coded district codes of conduct for 2013-14 and 2015-16 school years.
- Quantified changes in codes of conduct in response to revised state guidelines
- Created data visualizations for comparing district codes to state guidelines

# Summary of Findings

- **Finding 1:** State guidelines are very broad
- **Finding 2:** School districts varied in their adherence to state recommendations
- **Finding 3:** After the state policy change, district codes of conduct included more response options, on average, per infraction than before.
- **Finding 4:** The increases in response options were generally driven by less exclusionary responses, though the number of infractions to which in-school suspension (ISS) was an option also experienced a relatively large increase.
- **Finding 5:** Variation in codes of conduct were largely unrelated to racial composition of districts
- **Finding 6:** Measurement matters when assessing racial disparities in discipline across districts










# Anne Arundel County Schools

Behaviors	Behavioral Contract	Check-in with School Counselor/Resource Specialists	Classroom-Based responses	Community Conferencing	Community Service	Conflict Resolution	Detention	Expulsion	Functional Behavior Assessment & Behavioral Intervention Plan	In-School Removal/Intervention	Mentoring Program	Parent Outreach	Parent/Guardian and Student/Teacher Conference	Peer Mediation	Recommend for Further Action	Referral to Alternative Education	Referral to Appropriate Substance Abuse Counseling Services	Referral to Community-Based Organizations	Referral to Health/Mental Health Services	Referral to IEP Team for a Student not Currently Eligible	Referral to IEP Team for a Student Currently Eligible	Referral to Student Support Team	Referral to a Student Support Team for a Student with a 504 Plan	Removal from Extracurricular Activities/Loss of Privileges	Restitution	Restorative Justice Practices	Suspension (In-School)	Suspension (Short Term, Out-of-School)	Suspension (Long Term, Out-of-School)	Suspension (Extended, Out-of-School)	Student Court
Class Cutting	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Tardiness	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Truancy	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Disrespect	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Disruption	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Dress Code	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Sexual Activity	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Sexual Attack	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0
Harassment - Sexual and Bullying	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Threat - to adult, student, extortion	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
False Alarm/ Bomb Threat	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Academic Dishonesty	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Theft	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Destruction of Property	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Alcohol	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Inhalants	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Drugs/Controlled Substances	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Tobacco	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
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Inappropriate Use of Personal Electronics	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
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Arson/Fire	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0

 State recommends use but district does not use

 State does not recommend use but district does use

# Baltimore City Schools

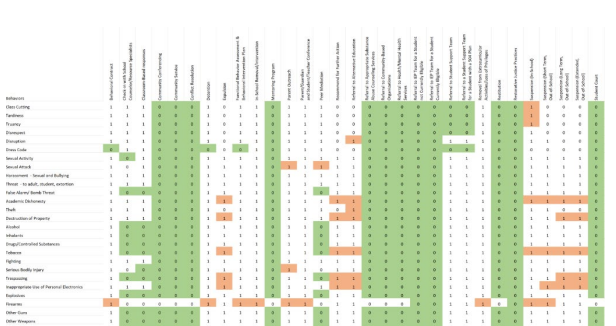
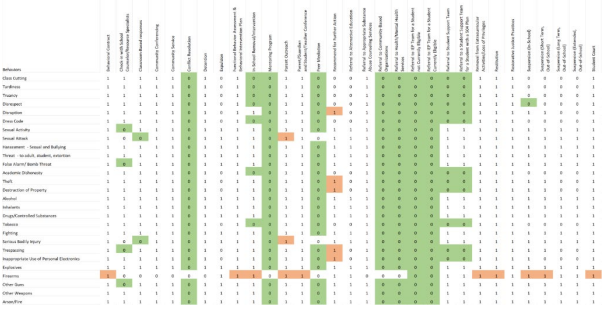
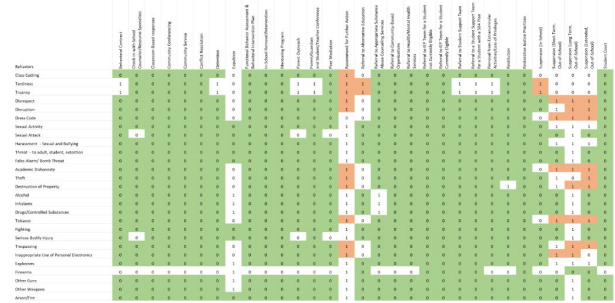
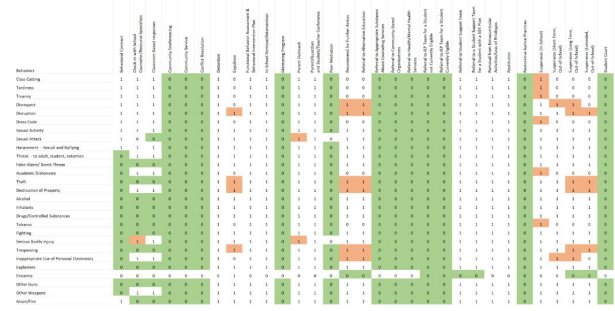
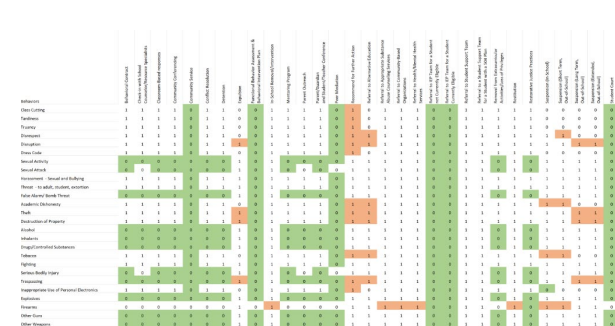
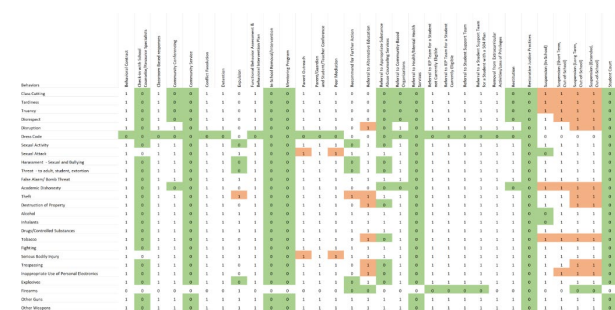
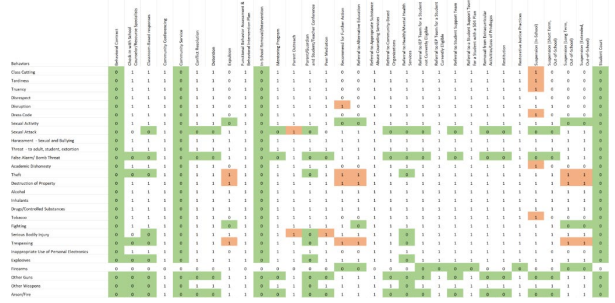
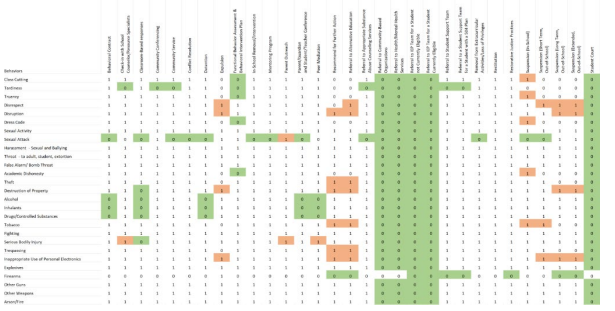
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Tardiness	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Truancy	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Disrespect	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Disruption	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Dress Code	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Sexual Activity	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
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Tobacco	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Fighting	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Serious Bodily Injury	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
Trespassing	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0
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Explosives	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0
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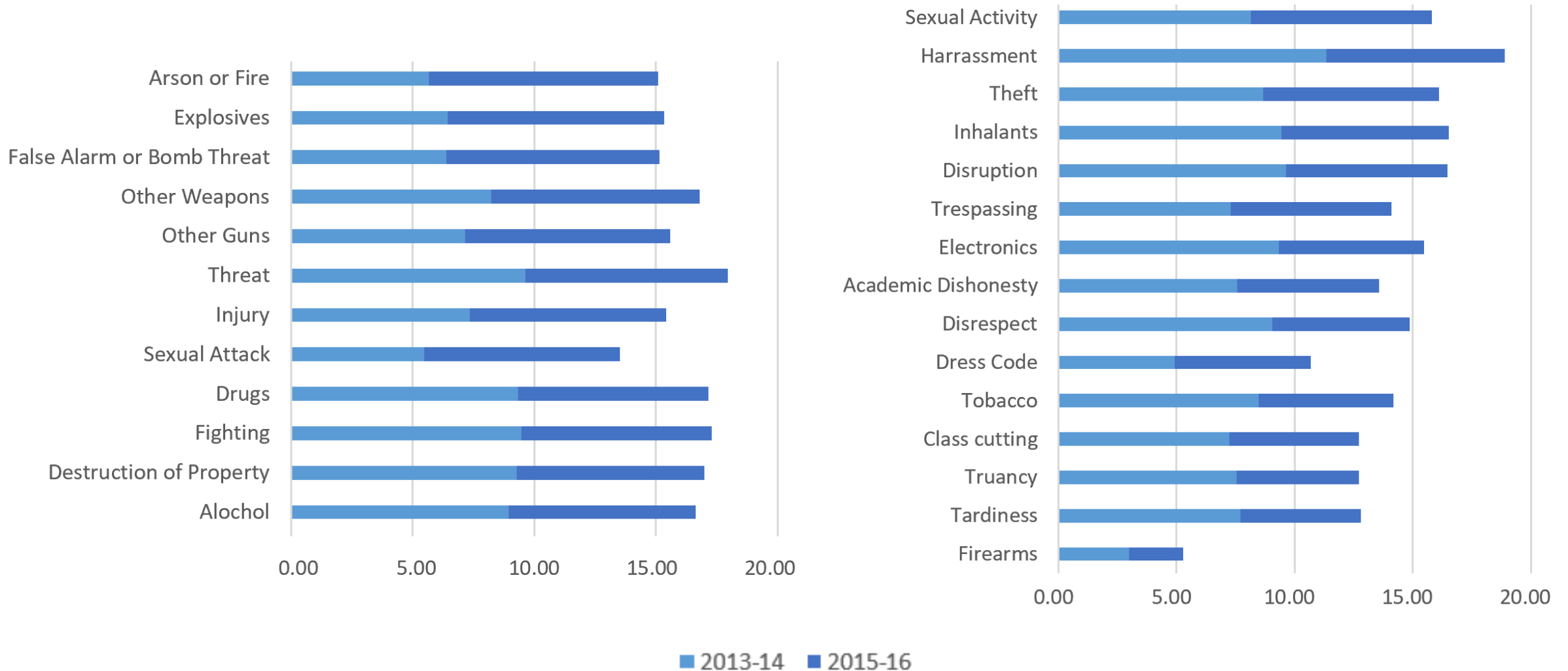
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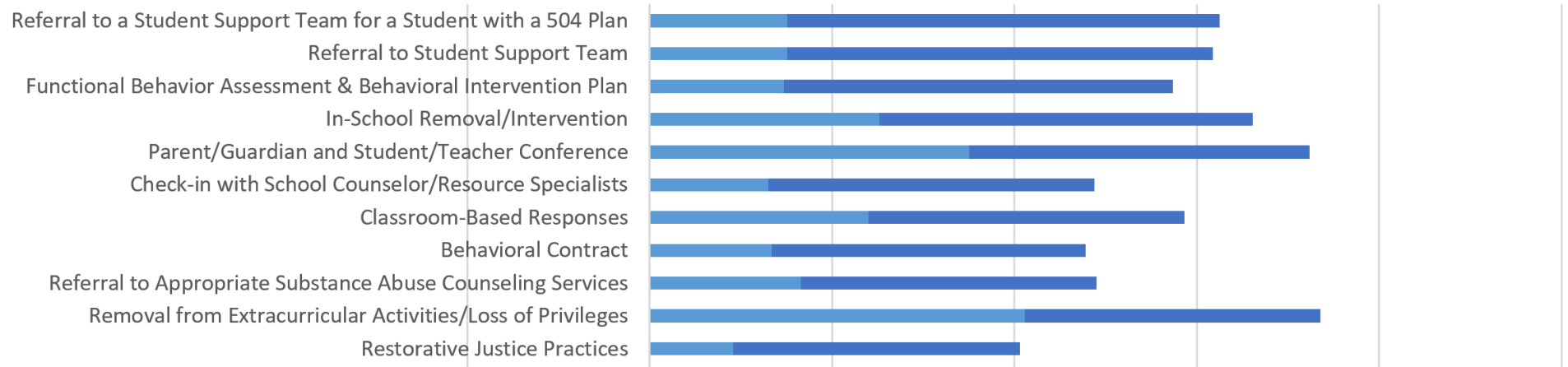


**Finding 3:** After the state policy change, district codes of conduct included more response options, on average, per infraction than before.

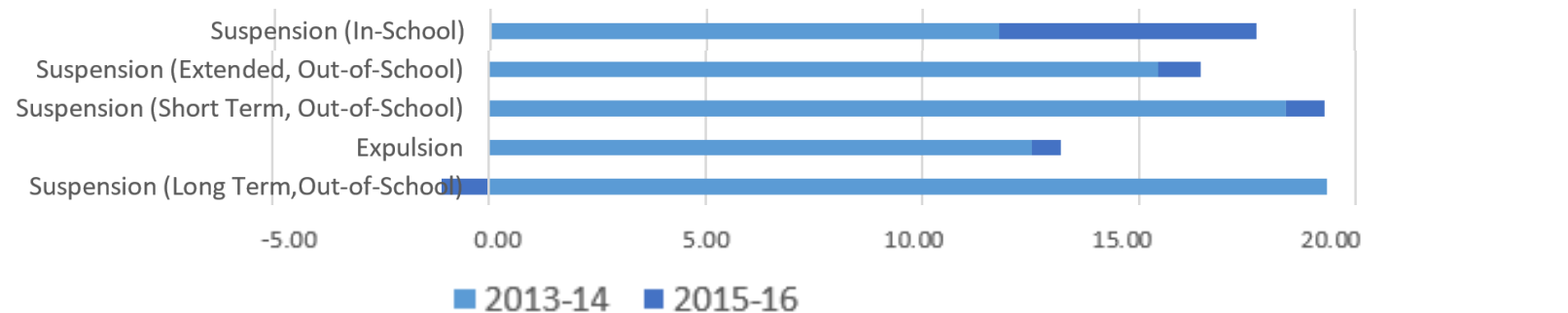


# Finding 4: Increases in response options were generally driven by less exclusionary responses as well as in-school suspension

## Largest increases in response options:

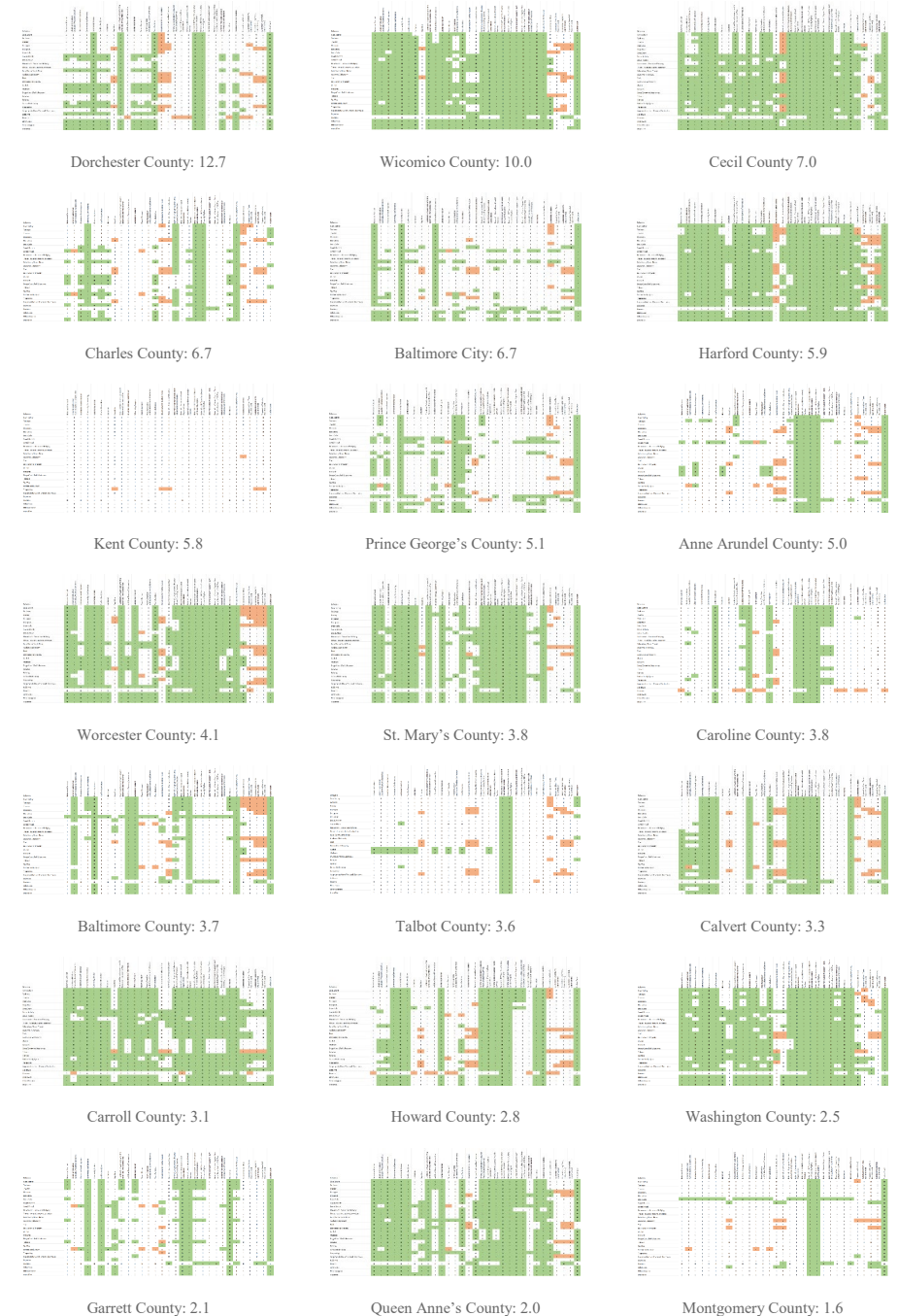


## Other exclusionary discipline options:



## Finding 5: Variation in codes of conduct were largely unrelated to racial composition of districts

- Significant variation across districts in alignment with state guidelines
- No clear relationship between alignment with state guidelines and out-of-school suspension rates
- The average tier of response weakly correlated with OSS rates: 0.33



# Finding 6: Measurement matters when assessing racial disparities in discipline across districts

Black-White OSS Gap (Relative Risk Ratio)	District	Black-White OSS Gap (% Point Difference)
5.2	Montgomery County Public Schools	14.9
5.1	St. Mary's County Public Schools	14.9
4.7	Talbot County Public Schools	13.7
4.3	Howard County Public Schools	13.4
4.0	Harford County Public Schools	10.1
3.8	Washington County Public Schools	9.8
3.8	Frederick County Public Schools	8.3
3.8	Wicomico County Public Schools	7.8
3.8	Allegany County Public Schools	7.6
3.7	Queen Anne's County Public Schools	6.7
3.6	Calvert County Public Schools	6.5
3.5	Caroline County Public Schools	6.3
3.5	Anne Arundel County Public Schools	6.3
3.5	Dorchester County Public Schools	6.2
3.4	Worcester County Public Schools	5.8
3.3	Carroll County Public Schools	5.5
3.1	Somerset County Public Schools	5.0
3.0	Baltimore County Public Schools	4.7
2.8	Kent County Public Schools	4.4
2.7	Charles County Public Schools	4.2
2.7	Cecil County Public Schools	4.0
2.4	Prince George's County Public Schools	3.9
2.3	Baltimore City Public Schools	2.7

Larger Black-White Discipline Gap →

# By Discipline Gap

- No clear relationship between codes of conduct alignment and the Black-White discipline gap as measured by a relative risk ratio or as a % point difference

Relative Risk Ratio



% Point Difference



Larger Black-White Discipline Gap ↑



# Implications

- Finding 1: State guidelines are very broad
  - **What was the state's intention?**
  - **Consider offering a recommended model that is more prescriptive, still allowing for local flexibility**
- Finding 2: School districts varied in their adherence to state recommendations
  - **Disaggregated student level data needed to assess implementation of policy at local levels**

# Implications

- Finding 3: After the state policy change, district codes of conduct included more response options, on average, per infraction than before.
  - **Provide training/professional development on student-centered, non-exclusionary responses**
- Finding 4: The increases in response options were generally driven by less exclusionary responses, though the number of infractions to which in-school suspension (ISS) was an option also experienced a relatively large increase.
  - **Conduct research to learn more about the effectiveness of other responses**

# Implications

- Finding 5: Variation in codes of conduct were largely unrelated to racial composition of districts
  - **Implementation at the school level matters**
  - **Disaggregated student level data needed to assess implementation of policy at local levels**
  - **Provide training/professional development on student-centered, non-exclusionary responses**
- Finding 6: Measurement matters when assessing racial disparities in discipline across districts
  - **Should use multiple measures when assessing disparities**
  - **Holding a district/school accountable for disparities on a single measure could be a mistake**

# Final Thoughts

- Encourage collaboration with researchers
  - Methodological expertise
  - Faculty engage in research as part of job

# Thanks!

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