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The Impact of Suite360 Programs and Comprehensive Restorative Practices on Student Discipline Rates

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Introduction

Schools today are facing an unprecedented challenge. Prior to the emergence of COVID-19, mental health concerns among youth were on the rise across the nation. In the wake of the pandemic, those concerns have only increased. Many of these students have struggled to re-enter a traditional learning environment. One result is an increase in the occurrence of challenging behaviors among students of all ages. This poses a particular challenge for schools that are attempting to teach all students, help those who require remediation, meet the mental health care needs of their students, and support those who have experienced trauma over the past few years. The need for a comprehensive approach to social-emotional learning (SEL), mental health awareness and restorative practices is clear.

Located in the panhandle of Florida, the Escambia County School District (ECSD) embraced such a comprehensive approach. ECSD utilizes Navigate360's Suite360 programs, including Student, Family, Staff, Intervention, and Mental Health & Prevention. The Suite360 Intervention program has become an integral component of ECSD's discipline approach.

Discipline Approach

The commitment of ECSD to a positive schoolwide discipline approach is evident in the creation of the district’s Behavior Education Support Team (BEST), designed to provide a continuum of behavioral supports. These behavioral supports include:

“... (1) schoolwide behavioral training, skill development and support for building-level Behavior Coaches, (2) classroom consultation, (3) Functional Behavioral Assessment (FBA) and Positive Behavior Intervention Plan (PBIP) consultation and/or development, and (4) direct support to specialized units and schools with Emotional and/or Behavioral Disturbances (EBD), autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and Intellectually Differently Abled (ID) populations.”

ECSD embraces a restorative practices approach to discipline. For example, the district prioritizes the use of expulsion as a last resort and instead focuses on getting students back into classrooms following the occurrence of challenging behaviors.



For relatively minor behavioral infractions, behavioral intervention looks quite different from traditional discipline models. Students may be assigned a Suite360 Intervention lesson addressing the specific behaviors a student demonstrated. They may also be given an in-school suspension, but even this is not typical. Rather than being placed in an in-school suspension program for an entire day, students are placed there only for the class(es) in which the behaviors occurred. While there, students complete one or more Suite360 lessons and school assignments and work with appropriate individuals to deal with the problem and the setting in which it occurred. This process leads students back into the classroom more quickly and eliminates learning loss in other classes.

Behavioral intervention also looks quite different for students with more severe behavioral infractions. Students always can earn their way back into the classroom as they complete Suite360 Intervention lessons, make healthy behavioral choices, and address the problems that led to the occurrence of challenging behaviors in the first place. To eliminate the use of expulsion, ECSD temporarily reassigns students as needed to other schools where their needs may be better met. At those schools, students complete Intervention lessons, receive instructional support and continue to address issues that led to their reassignment. As always, students can earn their way back to the traditional school setting.

There is a concerted effort across the district to minimize the use of in-school and out-of-school suspension, noting that it is detrimental to the student. Instead, a leveled approach where incidents are clearly defined and students have their underlying concerns addressed helps students stay in the general education setting and thrive.

Outcomes

The effectiveness of ECSD’s discipline approach and use of Suite360 Intervention lessons as part of comprehensive restorative practices is noteworthy. The State of Florida requires districts to report discipline data annually. Data for the 2020-2021 academic year are provided below. A comparison district was selected based on demographic data provided by each district (see Figure 1 and Figure 2). These data highlight the similarities between the two Florida districts. The only noteworthy difference is in the percentage of Hispanic and Black Students; ECSD had more Black students, while the comparison district had more Hispanic students.

% of Students by Subgroup 2020-2021

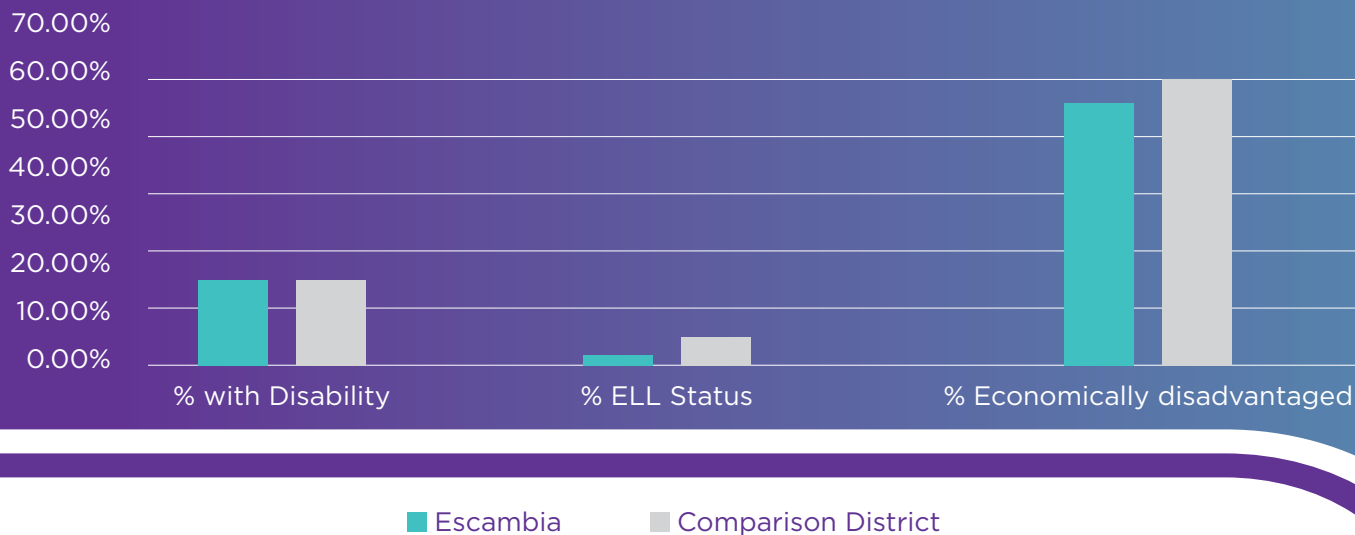


Figure 1: District Demographic Data: Total and Subgroups

% of Students by Race 2020-2021

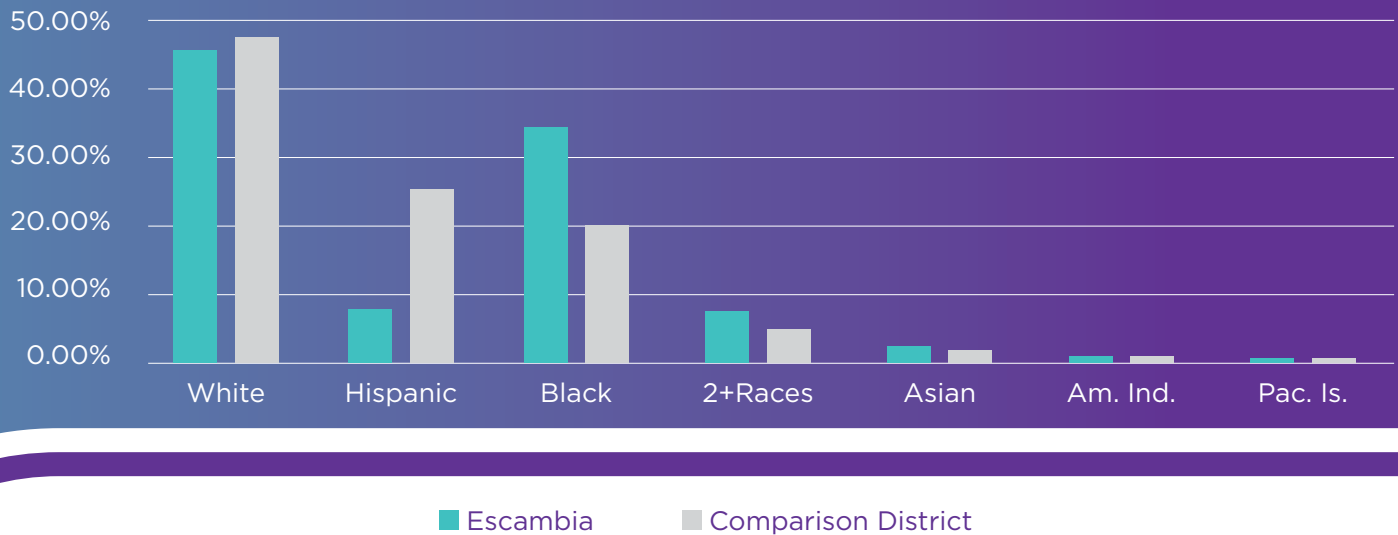


Figure 2: District Demographic Data: Race Distribution

As discussed, ECSD used Suite360 Intervention lessons with students who exhibited challenging behaviors. Lessons were assigned based on the specific behavior and other topics that may be helpful for each situation. Students who completed Suite360 Intervention lessons completed pre-test and post-test questions within each lesson. On average, students' scores increased by more than 14% from pre-test to post-test.

Comparing ECSD to a similar district in the same state (see Figure 3) shows that ECSD reported fewer occurrences of in-school suspension (6.81% of reported disciplinary actions compared to 9.39%), out-of-school suspension (4.88% of reported disciplinary actions compared to 10.04%), and expulsion (0% of reported disciplinary actions compared to 0.14%).



Discipline Data 2020-2021

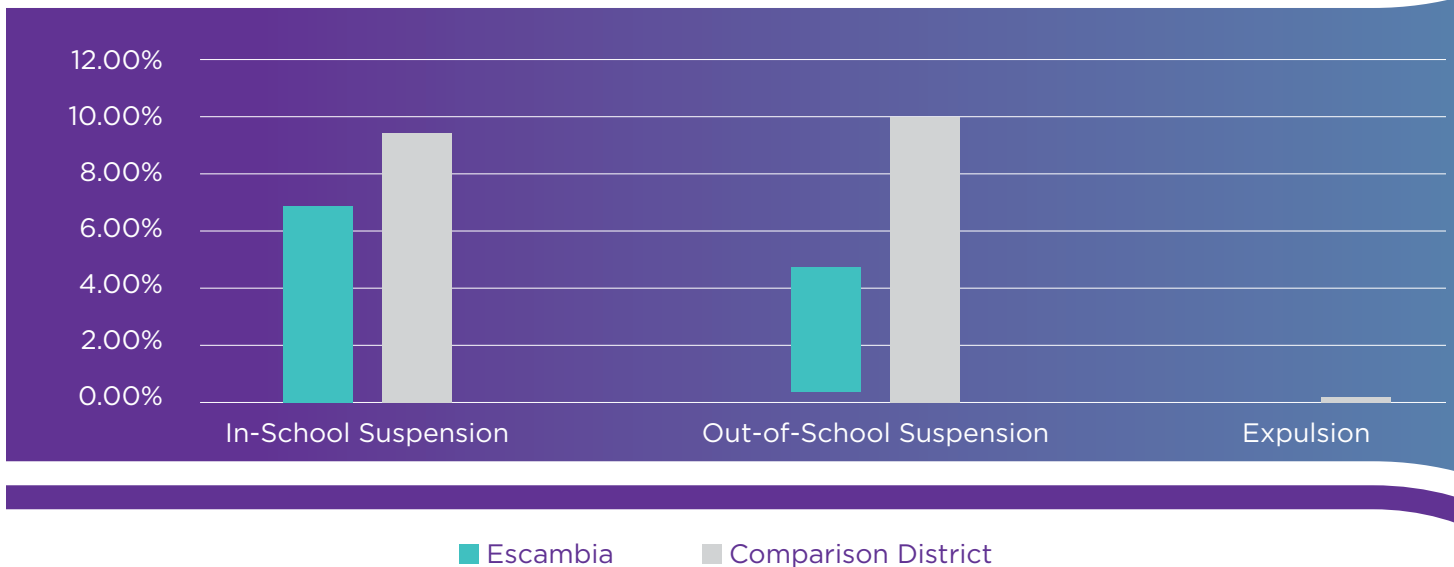


Figure 3: Comparison of Discipline Data

Making the Commitment

ECSD made a commitment to keep students in school using a restorative practices model. Implementing the model with fidelity and with supportive leadership resulted in observable positive outcomes. Students in ECSD stayed in school and in the classroom at higher rates than those of the closest comparison district. Those results begin with district leadership committed to the use of restorative practices and the elimination of traditional punitive discipline approaches that have been found to be ineffective. Then, with professional development, support of leadership and curricular support through programs like Suite360 Intervention, students can learn from their mistakes, stay in the classroom and thrive.





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Here's How We Can Help

With Suite360 Intervention, administrators can begin to turn discipline and punishment into learning opportunities for their students and promote a more positive school climate. Grade-appropriate, immersive content helps keep students engaged with their lessons, drawing on nationally recognized and evidence-informed practices from expert sources. And with individualized lesson plans based on students' specific behaviors and needs, educators can help improve students' decision-making, leading to a decrease in detentions, suspensions and expulsions.

To find out more about developing a behavioral intervention program, contact us today! Visit navigate360.com/schedule-a-consultation.



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