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## What Have We Done? An Analysis of Student Handbooks of Public High Schools in a Suburban County in the Wake of Illinois Senate Bill 100

Melissa Delarosa Moore

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LOYOLA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO

WHAT HAVE WE DONE? AN ANALYSIS OF  
STUDENT HANDBOOKS OF PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS IN  
A SUBURBAN COUNTY IN THE WAKE OF  
ILLINOIS SENATE BILL 100

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

PROGRAM IN SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGY

BY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	v
ABSTRACT .....	vi
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION .....	1
Exclusionary Discipline in the United States .....	1
Scope of Problem in Illinois .....	2
Illinois Senate Bill 100 .....	3
Study Purpose and Goals .....	3
Research Questions .....	4
II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE .....	6
Purpose of School Discipline .....	6
Exclusionary Discipline .....	6
Definition and Prevalence .....	6
Zero-Tolerance Policies .....	7
Support for Exclusionary Discipline .....	7
Evidence Against Exclusionary Discipline .....	8
Disproportionality and Implicit Bias .....	9
Federal Guidance for Reform .....	10
Guidance for Reform Specific to Senate Bill 100.....	12
Previous Studies Analyzing Discipline Policies.....	12
Discipline Policies and Student Handbooks .....	14
Summary of Related Literature .....	14
III. METHOD .....	16
Units of Analysis .....	16
Instrumentation and Selection of Handbooks .....	17
Procedure .....	17
Content Analysis and Development of Coding System .....	17
Selection and Training of Coders .....	18
Coding Procedure .....	19
Analysis Procedure .....	20
Reliability and Validity .....	22
Ethical Considerations .....	23
IV. RESULTS .....	25
Research Question 1 .....	25

Research Question 1 Results .....	25
Research Question 1 Summary .....	27
Research Question 2 .....	28
Research Question 2 Results .....	28
Coding System Category Descriptions and Results .....	30
Zero-tolerance policies .....	30
Monetary fees/fines .....	32
Students encouraged to drop out .....	32
Limiting exclusionary discipline .....	33
Threat to safety or disruption .....	34
Determined on case-by-case basis .....	34
Appropriate interventions exhausted .....	35
Non-exclusionary discipline documented .....	35
Efforts to minimize length .....	36
District documents how length determined .....	36
Board determines in best interest of school .....	36
Written decision includes rationale for duration .....	37
Support services provided .....	37
Notice lists whether supports will be provided .....	37
Make-up work policy language .....	38
Re-engagement policy language .....	39
Professional development .....	41
Research Question 2 Summary .....	41
V. DISCUSSION .....	43
Interpretation of Findings .....	43
Research Question 1 .....	43
Research Question 2 .....	45
Limitations of Research .....	48
Implications for Future Research .....	51
Implications for Practice .....	54
APPENDIX	
A. SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS, 2016-17 .....	57
B. SCHOOL/DISTRICT COMPOSITION .....	59
C. TSDC SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST .....	61
D. CODING SYSTEM .....	70
REFERENCE LIST .....	75
VITA .....	80

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Reflection of Senate Bill 100 by School, Pre- and Post-Implementation .....	26
2. Reflection of Senate Bill 100 by Category, Pre- and Post-Implementation .....	29

## ABSTRACT

This study presents the findings of a content analysis of student handbooks from 23 public high schools in a suburban Illinois county. A checklist was utilized to compare discipline policy information between handbooks published in the school years prior to and following implementation of Illinois Senate Bill 100. The results included 20 of the 23 schools' handbooks demonstrating an increase in their reflection of Senate Bill 100 requirements from the 2015-16 to 2016-17 school years with approximately half of the schools modifying handbook language from pre- to post-implementation years to remove zero-tolerance policies and reflect policies aligned with the Senate Bill 100 requirements for make-up work and re-engagement following student exclusion. While these initial results appear promising, much is left to be known regarding how the modifications reflected in the handbooks are applied in practice and the impact on student outcomes in order to fully understand whether the goals of Senate Bill 100 will be realized. In order to take significant steps toward combatting the negative outcomes and disproportionality associated with exclusionary discipline, a recommendation is offered for school personnel to continue to examine alignment with Senate Bill 100 while committing to collaborative actions to improve systemic practices.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Exclusionary Discipline in the United States**

When examining disciplinary practices in schools, concerns with the adverse impact of exclusionary practices, including out-of-school suspension and expulsion, have long been documented as pervasive issues across the United States. For example, in 2001, Skiba and Knesting summarized the lack of evidence of the effectiveness of zero tolerance discipline policies, suggesting a need for alternative approaches. In a 2002 article, Vavrus and Cole reported that removal from the educational environment via suspension or expulsion frequently involves race or gender bias resulting in disparities in its use, known as disproportionality, which impart significant adverse effects upon minority student subgroups. In addition to race or gender bias, disproportionality with the application of exclusionary discipline has also been cited on the basis of disability and sexual orientation (Morgan et al., 2014). Because of the problems highlighted in studies of disciplinary practices, in 2008, as a result of a review of literature dating back to 1979, the American Psychological Association Task Force on Zero Tolerance Policies recommended reforming zero-tolerance policies and utilizing alternative approaches to exclusionary discipline. Despite the long-standing evidence of a need for reform, recent literature suggests a lack of change over the last several decades to effectively address cited concerns with discipline practices in the United States. In a January 2014 “Dear



Colleague Letter,” the authors stated that African American students in the general education population are expelled or suspended three times more often than white students. The authors also described the ongoing adverse impact of exclusionary discipline, citing multiple research studies that link exclusion to “school avoidance and diminished educational engagement; decreased academic achievement; increased behavior problems; increased likelihood of dropping out; substance abuse; and involvement with juvenile justice systems” (U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division & U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014, p. 4).

### **Scope of Problem in Illinois**

While disparities between the suspension rates of black and white students have been reported across the country, discipline data from the 2011-12 school year revealed Illinois to be one of eleven states (and D.C.) with a rate of disproportionality that exceeds the national average. Data from 2011-12 indicated that, in Illinois, 19% of black male students received out-of-school suspensions compared with 5% of their white male peers. In that same year, 13% of black female students received out-of-school suspensions compared with 2% of white females (U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014).

Additionally, published data indicated that during the 2014-15 school year, an estimated 45% of Illinois students who received suspensions, expulsions, or discipline-related transfers to alternative schools were African American. African American students, however, represented only approximately 17.5% of the total student population (Transforming School Discipline Collaborative [TSDC], 2016b).

### **Illinois Senate Bill 100**

In order to address the identified concerns with discipline practices in Illinois, on August 24, 2015, Illinois Gov. Bruce Rauner signed into law Illinois Public Act 99-0456, first introduced and commonly referred to as Illinois Senate Bill 100. The mandates of Illinois Public Act 99-0456 (hereafter “Senate Bill 100”), which became effective on September 15, 2016, require Illinois public school districts to alter discipline practices significantly, including banning zero tolerance policies and adopting more inclusive disciplinary consequences (TSDC, 2016b). Although Senate Bill 100 represents a step toward reform, given the lack of significant change over the decades during which concerns with discipline practices have been documented, more should be known about the actual impact of Senate Bill 100 on school discipline policies in Illinois.

### **Study Purpose and Goals**

The purpose of the proposed research study is to identify how and to what extent, if any, Illinois public high schools modified their discipline policies for the 2016-17 school year in conjunction with the initial implementation of Senate Bill 100, as well as to examine how those policies comply with the requirements of Senate Bill 100. The results of the proposed research will serve to identify the initial impact of the legislation on written policies, as well as to identify gaps between legislative requirements and written policies in order to provide recommendations for further reform. Additionally, the research will identify language and practices reflected in school district policies that could provide an example to other schools.

In order to achieve the aforementioned goals, the scope of the current study will be limited to public high schools located within one suburban Illinois county. The

purpose of limiting the scope to one county is to increase the likelihood that recommendations for further reform are provided directly to the actual school districts via countywide professional development and networking events. These same opportunities could also be utilized for districts to discuss the changes that they have implemented, including those practices that are identified as exemplars, and the outcomes that the districts have realized as a result.

### **Research Questions**

In order to effectively achieve the stated purpose, the proposed research study will seek to answer the following two questions:

1. To what extent, if any, have the student handbooks of public high schools in one suburban Illinois county been modified from the 2015-16 to the 2016-17 school year to reflect the requirements of Senate Bill 100?
  - a. To what extent do the 2015-16 student handbooks reflect the requirements of Senate Bill 100? (pre-implementation)
  - b. To what extent do the 2016-17 student handbooks reflect the requirements of Senate Bill 100? (post-implementation)
  - c. To what extent have the student handbooks changed from 2015-16 to 2016-17 with respect to the requirements of Senate Bill 100?
2. How have the student handbooks of public high schools in one suburban Illinois county been modified from the 2015-16 to the 2016-17 school year to reflect the requirements of Senate Bill 100?
  - a. How do the 2015-16 student handbooks reflect the requirements of Senate Bill 100? (pre-implementation)

b. How do the 2016-17 student handbooks reflect the requirements of Senate Bill 100? (post-implementation)

c. How have the student handbooks changed from 2015-16 to 2016-17 with respect to the requirements of Senate Bill 100?

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### **Purpose of School Discipline**

A review of the literature on school discipline indicates several distinct purposes for the rendering of disciplinary consequences for behavioral infractions in schools. First, discipline is utilized to maintain safety (American Psychological Association Task Force on Zero Tolerance Policies, 2008; Mallett, 2016; Skiba & Rausch, 2006) and foster a safe school climate (Ewing, 2000). Second, discipline aims to reduce classroom disruptions in order to create an environment that is conducive to learning (American Psychological Association Task Force on Zero Tolerance Policies, 2008; Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Skiba and Rausch (2006) also highlight goals of teaching essential social skills and reducing the likelihood of repeat offenses.

#### **Exclusionary Discipline**

##### **Definition and Prevalence**

A trend toward the use of exclusionary discipline practices, including suspension and expulsion (Skiba & Knesting, 2001) has been observed since the 1980s (Mallett, 2016). Studies suggest that suspension, which involves temporary removal from school for a specified number of school days (Sharkey & Fenning, 2012), is among the most common behavioral consequence used in schools (Fabelo et al., 2011; Lewis, Butler, Bonner, & Joubert, 2010; Skiba & Knesting, 2001). Although used less frequently,

expulsion, which results in permanent removal from school (Vavrus & Cole, 2002) has also increased in prevalence in the last several decades. Nearly twice as many students were suspended or expelled from school in 2010 as compared with the numbers reported in 1974 (Skiba, Arredondo, & Williams, 2014). While expulsion is generally utilized for moderate to severe behavioral infractions, suspensions have frequently been applied as a consequence for relatively mild, nonviolent behaviors (Skiba & Knesting, 2001; Skiba & Rausch, 2006; Vavrus & Cole, 2002).

### **Zero-Tolerance Policies**

A review of the literature indicates a frequent overlap in the discussion between the use of exclusionary discipline practices and zero-tolerance policies in schools (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Zero-tolerance policies involve the application of predetermined disciplinary consequences as the result of a specified behavioral infraction (American Psychological Association Task Force on Zero Tolerance Policies, 2008; Mallet, 2016; Skiba & Knesting, 2001). The consequences are typically punitive and rendered without consideration of those factors that are unique to the behavioral infraction (American Psychological Association Task Force on Zero Tolerance Policies, 2008). The American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008) and Gregory and Cornell (2009) reported the use of zero-tolerance policies to be widespread throughout schools in the United States.

### **Support for Exclusionary Discipline**

Proponents of the use of exclusionary discipline practices argue that removing students from school helps to increase compliance (Landrum & Kauffman, 2006) and to maintain a safe environment conducive to learning (Skiba & Rausch, 2006; Wald &

Losen, 2003). Supporters of zero tolerance policies assert that such policies will deter students from committing serious behavioral infractions (Ewing, 2000; González, 2012; Skiba & Knesting, 2001). Additionally, Larson and Ovando (2001) suggest that failure to punish disciplinary violations adequately will create an appearance that the school is not concerned about safety.

As an additional example of support, Bear (2010, 2012) argues for the use of suspension in schools as one component of a comprehensive approach to discipline. Bear (2012) states that “if the criterion used to evaluate the effectiveness of suspension, or any other form of punishment, is a reduction in behavior problems via either deterrence or correction, then research supports its use for the majority of students in most schools, although certainly not for all students” (p. 179). Based on this argument, Bear (2012) advocates for use of a combination of disciplinary practices, including punitive discipline to address behavioral concerns and alternative approaches that help students to develop self-discipline.

Finally, in a study of the effectiveness of multiple types of discipline practices, Flannery, Frank, and Kato (2012) found out-of-school suspension to be effective at decreasing the likelihood of repeat truancy offenses. However, the results also indicated that repeat exclusion over time as the result of out-of-school suspensions was associated with increased truancy (Flannery et al., 2012)

### **Evidence Against Exclusionary Discipline**

In contrast with the arguments in support of exclusionary discipline and zero tolerance, several studies have found that exclusionary practices and zero-tolerance policies do not demonstrate evidence of reduced behavioral infractions or an improved

school climate (American Psychological Association Task Force on Zero Tolerance Policies, 2008; Christle, Jolivette, & Nelson, 2005; Skiba & Raush, 2006). Furthermore, the use of exclusionary discipline has been found to lead to increases in academic difficulties (Algozzine, Wang, & Violette, 2011; Arcia, 2006; Skiba & Rausch, 2006), behavioral challenges (Algozzine et al., 2011; Hemphill, Toumbourou, Herrenkohl, McMorris, & Catalano, 2006; Skiba & Rausch, 2006), feelings of stigmatization and alienation (Sander, Sharkey, Olivarri, Tanigawa, & Mauseth, 2010; Suvall, 2009), substance abuse (Hemphill, Heerde, Herrenkohl, Toumbourou, & Catalano, 2012); and dropout rates (Skiba & Knesting, 2001; Skiba & Rausch, 2006). The concept of a “school-to-prison pipeline,” has also been frequently described in reference to a positive correlation between exclusionary school discipline and association with the juvenile justice system (Kang-Brown, Trone, Fratello, & Daftary-Kapur, 2013; Mallett, 2013, 2016; Skiba et al., 2014; Wald & Losen, 2003).

### **Disproportionality and Implicit Bias**

Finally, studies indicate recurring themes of disproportionality in the rendering of school-based behavioral consequences. This includes evidence of disproportionality in the use of suspension and expulsion on the basis of race (Eitle & Eitle, 2004; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Losen, 2015; Morgan, Salomon, Plotkin, & Cohen, 2014; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Wald & Losen, 2003); socio-economic status (Skiba & Knesting, 2001); disability (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006; Morgan et al., 2014; Raffaele Mendez, 2003); and sexual orientation (Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2011; Morgan et al., 2014).

Even when educators intend to administer discipline in a fair and impartial



manner, studies have linked the existence of disproportionality in education to the notion of implicit bias, which involves the application of unconscious mental associations to a person's behavior and decision making (Staats, 2016). One such example of implicit bias that has been documented in numerous studies includes the association of African American males with aggressive behavior, even amongst people who do not report such beliefs (Eberhardt, Goff, Purdie, & Davies, 2004).

These implicit biases may lead to unintentional disproportionality with respect to school discipline. For instance, Skiba et al. (2002) presented the results of a study that revealed that students of color had received discipline for subjective infractions, such as disrespect, more frequently than White students. According to Staats (2016),

even individuals who profess egalitarian intentions and try to treat all individuals fairly can still unknowingly act in ways that reflect their implicit – rather than their explicit – biases. Thus, even well-intentioned individuals can act in ways that produce inequitable outcomes for different groups. (p. 30)

Staats (2016) also reported that the existence of implicit bias is particularly common in circumstances that are ambiguous, must be addressed in a short timeframe, or involve mental fatigue, which are likely characteristics of situations in which educators are addressing student behavior and disciplinary infractions.

### **Federal Guidance for Reform**

As a result of the evidence of negative outcomes associated with exclusionary discipline practices and zero-tolerance policies, federal agencies have published several documents in recent years that provide explicit guidance for school districts with respect to discipline practices. In 2014, the U.S. Department of Education published a guide to

support schools in modifying discipline policies to align with best practices. The document cites the U.S. Departments of Justice and Education's (2014) "Dear Colleague Letter," which provides direction for implementing discipline practices in a nondiscriminatory manner. The guide is based on three principles: "(1) create positive climates and focus on prevention; (2) develop clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations and consequences to address disruptive behaviors; and (3) ensure fairness, equity, and continuous improvement" (p. 1). Within the document, the authors suggest explicit action steps that school districts can take in order to move toward each of the guiding principles. Recommendations include implementing a multi-tiered system of supports, training school staff, adopting nondiscriminatory discipline policies, and engaging the community (U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

In the same year, the Council of State Governments Justice Center published a report outlining contemporary issues related to school discipline and key strategies for schools to combat those issues (Morgan et al., 2014). Broad topics addressed include: "conditions for learning, targeted behavioral interventions, school-police partnerships, and courts and juvenile justice... [as well as] information-sharing and data-collection issues" (p. xl). Amongst its recommendations, the report highlights guidelines for revising state laws related to school discipline, as well as for revising district codes of conduct (Morgan et al., 2014)

In 2015, the U.S. Department of Education published an additional report that the authors indicate builds upon aforementioned federal guidance documents published in 2014 (Osher et al., 2015). The purpose of the 2015 report is to provide concrete action steps for schools to identify and address disproportionality in disciplinary practices. The

authors urge school districts to evaluate data across several domains in order to develop a data-driven plan of action (Osher et al., 2015).

### **Guidance for Reform Specific to Senate Bill 100**

The Transforming School Discipline Collaborative (2016a, 2016b) has published two documents that provide guidelines for school districts to develop discipline policies and practices that align with the requirements of Senate Bill 100. The “Public Act 99-0456 School District Self-Assessment Checklist” organizes the requirements of Senate Bill 100 into several categories with additional questions for consideration and tips for implementation (TSDC, 2016a). The “TSDC’s Model Student Code of Conduct” provides guidance for developing policies and practices that not only adhere to the requirements of Senate Bill 100 but also incorporate additional practices to further address the problems associated with exclusionary discipline (TSDC, 2016b).

The requirements delineated in the TSDC (2016a, 2016b) documents reflect multiple points of overlap with federal guidance documents. For example, the following concepts are presented in federal guides and also reflected in guidance documents as key requirements of Senate Bill 100: eliminating zero-tolerance policies, increasing community involvement, addressing bullying, developing agreements for partnering with local law enforcement, limiting exclusionary discipline practices, providing support to students when excluded, and providing staff training (Morgan et al., 2014; Osher et al., 2015; TSDC, 2016a, 2016b; U.S. Department of Education, 2014).

### **Previous Studies Analyzing Discipline Policies**

Multiple studies have been conducted in order to glean information related to the discipline practices reflected in schools’ written codes of conduct. A review of available

literature has not resulted in the identification of similar studies conducted since the publication of Morgan et al. (2014), U.S. Department of Education (2014), Osher et al. (2015), or the effective date of Senate Bill 100 in 2016 (TSDC, 2016b).

In 2000, Fenning, Parraga, and Wilczynski published the results of a study in which the authors analyzed the content of school codes of conduct in order to determine the frequency with which various types of consequences were reflected in written policies. The results revealed punitive discipline, such as suspension and expulsion, to be reflected more frequently in codes of conduct than those consequences that represent a relatively more proactive response (Fenning et al., 2000).

In 2008, Fenning et al. conducted a study to expand upon previous findings. The authors described a two-pronged purpose: to collect data describing the time that school officials dedicate to discipline and to analyze the content of written discipline policies used in Illinois schools. The findings of the 2008 study were consistent with that of the 2000 study with results that reflected a majority of those disciplinary practices described in written codes of conduct to be exclusionary or punitive in nature, even as a response to relatively mild behaviors (Fenning et al., 2008).

In 2012, Fenning et al. further expanded the content analysis to include written discipline policies from high schools across six states. The results of this study again indicated exclusionary practices, such as suspension and expulsion, to occur frequently within written policies across all six states. The states, however, demonstrated variability in the frequency with which exclusionary practices were indicated as a consequence for minor behavioral infractions (Fenning et al., 2012).

## **Discipline Policies and Student Handbooks**

While discipline policy information may be present in a variety of school district documents, the aforementioned prior studies examined written codes of conduct as the source of information. The current study will also analyze the content of written codes of conduct, specifically those found in student handbooks, given the following requirement in Illinois School Code:

school authorities shall furnish a copy of the [student discipline] policy to the parents or guardian of each pupil within 15 days after the beginning of the school year, or within 15 days after starting classes for a pupil who transfers into the district during the school year, and the school board or governing body of a charter school shall require that a school inform its pupils of the contents of the policy. (105 ILCS 5/10-20.14 (a))

With this requirement, Illinois School Code stresses the right of parents and students to be informed of the school discipline policy. Distribution of the student handbook containing the discipline policy, either via paper or electronic copy, is a convenient method for schools to meet the Illinois School Code mandate and, therefore, may be the primary resource that students and families rely on for information about their rights and responsibilities.

### **Summary of Related Literature**

Theoretically, exclusionary discipline exists to enhance the learning environment and shape student behavior; however, the lack of evidence of positive outcomes, coupled with evidence of negative outcomes and disproportionality, suggests a need for reform (American Psychological Association Task Force on Zero Tolerance Policies, 2008;

Skiba et al., 2014; Skiba & Rausch, 2006). As a result, federal organizations have developed several documents in recent years to guide school districts in adapting disciplinary practices and related systems (Morgan et al., 2014; Osher et al., 2015; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Similar documents have also been published to support Illinois school districts in increasing compliance not only with best practices but also with the requirements of Senate Bill 100 (TSDC, 2016a, 2016b).

Prior studies that have evaluated written discipline policies have utilized content analysis methods to code and analyze content systematically (Fenning et al., 2008; Fenning et al., 2000; Fenning et al., 2012). The methods employed within those studies serve as a model for further research to assess school districts' response to Senate Bill 100. Given the use of student handbooks to meet the state mandate that schools distribute discipline policy information to parents and students, the analysis of student handbooks provides a consistent measure of analyzing discipline policy information in a format in which it is likely to be most commonly accessed.

## CHAPTER III

### METHOD

#### **Units of Analysis**

The units of analysis included the student handbooks of the public high schools (grades 9-12) in the selected suburban Illinois county. These were selected as the units of analysis in order to evaluate the code of conduct and discipline information presented to students and families across each school in the county. All high schools in the population selected included discipline policy information within the student handbook and published a copy of the handbook online for public access. No human subjects participated in the study, and individual schools were not directly named in the results.

As previously discussed, the purpose for focusing upon public high schools in a suburban county was to capitalize upon opportunities to utilize the results to provide direct recommendations and examples through available countywide professional development and networking opportunities. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2016) website, the selected county included 23 public high schools. All units of analysis within the population were included in the study; therefore, no sampling was required. While the handbooks, rather than the high schools, were the units of study, demographic information from the 2016-17 school year has been included in Appendix A in order to provide context of student composition and financial resources.

### **Instrumentation and Selection of Handbooks**

Data was collected from the 2015-16 and 2016-17 student handbooks of all 23 public high schools located within the selected suburban Illinois county. Each handbook was obtained via the school's public website during the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years. In a few instances, the handbook posted on a school's website was dated with a previous school year, such as 2014-15 during the 2015-16 school year, or with a multi-year span, such as 2014-16 (see Appendix B for two discrepancies in year of publication). These handbooks were included within the study so as to capture the information readily available to students and parents during the school year of focus.

### **Procedure**

#### **Content Analysis and Development of Coding System**

In order to measure the information found in the student handbooks, a content analysis method was employed (Babbie, 2016). According to Babbie, content analysis is “the study of recorded human communications, such as books, websites, paintings, and laws” (2016, p. 323). So that each handbook could be consistently evaluated with respect to the two research questions, a structured checklist was used to create a systematic coding system. The items included in the TSDC (2016a) Self-Assessment Checklist, which incorporates the requirements of Senate Bill 100, as well as related best practice suggestions, were transferred to a coding spreadsheet (see Appendix C for a copy of the TSDC Self-Assessment Checklist and see Appendix D for the coding spreadsheet derived from the checklist).

Within the coding spreadsheet, a separate column was dedicated to each of the



school's handbooks in each of the year's studied. For example, School A's 2015-16 handbook was coded in one column, followed by School A's 2016-17 handbook in the next column and School B's 2015-16 handbook in the third column. This allowed for each handbook's data to be recorded and evaluated separately. It also provided for easy comparison within the same school from one year to the next, as well as comparison between schools in the same year. Each school was randomly assigned as School A through School W, except for schools within the same district, which were assigned consecutive letters of the alphabet to allow for easy comparison and presentation of within-district data (see Appendix B for the composition of schools and districts).

### **Selection and Training of Coders**

After developing the coding system, the primary researcher conducted a training with a professor in school psychology and several graduate students in order to ensure use of a consistent content analysis procedure. During the training, attendees reviewed each item of the coding checklist to confirm a common understanding of the language. They then practiced with the application of a handbook that was not included in the study and agreed to a common interpretation of each item.

For the present study, the primary researcher coded each of the 46 handbooks (2 years of handbooks from each of the 23 public high schools). The professor and one of the graduate students each coded a subset of the handbooks so that multiple raters (i.e., the primary researcher and either the graduate professor or the graduate student) coded 18 of the 46 handbooks, or handbooks of 9 of the 23 high schools. In order to determine the rate of intercoder reliability, a percentage of agreement was calculated by dividing the

total number of categories that both raters coded identically by the total number of categories coded.

### **Coding Procedure**

In order to evaluate the handbooks based upon the coding system, each handbook was read, and the coder recorded a response for each of the items in the coding spreadsheet. The majority of the items required a recording of “Yes” or “No” to indicate whether the item was present or not present, respectively, in the handbook. Each of the coding system items that represented changes in law as a direct result of Senate Bill 100 required a “Yes” or “No” response to indicate presence or absence. Those elements were determined based upon a comparison of the TSDC checklist with the modifications made to Illinois School Code to incorporate the requirements of Senate Bill 100. In total, 17 of the coding system categories were identified as requirements of Senate Bill 100 (see Appendix D for 17 required categories indicated by bold text). The remaining categories were either present in Illinois School Code prior to Senate Bill 100, included in the Self-Assessment Checklist to capture best practice, or included in the study to gather additional related information.

Additional items on the coding spreadsheet required descriptive entries in order to gather additional information or examples. For instance, one item on the coding spreadsheet required the coder to record whether the handbook indicated suspension as a disciplinary consequence using a “Yes” or “No” response. If “Yes,” the subsequent item required the coder to specify those behaviors indicated in the handbook as leading to suspension. Rather than a “Yes” or “No” response, the coder listed verbatim those

behaviors specified in the handbook as infractions resulting in suspension.

### **Analysis Procedure**

Because the two research questions sought to analyze change based upon the adoption of Senate Bill 100, only the 17 coding system categories that reflect the requirements of Senate Bill 100 were utilized in the calculation of the results for each research question. Each category was coded as either present or not present for each handbook analyzed. Whether a “Yes” response or a “No” response was reflective of the Senate Bill 100 requirement for each of the 17 required categories is delineated in the coding system (see Appendix D). For example, one of the coding categories required the coder to record whether or not a zero-tolerance discipline policy was present in the handbook using a “Yes” or “No” response. For this item, a response of “No” was reflective of the Senate Bill 100 requirement.

In order to analyze the first research question, which sought to answer to what extent the handbooks reflected the Senate Bill 100 requirements during each of the years studied, a percentage of reflection was calculated for each school during the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years. This calculation was obtained by dividing the number of categories out of the 17 that were coded as reflective of the Senate Bill 100 requirement for a given school’s handbook in a given year divided by the total number of coding system categories required by Senate Bill 100, or 17. As an example, of the 17 coding system categories included in the calculation, School A’s 2015-16 handbook reflected the Senate Bill 100 requirement in 2 categories. Therefore, the percentage of compliance for School A in the 2015-16 school year was  $2/17$  or 12%. In response to the first research question,

the extent to which School A's 2015-16 handbook reflected the requirements of Senate Bill 100 was 12%.

In order to analyze the second research question, which sought to answer how schools reflected the Senate Bill 100 requirements during each of the years studied, a percentage of reflection was calculated for each of the 17 coding system categories that capture Senate Bill 100 requirements. This calculation was obtained by dividing the total number of handbooks for which the given category was coded as reflective of the Senate Bill 100 requirement during a particular school year by the total number of handbooks analyzed, which was 23 in each school year. For example, one of the 17 coding categories that reflected a requirement of Senate Bill 100 was whether or not the handbook indicated the presence of a zero-tolerance discipline policy. A coding of "No" indicated reflection of the Senate Bill 100 requirement. During the 2015-16 school year, 2 of the 23 handbooks were coded as compliant with this category; therefore, the percentage of reflection was calculated as  $2/23$ , or 9%. In response to the second research question regarding how schools reflected compliance with Senate Bill 100, 9% of 2015-16 handbooks reflected the Senate Bill 100 requirement to eliminate zero-tolerance discipline policies.

In answering both the first and second research questions, the absolute change was calculated by computing the difference between the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years in terms of the number of categories coded as reflective of the Senate Bill 100 requirement. For example, after calculating the percentages of reflection for the first research question, School A's handbook reflected 2 out of 17 Senate Bill 100

requirements in the 2015-16 school year and 5 out of 17 Senate Bill 100 requirements in the 2016-17 school year. The absolute change for School A between the two school years was 5-2, or an increase of 3 categories that reflected Senate Bill 100 requirements.

Additionally, the percentage change from the 2015-16 to the 2016-17 school year was computed by dividing the difference in the percentages between the two years by the initial percentage in 2015-16. Using the same example, the percentage change for School A between the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years was calculated as follows:  $((5/17) - (2/17)) / (2/17)$ , which results in a percentage change of 150%. Note that the fractions  $(5/17)$  were used in the calculation, rather than the percentages (29%) because the percentages reported were subject to rounding. Because of the nature of the percentage change computation, in which a denominator of 0 was possible, the percentage change could not be calculated in instances in which the 2015-16 percentage was 0; however, an absolute change was still calculated.

Finally, the calculations obtained for both research questions were summarized via range and median during each of the years analyzed, as well as the change between the two years. The range reflected the highest and lowest percentages calculated, and the median reflected the midpoint of the percentages when compared from least to greatest.

### **Reliability and Validity**

According to Babbie (2016) the content analysis method supports reliability because data can be recoded multiple times utilizing the same exact information. In order to capitalize upon this advantage, multiple raters were utilized to enhance the reliability of the results, and intercoder reliability was calculated. In order to obtain intercoder

reliability, two raters coded the 2015-16 and 2016-17 handbooks from 9 of the 23 public high schools, for a total of 18 handbooks. The coded results across the 17 coding categories included in calculations were compared across both raters. If both raters coded a category as “Yes” or “No” for a given school in a given year, the raters were considered to be in agreement. If one rater coded a category as “Yes” and the other rater coded the same category as “No” for a given school in a given year, the raters were considered to be in disagreement. Reliability was calculated by dividing the number of agreements by the total number of results coded (agreements plus disagreements). In the present study, intercoder reliability of 85% was achieved.

Babbie (2016) discusses that validity is more problematic than reliability with the content analysis method, as there are no controls over the content assessed given that the content is developed by each high school or school district. In order to strengthen the internal validity of the results, an established, research-based tool was utilized to develop the coding system and categories. As previously indicated, the coding system was consistent with the TSDC (2016a) Self-Assessment Checklist, which aligns with federal guidance documents and the requirements of Senate Bill 100 (see Appendix C for the TSDC Self-Assessment Checklist and Appendix D for the coding system). The 17 coding system categories utilized in calculating the study results were selected based upon a comparison between the checklist and the modifications made to Illinois School Code as a result of Senate Bill 100.

### **Ethical Considerations**

According to Babbie (2016), content analysis is considered unobtrusive research,

as the researcher does not intrude on the subject matter being studied. Because the study methodology involved the analysis of publicly available documents and did not involve the use of human subjects, there was no direct risk of harm to individuals as a result of the proposed study. Additionally, the reporting of collective results or individual results without the use of school names was utilized to further reduce the likelihood of negative effect.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### **Research Question 1**

The first research question that the present study sought to answer was as follows: To what extent, if any, have the student handbooks of public high schools in a suburban Illinois county been modified from the 2015-16 to the 2016-17 school year to reflect the requirements of Senate Bill 100? In order to answer this question, the following three subcomponents were answered:

- a. To what extent do the 2015-16 student handbooks reflect the requirements of Senate Bill 100? (pre-implementation)
- b. To what extent do the 2016-17 student handbooks reflect the requirements of Senate Bill 100? (post-implementation)
- c. To what extent have the student handbooks changed from 2015-16 to 2016-17 with respect to the requirements of Senate Bill 100?

#### **Research Question 1 Results**

The results for Research Question 1 were reported for each of the 23 public high schools located within the selected suburban county. Each high school's 2015-16 (pre-implementation) and 2016-17 (post-implementation) handbooks were coded to determine the extent to which the handbook reflected the 17 coding system categories identified as new Illinois School Code requirements introduced by Senate Bill 100. For each of the 23



high schools, the number and percentage of categories coded as reflective of the Senate Bill 100 requirement were reported for the two years studied, as well as the absolute and percentage (if available) changes between the two years. Table 1 contains the results of Research Question 1. Refer to the Methods section for a detailed description of how the calculations were obtained.

Table 1

*Reflection of Senate Bill 100 by School, Pre- and Post-Implementation*

School	2015-16 Number of Categories Reflective of SB100 (% of Categories)	2016-17 Number of Categories Reflective of SB100 (% of Categories)	Change from 2015-16 to 2016-17 (% Change)
A	2 (12%)	5 (29%)	+3 (150%)
B	2 (12%)	5 (29%)	+3 (150%)
C	2 (12%)	6 (35%)	+4 (200%)
D	2 (12%)	3 (18%)	+1 (50%)
E	4 (24%)	4 (24%)	0 (0%)
F	3 (18%)	3 (18%)	0 (0%)
G	3 (18%)	4 (24%)	+1 (33%)
H	4 (24%)	4 (24%)	0 (0%)
I	2 (12%)	5 (29%)	+3 (150%)
J	4 (24%)	10 (59%)	+6 (150%)
K	1 (6%)	3 (18%)	+2 (200%)
L	2 (12%)	4 (24%)	+2 (100%)
M	2 (12%)	4 (24%)	+2 (100%)

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N	2 (12%)	4 (24%)	+2 (100%)
O	3 (18%)	6 (35%)	+3 (100%)
P	3 (18%)	6 (35%)	+3 (100%)
Q	2 (12%)	6 (35%)	+4 (200%)
R	4 (24%)	11 (65%)	+7 (175%)
S	4 (24%)	11 (65%)	+7 (175%)
T	4 (24%)	15 (88%)	+11 (275%)
U	2 (12%)	11 (65%)	+9 (450%)
V	4 (24%)	14 (82%)	+10 (250%)
W	3 (18%)	13 (76%)	+10 (333%)

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*Note:* Percentages were calculated out of a total of 17 categories.

### **Research Question 1 Summary**

During the pre-implementation year (2015-16), the number of categories out of 17 that were coded as reflective of Senate Bill 100 requirements ranged from 1 (6%) to 4 (24%) in a handbook, with a median of 3 (18%). During the post-implementation year (2016-17), the number of categories out of 17 that were coded as reflective of Senate Bill 100 requirements ranged from 3 (18%) to 15 (88%) in a handbook, with a median of 5 (29%).

The change from 2015-16 to 2016-17 ranged from 0 categories, or no change, to +11 categories, meaning that an additional 11 categories in a school's 2016-17 handbook were coded as reflective of the Senate Bill 100 requirements beyond those in 2015-16. The percentage change ranged from 0% to 450%. No change was observed between the two years in 3 of the 23 high schools' handbooks. The handbooks of the remaining 20

high schools increased their reflection of the Senate Bill 100 requirements between the pre- and post- implementation years.

### **Research Question 2**

The second research question that the present study sought to answer was as follows: How have the student handbooks of public high schools in a suburban Illinois county been modified from the 2015-16 to the 2016-17 school years to reflect the requirements of Senate Bill 100? In order to answer this question, the following three subcomponents were answered:

- a. How do the 2015-16 student handbooks reflect the requirements of Senate Bill 100 (pre-implementation)?
- b. How do the 2016-17 student handbooks reflect the requirements of Senate Bill 100? (post-implementation)
- c. How have the student handbooks changed from 2015-16 to 2016-17 with respect to the requirements of Senate Bill 100?

### **Research Question 2 Results**

The results of Research Question 2 were reported according to the 17 unique coding system categories that reflect required changes to Illinois School Code due to Senate Bill 100. For each of the 17 categories, the number and percentage of student handbooks out of the population of 23 public high schools that reflected the requirements of Senate Bill 100 during 2015-16 (pre-implementation) and 2016-17 (post-implementation) were reported, as well as the absolute and percentage (if available) changes between the two years. Table 2 contains the results of Research Question 2. Refer to the Methods section for a detailed description of how the results were calculated.

Table 2

*Reflection of Senate Bill 100 by Category, Pre- and Post-Implementation*

Category	2015-16 Number of Schools Reflective of SB100 (% of Schools)	2016-17 Number of Schools Reflective of SB100 (% of Schools)	Change from 2015-16 to 2016-17 (% Change)
Zero-tolerance policies (No = Reflects SB100)	2 (9%)	13 (57%)	+11 (550%)
Monetary fees/fines (No = Reflects SB100)	20 (87%)	22 (96%)	+2 (10%)
Students encouraged to drop out (No = Reflects SB100)	23 (100%)	23 (100%)	0 (0%)
Limiting exclusionary discipline (Yes = Reflects SB100)	0 (0%)	10 (43%)	+10 (n/a)
Threat to safety or disruption (Yes = Reflects SB100)	0 (0%)	8 (35%)	+8 (n/a)
Determined on case-by-case basis (Yes = Reflects SB100)	2 (9%)	8 (35%)	+6 (300%)
Appropriate interventions exhausted (Yes = Reflects SB100)	0 (0%)	6 (26%)	+6 (n/a)
Non-exclusionary discipline documented (Yes = Reflects SB100)	0 (0%)	3 (13%)	+3 (n/a)
Efforts to minimize length (Yes = Reflects SB100)	0 (0%)	3 (13%)	+3 (n/a)

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District documents how length determined (Yes = Reflects SB100)	0 (0%)	5 (22%)	+5 (n/a)
Board determines in best interest of school (Yes = Reflects SB100)	0 (0%)	3 (13%)	+3 (n/a)
Written decision includes rationale for duration (Yes = Reflects SB100)	0 (0%)	3 (13%)	+3 (n/a)
Support services provided (Yes = Reflects SB100)	0 (0%)	6 (26%)	+6 (n/a)
Notice lists whether supports will be provided (Yes = Reflects SB100)	0 (0%)	5 (22%)	+5 (n/a)
Make-up work policy language (Yes = Reflects SB100)	12 (52%)	23 (100%)	+11 (92%)
Re-engagement policy language (Yes = Reflects SB100)	5 (22%)	16 (70%)	+11 (220%)
Professional development (Yes = Reflects SB100)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (n/a)

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*Note:* Percentages were calculated out of a total of 23 schools.

### **Coding System Category Descriptions and Results**

#### **Zero-tolerance policies.**

This category refers to the following language added to Illinois School Code (ILCS) as a result of Senate Bill 100: "Unless otherwise required by federal law or this Code, school boards may not institute zero-tolerance policies by which school

administrators are required to suspend or expel students for particular behaviors" (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (b-10)). For the purposes of this study, only those discipline policies that prescribed out-of-school suspension or expulsion as an automatic consequence for a given behavior coded as including a zero-tolerance policy. Discipline policies that included out-of-school suspension or expulsion as a possible, but not automatic, consequence were not coded as indicative of a zero-tolerance policy, since contextual factors can be taken into account when a consequence is not applied automatically. Similarly, policies that prescribed automatic consequences other than out-of-school suspension or expulsion, such as a warning, detention, or in-school suspension, were not coded as indicative of a zero-tolerance policy since Senate Bill 100 specifically restricts policies that mandate exclusionary discipline.

Of those schools that continued to include zero-tolerance policies resulting in out-of-school suspension during the post-implementation year, out-of-school suspension was prescribed as an automatic consequence for behaviors including: hazing, fighting, violent threats, possession/distribution of substances, gang activity, arson, failure to comply with a search, failure to complete an in-school suspension or Saturday detention, and excessive tardiness. The three schools that included zero-tolerance policies resulting in expulsion in the post-implementation year cite the consequence for behaviors including: gang activity, distribution of substances, repeated offenses involving possession/use of substances, and a tenth code of conduct violation. None of the handbooks cited the ILCS language specifically banning zero-tolerance policies resulting in exclusionary discipline.

It should be noted that an additional eight post-implementation handbooks included language from ILCS requiring expulsion resulting from the use or possession of

a weapon, with the ability to modify this requirement on a case-by-case basis and at the superintendent's discretion. Because the language in Senate Bill 100 specifies that zero-tolerance policies resulting in suspension or expulsion not be used "unless otherwise required by federal law or this Code" (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (b-10)), handbooks that listed the ILCS language related to weapons as the only zero-tolerance policy were not included in the calculation as having a zero-tolerance policy present, as this policy still meets the requirements of ILCS as amended following Senate Bill 100.

**Monetary fees/fines.**

As a result of Senate Bill 100, the following language was added to ILCS: "A student may not be issued a monetary fee or fine as a disciplinary consequence, though this shall not preclude requiring a student to provide restitution for lost, stolen, or damaged property" (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (i)). In the year prior to implementation, fines were observed for parking violations, failure to clean out a locker, and retribution for violation of a technology policy. In the year following implementation, one handbook continued to reference a monetary fine for failure to clean out a locker.

**Students encouraged to drop out.**

The following language was added to ILCS with Senate Bill 100: "School officials shall not advise or encourage students to drop out voluntarily due to behavioral or academic difficulties" (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (h)). In both the pre-implementation and post-implementation years, no handbooks included statements encouraging students to drop out. In the post-implementation year, eight handbooks cited the new ILCS language banning school officials from encouraging students to drop out.

While not coded as explicitly encouraging students to drop out, four post-implementation handbooks included language indicating that students would be withdrawn from either classes or school for reasons related to truancy. The circumstances under which this might occur ranged from broad statements that excessive absences may lead to students being withdrawn from school to more specific scenarios, including students potentially being withdrawn from school after missing ten consecutive without parental notice, failing to enroll in five classes after 17 years of age, or missing 20% of the last six months of school.

**Limiting exclusionary discipline.**

With Senate Bill 100, the following language related to limiting exclusionary discipline was added to ILCS: "School officials shall limit the number and duration of expulsions and suspensions to the greatest extent practicable, and it is recommended that they use them only for legitimate educational purposes" (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (b-5)). The ten handbooks that reflected this requirement in the post-implementation year did so in one of two ways. Seven handbooks included, verbatim, the first clause of the sentence above that was adopted into ILCS. Three handbooks included a statement that administration would prioritize students remaining in school. These three handbooks came from schools in the same district. None of the post-implementation handbooks specified how school administrators would limit exclusionary discipline.

While several handbooks referenced limiting exclusionary or prioritizing non-exclusionary discipline, all pre- and post-implementation handbooks included out-of-school suspension and expulsion as potential disciplinary consequences that may be used. In the pre-implementation year, all handbooks listed examples of behaviors that could



lead to either out-of-school suspension and/or expulsion. These behaviors were often classified as “gross disobedience or misconduct;” common examples included: fighting, theft, vandalism, arson, gang involvement, substance use, possession of weapons, and repeated code of conduct violations. In the post-implementation year, several schools adapted their handbooks by making the discipline policy less specific or prescribed. Rather than linking examples of behavioral violations to potential consequences, these schools listed all examples of behavioral violations followed by a list of a range of disciplinary consequences that could be issued (with the caveat that neither of the lists is exhaustive).

**Threat to safety or disruption.**

This category refers to the following language added to ILCS as a result of Senate Bill 100: "Out-of-school suspensions of 3 days or less may be used only if the student's continuing presence in school would pose a threat to school safety or a disruption to other students' learning opportunities" (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (b-15)). The eight handbooks that reflected this requirement in the post-implementation year did so by including the ILCS language verbatim.

**Determined on case-by-case basis.**

Following Senate Bill 100, ILCS requires that the “threat to school safety or a disruption to other students' learning opportunities shall be determined on a case-by-case basis by the school board or its designee” (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (b-15)). The handbooks included in the study reflected this requirement either by citing the ILCS language verbatim, by stating that the determination of the use of exclusionary discipline will be made on a case-by-case basis, or by stating that disciplinary decisions in general, whether

resulting in exclusionary or non-exclusionary discipline, will be made on a case-by-case basis.

**Appropriate interventions exhausted.**

In addition to the aforementioned threat to safety or disruption requirement, ILCS added the following language related to issuing exclusionary discipline: "Unless otherwise required by this Code, out-of-school suspensions longer than 3 days, expulsions, and disciplinary removals to alternative schools may be used only if other appropriate and available behavioral and disciplinary interventions have been exhausted..." 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (b-20). The six handbooks that reflected this in the post-implementation year included the ILCS language verbatim. None of the handbooks included examples of what those behavioral and disciplinary interventions might or how school administration would determine that all options had been exhausted.

**Non-exclusionary discipline documented.**

As an extension of the requirement that schools exhaust non-exclusionary discipline prior to excluding a student for more than three days, ILCS requires that "it shall be documented whether other interventions were attempted or whether it was determined that there were no other appropriate and available interventions" (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (b-20)). In the post-implementation year, three handbooks from the same district indicated that a written notice of exclusion longer than three days would document other forms of discipline that had been attempted. In a section that described the procedures to be followed with suspensions and expulsions, the three handbooks stipulated that notices of out-of-school suspension of 4 days or more would list behavioral interventions attempted.

**Efforts to minimize length.**

With Senate Bill 100, the following language was added to ILCS: "School officials shall make all reasonable efforts to resolve such threats, address such disruptions, and minimize the length of suspensions to the greatest extent practicable" (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (b-15)). Three handbooks included this language verbatim in the post-implementation year. None of those handbooks further specified examples of what those efforts might be.

**District documents how length determined.**

With respect to minimizing the length of exclusionary discipline, ILCS states that "the suspension decision shall also include a rationale as to the specific duration of the suspension" (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (b)). Five post-implementation handbooks included this language when referencing written notices of out-of-school suspension. Each of the handbooks stated that the rationale would be included in the notice but did not elaborate with factors that administrators might consider or a guidance tool that would be utilized in decision-making.

**Board determines in best interest of school.**

With Senate Bill 100, the following language was added to ILCS: "If the board acts to expel a pupil, the written expulsion decision shall detail the specific reasons why removing the pupil from the learning environment is in the best interest of the school" (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (a)). The three post-implementation handbooks that reflected this requirement did so by including the ILCS language verbatim in sections describing expulsion procedures.

**Written decision includes rationale for duration.**

Additionally, ILCS requires that “the expulsion decision shall also include a rationale as to the specific duration of the expulsion” (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (a)). While five post-implementation handbooks included language specifying that notices of out-of-school suspension would include rationale for the duration, three post-implementation handbooks included the ILCS language that notices of expulsion would include a rationale for the duration. Those three handbooks included the ILCS language verbatim within sections describing expulsion procedures.

**Support services provided.**

The changes to ILCS brought about by Senate Bill 100 require that "students who are suspended out-of-school for longer than 4 school days shall be provided appropriate and available support services during the period of their suspension” (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (b-25)). Of the 23 post-implementation handbooks, six indicated that appropriate support services would be provided in instances of suspension of either 4 days or more or 5 days or more, both of which meet the Senate Bill 100 stipulations. None of the handbooks gave examples of possible support services or how administrators would determine those services that would be provided.

**Notice lists whether supports will be provided.**

With respect to providing support services, ILCS states that, within a notice of exclusion for longer than 4 school days, “it shall be documented whether such services are to be provided or whether it was determined that there are no such appropriate and available services” (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (b-25)). Five handbooks reflected this notification requirement in the post-implementation year, all five of which were also

included in the group that cites the ILCS language regarding providing support services. The reason that one of the six handbooks from the previous category that included a statement about providing support services did not reflect this requirement of notification is because that handbook did not discuss the contents of notifications of exclusionary discipline. None of the handbooks included in this category elaborated upon how officials might determine that no services are appropriate or available; they simply stated that a notice of exclusion of 5 days or more would include any such services.

**Make-up work policy language.**

With respect to make-up work, Senate Bill 100 requires that "a school district shall create a policy by which suspended pupils, including those pupils suspended from the school bus who do not have alternate transportation to school, shall have the opportunity to make up work for equivalent academic credit" (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (b-30)). During the pre-implementation year, twelve handbooks referenced policies whereby students could make up work for full credit during an out-of-school suspension. The remaining pre-implementation handbooks either did not reference policy related to making up work during suspension or referenced a policy with some type of academic penalty. Examples of the latter included: not allowing students to make up any missed work, with the rationale being that the academic penalty is part of the behavioral consequence; allowing students to make up all work on the first but not subsequent suspensions; allowing students to make up only major tests, quizzes, and/or projects; or some combination of these.

Additionally, two handbooks that were coded as not reflective of the Senate Bill 100 requirement were coded as such because of conflicting language within the

handbook. In one of these handbooks, one page stated that work made up while suspended will receive full credit, while another page stated that work may not receive full credit. In the other handbook, one page stated that all work could be made up for full credit, but another page stated that full credit would not be granted during any suspensions after the student's first.

During the post-implementation year, all 23 handbooks reflected a make-up work policy reflective of the requirements of Senate Bill 100 with excluded students able to make up all work for full credit. The majority of the handbooks included the ILCS language, "make up work for equivalent academic credit" (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (b-30)). Some handbooks included additional directions for make-up work, such as students must contact the teacher for work either while out of school or upon return to school or work must be done at a time convenient to the teacher. Two handbooks from the same district included contradictory statements regarding deadlines: in one place, the handbook indicated a deadline of 48 hours from the time that the student returns to school, and in another place, a deadline of the number of days that the student was excluded. Nine of the post-implementation handbooks also included specific information as to how parents and students could secure missed work. Examples included that requested assignments could be picked up in the Guidance office or that students must request and obtain assignments from each teacher.

**Re-engagement policy language.**

Following an exclusionary consequence, "a school district shall create a policy to facilitate the re-engagement of students who are suspended out-of-school, expelled or returning from an alternative school setting" (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (b-25)). Each of the

pre-implementation handbooks that referenced a re-engagement policy, which included high schools in two districts, required a conference with the student, parent, and administrator or dean after a student completed an out-of-school suspension of five days or more. Three of the handbooks from schools in the same district also indicated that re-entry meetings could be required following suspensions of shorter durations at the discretion of the dean. It should be noted that four additional pre-implementation handbooks that were representative of two districts included statements that a student and parent may be requested to meet with a dean prior to re-entry. These handbooks were not coded as reflective of the Senate Bill 100 requirement during the pre-implementation year, however, as it is unclear as to whether a re-engagement policy existed based on the language as written.

In the post-implementation year, the handbooks that reflected the Senate Bill 100 requirement with respect to a re-engagement policy did so in a variety of ways. Twelve handbooks included the language from Senate Bill 100 verbatim, indicating that a re-engagement policy exists. Eight of those twelve handbooks added additional statements communicating what the school's specific policy is. Many handbooks included a policy of holding re-engagement meetings after a period of exclusion of any duration, with the purpose of the meeting described as supporting school success and providing time to make up work. The four handbooks that reflected the Senate Bill 100 requirement in a manner other than quoting the language in the law verbatim did so by stating a specific policy, such as that re-entry meetings would be required after all out-of-school suspensions or after out-of-school suspensions of five days or more.

**Professional development.**

Finally, Senate Bill 100 added the following language regarding training to ILCS:

School districts shall make reasonable efforts to provide ongoing professional development to teachers, administrators, school board members, school resource officers, and staff on the adverse consequences of school exclusion and justice-system involvement, effective classroom management strategies, culturally responsive discipline, and developmentally appropriate disciplinary methods that promote positive and healthy school climates. (105 ILCS 5/10-22.6 (c-5))

During both the pre-implementation and post-implementation years, no handbooks referenced staff training on the noted topics. Furthermore, none of the handbooks included any information about staff training or professional development plans.

**Research Question 2 Summary**

During the pre-implementation year (2015-16), the number of schools out of 23 reflected the Senate Bill 100 requirement for a given category ranged from 0 (0%) to 23 (100%) with a median of 0 (0%). The 6 categories with which at least one school was coded as reflective of Senate Bill 100 during the 2015-16 school year included: zero-tolerance policies, monetary fees/fines, students encouraged to drop out, suspensions determined on a case-by-case basis, make-up work policy, and re-engagement policy.

During the post-implementation year (2016-17), the number of schools coded as reflective of Senate Bill 100 for a given category ranged from 0 (0%) to 23 (100%) with a median of 6 (26%). The only category in which none of the post-implementation handbooks reflected the Senate Bill 100 requirement was the category mandating that professional development be provided on certain topics. The remaining 16 required



Senate Bill 100 categories were reflected in at least 3 schools' handbooks.

The change from 2015-16 to 2016-17 ranged from 0 schools, or no change, to +11 schools, meaning that an additional 11 schools were coded as reflecting the Senate Bill 100 requirements in 2016-17 beyond those coded in 2015-16. The percentage change ranged from 0% to 550%. The greatest change (+11) was observed in the following three categories: zero-tolerance policies, make-up work policy, and re-engagement policy. No change was observed between the two years in 2 of the 17 categories. These included whether the handbooks indicated that students were encouraged to drop out, which remained consistent at 100% reflection in handbooks in both years, and whether the handbooks indicated that professional development was provided on specified topics, which remained consistent at 0% reflection in both years. The remaining categories reflected an increase in the number of handbooks reflecting Senate Bill 100 requirements between 2015-16 and 2016-17.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

#### **Interpretation of Findings**

##### **Research Question 1**

With Research Question 1, the researcher sought to answer the extent to which student handbooks reflected the requirements of Senate Bill 100 during pre- and post-implementation years, as well as the extent to which those handbooks changed between the two years. Given differences in resources between schools, including funding, personnel, and access to legal or consultative support, and the likelihood of varying levels of expertise, motivation, and training related to modifying disciplinary practices, the researcher anticipated differences between schools. However, because the requirements of Senate Bill 100 were state-mandated, the researcher expected to observe an increase in reflection of these requirements across all schools' handbooks between the two years examined.

The findings related to Research Question 1 partially matched the researcher's hypothesis. As anticipated, the handbooks varied with respect to the degree with which they reflected the Senate Bill 100 requirements during both pre- and post-implementation years. Additionally, the majority (20 out of 23) of schools' handbooks demonstrated an increase in their reflection of Senate Bill 100 requirements from pre- to post-implementation years. This finding is likely indicative of some level of awareness of

the requirements of Senate Bill 100 and efforts on the part of school personnel to reflect those within the school's written code of conduct. The results do not reveal, however, whether changes were made that were not reflected in the student handbooks or, conversely, whether the changes indicated in each handbook were fully implemented.

The three schools (Schools E, F, and H) whose handbooks did not reflect change from pre- to post-implementation represent an unexpected result. School E belongs to a two-school district with School D, but the two schools did not publish the same handbook in either year examined. School F is the only high school in its district. School H is one of four high schools in a district in which each school's handbook consisted of a section that was common amongst all schools and an individualized section, and School H is the only school of the four with a handbook that did not reflect any change in reflection of Senate Bill 100 requirements. Based on this, it appears that the school districts to which Schools E and H belong left reflection of the Senate Bill 100 requirements up to the schools rather than overseeing this from the district level. Without support from the district level, including the district adopting Senate Bill 100 and discipline reform as a prioritized initiative, variation in adoption across each building will most certainly be observed.

Given the results of Research Question 1, it is clear that the adoption of a law with the expectation of a consistent level of implementation by all impacted parties is impractical when those parties have varying resources, knowledge, and motivation to accomplish the mandates. In order to achieve the impact for which Senate Bill 100 was adopted, additional steps must be taken so that all schools have sufficient support and training to be able to implement the changes set forth in Senate Bill 100.

## Research Question 2

With Research Question 2, the researcher sought knowledge of how the handbooks reflected the requirements of Senate Bill 100 in each year examined, as well as those areas in which changes were made between the two years. The researcher anticipated that categories in which the requirement could be reflected via simply excluding certain language (e.g., excluding language indicative of school personnel encouraging students to drop out) would be the easiest to achieve and, therefore, have relatively higher rates of reflection in handbooks compared with other categories. It was also expected that those categories that involved action or participation on the part of the student and/or parent (e.g., how to access homework when excluded from school) would be more likely to be present in handbooks than those categories that solely reflected action or participation of the school (e.g., training for personnel).

As with Research Question 1, the results partially met the researcher's expectations. No handbooks included language suggestive of encouraging students to drop out and, therefore, all schools examined reflected the relevant Senate Bill 100 requirement in both pre- and post-implementation years. Schools also frequently increased reflection of Senate Bill 100 requirements between the two years by adding language to the handbook related to procedures requiring action on the part of the student, including policies on make-up work and re-engagement following a period of exclusion. Furthermore, of the 23 schools, 11 increased their handbook's reflection of Senate Bill 100 requirements between the two years by removing language and formulas related to zero-tolerance policies. (Two schools did not include zero-tolerance policies in either the pre- or post-implementation years.)

While 13 handbooks reflected the requirements of Senate Bill 100 related to zero-tolerance policies in the post-implementation year, it is important to note that 20 of the 23 handbooks continued to include at least one zero-tolerance policy in the post-implementation year that resulted in non-exclusionary discipline, such as detention or in-school suspension. This could be suggestive of a willingness on the part of the school district to make changes in order to comply with the requirements of Senate Bill 100 but that those responsible for the changes may be overlooking the intent that administrators take contextual factors into account when assigning disciplinary consequences.

Alternatively, one must consider the practicality of weighing contextual variables in every single disciplinary case. Given that the majority of the behaviors that resulted in automatic consequences in the post-implementation year were related to tardiness, truancy, or parking violations, which are likely high frequency behavioral violations in the high school setting, it may be nearly impossible to give thorough consideration to the consequences in every situation. This example seems to be illustrative of the challenges that schools face when applying changes in law to practice and attempting to balance the spirit of the law with resource limitations, particularly time and personnel. While schools can reflect changes in the handbook, it is necessary to consider how these changes can be made so that they are feasible, sustainable, and impact students in the manner intended.

One finding that came as a surprise to the researcher was the relatively low number of schools that added language to the post-implementation handbook related to procedures required when excluding students from school, such as required documentation and components of written notices. Since these policies only specify the actions of the district and do not necessarily require action on the part of the student or

parent, it is likely that more schools are in compliance with these requirements than those that reflect this requirement in their handbooks, as schools may implement the requirements and/or reference them in policy manuals without including them in the student handbook.

Regardless, Senate Bill 100's requirement that schools notify families and students of disciplinary decisions and the factors that weigh into decision-making when exclusionary discipline is used is indicative of a prioritization of enhanced transparency with parents and students regarding their rights concerning student discipline. Additionally, the mandates for individualized decision-making, rather than zero-tolerance policies, with consideration of several factors prior to excluding a student from school, are reflective of an emphasis on student-centeredness. Therefore, even if a school's practices or written policies outside of the student handbook comply with Senate Bill 100, if critical information is not reflected in the documents that parents and students are most easily and likely able to access, such as the student handbook, school administrators must consider how they are meeting the spirit of the law around transparency and student-centeredness as it relates to student discipline information.

While it may be difficult to include every aspect of Senate Bill 100 within one document and still make it user-friendly for the purpose of accessing critical information, those schools that reflected the requirements of Senate Bill 100 related to notices of exclusionary discipline were able to accomplish this within sections of the handbook with titles such as, "Due Process Procedures" or "Suspensions and Expulsions." These sections referenced relevant board policy sections but included in plain language those due process procedures that students are afforded when accused of a behavioral

infraction, as well as what students and parents can expect in the decision-making and notification process. For example, handbooks in each of the schools in one district included three sentences, each sentence specifying what would be included in a notice of exclusionary discipline of (1) three days or less, (2) four to ten days, and (3) five to ten days.

As an additional example, the one school that reflected 15 of the 17 Senate Bill 100 categories in its post-implementation handbook included all but the category regarding professional development, which no school reflected and does not directly inform students about their rights, and the category regarding limiting exclusionary discipline. All of the handbooks that reflected the requirement to limit exclusionary discipline did so with the addition of one sentence that either quoted the ILCS language or stated that administration would prioritize non-exclusionary discipline. Therefore, with the addition of one sentence, that handbook could have feasibly informed families about all of the essential changes to students' rights related to discipline brought about by Senate Bill 100.

### **Limitations of Research**

The methods utilized in the current study present several limitations in addressing the research questions. First, the coding process can lead to errors in interpretation. So, although 85% intercoder reliability was achieved, raters coded 15% of the categories differently. This could be due to differences in interpretation of the language in the handbook or errors in close reading. The use of content analysis is beneficial, as the content could readily be reviewed when raters were in disagreement; however, there is still the possibility that both raters make an error or that differences in interpretation

cannot be easily resolved. Furthermore, in instances of disagreement in this study, the coders did not have an opportunity to discuss and resolve the disagreement, so the primary researcher's coding was reported as the final result.

Second, utilizing student handbooks as the sole source of data can lead to overinterpretation of limited information. Aspects of a school's policies or practices may not be represented in the student handbook. For example, a school might include the required information in policy manuals or in written notices of exclusionary discipline; however, the student handbook may not indicate this. Additionally, the language in the handbook may lack clarity or completeness to be able to fully understand whether a school's practice complies with the requirements of Senate Bill 100. For example, several handbooks referenced ticketing as a consequence for a parking violation; however, whether ticketing includes a monetary fine was not consistently clear. In these examples, the language was coded at face value without making an assumption; however, greater accuracy would be achieved with additional clarification.

Third, the information written in the handbooks may not accurately reflect actual school practices and procedures. Because school personnel are responsible for implementing policy, human error, bias, interpretation, and motivation all factor into a school's actual compliance with legal mandates. For example, schools in this study most frequently met the requirement of eliminating zero-tolerance policies by changing language such as "will result in out-of-school suspension" to "may result in out-of-school suspension." While on paper this change ultimately complies with Senate Bill 100, as demonstration of that specific behavior no longer automatically results in an out-of-school suspension, it begs the question of whether the change in language has been



accompanied by an equivalent change in practice. Regardless of the change in language reflected in the policy, school administrators could easily continue to use out-of-school suspension as the consequence for that behavior on most or all occasions based on habit, personal beliefs, or a lack of motivation to seek alternatives. On a related point, the use of compulsory district-level policies and the availability of guides, such as model handbooks or policy subscription services, may influence the language included within a school's student handbook without having any impact on practice. Because of this, the table in Appendix B denotes those schools within the study that are within the same district, as well as those schools within a district that used the same 2015-16 and/or 2016-17 handbooks.

Furthermore, one reason for choosing to analyze student handbooks is because these documents are publicly available and easily accessed by parents and students, thereby representing transparent communication about a school's policies and practices. In order to include the same information available to any interested consumer, the handbook posted on the school's website during each of the 2015-16 and 2016-17 school years was the handbook included in the study. One limitation of this approach is that a handbook or a school's practices may have been updated but not posted to the website in a timely manner. During the pre-implementation year (2015-16), one school in the study posted a handbook labeled 2014-16, and two different schools in the same district posted handbooks labeled 2014-15 (see Appendix B for the school/district composition). All schools posted handbooks labeled 2016-17 during the initial year of Senate Bill 100 implementation.

Finally, the selection of subjects did not utilize randomization and was limited to

high schools in a suburban county that is not representative of the larger population of schools throughout the state of Illinois. These subjects were selected for the purpose of sharing information and advocating for continuous improvement within the schools in the county examined. The findings are limited, however, in their representation of how Illinois schools overall have responded to the requirements of Senate Bill 100.

### **Implications for Future Research**

For decades prior to the implementation of Senate Bill 100, studies had identified significant adverse effects resulting from the use of exclusionary discipline without substantial change to practice as a result (U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division & U.S. Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights, 2014). In Illinois, the requirements of Senate Bill 100 attempted to create changes that aligned with recommendations made in federal guidance documents. Previously mentioned examples of this overlap included: eliminating zero-tolerance policies, increasing community involvement, addressing bullying, developing agreements for partnering with local law enforcement, limiting exclusionary discipline practices, providing support to students when excluded, and providing staff training (Morgan et al., 2014; Osher et al., 2015; TSDC, 2016a, 2016b; U.S. Department of Education, 2014). The present findings include observed increases in the elimination of zero-tolerance policies, inclusion of policies and procedures to limit exclusionary discipline, and the provision of supports for students who are excluded, including an increase in make-up work and re-engagement policies.

Additionally, previous studies that analyzed discipline policies prior to the year in which Senate Bill 100 was first implemented indicated that punitive discipline was used more frequently than proactive consequences, with observations of exclusionary

discipline being applied to relatively minor behavioral infractions (Fenning et al., 2000; Fenning et al., 2008; Fenning et al., 2012). Although the scope of the present study does not provide for comparisons between the frequency of use of punitive versus proactive consequences, the results do suggest increased limitations in the use of exclusionary discipline, particularly as a consequence for minor infractions, based on the observed elimination of zero-tolerance policies, changes in notification requirements, and additional considerations made in the determination that exclusionary discipline is warranted.

While the findings suggest movement toward the goals of Senate Bill 100 to combat the negative outcomes associated with exclusionary discipline, disproportionality, and the school-to-prison pipeline, this movement is limited to strict compliance with some of the legal requirements that can be captured via descriptive policy and procedure. In addition to the factors that could not be studied due to the limitations of the present research, the larger question that remains unknown is whether the changes observed in the current findings have led or will lead to a change in the negative outcomes associated with exclusionary discipline. Even if studies are completed that indicate that schools are implementing the requirements of Senate Bill 100 with complete fidelity, it is still necessary to determine whether doing so accomplishes the desired results.

Because of the limited information available via student handbooks, an initial suggestion for future research involves the incorporation of additional data in order to determine changes that schools have made but have not been captured in the handbook. Policy manuals, examples of written notices, professional development plans, and other relevant documents would help to increase the accuracy of the data gathered and identify

inconsistencies within schools. This would provide a better understanding of whether schools are in compliance with requirements of documentation and written notices created when excluding students from school, which was one of the results that came as a surprise due to its relatively low levels of compliance based on an analysis of handbooks alone.

To gain an even greater depth of understanding of schools' compliance with Senate Bill 100, a future study might also expand beyond document analysis to analyze a school's daily practices. Methods such as interviews, surveys, focus groups, and observation, as well as analysis of actual discipline data, would be beneficial in studying a school's practices in depth. This would help to overcome the limitation of knowing whether the information in the handbook is reflective of actual practice. For example, while the findings revealed that schools frequently increased compliance with Senate Bill 100 by eliminating zero-tolerance policies in the handbooks, all schools continued to include out-of-school suspension and expulsion as potential consequences. Additional information, potentially gleaned via methods such as surveys and interviews, is necessary to determine whether the elimination of zero-tolerance policies in the handbook has resulted in an equivalent change in practice, or whether school personnel are continuing to follow prescriptive formulas in issuing exclusionary discipline.

In order to continue to add to the available knowledge related to this topic, a logical next step would be to expand the study beyond one county. The author is aware of one such study utilizing the author's coding system to analyze a sample of student handbooks from counties throughout Illinois. This would allow for comparison across schools of similar or dissimilar characteristics, as well as identification of those schools

that may serve as exemplars and those in need of additional support or training. The data would also provide an indicator of the impact of the law throughout the state.

Additionally, because the current study analyzes student handbooks in the first year of implementation of Senate Bill 100 (2015-16), additional information can be gathered through repeating the study with handbooks published in subsequent years. This would serve to identify changes made since the initial year of implementation, including whether schools have continued to increase compliance, have remained steady since the first post-implementation year, or have reverted away from compliance. More recent data would also help with reflection and suggestions for growth in general and for individual schools by using the most current information as the baseline.

Finally, while each of the previous suggestions expands upon the current study in order to capture more information about schools' compliance with Senate Bill 100, future research must be completed to determine the actual impact of these changes. Suggestions include examining whether changes have occurred with respect to the use of exclusionary discipline, rates of disproportionality, and short- and long-term outcomes such as academic performance, attendance, graduation rates, and imprisonment. Furthermore, because successful change requires shifts in stakeholders' motivations (Adelman & Taylor, 2007), additional research might be done to capture changes in attitudes and bias on the part of school personnel.

### **Implications for Practice**

The current results provide an initial snapshot of schools' compliance with the requirements of Senate Bill 100 and the changes that schools made in response to implementation of the law. The information will not only help stakeholders associated

with individual schools reflect on changes they have made and areas for continued growth, but the overall data suggests implications for next steps in general.

As a whole, the high schools in the county studied made changes from the pre-implementation year to the post-implementation year that reflected increased compliance with Senate Bill 100. With respect to next steps, the information gleaned suggests that schools can continue to increase compliance through the inclusion of procedural information related to exclusionary discipline. While it is possible that this information is available in other documents or is implemented in practice without being written, including explicit language in the student handbook contributes to increased transparency with students and parents, which may, in turn, also lead to greater consistency with respect to implementation. Given that one of the school's post-implementation handbooks reflected compliance with 82% of the categories coded, an example is available for how to integrate the requirements of Senate Bill 100 into the format and purpose of a student handbook.

While it is important that school personnel continue to examine and attain compliance with the requirements of Senate Bill 100, both from a legal perspective and to put forth the greatest effort to achieve the intended outcomes, the larger steps will be related to systemic changes in positive and punitive practices in schools. This is because without actual changes in practice, minimum compliance with Senate Bill 100 can arguably be met via checkboxes on documents and school personnel going through the motions. In order to achieve systemic improvements, the changes that can be captured in a handbook are one component, but “there is [also] a need for a strong science base, leadership, and adequate resources for capacity building (Adelman & Taylor, 2007).

Knoff (2000) describes the unique skills and position of school psychologists to effect change within the realm of school discipline but cautions that school psychologists cannot accomplish this feat alone; the support of administration and other stakeholders is critical, programming and activities must be implemented, and change should be expected to take a year or longer.

Given that timeline, it would be unrealistic to expect the present findings to indicate full compliance with Senate Bill 100 with the publication of a school's first post-implementation handbook. Likewise, school personnel should not expect to make changes to a handbook to minimally comply with Senate Bill 100 and be done with their work related to school discipline reform. With this in mind, findings that schools have made changes to policies and procedures reflected in their handbooks to align with the requirements of Senate Bill 100 is a promising start, but in practice, significant collaborative work must be done in order to increase the likelihood that those initial changes produce the outcomes that the law intended.

APPENDIX A  
SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS, 2016-17



Student Characteristic	Average	Range	State Average
Enrollment (Number of Students)	2,156	449-3,698	n/a
White	56%	30%-75%	48.5%
Black	7%	2%-20%	17%
Hispanic	22%	6%-62%	26%
Asian	11%	4%-26%	5%
Low Income	28%	7-54%	50%
English Learners	3%	0-12%	11%
With Disabilities	11%	7-17%	14%
Homeless	1%	0-3%	2%
Attendance	94%	92-97%	94%
Meet or Exceed ACT College Readiness Benchmarks	64%	37-85%	51%
Instructional Spending per Pupil	\$9,991	\$7,387-\$12,862	\$7,853

*Note:* State average includes all grade levels. Figures calculated based on data from “Illinois School Report Card,” by Illinois State Board of Education. Retrieved from <https://www.illinoisreportcard.com/Default.aspx>. Copyright 2018 by Illinois State Board of Education.

APPENDIX B  
SCHOOL/DISTRICT COMPOSITION

School	Schools Belong to Same District	Schools Published Same 2015-16 Handbook	Schools Published Same 2016-17 Handbook
A	A/B		
B			***
C			
D	D/E		
E			
F		**	
G	G/H/I/J	G/H/I/J*	G/H/I/J*
H		G/H/I/J*	G/H/I/J*
I		G/H/I/J*	G/H/I/J*
J		G/H/I/J*	G/H/I/J*
K			
L	L/M	L/M	L/M
M			
N			
O	O/P	O/P	O/P
P			
Q			
R	R/S/T	R/S/T	R/S/T
S			
T			
U			
V	V/W		
W			

\* Handbooks for schools in this district were comprised of one section that was the same for all schools in the district and a second section that was unique to each school.

\*\* Pre-implementation handbook was labeled 2014-16.

\*\*\* Post-implementation handbook was labeled 2015-16.

APPENDIX C  
TSDC SELF-ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST




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## Public Act 99-0456 School District Self-Assessment Checklist

**Public Act 99-0456<sup>1</sup> creates new discipline and training requirements that apply to all publicly-funded schools in Illinois, including charter schools. Please use this checklist to update and revise your school discipline policies.**

All school districts<sup>2</sup> must comply with Public Act 99-0456 by September 15, 2016.

**This checklist details the Act's new requirements, as well as "Implementation Tips" that provide steps that your district can take to implement the Act. While these tips are not explicitly required by the Act, they address topics that your district should consider for implementation. Items in italics are questions or suggestions for implementation.**

**Before you begin this self-assessment, gather the following documents for your district:**

- Code of Conduct and/or Student Handbook
- Discipline procedures and School Board<sup>3</sup> policies related to discipline
- Discipline forms, including referrals, checklists, or suspension and expulsion notices
- School and Professional Development calendars

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### NEW REQUIREMENTS FOR STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICIES

1. **New Rules:** Your school district's Code of Conduct<sup>4</sup> must comply with specific rules added by Public Act 99-0456.
  - No zero-tolerance policies, which *require* administrators to suspend or expel students for certain offenses, unless required by federal or state law. 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(b-10).

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<sup>1</sup> Public Act 99-0456 is also known as Senate Bill 100 (SB 100).

<sup>2</sup> The term "School District" or "District" is intended to include charter schools.

<sup>3</sup> The term "School Board" is intended to include governing boards of charter schools.

<sup>4</sup> We recognize that your school district may not have a document entitled, "Code of Conduct," but we use this term to describe the document where your school district details its rules and consequences for students, as well as other student disciplinary policies and procedures.

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**Public Act 99-0456 – School District Self-Assessment Checklist**

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- No monetary fines or fees for disciplinary consequences, except for restitution for lost, stolen or damaged property. 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(i).
  - Staff cannot encourage students to drop out. 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(h).
2. **Charter Schools:** Sections 10-20.14, 10-22.6, and 34-19 of the Illinois School Code now apply to charter schools. 105 ILCS 5/27A-5(g)(2).

*Use the checklist to verify that your charter school's Code of Conduct and discipline procedures comply with these sections.*

3. **Community Involvement:** District procedures must meet these requirements.
- Provide the Code of Conduct to students and parents before the 15th day of school each year. 105 ILCS 5/10-20.14(a). *How will the District distribute its Code of Conduct? Consider sending it home on the first day of school, providing it at orientation, registration, or Back to School Night*
  - The District has a policy specific to bullying prevention, which is developed with the parent-teacher advisory committee. 105 ILCS 5/10-20.14(a).
  - The Code of Conduct is reviewed every year with the parent-teacher advisory committee. 105 ILCS 5/10-20.14(a).
    - Who is on the advisory committee? How are members selected? How do you inform parents and the community about the meetings? When does the committee meet? How is work of the committee publicized? How do you ensure that the committee is reflective of your district's community?*
  - The District has a written policy for reciprocal reporting of criminal offenses with local law enforcement. 105 ILCS 5/10-20.14(b).
    - The parent-teacher advisory committee develops this policy with the District. 105 ILCS 5/10-20.14(b).
    - Districts are encouraged to develop a memorandum of understanding ("MOU") with local law enforcement that clearly defines the law enforcement's role in schools. 105 ILCS 5/10-20.14(b).

**DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES**

1. **Limiting Exclusionary Discipline Generally:** Districts must limit the use of suspension and expulsion "to the greatest extent practicable." 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(b-5).

**Public Act 99-0456 – School District Self-Assessment Checklist****IMPLEMENTATION TIPS****Limiting school exclusion “to the greatest extent practicable”**

- The District uses, and the Code of Conduct includes, non-exclusionary methods of discipline. *Examples include:*
  - Restorative justice approaches (e.g., restorative conversations, peace circles, peer juries, mediation)
  - Classroom-based interventions (e.g., classroom management and consultation, training in functional analysis of behavior and interventions)
  - Referrals to appropriate service providers (e.g., school-based mental health service providers and coordination with community-based mental health service providers)
- The District provides additional resources, classroom support and professional development to implement these alternatives.
- The District has specific programs or plans to proactively reduce suspension and expulsion. *Examples include integrated frameworks, such as multi-tiered systems of support, that incorporate school-wide positive behavior support, social-emotional learning and restorative practices.*
- The District collects and reviews discipline data to reduce suspension and expulsion. *Questions to consider:*
  - Who is responsible for data collection and review?
  - Is there a designated team and team leader?
  - How often does the team meet to review this data and evaluate the district’s progress in reducing suspensions and expulsions?
  - How will the discipline data and any related recommendations be reported to the Board, District administrators, school personnel, and the public?
- The District develops a written plan to reduce exclusionary discipline and any disparate use with sub-groups of students (e.g., by race, gender, or disability).
  - Starting in fall 2017, an exclusion reduction plan will be required for Districts with the highest rates of suspension, expulsion, and/or racial disproportionality for the previous three school years. 105 ILCS 5/2-3.160.
- For an individual student, the District documents the non-exclusionary options implemented before using suspension or expulsion or the basis for concluding that there were no other appropriate and available interventions. *Do District forms prompt an administrator to document the following before a suspension or expulsion:*
  - What interventions have been attempted? What data were collected about implementation efforts and results?
  - Did the school try more than one intervention? If so, what were the interventions, how long were they implemented and were they implemented as planned (e.g., with fidelity)? What data was collected to document outcomes and changes in programming as a result of reviewing the data?
  - If the administrator determines that there were no other appropriate and available interventions, how is that documented?

**Public Act 99-0456 – School District Self-Assessment Checklist**

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**1. Out-of-School Suspension:** Public Act 99-0456 places new restrictions on when suspension may be used and requires school districts to take additional steps before imposing a suspension.

A. A suspension of **3 days or less** is only allowed “if the student’s continuing presence in school would pose a threat to school safety or a disruption to other students’ learning opportunities.” 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(b-15).

**IMPLEMENTATION TIPS**

**Determining “if the student’s continuing presence in school would pose a threat to school safety or a disruption to other students’ learning opportunities”**

- The Code of Conduct explicitly includes this standard.
- The District has a procedure to help administrators determine when a student would “pose a threat to school safety.” This must be made on a “case-by-case” basis. *Schools cannot assume certain offenses (like fighting) always pose a threat to school safety. Schools should document the specific factors for each situation that support this determination. A systematic threat assessment model, such as the Virginia Threat Assessment guidelines (Cornell, Sheras, Gregory, & Fan, 2009), could be implemented following training of school personnel on its use.*
- The District has a procedure to help administrators determine when a student would cause “disruption to other students’ learning.”
- School officials document in writing the determination of whether the student’s presence poses a safety threat or disrupts other students’ learning opportunities.

B. A suspension **4 days or more** is only allowed if “other appropriate and available behavioral and disciplinary interventions have been exhausted” **and** the “student’s continuing presence in school would pose a threat” to safety or “substantially disrupt, impede, or interfere with the operation of the school.” 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(b-20).

**IMPLEMENTATION TIPS**

**Determining when “other appropriate and available behavioral and disciplinary interventions have been exhausted”**

- The Code of Conduct explicitly includes this standard.
- The District has other behavior interventions and a process to document when they have been “exhausted.” *See above for information on alternatives.*
- The District has criteria for determining whether an intervention was successful.



**Public Act 99-0456 – School District Self-Assessment Checklist**

**IMPLEMENTATION TIPS**

**Determining when the “student’s continuing presence in school would pose a threat” to safety or “substantially disrupt, impede, or interfere with the operation of the school”**

- The Code of Conduct explicitly includes this standard.
- The District has a procedure to help administrators determine when a student would “pose a threat to school safety.” *Consider providing professional development in a threat assessment protocol. Seek support from school based mental health service providers. Become familiar and seek support in the use of Screening, Assessment, and Support Services (SASS) when a mental health concern is suspected (Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services, 2015).*
- The District has a procedure to help administrators determine when a student would “substantially disrupt, impede or interfere with the operation of the school.”

- C. **Suspension Procedures:** Suspensions must provide specific procedural protections. 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6.
- Suspensions are reported to parents “immediately.” *How? In what form?*
  - The written suspension notice includes, per 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6:
    - A “full statement of the reason” for the suspension.
      - *Consider describing the specific acts committed, not just listing an offense.*
    - Information about the right of a student/parent to appeal.
    - The support services that will be provided to the student during a suspension longer than 4 days.
    - *Consider also documenting other non-exclusionary interventions that were attempted or the basis for concluding that there were no other appropriate and available interventions.*
  - Suspensions must comply with procedural protections for students with disabilities. If a student has an IEP, 504 plan, is being evaluated, or may have a disability, follow the additional procedures in the Code of Conduct.
  - Suspension appeals go to the Board or a hearing officer. *What is the process for appeal?*
  - For all suspensions, school officials “shall make all reasonable efforts to... minimize the length of suspensions to the greatest extent practicable.” 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(b-15 and b-20).

**Public Act 99-0456 – School District Self-Assessment Checklist****IMPLEMENTATION TIPS****Making “reasonable efforts to...minimize the length of suspensions to the greatest extent practicable”**

- The District documents how the length of each suspension is determined.
- The District has guidelines or criteria to determine the length of a suspension.
- The District has guidelines or criteria to determine that the suspension is minimized.

D. All suspensions are reported to the Board, including the length and reason. 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(b). *When and how does this happen? Who makes the report? How often?*

**3. Expulsion:** Public Act 99-0456 creates new limits on expulsions and additional procedural requirements for Districts. 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(a).

- The District follows the procedures and rules for suspensions of more than 3 days. *See the procedural rules above.*
- The Department of Human Services is invited to consult on suspensions or expulsions when mental illness might be a factor in the behavior. 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(c). *How does the District determine when this applies? Who contacts DHS?*
- The District provides notice of any expulsion hearings (with the time, place, and purpose) by registered or certified mail. 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(a).
- If using a hearing officer, the hearing officer prepares a written summary of the evidence and recommendation for the Board. 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(a).
- The Board must determine that expulsion is “in the best interest of the school.” *What criteria or guidelines does the District have for making this determination?*
- The written expulsion decision by the Board includes the “rationale as to the specific duration of the expulsion.” 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(a).
- The parent is notified of the decision and given the opportunity to obtain a copy of the written expulsion decision. 105 ILCS 10/2.
- Expulsions are limited to 2 years. 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(d). *Consider including a specific statement about this limit in the Code of Conduct.*

**Public Act 99-0456 – School District Self-Assessment Checklist**

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**SUPPORTS TO STUDENTS WHO ARE EXCLUDED FROM SCHOOL**

- 1. Suspended and Expelled Students:** Districts shall provide “appropriate and available support services” to students suspended longer than four days, during the period of their suspension. 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(b-25).

**IMPLEMENTATION TIPS**

**Determining “appropriate and available support services”**

- The Code of Conduct informs families that the District will provide appropriate and available support services, as determined by school authorities, during suspensions of more than 4 days.
- The suspension and expulsion notices list whether support services will be provided.
- The District has a list of services (e.g. tutoring, counseling) and criteria to determine which services to provide.
- If no services are provided, the notice documents and explains why no services are available or provided.

- 2. Make-Up Work:** Suspended students shall have the opportunity “to make up work for equivalent academic credit.” 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(b-30).

**IMPLEMENTATION TIPS**

**Providing an opportunity for make-up work**

- The District has a policy for make-up work for academic credit during suspension.
- The Code of Conduct explicitly states a policy about make up work for academic credit.
- The Code of Conduct and suspension notice inform parents and students about how to secure and complete make up work.

- 3. Re-entry after School Exclusion:** The District shall have a policy “to facilitate the re-engagement of students who are suspended out-of-school, expelled, or returning from an alternative school setting.” 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(b-25).

**IMPLEMENTATION TIPS**

**Proactively facilitating student re-engagement**

- The Code of Conduct explicitly states the re-engagement policy.
- The District takes proactive steps to facilitate student re-engagement. *Consider the following steps to re-engage a student:*
  - *A re-engagement meeting including students and parents to develop a plan for ensuring the student is successfully reintegrated into the community including ways to prevent future school exclusion, forms of*

**Public Act 99-0456 – School District Self-Assessment Checklist**

*restorative action, and supportive intervention to aid in student's academic success.*

- *Meetings with designated staff to coordinate the transfer of credits or make up work.*
- *Periodic check-ins with the returning student and school counselor.*
- *Ongoing social emotional supports or counseling.*

**TRAINING**

1. The District shall make a “reasonable effort to provide ongoing professional development to teachers, administrators, school board members, school resource officers, and staff” regarding specific discipline topics. 105 ILCS 5/10-22.6(c-5).

**IMPLEMENTATION TIPS**

**Making reasonable efforts to provide ongoing professional development**

- The District provides training to teachers, administrators, school board members, school resource officers and staff in the following topics:
  - *Adverse consequences of school exclusion*
  - *Adverse consequences of criminal justice system involvement*
  - *Effective classroom management strategies*
  - *Culturally responsive discipline*
  - *Developmentally appropriate disciplinary methods*
- The District tracks participation of teachers, administrators, school board members, school resource officers and staff in trainings.

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The Transforming School Discipline Collaborative is a collaborative of organizations that are working to ensure that Illinois' schools are safe and supportive for all students. This Self-Assessment Checklist was developed by Equip for Equality together with attorneys and other professionals from Chicago Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, Inc., the Education Law and Policy Institute at Loyola University Chicago School of Law, Illinois Safe Schools Alliance, Loyola University Chicago School of Education, Northwestern University, Prevent School Violence Illinois, Umoja Student Development Corporation and the Ounce of Prevention Fund. It has been strengthened by feedback received from school administrators, school psychologists, attorneys, youth and a variety of other stakeholders and professionals in the field of education.

APPENDIX D  
CODING SYSTEM

	School A 2015-16	School A 2016-17
Zero-tolerance policies	Explicitly banned (Yes/No) <b>*Indicated (Yes/No)</b> <b>No = Reflects SB100</b> If included, resulting in suspension (Yes/No) If included, specify behaviors resulting in suspension If included, resulting in expulsion (Yes/No) If included, specify behaviors resulting in expulsion	
Monetary fees/fines	Explicitly banned (Yes/No) <b>*Indicated (Yes/No)</b> <b>No = Reflects SB100</b> If included, specify behaviors resulting in fees/fines	
Students encouraged to drop out	Explicitly banned (Yes/No) <b>*Indicated (Yes/No) No = Reflects SB100</b> If included, specify behaviors resulting in encouragement to drop out	
Bullying prevention	Indicated (Yes/No)	
Parent-teacher advisory committee	Indicated (Yes/No)	
Reciprocal agreement with local law enforcement	Indicated (Yes/No) MOU Indicated (Yes/No)	
Limiting exclusionary discipline	<b>*Limiting exclusionary discipline is explicitly indicated (Yes/No)</b> <b>Yes = Reflects SB100</b> Suspension indicated as consequence (Yes/No) If suspension indicated, specify behaviors potentially resulting in suspension Expulsion indicated as consequence (Yes/No) If expulsion indicated, specify behaviors potentially resulting in expulsion	

Non-exclusionary Discipline	Use of non-exclusionary discipline is explicitly indicated (Yes/No) Restorative justice approaches indicated (Yes/No) Classroom-based interventions indicated (Yes/No) Referrals to service providers indicated (Yes/No) Specify methods of non-exclusionary discipline indicated
Proactive programs or plans	Indicated (Yes/No) Specify programs indicated
Data collection/review	Indicated (Yes/No)
Written plan to reduce exclusion	Indicated (Yes/No)
Out-of-school suspension 3 days or less	Specific language indicated (Yes/No) <b>*Threat to safety or disruption language indicated (Yes/No) Yes = Reflects SB100</b> Procedure for determining threat to safety indicated (Yes/No) Procedure for determining disruption indicated (Yes/No) <b>*Determined on case-by-case basis indicated (Yes/No) Yes = Reflects SB100</b>
Out-of-school suspension 4 days or more	Specific language indicated (Yes/No) <b>**Threat to safety or disruption language indicated (Yes/No) Yes = Compliant (repeated)</b> <b>*Appropriate interventions exhausted language indicated (Yes/No) Yes = Reflects SB100</b> Procedure for determining threat to safety indicated (Yes/No) Procedure for determining substantial disruption indicated (Yes/No) Process to document exhaustion of interventions indicated (Yes/No) Criteria for determining success of interventions indicated (Yes/No)

Out-of-school suspension 4 days or more	**Determined on case-by-case basis indicated (Yes/No) Yes = Reflects SB100 (repeated)
Suspension procedures	Immediate reporting indicated (Yes/No) Notice includes full statement of reason indicated (Yes/No) Information about right to appeal indicated (Yes/No) **Support services provided indicated (Yes/No) Yes = Reflects SB100 (repeated) <b>*Non-exclusionary discipline documented indicated (Yes/No)</b> <b>Yes = Reflects SB100</b> Protections for students with disabilities indicated (Yes/No) Appeals go to board or hearing officer indicated (Yes/No)
Efforts to minimize length	<b>*Indicated (Yes/No) Yes = Reflects SB100</b> <b>*District documents how length determined indicated (Yes/No)</b> <b>Yes = Reflects SB100</b> Guidelines/criteria for determining length indicated (Yes/No) Guidelines/criteria to determine length minimized indicated (Yes/No) Suspensions reported to board (Yes/No)
Expulsion	**Procedures for suspension of 4 or more days indicated (Yes/No) Yes = Reflects SB100 (repeated) DHS invited when mental illness may be factor indicated (Yes/No) Notice of hearing made by registered or certified mail indicated (Yes/No) Hearing officer prepares written recommendation indicated (Yes/No) <b>*Board determines in best interest of school indicated (Yes/No)</b> <b>Yes = Reflects SB100</b> <b>*Written decision includes rationale for duration indicated (Yes/No)</b> <b>Yes = Reflects SB100</b> Parent notified of decision indicated (Yes/No)



Expulsion	Parent can obtain written copy of decision indicated (Yes/No) Expulsions limited to 2 years indicated (Yes/No)
Supports to excluded students	<b>*Supports for suspension longer than 4 days language indicated (Yes/No)</b> <b>Yes = Reflects SB100</b> Families informed indicated (Yes/No) <b>*Notice lists whether supports will be provided indicated (Yes/No)</b> <b>Yes = Reflects SB100</b> List of services indicated (Yes/No) Specify services Criteria to determine services indicated (Yes/No) Notice and explanation why no services provided indicated (Yes/No)
Make-up Work	<b>*Opportunity to make up missed work language indicated (Yes/No)</b> <b>Yes = Reflects SB100</b> Policy for make-up work during suspension indicated (Yes/No) Parents/students informed of how to secure/complete indicated (Yes/No)
Re-Entry after Exclusion	<b>*Facilitation of re-engagement language indicated (Yes/No)</b> <b>Yes = Reflects SB100</b> Specific re-engagement policy indicated (Yes/No) Specify steps to re-engagement
Training	<b>*Effort to provide PD regarding discipline language indicated (Yes/No)</b> <b>Yes = Reflects SB100</b> Specify professional development topics District tracks participation in training indicated (Yes/No)

\*Bolded categories were added to Illinois School Code as a result of Senate Bill 100 and are included in the calculation of results.

\*\*Categories indicated as “repeated” were added to Illinois School Code as a result of Senate Bill 100 but are repeated elsewhere in the coding system. These categories are represented only once in the calculation of results.

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Melissa Moore was born in Chicago, Illinois, on March 14, 1985. She currently resides in a suburb of Chicago with her husband, Brett, and daughter, Olivia.

Melissa attended elementary and high school in Vernon Hills, Illinois. She graduated magna cum laude from University of Notre Dame in 2007 with a Bachelor of Business Administration degree in Finance. She worked for Merrill Lynch in Chicago before pursuing a career in education. In 2012, Melissa earned an Educational Specialist degree in School Psychology from The Chicago School of Professional Psychology. In 2015, she completed a Director of Special Education Certificate Program at Northern Illinois University.

After earning her Educational Specialist degree, Melissa worked as a school psychologist at Woodlawn Middle School in Long Grove, Illinois, and subsequently at Hinsdale South High School in Darien, Illinois. For the past 3 years, she has worked as Assistant Principal for Student Services at York Community High School in Elmhurst, Illinois.

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