

# Significant Discrepancy by Race/Ethnicity in Long-Term Suspensions and Expulsions



Special Education Indicator 4b  
Fact Book

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**Department of  
Education &  
Workforce**

# What is Significant Discrepancy in Long-Term Suspensions and Expulsions by Race/Ethnicity (Indicator 4b)?

This Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) indicator is part of a set of equity measures that evaluate whether students with disabilities are being suspended or expelled<sup>1</sup> at a higher rate than their peers without disabilities. It assesses significant discrepancies between students with disabilities by race/ethnicity and students without disabilities who have more than 10 cumulative days of out-of-school suspensions and expulsions. This indicator is a compliance measure with required targets of 0.00 percent each year, meaning the goal is that no district or community school has a significant discrepancy by race resulting from noncompliant policies, procedures, or practices.

## Why is Significant Discrepancy in Long-Term Suspensions and Expulsions by Race/Ethnicity Important?

Significant discrepancy (Indicator 4b) aims to understand whether:

- Schools administer exclusionary discipline equally to all students, regardless of disability and race/ethnicity.
- Schools administer discipline in a nondiscriminatory manner.

Districts and schools must consistently review their discipline practices to promote the most equitable environment for students with disabilities.

## How is Significant Discrepancy by Race/Ethnicity Calculated?

In fall 2024, Ohio sought stakeholder input on the number of years considered in the calculation for Indicator 4b. See Ohio’s [Special Education Methodology and Target Setting webpage](#) for more information about the stakeholder engagement process. Table 1 summarizes each methodological component of Indicator 4b, including both the previous and new methodologies, and highlights the changes in blue cells and bold font. The new methodology for Indicator 4b will be implemented for the first time with the 2024-25 Special Education Profile based on data from the two most recent consecutive years, including the 2022-23 and 2023-24 school years.

Table 1. Comparison of Ohio's new Indicator 4b methodology to Ohio's previous methodology

Methodological Component	Ohio's Previous Methodology	Ohio's New Methodology	Ohio's Definition
Threshold	2.50	2.50	Ohio defines, "significant discrepancy," as a discipline rate for children with disabilities of a racial/ethnic group that is 2.50 times the discipline rate for all children without disabilities in the same district or community school.
Minimum Cell Size	10	<b>0</b>	A minimum cell size of 0 means a rate ratio is calculated for all districts and community schools. Previously, Ohio used a minimum cell size of 10. This means that for a district to be included in the analyses, there had to be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• at least 10 children with disabilities of the racial/ethnic group suspended/expelled for at least 10 cumulative days in the district; and</li><li>• at least 10 children without disabilities suspended/expelled for at least 10 cumulative days in the district.</li></ul>

Minimum N Size	30	0	A minimum n-size of 0 means a rate ratio will be calculated for all districts and community schools. Previously, Ohio used a minimum n-size of 30. This means that for a district to be included in the analyses, there had to be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>at least 30 children with disabilities of the racial/ethnic group enrolled in the district; and</li> <li>at least 30 children without disabilities enrolled in the district.</li> </ul>
Multiple Years of Data	3	2	Ohio uses two years of data to determine whether “significant discrepancy” is occurring in a district or community school. A district or community school must have a rate ratio that exceeds 2.50 for each of the years considered to have a significant discrepancy by race/ethnicity as defined by Ohio.

Significant discrepancy is calculated based on the data reported by each district and community school in the Education Management Information System (EMIS). Across all categories, enrollment data are calculated based on full-time equivalency, or FTE. FTE provides a precise calculation based on the amount of time each student was enrolled in the district during the school year. Ohio calculates significant discrepancy by race/ethnicity in out-of-school suspensions and expulsions (OSSE) using a rate ratio (see Figures 1-3 and Table 2). The below graphic shows how to calculate the rate ratio for Black students with disabilities.

Figure 1. Calculation step 1: The number of Black students with disabilities with out-of-school suspensions and expulsions (OSSE) of greater than 10 cumulative days divided by the district enrollment of students with disabilities equals the district rate for Black students with disabilities with OSSE of greater than 10 cumulative days.



Figure 2. Calculation step 2: The number of students without disabilities with out-of-school suspensions and expulsions (OSSE) of greater than 10 cumulative days divided by the district enrollment of students without disabilities equals the district rate for students without disabilities with OSSE greater than 10 cumulative days.

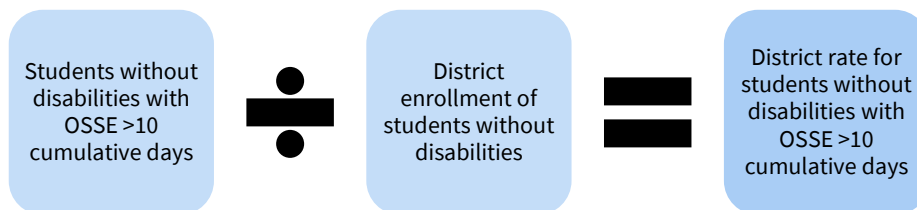


Figure 3. Calculation step 3: The district rate for Black students with disabilities with greater than 10 out-of-school suspensions or expulsions (OSSE) of greater than days divided by the district rate for students without disabilities with OSSE greater than 10 cumulative days equals the discipline rate ratio for Black students.

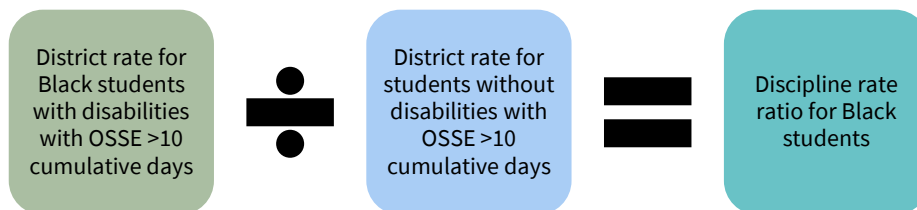


Table 2. Example of a step-by-step calculation for significant discrepancy by race/ethnicity in out-of-school suspensions and expulsions (Indicator 4b).

Calculation	Description	2022-23	2023-24
A	Black students with disabilities with out-of-school suspensions and expulsions of more than 10 cumulative days	150	180
B	Black students with disabilities enrollment	2,000	2,000
$C = A \div B$	Discipline rate for Black students with disabilities	7.50%	9.00%
D	Students without disabilities with out-of-school suspensions and expulsions of more than 10 cumulative days	580	680
E	Students without disabilities enrollment	17,200	17,800
$F = D \div E$	Discipline rate for students without disabilities	3.37%	3.82%
$G = C \div F$	Rate ratio for Black students with disabilities	2.22	2.36

To have a significant discrepancy by race in Ohio, the rate ratio must be greater than 2.50 for both years considered. Using the example in Table 2, this district does not have a significant discrepancy, as defined by Ohio, because their rate ratio does not exceed 2.50 for either school year considered. A rate ratio of 2.50 means that the rate of suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 cumulative days for students with disabilities within a specific racial group is two and a half times more than the rate for students without disabilities in the district. A rate ratio of 1.00 means that students with disabilities within a racial/ethnic group are no more or less likely to be disciplined than students without disabilities.

### Rationale for New Methodology

Stakeholders who recommended using two years of data stated two years is enough to establish a potential pattern and allows for local education agencies to obtain support from the state sooner. Stakeholders appreciated the option to use these indicators as an early warning system for significant disproportionality.

Stakeholders who opposed using two years of data in favor of using three noted it is necessary to gather as much data as possible to identify trends, particularly with the reduction in the minimum cell and n-sizes. Stakeholders also focused on having insufficient staff at the local level to effectively address behavioral concerns and the need to address staff mindset.

Few stakeholders noted their belief in meritocracy suggesting race is not an issue, while others shared a preference for lowering the rate ratio threshold for indicator 4b and for having consistent methodology across indicators where possible.

## Data for Significant Discrepancy in Long-Term Suspensions and Expulsions

Ohio's percentage of districts and community schools with a significant discrepancy between students with and without disabilities in out-of-school suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 cumulative days that exceeded 2.50 for two consecutive years was 11.40 percent in 2023-24 (See Table 3).

Table 3. Ohio's percentage of districts and community schools with a significant discrepancy by race/ethnicity of greater than or 2.50 for two consecutive years

<b>4b: Significant Discrepancy by Race/Ethnicity between Students with and without Disabilities in Out-of-school Suspensions and Expulsions of Greater than 10 Cumulative Days</b>	<b>2023-24</b>
Two consecutive years of discipline data	Data from the 22-23 and 23-24 school years
Number of districts and community schools with a discrepancy by race/ethnicity >2.50 for two consecutive years	111
Total number of districts and community schools included in the analysis	974
Percentage of districts and community schools with a discrepancy by race/ethnicity >2.50 for two consecutive years	11.40%
Number of districts and community schools with a discrepancy by race/ethnicity >2.50 for two consecutive years that is the result of noncompliant policies, procedures, or practices	TBD*
Percentage of districts and community schools with a discrepancy by race/ethnicity for two consecutive years that is the result of noncompliant policies, procedures, or practices	TBD*
Total number of districts and community schools	974
Percentage of all districts and community schools included in the analysis	100.00%

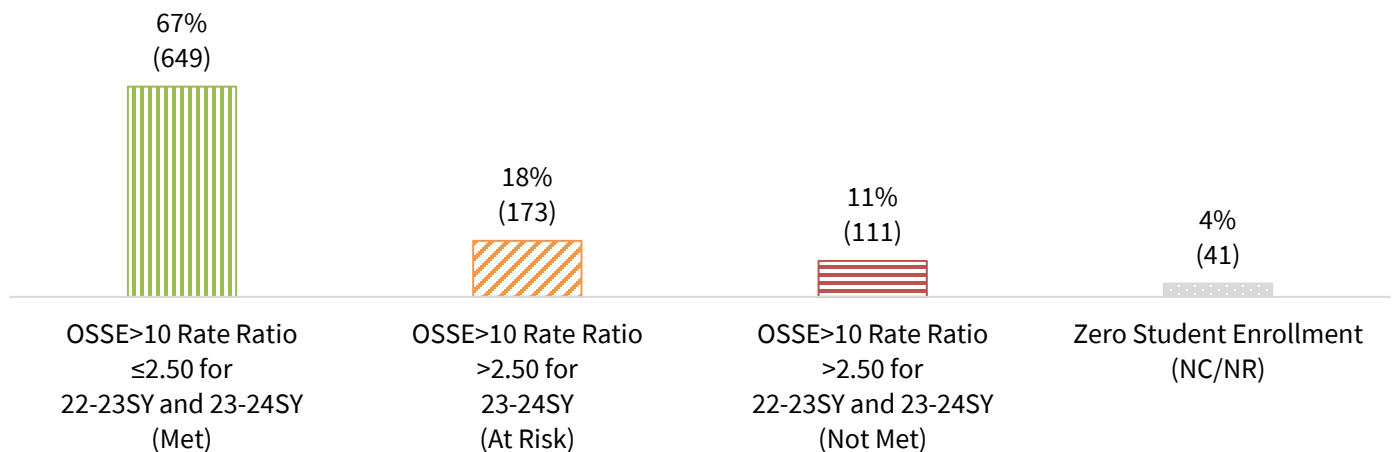
\*Noncompliant policies, procedures, or practices are identified via the monitoring of this indicator, which occurs after the data are published in the Special Education Profile each December. These data are not yet available.

Data Source: Education Management Information System (EMIS)

State-level data from the 2023-24 school year for Indicator 4b will be reported to the U.S. Department of Education in the Annual Performance Report due February 2026. District and community-school level data for Indicator 4b will be reported within the 2024-25 Special Education Profile targeted for release in December 2024. Figure 4 identifies the number of districts and community schools that exceed the state threshold for two consecutive years.

Figure 4. Number and percentage of districts and community schools with a significant discrepancy between students with and without disabilities in out-of-school suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 cumulative days.

### Indicator 4b: Significant Discrepancy by Race/Ethnicity between Students with and without Disabilities with Out-of-school Suspensions and Expulsions of Greater than 10 Cumulative Days



OSSE>10 = out-of-school suspensions and expulsions of greater than 10 cumulative days.

Districts and community schools with Zero Student Enrollment are differentiated by NC for Not Calculated (the district or community school had students included in the calculation for only one of the two years considered) and NR for Not Rated (the district or community school had zero students included in the calculation for both years considered).

## Required Actions for Significant Discrepancy

Districts and community schools that exceed the threshold of 2.50 for each year considered must:

- 1) Review their policies, procedures, and practices and submit documentation to the Department of Education and Workforce. If noncompliance is found during this review, correct the noncompliance according to IDEA.
- 2) Identify and address the factors that may be contributing to the significant discrepancy.

## Resources for Addressing Systemic Improvement of Significant Discrepancy


Table 4. Resources for addressing systemic improvement of significant discrepancy

Resource	Resource Description
<a href="#">Implicit Bias Modules</a> from The Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity	Activity addressing possible biases staff may have between students with disabilities and students without disabilities.
<a href="#">Learning Management System (LMS)</a>	Professional learning opportunities including <i>Culturally Responsive Practice Program</i> .
<a href="#">Ohio's Whole Child Framework</a>	A framework to support a student-centered environment that meets mental, behavioral, physical health, wellness, nutrition, and safety needs.
Ohio Center for Autism and Low Incidence's (OCALI) <a href="#">Teaching Diverse Learners Center</a>	Provides learning opportunities through the <i>Challenging Behaviors Webinar Series</i> and <i>Bullying and Individuals with Special Needs and InspirED Zoomcasts</i> .
<a href="#">Ohio Preschool Expulsion Prevention Partnership</a>	Partnership developed between Nationwide Children's Hospital and the Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services to reduce the rate of expulsions for preschool children.
<a href="#">SchoolSafety.gov</a>	Created by the federal government to provide schools and districts with actionable recommendations to create safe and supportive learning environments for students and educators.

# Historical Data for Significant Discrepancy in Long-Term Suspensions and Expulsions by Race

Figure 5. Ohio's percentage of districts and community schools with a significant discrepancy by race/ethnicity greater than 2.50 increased from 5.26 percent in 2018-2019 to 15.79 percent in 2019-2020. Ohio met the target of 0 percent in 2020-21 and has continued to meet that target. Zero districts or community schools have had significant discrepancy by race/ethnicity that is the result of noncompliant policies, procedures, or practices since 2018-2019.

## 4b: Percentage of Districts and Community Schools with a Significant Discrepancy by Race/Ethnicity >2.50 for Three Consecutive Years

 Districts and Community Schools with a Significant Discrepancy by Race/Ethnicity     Target

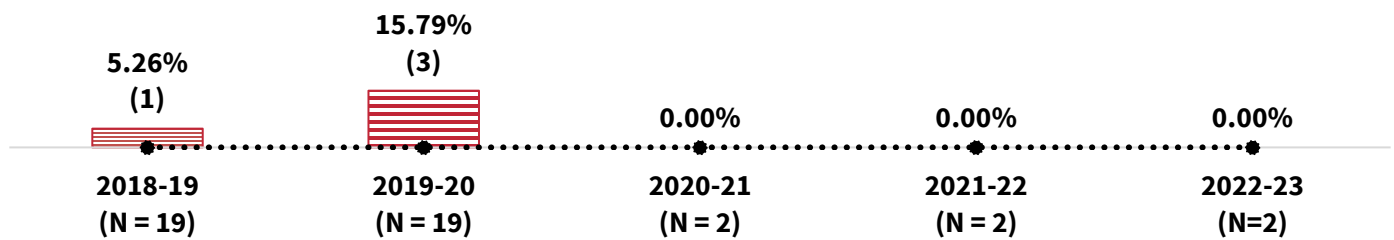


Table 5. Ohio's percentage of districts and community schools with a discipline discrepancy by race/ethnicity of greater than or 2.50 for three consecutive years, including the number who were included in the analysis because they met the minimum cell and N sizes.

4b: Discipline Discrepancy by Race/Ethnicity	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
Three consecutive years of discipline data	Data from the 16-17, 17-18, and 18-19 school years	Data from the 17-18, 18-19, and 19-20 school years	Data from the 18-19, 19-20, and 20-21 school years	Data from the 19-20, 20-21, and 21-22 school years	Data from the 20-21, 21-22, and 22-23 school years
Number of districts and community schools with a discipline discrepancy by race/ethnicity >2.50 three consecutive years	1	3	0	0	0
Total number of districts and community schools included in the analysis	19	19	2	2	2
Percentage of districts with a discipline discrepancy by race/ethnicity >2.50	5.26%	15.79%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%

<b>4b: Discipline Discrepancy by Race/Ethnicity</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2020-21</b>	<b>2021-22</b>	<b>2022-23</b>
Number of districts with a discipline discrepancy by race/ethnicity that is the result of noncompliant policies, procedures, or practices	0	0	0	0	0
Percentage of districts with a discipline discrepancy by race/ethnicity that is the result of noncompliant policies, procedures, or practices	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
Total number of districts and community schools	969	933	932	943	968
Percentage of all districts and community schools included in the analysis	1.96%	2.04%	0.21%	0.21%	0.21%

Data Source: Education Management Information System (EMIS)