

Influence of Probation on the Academic and Behavioral Outcomes of Justice-Involved Youth

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All opinions are the authors' and do not represent the opinion of the MLDS Center or its partner agencies.

This work is preliminary. Please do not cite.

Motivation

1. Ed policy researchers typically focus on the “**school-to-prison**” metaphor :
 - Increased contact with juvenile justice (Mittleman, 2018; Sorensen et al., 2022; Sorensen et al., 2025)
 - Adult criminal justice systems (Bacher-Hicks et al., 2025)
 - School-based referrals reduce a student’s school engagement and performance (Sorensen et al., 2025).
2. Less on the “**prison-to-school**” pipeline:
 - Worsened school participation and outcomes both before and after arrests (e.g. McCurley et al., 2017)
3. ***Policy-relevant***
 - What is working (and what isn’t) on the DJS side to mitigate negative schooling outcomes associated with arrest?

Research Questions

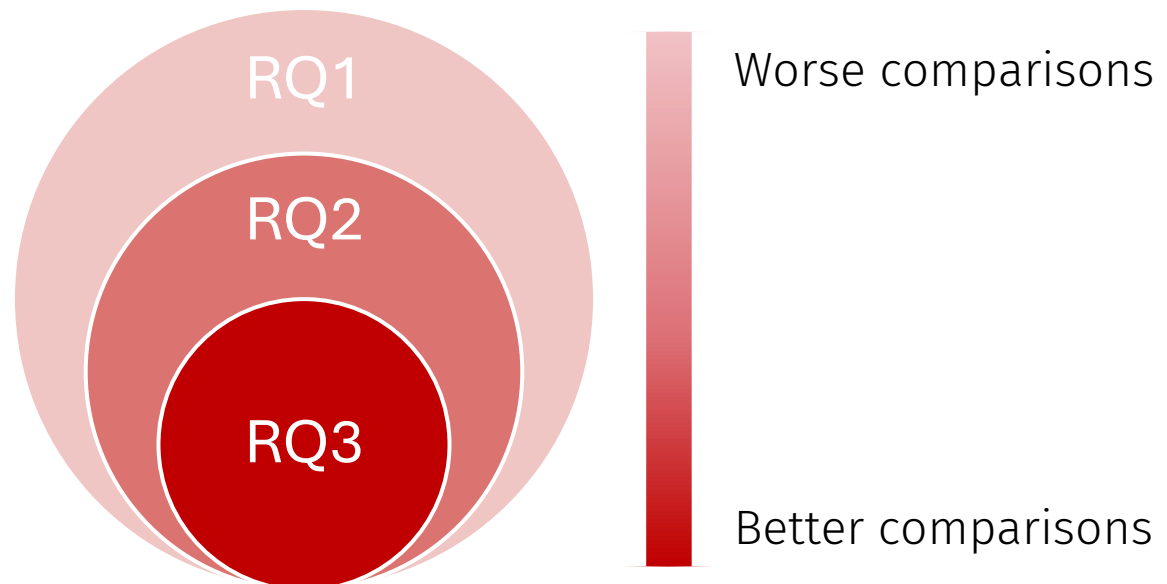
1. **RQ1:** How do justice-involved youth fare relative to their non-involved peers?
2. **RQ2:** Are there differences in outcomes between the times when a student is and isn't arrested?
3. **RQ3:** How do justice-involved youth on probation fare relative to justice-involved youth who were placed under DJS supervision or whose cases are dismissed?
4. **RQ4:** Does the moderating role of probation vary by student race, sex, disability, and poverty status?

Data

- Match **student records to DJS records** and exclude any DJS records without a matched education record (primarily on border districts)
- Aggregate data to **student by academic year level**
 - Generate variables indicating if a student was *ever arrested*, on probation, suspended, etc. **during the academic year**
- Between AYs 2013 and 2020

Sample

1. **RQ1** (justice-involved to non-justice involved): All matched students
2. **RQ2** (when a student is and isn't arrested): Students ever arrested
3. **RQ3/4** (probation to committed/dismissed): Students during the years in which they are arrested and on probation, committed, or dismissed



Research Question 1: How do justice-involved youth fare relative to their non-involved peers?

Empirics

1. Simple summary statistics
2. Compare justice involved-youth with the full sample of Maryland students

RQ1: Results

	Full Sample	Suspended	Arrested	Disposition
Arrested	0.026	0.18	1	1
Suspended	0.08	1	0.558	0.553
Type of Offense				
<i>CINS, Citation, Ordinance</i>			0.087	0.009
<i>Violation of Probation</i>			0.014	0.032
<i>Misdemeanor</i>			0.67	0.491
<i>Felony or COV</i>			0.229	0.469
Dispositions			0.432	1
<i>Committed</i>				0.144
<i>Probation</i>				0.409
<i>Dismissed</i>				0.409
Race				
<i>Asian</i>	0.064	0.012	0.009	0.007
<i>Black</i>	0.354	0.586	0.571	0.651
<i>White</i>	0.481	0.317	0.331	0.262
<i>Other</i>	0.038	0.027	0.023	0.02
<i>Multi-racial</i>	0.063	0.059	0.066	0.059
<i>Hispanic</i>	0.147	0.105	0.087	0.079
Title 1	0.07	0.103	0.079	0.108
TAS	0.002	0.004	0.003	0.005
ELL	0.051	0.038	0.021	0.021
Female	0.488	0.34	0.311	0.225
Special Education	0.113	0.219	0.23	0.27
Dropout	0.015	0.032	0.073	0.097
Days Absent	12.324	22.129	31.16	36.374
	(16.371)	(19.961)	(28.172)	(31.439)
Unlawful Days Absent	7.631	13.974	22.028	27.412
	(14.836)	(17.863)	(27.453)	(31.134)
Days Attending	159.727	142.908	119.184	102.58
	(31.904)	(37.78)	(49.821)	(52.064)
GPA	2.646	1.662	1.332	1.048
	(1.067)	(0.979)	(1.014)	(0.952)
Observations	3,226,340	257,495	83,067	35,915

Risk

RQ1: Results

Arrested
Suspended
Type of Offense
<i>CINS, Citation, Ordinance</i>
<i>Violation of Probation</i>
<i>Misdemeanor</i>
<i>Felony or COV</i>
Dispositions
<i>Committed</i>
<i>Probation</i>
<i>Dismissed</i>
Race
<i>Asian</i>
<i>Black</i>
<i>White</i>
<i>Other</i>
<i>Multi-racial</i>
<i>Hispanic</i>
Title 1
TAS
ELL
Female
Special Education
Dropout
Days Absent
Unlawful Days Absent
Days Attending
GPA
Observations

Disposition	Probation	Dismissed	Committed
1	1	1	1
0.553	0.605	0.525	0.549
0.009	0.002	0.006	0.001
0.032	0.022	0.012	0.099
0.491	0.423	0.488	0.296
0.469	0.553	0.494	0.604
1	1	1	1
0.144	0.067	0.119	1
0.409	1	0.227	0.191
0.409	0.227	1	0.339
0.007	0.008	0.006	0.005
0.651	0.644	0.72	0.691
0.262	0.271	0.201	0.231
0.02	0.019	0.019	0.021
0.059	0.058	0.054	0.052
0.079	0.076	0.073	0.084
0.108	0.103	0.158	0.101
0.005	0.004	0.008	0.003
0.021	0.021	0.018	0.025
0.225	0.203	0.225	0.132
0.27	0.275	0.286	0.322
0.097	0.094	0.103	0.117
36.374	37.265	41.383	35.414
(31.439)	(31.016)	(34.527)	(30.847)
27.412	27.546	32.914	27.039
(31.134)	(30.725)	(34.598)	(30.045)
102.58	102.658	98.105	66.567
(52.064)	(49.846)	(52.465)	(45.356)
1.048	1.022	0.925	0.631
(0.952)	(0.919)	(0.922)	(0.826)
35,915	14,697	14,693	5,163

Risk

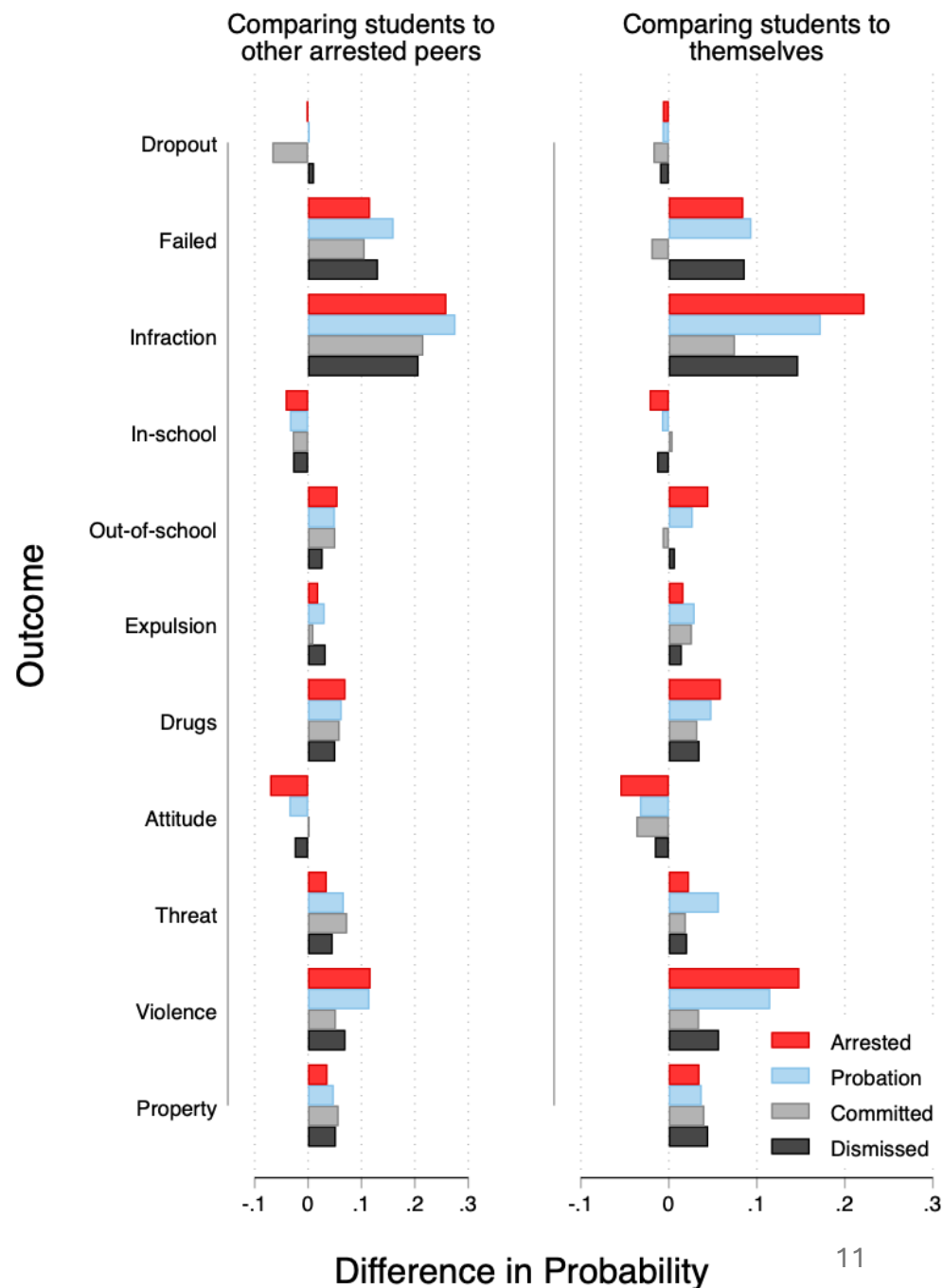
Research Question 2: Are there differences between the times when a student is and isn't arrested?

Empirics

1. Subset to students who are **ever arrested**
2. Two comparisons:
 - Students to other peers within the same school
 - Students to themselves when they are and aren't arrested
3. Coefficients indicate the difference in outcomes between years **when student is arrested**/on probation/dismissed/committed and **years when they are not**

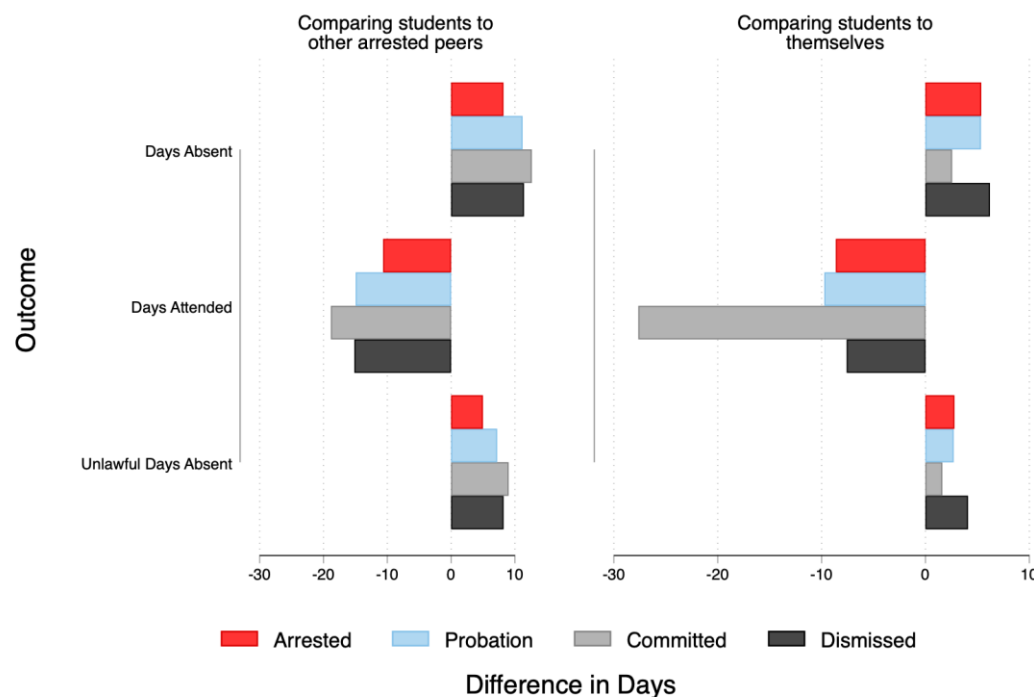
Results: Probabilities

1. See limited difference in effect sizes between arrest, probation, commitment, and dismissal
2. Suggests that regardless of disposition, differences are occurring via initial contact



Results: Days Absent/Attended

1. See limited difference in effect sizes between arrest, probation, commitment, and dismissal
2. Suggests that regardless of disposition, differences are occurring via initial contact



Research Question 3: How do justice-involved youth on probation fare relative to justice-involved youth who were committed or whose cases are dismissed?

Empirics

- Compare students who:
 1. were **adjudicated in the same district**
 2. for **similar offenses** (felony, misdemeanor, etc.),
 3. attend the **same school and grade, but**
 4. one was **placed on probation** and the other was **committed or dismissed**

Results

1. Relative to **dismissed peers**, students on probation were:
 1. **Less likely** to dropout
 2. **More likely** to have an in-school incident for **violence or threats**
 3. **More likely** to fail a class
2. Relative to **committed peers**, students on probation were:
 1. **More likely** to dropout
 2. **More likely** to fail a class
 3. **No change** in in-school incident likelihood



Note: Lighter bars indicate coefficient is statistically insignificant

Research Question 4: Does the moderating role of probation vary by student race, sex, disability, and poverty status?

(i.e., which subgroups drive the prior results)

For students on probation...

Relative to Dismissed

- Increased suspension driven by:
 1. Female students
- Increased failure rates driven by:
 1. Black students
- Decreased dropout:
 1. Consistent across groups

Relative to Committed

- Increased suspension driven by :
 1. Black students
 2. Female students
- Increased failure rates driven by :
 1. Black students
 2. FARMS
- Increased dropout:
 1. Non-Black students
 2. SWDs
 3. Male students

Implications

Implications

1. Confirm prior findings regarding justice-involved youth being at **heightened risk for negative outcomes** in terms of suspension, course failure, dropout, and attendance
2. Negative outcomes, *on average* and relative to when a student is “*not in trouble*” occur **primarily as a product of arrest**
3. When a student *is* arrested, **probation may be beneficial on the extensive margin** (reducing dropout), but comes with the cost of potential increased surveillance (increased in-school infraction records)
4. Odd comparisons with probation and committal– committed students are registered in school 40 fewer days. **Results regarding probation vs commitment should be taken with a grain of salt**

Thank you!

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