Working Toward
Equitable Discipline Practices

MODULE 1

Discipline Disparities: Myths & Facts
The Equity Project, Indiana University

Student Discipline Case Studies

How Educators Can Eradicate
Disparities in School Discipline
Anne Gregory, James Bell, and Mica Pollock

"I have never encountered any children in any group who are not geniuses. There is no mystery on how to teach them. The first thing you do is treat them like human beings and the second thing you do is love them."

Dr. Asa Hilliard

WAKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

FACILITATOR AGENDA
EQUITY LEARNING RESOURCES FOR SCHOOL LEADERS
MODULE ONE: DISCIPLINE DISPARITIES MYTHS & FACTS

SESSION OUTCOMES
- Review school-level student discipline data
- Identify the myths and facts around school-level student discipline data
- Unpack the *Five Questions Every School Should Explore About Student Discipline* (Adapted from *The Equity Project, Indiana University*)

TIME 90 MIN	ACTIVITY	FACILITATION NOTES
PART ONE 20 MIN	**GOOD AFTERNOON & WELCOME!** **1. Open and Overview of Today** **2. Warm Up Activity: "Changing the narrative…"** • Participants find a partner and share a recent "positive" about one of their most challenging students. A "positive" is any story or action that counters the negative narrative usually associated with the student.	Note: Facilitator(s) should thoroughly read the research brief, ***New and Developing Research on Disparities in Discipline by Russell J. Skiba (Page 8)***, before leading this session with staff. Open with a welcome to the participants and an introduction of the reasons for engaging in an ongoing series of professional learning about achieving equitable student discipline outcomes.
PART TWO 30 MIN	**THE PROBLEM WE ARE TRYING TO SOLVE** **1. The myths and facts of student discipline data. What do we believe?** **2. Unpacking Myths & Facts: What We Believe** • **Small Group Discussion Prompt:** *Is there consensus within the small group concerning the myths & facts? Where are there similarities/differences?* **3. Small Groups Share Out**	1. Record the statements from the document, ***Discipline Disparities: Myths & Facts (Page 6,)*** on separate pieces of chart paper. Have participants place a green dot below the statements they believe are mostly true and a red dot below the statements they believe are mostly false. Each participant should have a copy of **Discipline Disparities: Myths & Facts** and also record their sentiments on their document. 2. Have small groups find consensus, similarities, differences concerning myths & facts. 3. Have small groups share their findings with the whole group. Facilitator links small group comments to trends found on chart paper.
PART THREE 30 MIN	**FIVE QUESTIONS EVERY SCHOOL SHOULD EXPLORE ABOUT STUDENT DISCIPLINE**	Open with a statement about using "real-time" data to help uncover the school's myths & facts about student discipline outcomes, and how using the document, ***Five Questions Every School Should Explore About Student Discipline (Page 7)***, will help further explore the school's student discipline data.

TIME 90 MIN	ACTIVITY	FACILITATION NOTES
	1. Reviewing school-level student discipline data • **Small Group Investigation:** *What are our myths & facts?*	1. Assign one or two questions from the document above to each small group. Make sure groups have access to the the appropriate data in order to answer the questions. Have participants record on chart paper the data that confirms/refutes the assigned question.
	2. Small Groups Share Out & Whole Group Discussion • **Whole Group Discussion Prompt:** *Has what you considered myth/fact about student discipline outcomes at our school shifted during this session?*	2. Allow time for small groups to share their data findings. After small groups share their findings, unpack the whole group discussion prompt.
PART FOUR 10 MIN	**CLOSING MOVES** **1. Written Reflections** appreciations, insights, etc.	1. Close the session with any appreciations for people in the group and time for written reflections on the session.
	2. Homework: How should we as a faculty respond to our "facts?" **3. Adjourn**	2. Have faculty reflect on how the school should respond to the "facts" about student discipline outcomes before the next meeting.

FACILITATOR PREPARATION

1. Materials
- Schoolt level discipline data by offense (including the number of days suspended) disaggregated by race, gender, IEP status
- Chart paper
- Red and green sticker dots
- Document: Discipline Disparities: Myths & Facts (Page 6)
- Document: Five Questions Every School Should Explore about School Discipline (Page 7)
- Article: New and Developing Research on Disparities in Discipline by Russell J. Skiba (Page 8)

2. Facilitator Review
- Facilitator(s) should review the research brief, *New and Developing Research on Disparities in Discipline* by Russell J. Skiba. Having a thorough understanding of the myths and facts around student discipline outcomes on a national level will help provide context to schoolt level discussions.

3. Making Connections to the Effective Teaching Framework (effectiveteacher.wcpss.net)

Environment t *Standard 2: Teachers establish a respectful environment for a diverse population of student*
- Teachers provide an environment in which each child has a positive, nurturing relationship with caring adults. Teachers encourage an environment that is inviting, respectful, supportive, inclusive, and flexible **(2a)**.
  - *Critical Elements: Attention, Personal Relationship Building, Discipline, Classroom Climate, Space, Momentum, Time, Routines*

- Teachers embrace diversity in the school community and in the world. Teachers recognize the influence of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and other aspects of culture on a student's development and personality. Teachers strive to understand how a student's culture and background may influence his or her school performance. **(2b)**.
  - *Critical Elements: Expectations, Classroom Climate, Learning Experiences, Time*

4. Modeling the Skillful Teacher – Introduction to Management: Momentum (Chapter 4, Page 32)
- The activities in this module align to the following teaching moves: Provisioning, Subdividing, and Anticipation.

WORKING TOWARD EQUITY

WCPSS VISION 2020

Goal Statement
By 2020, WCPSS will annually graduate at least 95% of its students ready for productive citizenship as well as higher education or a career.

Core Belief #2
Every student is expected to learn, grow, and succeed while we eliminate the ability to predict achievement based on socioeconomic status, race, and ethnicity.

Core Belief #5
The Board of Education, superintendent, and all staff value a diverse school community that is inviting, respectful, inclusive, flexible, and supportive.

WCPSS PRINCIPLES OF EQUITY

Educators will work to socialize intelligence and effort among all students in every school, every classroom, everyday.
Socializing intelligence and effort recognizes that students have both a right and an obligation to understand the world around them. Through daily engagement with curricula that requires a high thinking demand, academic challenges will ultimately yield to sustained effort by students.

<div align="right">Adapted from the Institute for Learning, University of Pittsburgh</div>

Educators will be intentional about interrupting beliefs and practices that serve as barriers to student achievement.
Educators must be willing to uncover destructive beliefs and practices, understand their impact on student achievement, and move to interrupt these barriers by any means necessary.

Leaders will model and advance courageous conversations about ability, income and race, and how these attributes shape teaching and learning experiences in schools and classrooms.
To achieve equity in schools and classrooms, leaders must be willing to name inequities in schools and classrooms. School leaders must become comfortable leading uncomfortable conversations about the predictability of student achievement based on cultural and social factors.

DISCIPLINE DISPARITIES: MYTHS & FACTS

SUPPORTING MATERIAL

DISCIPLINE DISPARITIES: MYTHS & FACTS

DIRECTIONS: On the chart paper provided, place a green dot below the statements you believe are mostly true and a red dot below the statements you believe are mostly false.

Disparities aren't really due to race or ethnicity; they are really about the challenges of poverty, inadequate home lives, and violent communities.	MOSTLY TRUE ☐ MOSTLY FALSE ☐
Racial disparities are really due to worse behavior among students of color.	MOSTLY TRUE ☐ MOSTLY FALSE ☐
Suspension and expulsion are used infrequently and to prevent or punish serious acts of misbehavior.	MOSTLY TRUE ☐ MOSTLY FALSE ☐
Disciplinary disparities are evident only for Black students.	MOSTLY TRUE ☐ MOSTLY FALSE ☐
While a powerful symbol, there is really no evidence that the "school-to-prison pipeline" actually exists.	MOSTLY TRUE ☐ MOSTLY FALSE ☐
Disparities are solely due to individual teachers and principals.	MOSTLY TRUE ☐ MOSTLY FALSE ☐
There is very little schools can do to eliminate disparities.	MOSTLY TRUE ☐ MOSTLY FALSE ☐

FIVE QUESTIONS EVERY SCHOOL SHOULD EXPLORE ABOUT STUDENT DISCIPLINE

1 What are the school factors or practices that predict disparities in student discipline (educator philosophies and practices; unequal access to quality teaching, a rigorous and meaningful curriculum, and resources)?

2 Are African American and Latino students punished more severely for similar or less serious behaviors than their peers?

3 Are suspensions primarily used for non-violent, non-safety threatening incidents?

4 Is the greatest disproportionality in discipline for students of color based on subjective and relational-based issues such as "defiance" and "disruptive behavior?"

5 Are the most extreme differences in discipline outcomes found at the intersection of student demographics, e.g., Black males with a disability, white females with a disability?

Discipline Disparities:
A Research-to-Practice Collaborative

New and Developing Research on Disparities in Discipline

Russell J. Skiba, Mariella I. Arredondo, and M. Karega Rausch

Discipline Disparities Series: New Research

March 2014

The Discipline Disparities Research to Practice Collaborative

Disparities in the use of school discipline by race, gender, and sexual orientation have been well-documented and continue to place large numbers of students at risk for short- and long-term negative outcomes. In order to improve the state of our knowledge and encourage effective interventions, the Discipline Disparities Research to Practice Collaborative, a group of 26 nationally known researchers, educators, advocates, and policy analysts, came together to address the problem of disciplinary disparities. Funded by Atlantic Philanthropies and Open Society Foundations, the Collaborative has spent nearly three years conducting a series of meetings with groups of stakeholders—advocates, educators, juvenile justice representatives, intervention agents, researchers, and policymakers—in order to increase the availability of interventions that are both practical and evidence-based, and to develop and support a policy agenda for reform to improve equity in school discipline. The project has funded 11 new research projects to expand the knowledge base, particularly in the area of intervention, and commissioned papers from noted researchers presented at the Closing the School Discipline Gap Conference. A culminating report of the Collaborative's work is the formal release of the Discipline Disparities Briefing Paper Series, three papers on policy, practice, and new research summarizing the state of our knowledge and offering practical, evidence-based recommendations for reducing disparities in discipline in our nation's schools.

Introduction

Since first identified by the Children's Defense Fund[1] nearly 40 years ago, researchers have consistently documented African American disproportionality in a range of exclusionary discipline practices including office disciplinary referrals, suspensions, expulsions, and corporal punishment.[2] Since that time, the field has learned that contextual factors, such as higher rates of student misbehavior and higher rates of poverty, do not fully explain racial disparities.[3] Some factors that may contribute to disparities include the racial diversity of the student body and school faculty,[4] classroom and administrative decision-making processes,[5] and differential experiences and perceptions of school climate.[6]

Although our knowledge base has grown to a more sophisticated understanding of disciplinary disparities for African American students, the research base has been much more limited concerning the extent of, and reasons for, disparities for other student groups, such as Hispanic/Latino students, Native American students, students with disabilities, and LGBT students. An even more significant gap has been a lack of research attention to the identification of strategies, interventions or programs to reduce or eliminate disparities in discipline. Through its *Collaborative Funded Research Grant Program* and a national conference on disciplinary disparities, *Closing the Discipline Gap* (Washington, D.C., January, 2013), the Discipline Disparities Collaborative has begun to generate new research addressing these and other gaps.[7] This briefing paper on New & Developing Research on Disparities describes the results of that new research, and identifies remaining gaps in the literature that can guide researchers and funders of research. The brief is organized into two sections:

1) *What Have we Learned? Key New Research Findings* describes research from leading scholars across the nation commissioned by The Center for Civil Rights Remedies at UCLA's Civil Rights Project with the support of the Collaborative, findings from projects supported by the Collaborative Funded Research Grant Program, and other new research on disproportionality in school discipline in the peer-reviewed literature.

2) *Future Research Needs* describes gaps that remain in the research base. Although there has been considerable new knowledge generated in recent years, significant gaps remain, especially in identifying and evaluating intervention strategies that reduce inequity in discipline for all students.

What Have We Learned: Key New Research Findings

Research continues to show that students of color and students with disabilities are at higher risk for suspension and expulsion. New findings show that race interacts with gender in determining who will be suspended or expelled, and that Hispanic/Latino students are also disproportionately at risk for exclusionary discipline as they reach middle and high school.

Students of color, African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Native American students specifically, are more likely than White students to be face exclusionary discipline. Drawing upon three national surveys, a recent study reported that the odds of Black students being suspended out of school was 1.78 times that of White students, while Hispanic/Latino students' odds of suspension were 2.23 times that of White students.[8] A longitudinal study of students in the state of Florida found that 39% of African American students were suspended, compared to 22% of White students, and 26% of Hispanic/Latino students.[9] African American students were also suspended for longer periods of time than other students, even after controlling for poverty.[10]

Students with disabilities are also at high risk for disproportionate discipline. Students with disabilities are suspended almost twice as frequently as their non-disabled peers[11] and for longer periods of time, even after controlling for poverty.[12] Race and disability intersect, producing an even higher degree of risk. Nationally, twenty-five percent of African American students with disabilities were suspended out-of-school at least once in 2009-2010, a rate higher than every other racial/ethnic group and sixteen percentage points higher than white students with a disability.[13]

Gender intersects with race to increase the risk of school exclusion. New research continues to find that males are more likely to be suspended than females,[14] and Black males are consistently the most at-risk for exclusionary discipline and arrest.[15] Yet, in some schools, African American and to some extent Hispanic/Latino girls are at high risk of suspension and expulsion. Two separate studies of Black, White, and Hispanic/Latino

secondary school students found that Black females were suspended out of school at rates significantly higher than other females, and higher than White and Hispanic/Latino males.[16] Hispanic/Latino females reported rates higher than White females and rates equivalent to White males.

New research continues to find no evidence that disciplinary disparities are due to poverty...nor is there evidence that students of color engage in rates of disruptive behavior sufficiently different from others to justify higher rates of punishment.

Although findings of disproportionality have been somewhat inconsistent for Hispanic/Latino students, recent research is identifying patterns by school level. Two recent studies[17] have found no disproportionality or even under-representation for Hispanic/Latino students at the elementary level; yet by middle and high school, Hispanic/Latino students are significantly more likely than White students to be suspended out of school or expelled.

Racial/ethnic differences in the use of suspension and expulsion are not due to poverty or different rates of misbehavior.

New research continues to find no evidence that disciplinary disparities are due to poverty. Skiba and colleagues joined a host of previous investigations in finding that Black-White differences in out-of-school suspension persist regardless of level of poverty.[18] Nor is there evidence that students of color engage in rates of disruptive behavior sufficiently different from others to justify higher rates of punishment. Survey data from 8th and 10th grade Black, White, and Hispanic/Latino students indicate that Black males reported similar or lower use of drugs, alcohol, and weapons at school compared to other students, yet they also reported receiving more suspensions than any other group.[19] Black and Hispanic/Latino high school students were significantly more likely than

White students to be suspended out of school even with the same level of misbehavior.[20]

The experiences of LGBT students illuminate discipline and criminal justice disparities that are often undocumented and unaddressed.

New research finds that LGBT students may also experience exclusionary discipline, hostile school climates, and contact with the juvenile justice system more often than their peers. Using a nationally representative sample of adolescents in grades seven through twelve, adolescents who reported same-sex attraction had significantly higher odds of being expelled from school, even after controlling for self-reported rates of misbehavior, age, gender, race, and socioeconomic status.[21] Preliminary findings from a mixed-methods study documenting the experiences of discipline for LGBT youth indicated that LGBT students experience high rates of punitive or exclusionary discipline, disciplinary consequences for violating gender norm policies, and a school climate so hostile that it may motivate fighting to protect oneself against bullying.[22] Non-heterosexual youth, especially girls, have reported experiencing significantly higher rates of being stopped by the police, arrested, and convicted as other girls who report engaging in similar behaviors.[23]

Suspension is often the first step in a chain of events leading to short- and long-term consequences, including academic disengagement, academic failure, dropout, and delinquency.

Opportunity to learn is one of the strongest predictors of academic achievement; so it is not surprising that removing students from school for disciplinary reasons is associated with negative academic outcomes, such as course failure, academic disengagement, and ultimately dropping out of school. In a longitudinal statewide study of 9th graders in the state of Florida, 73% of students suspended in 9th grade failed subsequent academic courses, compared to 36% of students who were not suspended;[24] even after accounting for socio-demographics, attendance, and course performance, being suspended even once in 9th grade is associated with a 20 percent increase in dropping out. Similar results on the negative relationship between suspension and dropout for all students were found in longitudinal analyses in the state of Texas, even after controlling for a number of explanatory factors.[25] For African American males, and to some degree Hispanic/Latino males, academic disengagement has been reported to be a strong predictor of truancy, suggesting that these student groups may

abandon school in response to feeling academically disengaged.[26]

Suspension itself appears to be a risk factor for future contact with the justice system. Drawing from national longitudinal data, Shollenberger[27] reported that more than one-third (33%) of males suspended for 10 or more days had been confined in a correctional facility. Notably, a student's report of engaging in delinquency or crime occurred only after the first time they were suspended from school. In the groundbreaking study, *Breaking School's Rule*s, Fabelo and colleagues reported that suspension and expulsion for a discretionary school violation nearly tripled a student's likelihood of juvenile justice contact within the subsequent year. Only 2.4% of students with no disciplinary violations became involved with the juvenile justice system, increasing to 14.7% of those with 2-5 disciplinary incidents, and fully 46% of those who were suspended 11 or more times.[28]

Commonly relied-upon interventions, such as security measures or alternative placements, are often less effective than assumed, and can exacerbate racial/ethnic disparities.

Although alternative placements are often viewed as a disciplinary solution, some research says they may exacerbate negative outcomes, especially for students of color. A longitudinal investigation in a large school district in Kentucky found that half of the students placed in alternative schools in elementary school experienced subsequent juvenile detention within less than four years, while 43% of students placed in alternative schools in middle school were detained as juveniles within less than two years.[29] Racial gaps in alternative school placement were pronounced: 13% of all African-American students in the cohort experienced placement compared to 4% of White students.

Examination of merged data from three national surveys to address questions about security measures in high schools, suspension rates, and student misbehavior found that high-security[30] schools had significantly greater African American disparities in total suspensions compared to low-security schools, even after controlling for differences in student behavior.[31]

There are hidden costs to society, both fiscal and civic, associated with out-of-school suspensions.

A comprehensive, longitudinal study of Texas students reported that the link between school discipline and retention has significant economic impacts.[32] In the analysis,

school discipline was associated with approximately 4,700 grade retentions, costing the state nearly $41 million for each year of additional instruction. Moreover, delayed workforce entry related to grade retention cost the state over $68 million, including $5.6 million in lost tax revenue.

Disciplinary exclusion can also decrease the odds of future civic and political participation. Using the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescent Health dataset, Kupchik and Catlaw examined the post-school voting and volunteering behaviors of young adults with a history of suspension in school, and found that suspended students are less likely than others to vote and volunteer in civic activities after high school.[33]

Schools Have the Power to Change Their Rates of Exclusions

Recent research has implicated school perspectives and practices as among the most powerful predictors of suspension and disproportionality in suspension. Multilevel analyses[34] showed that while socioeconomic status or type of behavior did not fully explain Black-White disparities in school rates of out-of-school suspension, when school-level variables such as principal perspective on discipline were entered into the model, the influence of race on discipline was reduced to non-significance. Such results suggest that, rather than focusing on individual student deficits, disparity-reducing intervention efforts will be more productive by focusing on changing school factors.

While high suspension rates decrease feelings of safety and diminish school climate, strong student-teacher and parent-teacher relationships are related to decreased suspension rates and an increased sense of safety. A mixed-method study[35] showed that frequent use of suspensions in Chicago schools was associated with less safe environments, even when comparing schools with similar demographics.[36] Students and teachers felt safest in schools where teachers view parents as partners in children's education, where teachers offer academic support to students, where students trust their teachers, and where teachers trust their principals. Those relationships are even more important than neighborhood crime and poverty in predicting school safety, and are at least as strong as the relationship between safety and school achievement level.

Consequences of Discipline Disparities and Incarceration for Youth

The disproportionate confinement of African American males in secure juvenile detention mirrors their school experiences with school discipline disparities, and LGBT students experience more contact with police than other students.

School-level inequity in discipline and juvenile justice appear to be related. In an examination of school discipline and juvenile justice for African American and White youth aged 10-17 in 53 counties in Missouri, researcher Nicholson-Crotty and colleagues reported racial disproportionality in out-of-school suspensions to be a strong predictor of similar levels of racial disparity in juvenile court referrals, even when controlling for levels of delinquent behavior, poverty, and other demographic variables.[37]

Recent research has implicated school perspectives and practices as among the most powerful predictors of suspension and disproportionality in suspension.

In a longitudinal analysis drawing from a nationally representative sample of adolescents, Himmelstein and Bruckner reported that LGBT youth were approximately 50% more likely to be stopped and questioned by the police than other youth. Non-heterosexual girls, in particular, experienced about twice as many arrests and convictions as other girls who had engaged in similar transgressions.[38]

Detention is harmful to youth and its severe effects have been well documented.

Incarcerated youth run a high risk for sexual victimization and suicide. An estimated 12% of youth held in state juvenile facilities and

large non-state facilities across the country reported experiencing one or more incidents of sexual victimization by another youth or facility staff in the past 12 months or since admission.[39] Moreover, in a national survey of 110 juvenile suicides, 70% of youth who committed suicide were confined for nonviolent offenses.[40]

Placements in correctional facilities may actually increase criminal behavior among youth: Incarcerated youth were found to have a 70-80% recidivism rate within two to three years of release,[41] and youth placed in a correctional facility reported higher rates of re-offending compared to youth who remained in the community under supervision.[42]

What Are Some Promising Solutions and Interventions?

There *are* alternative discipline systems that can reduce reliance on exclusionary and punitive approaches to discipline. These alternative approaches have been implemented in school districts across the country, and have demonstrated the capability to reduce suspension and expulsion and improve school safety, climate, and academic outcomes. While the impact of these approaches on disciplinary disproportionality is still emerging, such strategies address three important components of school climate and school discipline that may lead to disparity reduction:

Relationship-Building: Approaches such as restorative practices or teaching that emphasize relationship-building between students and teachers are emerging as models that may reduce disparities in discipline.

Structural Interventions: Approaches such as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), Threat Assessment, and changing disciplinary codes of conduct may create structural changes in the way schools attend to school discipline.

Emotional Literacy: Approaches that include social-emotional learning improve the capacity of schools to address the emotional literacy of their students, and the ability to understand and regulate student social interactions and emotions.

Relationship-Building

Interventions that focus on sustained support for teacher development, strengthening teacher-student relationships, and strengthening student engagement can

lead to a reduction in the use of exclusionary discipline, particularly for African American students.

My Teaching Partner. In a randomized controlled trial that evaluated whether a sustained and rigorous professional development program, *My Teaching Partner* (MTP), focused on teachers' interactions with students found that teachers using MTP relied less on exclusionary discipline with all of their students. The program also had a differential impact by race, in that teachers' reduction of exclusionary discipline was the most pronounced for African American students.[43]

Students and teachers felt safest in schools where teachers view parents as partners in children's education, where teachers offer academic support to students, where students trust their teachers, and where teachers trust their principals. Those relationships are even more important than neighborhood crime and poverty in predicting school safety...

Restorative Practices. Restorative practices (RP) are informal and formal processes implemented throughout the school building that aim to proactively build relationships and a sense of community (preventing conflict) and to repair harm after wrongdoing has occurred (resolving conflict). A recent literature review of the effectiveness of RP in schools reports that the evidence base on RP is not yet expansive, particularly in the United States, but there are some state and district examples suggesting that RP may be linked to reduced suspension and expulsion, decreased disciplinary referrals, and improved academic achievement.[44]

Two recent studies showed RP's promise for reducing the racial discipline gap. Examination of teacher and student reports of RP implemented in two high schools found that individual teachers with better RP implementation tended to have narrower racial discipline gaps.[45] Compared to teachers rated as low in RP implementation, high RP teachers had better relationships with their students, were perceived as more respectful by their students from different racial and ethnic groups, and issued fewer exclusionary discipline referrals to African American and Hispanic/Latino students. For the schools as a whole, during the first year of implementation of RP, the number of students receiving at least one referral declined in 7 of 10 discipline categories. A 6-year mixed method study on the implementation of RP in the Denver Public Schools reported that suspension rates were reduced by nearly 47% across the district.[46] Reductions were reported for all racial/ethnic groups, with the largest percentage point drop for African Americans: African American suspension rates dropped from 17.6% to 10.4%, Hispanic/Latino rates dropped from 10.18% to 4.74%, and suspension rates for White students dropped from 5.88% to 2.28%.

Structural Interventions

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) has been found to create positive reductions in use of exclusionary discipline, although the evidence suggests that specific attention to issues of race, culture, and difference may be necessary if PBIS is to reduce disciplinary disparities.

A 5-year randomized controlled study on PBIS implementation in 35 middle schools showed that treatment schools changed practices from reactive punishment to proactive support, while schools in the control group continued emphasizing punitive consequences. The capability of PBIS to address racial disparities in discipline was mixed, however: There were some reductions in disciplinary exclusion rates for Hispanic/Latino and American Indian/Alaska Native students, but not for African-American students.[47]

Evidence demonstrating that PBIS as typically implemented does not address racial disparities well has caused some researchers to call for revised PBIS models that include cultural considerations[48] and pilot PBIS models that are more responsive to culture. For example, a study of five elementary and middle schools implementing PBIS with cultural adaptations across two school districts in British Columbia and Alberta, reported that students with Aboriginal status were no more

likely to receive Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs), or subjective ODRs (behaviors that require significant value judgment on the part of the referring agent) than students without Aboriginal status.[49]

A systematic protocol used in schools that respond to students' threats of violence without resorting to zero tolerance suspension has shown to effectively reduce suspensions and racial disparities between Black and White males.

Use of the Virginia Threat Assessment Guidelines across schools in Virginia was associated with a 19% reduction in the number of long-term suspensions and an 8% reduction in the number of short-term suspensions, reductions greater than schools not using the Guidelines. Formal training and length of implementation was associated with greater reductions in suspensions.[50] Use of the Guidelines was associated with reductions in suspensions for all racial groups included in the study, as well as a reduction in disproportionality between Black males and White males even after controlling for school size and poverty. Among schools not using the Guidelines, Black males had a long-term suspension rate 6 percentage points higher than White males (11.2% compared to 5.1%), compared to only a 3 percentage point difference (7.6% compared to 4.3%) among schools using the Guidelines.[51]

School and district codes of conduct often stress punitive and exclusionary approaches to discipline, and may be misaligned with preventative approaches to discipline.

Codes of conduct—the rules governing school discipline—often stress punishment and exclusion as the primary disciplinary option. As part of a larger multi-year and multistate study on the implementation of PBIS in high schools, Fenning and colleagues found that all of the school codes of conduct they reviewed were rated as punitive/reactive, even for minor behavioral infractions. The authors argue that re-aligning such policies to emphasize prevention-oriented practices such as PBIS and school/district discipline policies are required for effective systemic change.[52]

Emotional Literacy

Investing in social and emotional learning, support teams, and planning centers focusing on a learner-centered approach can reduce misbehavior and decrease out-of-school suspensions, yet more explicit attention to race, culture, and difference may be necessary to reduce racial disparities.

The Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD)—a large urban district where 81% of students are African American or Latino—engaged in comprehensive reform efforts designed to improve safety, order, and the conditions for learning. Intervention efforts included the implementation of data-driven improvement efforts, the district-wide implementation of empirically validated social and emotional learning programs, student support teams that addressed early warning signals such as discipline referrals and attendance issues, and planning centers that replaced the district's punitive in-school suspension program and were designed to help students learn self-discipline. An evaluation of that effort[53] reported improved student attendance district-wide, a decline in negative behavioral incidents per school by almost 50%, and a nearly 60% district-wide reduction in use of out-of-school suspension. Disciplinary disparities, however, remained.

Future Research Needs

Recent research has complemented and significantly extended what we know about disparities in school discipline. Even with these advances, however, significant gaps remain that researchers and funders of research could prioritize in order to advance knowledge and practice in the field. Specifically, gaps remain in our knowledge of the extent of, and reasons for, disparities among many student groups, and how schools and school systems should address disparities.

Building Knowledge on the Extent of and Reasons for Disparities

While much is known about disciplinary disparities and African American students, the knowledge base for other student groups and the impact of school security technology on disparities is not nearly as robust. Some key questions that future research should examine include:

What is the extent of, and reasons for, exclusionary discipline for student groups that have been under-researched to date—such as Native American, LGBT, gender nonconforming, and English language learning students—and where race/ethnicity, gender, disability, and sexual orientation intersect? Unlike the nearly 40 years of research on the extent of and factors that do and do not contribute to African American disciplinary disproportionality, there is a paucity of research for other student groups. Examining the extent of disproportionality for these groups, the degree to which factors associated with disciplinary disproportionality for African American students hold for other groups, and which other factors contribute to disparities

among these groups will fill a significant gap in our knowledge base. Moreover, emerging research suggests that some group identity intersections—such as African American males or females with a disability—have an increased risk of exclusion. Identifying the historical, structural, cultural, policy, and practice conditions that contribute to intersectional differential risk is a significantly underexplored area of research.

What accounts for inconsistent findings of exclusionary discipline with Hispanic/Latino students? The current research base is mixed on the extent of disparities for Hispanic/Latino students with some studies finding Hispanic/Latino overrepresentation and others finding under-representation.[54] Reasons for these differences have not been fully explored to date. Are there historical, geographic, community, school, and/or acculturation effects that might account for observed differences in the literature? Identifying differential reasons for disparities among Hispanic/Latino students may be important in designing intervention efforts.

What is the impact of increased law enforcement and security technology in schools on disciplinary disparities? There are very few rigorous studies of the effectiveness of increased law enforcement and security technology on school discipline overall and the effects of its disparate use. As many states and schools consider increasing the use of such methods,[55] an understanding of the conditions under which the use of security technology and increased police presence relates to disciplinary disparities can inform how such methods are used and implemented.

Building Knowledge of Effective Interventions and Systems Change

The development of evidence-based interventions, and especially under what conditions such interventions are most effective, is arguably the most important area for future research and evaluation. Key questions to be examined include:

What malleable school factors and interventions show the most promise for reducing disparities? Rigorously evaluated interventions that specifically examine impacts on disciplinary disparities are very few in number.[56] Research on effective interventions for reducing exclusionary discipline is growing, but research on approaches that reduce disparities is lacking. Schools and school districts seeking to improve practice and reduce inequity need empirically based guidance on how policies, procedures, and practices might be altered for greater equity. Identifying evidence-based solutions is a critical need as pressure increases for schools to address high rates of disciplinary removal.[57]

What are the classroom dynamics and structures that lead to disciplinary disparity reduction? Disparities appear to begin with differential rates of office referrals from classrooms.[58] Yet, the micro-level classroom processes by which differential referrals occur are not well understood. Well-designed classroom observational studies that identify and describe classroom systems and processes that contribute to disciplinary disparities will provide greater guidance for classroom-based intervention efforts. In particular, research on implicit bias suggests that bias and subtle stereotyping is virtually universal in our society.[59] Further research is needed on the extent to which implicit bias may contribute to disparities in office referrals, suspension, or expulsion.

A growing number of states and school districts—such as the state of Maryland, Los Angeles Unified School District, Denver Public Schools, and Chicago Public Schools among others— have recently instituted policy changes designed to reduce the use of exclusionary discipline for minor misbehaviors. Research is needed on the extent to which these and other policy changes impact disproportionality in discipline.

Is disciplinary equity best achieved through interventions that focus on disciplinary systems or through whole-school change efforts? The current evidence base is unclear whether targeted interventions—such as improved training in classroom management—are sufficient in and of themselves to change disciplinary disparities. Some

researchers and practitioners[60] have suggested that, given the pervasiveness of racial/ethnic inequity in school systems (e.g., academic achievement, special education), intervention efforts require more comprehensive and explicit culturally responsive change efforts in order to reduce disparities.

Under which contexts might an equity-implicit vs. equity-explicit approach be more or less effective? Interventions designed to reduce use of exclusionary discipline overall don't necessarily also reduce disparities.[61] What is less clear, however, is the degree to which disparity-reducing interventions must include having direct conversations about race/ethnicity and difference (equity-explicit approach) compared to interventions that focus on areas that produce disparities, such as improving relationships between students and teachers, but don't include those direct conversations (equity-implicit approach). That line of research can aid in understanding under what conditions an equity-implicit vs. equity-explicit approach may be the most effective in particular contexts, and uncover how educators can effectively talk about race/ethnicity, difference, and power in such a way that produces positive change rather than reinforcing stereotypes.[62]

How do school-based practitioners respond to state, district, and school disciplinary policy changes? A growing number of states and school districts—such as the state of Maryland, Los Angeles Unified School District, Denver Public Schools, and Chicago Public Schools among others—have recently instituted policy changes designed to reduce the use of exclusionary discipline for minor misbehaviors.[63] Research is needed on the extent to which these and other policy changes impact disproportionality in discipline at the local level, and, in particular, to better understand how those policies influence the decisions, behaviors, and perspectives of local decision-makers.

What resources are needed to create greater disciplinary equity? More research is needed describing any connections between under-resourced schools and disproportionality, and how new and/or existing resources—such as funding allocations, human capital development and distribution systems, and federal, state, and local accountability and support systems—might be best utilized to create greater equity.

Continuing Methodologically Rigorous Studies

What is known about disciplinary disparities is built from rigorous and methodologically sound research. The most effective research strategies in the field use multivariate tech-

niques, mixed-method approaches, and participatory research. New studies designed to address key questions on disciplinary disparities should continue to use such methods in order to continue to build an evidence base that researchers and practitioners can have confidence in.

Multivariate Studies

Simple numerical differences showing that some groups receive higher rates of exclusionary discipline in and of themselves do not rule out threats to internal validity of the findings; that is, simple mean differences between racial groups in rates of discipline could be due to any of a number of factors. Comprehensive efforts to further understand and alter disciplinary disparities should identify the degree to which a variable may mediate the relationship between race/ethnicity or other sources of difference (such as LGBT identification), and use of exclusionary school discipline. Multivariate techniques are well suited for this task as they allow for an examination of the relative and unique contribution of each variable while controlling for a range of other variables.[64] Such techniques are critical in statistical analyses of disciplinary disparities in order to increase confidence placed in the findings: Absent appropriate controls for factors such as poverty or student behavior, those alternative explanatory factors cannot be conclusively ruled out. Particularly given the multi-determined and nested nature of students in classrooms in schools that comprise school discipline and other educational examinations, hierarchical linear modeling[65] may be a more statistically appropriate technique compared to other multivariate models.[66]

Mixed Methods

The complexity of disciplinary disparities requires attending not only to quantitative relationships, but also an understanding of contextual relationships and settings that may be best captured through qualitative techniques. Methods that use both statistical analyses that describe which variables do and do not contribute to disparities and descriptive analyses of how those and other variables interact in actual classroom settings will provide a more robust understanding of the complexities of disciplinary disparities.[67]

Participatory Research

Since an important goal of future research includes developing and testing interventions that can reduce disciplinary disparities, involving educational practitioners in such work beyond their involvement as research participants appears to be an important consideration. Working with educators as part-

ners, perhaps through an action research paradigm,[68] is particularly important for addressing adaptive and complex organizational issues such as disproportionality in school discipline.[69] To the degree that participatory research is feasible, engaging educators throughout the design, implementation, and evaluation process has a greater likelihood of yielding greater generalizability and usability of findings in actual school settings.[70]

Conclusion

Our understanding of the extent of disparities in school discipline has significantly advanced over nearly 40 years of research, and, in particular, the recent studies described in this brief have made important new contributions to our understanding of disciplinary disparities. Yet significant gaps remain, including a robust description of the nature of disparities for a number of student groups (e.g., Hispanic/Latino students, students who identify as LGBT, and girls).

Developing research-validated strategies and interventions that can reduce or eliminate disciplinary gaps is an urgent priority and perhaps the most important and challenging need in the field. As the consequences of ineffective exclusionary practices, and the impact of those practices on marginalized groups, become increasingly evident, pressure will increase to replace ineffective practices and reduce disciplinary disparities. Given an increasing understanding of the severe consequences on students' lives of disproportionate rates of discipline, it is critical that future research seeks to identify effective research-based strategies that can guide practitioners as they seek to implement more effective and equitable school discipline practices.

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