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African American Male Discipline Patterns and School District Responses Resulting Impact on Academic Achievement: Implications for Urban Educators and Policy Makers

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This study, utilizing a sample of more than 3,500 African American males in a Midwestern urban school district, investigates the discipline patterns of African American males and school district responses that impact their academic achievement on state standardized tests. To fulfill the goals of this study, we have four interrelated objectives: (1) to investigate all documented behavior occurrences of African American males in comparison to their peers during the 2005-2006 academic school year; (2) to detail the discipline responses recommended by the school district for these offenses; (3) to calculate the total amount of class time missed as a result of school district prescribed resolutions; and (4) to provide a connection to performance on standardized test reporting for the larger African American student population in this urban school district. As a result of the findings of this study, recommendations will be made for educators and policy makers to improve the discipline patterns and academic performance of African American males.

Over the past three decades, scholars have investigated the schooling experiences of African American students, particularly African American male students in the area of school discipline (Skiba & Knesting, 2001; Townsend, 2000). The intensity of these scholarly investigations have focused on the common phenomenon of the ‘discipline gap’ that often occurs in many K-12 educational environments, particularly in urban school settings (Lewis,

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Hancock, James, & Larke, 2008; Skiba, Peterson & Williams, 1997; Skiba, 2002). Namely, many of these studies over the past three decades have identified the most frequent targets of unfair discipline practices--African American males (Lewis, et al, 2008; Townsend, 2000). Paradoxically, the research literature underscores the fact that African American males are no more likely than their racial and ethnic peers to be discipline problems in the classroom; however, many schools and school districts, particularly in urban environments, continue to mete out harsher discipline punishments to this cohort. To further problematize this situation, limited literature exists which links the impact that harsher discipline punishments exact on the performance of African American males in the classrooms, specifically their performance on standardized tests.

To contribute to addressing the problems associated with a paucity of research, this study examines African American male discipline patterns in one urban Midwestern school district. More specifically, this study examines this school district's responses to discipline and disciplinary actions that were meted out to African American students and the resulting impact on these students' academic achievement. As a result, this study is centered on four interrelated objectives, objectives excogitated from a thorough review of the literature surrounding this topic. Specifically, this study first uncovers all documented behavior occurrences among African American male cohorts in comparison to other ethnic group peers during the 2005-2006 academic years in the Midwestern school district under examination. Second, this study details the discipline responses recommended by the school district for these behavior occurrences. Third, we provide a calculation of the academic class time missed by African American males as a result of prescribed discipline resolutions enforced by the school district under examination. Fourth, this study illuminates African American males' performance on standardized tests, extrapolated from reports of the overall African American student population. Finally, as a result of the study findings, recommendations will be made for educators and policy makers to more effectively structure disciplinary processes and procedures in an effort to promote the success of African American males.

African American Students and School Discipline

School Discipline and the Policies that Govern

Behavioral problems within United States public school contexts are generally handled by the suspension and/or expulsion of students who are deemed disruptive. These practices are in large part due to the widespread and contentious adoption of the rigid *zero tolerance* approach to discipline (Leone, Mayer, Malmgren & Meisel, 2000; Skiba & Knesting, 2001). Broadly speaking, zero tolerance refers to policies that harshly punish all forms of student misconduct and wrongdoings with little or no regard to the severity of the offense that is committed. This policy is known to have originated during the early 1980s as a response to federal policies that were developed to combat the war on drugs by imposing "immediate, harsh, and legally mandated punishments" on dealers/ drug traffickers (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace & Bachman, 2008, p. 47). Almost a decade later, zero tolerance policies have continued to gain momentum and have subsequently spawned the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994--an Act which mandates that local educational agencies expel students, for a minimum length of one year, if they are caught with a weapon on school premises (20 U.S.C. Chapter 70 Section, 8921). The implementation of

this particular legislation has been extended and in turn has incited the widespread use and application of school-based zero tolerance policies for infractions also linked to alcohol, drugs, insubordination, and tardiness (Kaufman et al., 2000; Wallace, et al, 2008).

Past research investigations that have taken on the topic of zero tolerance have tended to focus on the implications of this policy on its most impacted victims, marginalized populations (e.g. African Americans) (Lewis et al, 2008). According to Fuentes (2003), the most nefarious implication of this policy is its negative impact on students' academic performance; students are essentially rendered incapacitated when they are suspended from the classroom setting in a time span as short as two or more days (Fuentes, 2003). Thus, one of the major criticisms of the zero tolerance policy is that it not only contributes to the loss of critical classroom instructional time but also inherently gives way to unsupervised activities that students engage in external to the school setting (Office of Special Education Programs, 2001; Townsend, 2000). It is the combination of these and other concerns that have led researchers to conduct additional investigations into this congeries of problems associated with zero tolerance policies.

Findings from these investigations yield evidence that purports a strong correlation among negative outcome variables such as: (a) dropping-out, (b) disaffection and alienation, (d) delinquency, (e) retention, (f) academic failure and (g) school suspensions/expulsions when applied to this group (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack & Rock, 1986; DeRidder, 1991; Bock, Tapscott & Savner, 1998; Bakken & Kortering, 1999; Brooks, Schiraldi & Zindenberg, 1999; Costenbader & Markson, 1994; Skiba, Peterson & Williams, 1997; Skiba, 2002). For all purposes, if the conclusions from these investigations accurately interpret the overrepresentation in the use of harsher disciplinary practices (i.e. corporal punishment, expulsion, etc.) for African American students, there is reason to believe that this population is more susceptible to lower classroom performance than their peers. Said differently, if African American students are removed from their educational environments for extended periods of time, there is less time dedicated towards learning. Hence, these students are not actively engaged in the classroom learning context, opportunities for their academic development become severely attenuated. In sum, it is plausible to contend that the dismal state of student performance among some African American students is potentially an unintended consequence of the zero tolerance policy.

African American Male Students and Disciplinary Practices

The disproportionate disciplinary representation of African American male students is a burgeoning topic that has permeated not only the literature on scholarship, but also the literature on pedagogy. With respect to scholarship, several researchers have repetitively asserted that African American males are dealt what Monroe (2006) calls an *uneven hand*, implying that African American males are oftentimes “targeted for disciplinary action in the greatest numbers” (Monroe, 2005, p. 46; see also Children’s Defense Fund, 1975; Gonzalez & Szecsy, 2004; Skiba, Michael, Nardo & Peterson, 2000; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Ferguson, 2000; Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Despite the lack of conclusive evidence supporting the claims that African American males display higher levels of disruptive behavior, this group of students tends to be suspended and/or expelled at higher rates—two to three times higher- than their counterparts (Skiba, Michael, Nardo & Peterson, 2000; Townsend, 2000; Wu, Pink, Crain & Moles, 1982). Behavior, in this sense, is but a weak predictor of cross-racial variations in the imposition of disciplinary sanctions.

A more vivid picture of this disproportionality can be drawn from the following empirical findings; namely, Raffaele Mendez and Knoff (2003) found that African American children account for 17% of the student population, yet they constitute approximately 33% of all suspensions (see also Education Trust, 1998). Additionally, Gregory and Weinstein (2008) observed similar dynamics in a study they completed, reporting that while African Americans made up 58% of students referred to the office for defiance related infractions, they constituted only 30% of the total student enrollment. Contrastingly, their White peers comprised only 5% of defiance referrals and made up roughly 37% of the student body (Gregory & Weinstein, 2008). In alignment with the previous research, Wallace et al. (2008) concluded from their analysis that African American males represented a startling 330% of the number suspensions and expulsions, roughly 3.3 times the rate of their White male peers. Similar investigations into the overrepresentation of African American males also report findings consistent with these above mentioned studies. As it stands, according to the extant literature, African American males have the highest reported suspension rates, followed by White males, African American females, and White females, respectively (Skiba et al., 2002).

These daunting statistics can be explained at least in part by: (a) racial discrepancies in the dispensation of disciplinary measures that result in more severe consequences for African American males; (b) the proliferation of zero tolerance policies; (c) interpersonal and cultural misunderstandings; and/or (e) the attitudes of school personnel (Bireda, 2002; Tucker, 1999). A review of the last two explanations provides a forum for discussion related to the relevance of pedagogy for closing what is referred to as the *discipline gap*—a concept coined to draw attention to the disproportionate discipline policies and procedures meted out to certain student groups at rates that supersede (sometimes drastically) this group's statistical representation in a particular school population.

According to Monroe (2005), the idea of culturally relevant pedagogy- which for the purpose of her work she formally labels as cultural synchronization- has implications that extend beyond academic achievement (Irvine, 1990; Ladson-Billings, 1994); cultural synchronization spills over into other areas, such as classroom management. The theory of cultural synchronization posits that if practitioners would balance their school disciplinary practices with those that mirror the students' lived reality, particularly their home disciplinary practices, then they (i.e. the practitioners) will be more successful with these students in managing classroom engagements. This level of understanding related to cultural contexts in schools is perceived to be a necessary and sufficient condition for classroom-based learning. As a result, the more equipped teachers are to deal with student conduct in the classroom, the better positioned they are to perform their job responsibilities; in turn facilitating a more effective learning environment. As a caveat, this form of culture responsiveness is not limited to racial attributes; however, race remains particularly important when considering that the demographic composition of the nation's teaching force is 86% Anglo (Golden, 2007).

Thus, research may in fact be suggesting that the discipline policies implemented are not reflective of African American males' cultural perspectives (Brown, 2005; Monroe, 2005). Take for instance, Weinstein et al. (2004) found that several novice White teachers reported that they often perceived lively debates occurring between African American males as suggestive of aggressive behaviors, when in fact these African American males perceived their engagements to be merely culturally expressive communication. Teachers aware of commonly documented forms of behavior found to exist among African American male populations (i.e. flamboyant and

nonconformist behaviors known as *cool pose* know that these students are often simply demonstrating, through a linguistic exchange, their thoughts (Majors & Billson, 1992). Problematic is that this cool pose generally conflicts with the constructed notions that teachers embrace regarding expected behaviors of who they would classify as “good students.” And, for this reason African American males are often penalized, or punished/ sanctioned, for behaviors that are subsequently deemed to be disruptive. With students of color comprising nearly 43% of the total student enrollment in public schools—African Americans making up 17%, Latinos 20% and other ethnic racial groups constituting 5% culturally relevant pedagogy, particularly for classroom management, becomes critically significant (United States Department of Education, 2008).

Data and Methods: Disciplinary Patterns of African American Males in Cascade Independent School District

This study is part of a series of scholarly investigations focusing specifically on African American K-12 students in one Midwestern urban school district, referred to hereafter by the pseudonym Cascade Independent School District (CISD). The goal of these investigations was focused primarily on the status of African American males in CISD in an effort to improve the academic achievement of this population at both the district and national level. Another major goal of this specific investigation was to examine the disciplinary patterns meted out to African American male students within CISD as compared to their peers—this is done as a means to develop more effective discipline techniques.

To fulfill the goals of this study, the following research question was developed: *What is the resulting impact of disciplinary patterns and school district responses regarding African American academic achievement?* To further grapple with this question, four interrelated objectives have been developed to guide the analysis: (1) to investigate all behavior occurrences among African American males in comparison to their peers during the 2005-2006 academic school year; (2) to detail the discipline responses recommended by the school district for these offenses; (3) to calculate the total amount of class time missed as a result of school district prescribed resolutions; and (4) to provide a connection to performance on standardized test reporting for the larger African American student population in this urban school district. Each objective will be addressed throughout the remainder of the paper.

The first author of this paper collaborated with CISD to obtain the dataset used in this study.¹ The information that was gathered was specific to the 2005-2006 academic school year. The data reported was collected from official records derived from the district’s Research Department. Because the database is extremely extensive, the analysis that follows only focuses on a subset of the data collected, providing detailed analysis of the disciplinary roles, infractions, and sanctions associated with African American male students attending schools located within CISD.

To offer some additional background information, the following descriptive statistics have been provided for the reader to gain a better understanding of the demographic composition

¹ The authors of this study have been provided the necessary research approval from CISD to conduct this analysis.

of the school district. During the 2005-2006 academic school year, CISD had a total student population of 33,301 students (i.e. 21% African American, 25% Anglo, and 49% Hispanic) African American males totaled 3,586 of the population across at all grade levels. While the African American male population comprises approximately 11% of the total population; they make-up nearly 37% of all males students cited for disciplinary action (see Table 1).

Table 1
Gender Breakdown of CISD Student Population Cited for Disciplinary Action, 2005-2006

Students Ethnicity	Male	%	Female	%	Total	%
African American	6801	<i>36.7%</i>	3649	<i>39.0%</i>	10450	<i>37.5%</i>
Asian American	477	<i>2.6%</i>	220	<i>2.3%</i>	697	<i>2.5%</i>
Native American	205	<i>1.1%</i>	130	<i>1.4%</i>	335	<i>1.2%</i>
Hispanic	6962	<i>37.6%</i>	3616	<i>38.6%</i>	10578	<i>37.9%</i>
Angelo	4075	<i>22.0%</i>	1749	<i>18.7%</i>	5824	<i>20.9%</i>
N	18520	<i>100.0%</i>	9364	<i>100.0%</i>	27884	<i>100.0%</i>

Note: The italicized percentages represent those students, by subcategory, cited for disciplinary action

Given this overrepresentation or over inclusion of African American males cited for disciplinary sanctioning, there is a need to examine- in greater depth--the discipline patterns meted out to African American male cohorts. As a point of initiation, it is necessary to identify the most common infractions and sanctions associated with all male students, across all racial categories. Tables 2 and 3, list the top ten behavior infractions committed- and sanctions imposed upon- male students in all grade levels. In examining these tables individually, we learn that acts of disobedience are the most common infractions committed by male students- regardless of race. Subsequently, school detention is seemingly the most frequently imposed sanction used to counter these acts of disruption enacted by male students.

Table 2
Top 10 Behavior Infractions for Male Students in CISD, 2005-2006

Indicators	AA Males	Hispanic Males	Angelo Males	Event Totals	% AA Males
Disobedience	2909	2735	1827	7727	37.65%
Defiance	1032	1111	440	2623	39.34%
Truancy	533	1003	586	2263	23.55%
Fight with Student	674	623	371	1743	38.67%
Tardiness	263	394	152	855	30.76%
Improper Dress	272	174	86	561	48.48%

African American Male Discipline Patterns

Threat to Student	160	109	56	329	48.63%
Profane – Adult	137	105	74	320	42.81%
Profane – Student	102	99	51	260	39.23%
Theft	76	82	27	197	38.58%

Table 3
Top 10 Behavior Sanctions for Male Students in CISD, 2005-2006

Indicator	AA Males	Hispanic Males	Angelo Males	Event Totals	% AA Males
Assigned School Detention	1508	1906	981	4538	33.23%
In School Suspension	1155	1172	608	3032	38.09%
Out of School Suspension – 3 days	479	512	241	1262	37.96%
Restricted Lunch	462	376	269	1158	39.90%
Restricted Recess	326	362	324	1055	30.90%
Conference with Student	451	356	203	1047	43.08%
Assign Saturday School	281	480	218	1030	27.28%
Warning	272	249	220	784	34.69%
Out of School Suspension – 5 days	218	224	100	565	38.58%
Conference with Parent/Student	182	161	96	452	40.27%

Analysis

To properly investigate all documented behavior occurrences in CISD for African American males in relation to their White counterparts the *rate ratio*, also known as the *relative risk ratio* (RRR), was computed. The relative risk ratio compares the *risk index* (RI) of one group to that of the comparison group. The risk index is calculated by dividing the number of students of a particular group (e.g. African American males) in a certain category or placement (e.g. those cited for disciplinary action) by the total population of students within the group (MacMillan & Reschly, 1998; Hosp & Reschly, 2003). The formula below used to calculate this index is cited here:

$$RI = \frac{\text{Total \# of a Particular Group of Students within a Category}}{\text{Total \# of Students within the Group}}$$

$$RRR = \frac{\text{Risk Index (RI) Specific Group}}{\text{Risk Index (RI) Comparison Group}}$$

Once RRR is determined, it is possible to mathematically estimate the degree of overrepresentation. For example, if the RRR = 1, then the index can be interpreted to indicate that the individual risk of one group is *similar* to that of the comparison group. However, if the RRR < 1 (i.e. less than one), then the index can be interpreted to indicate *underrepresentation* with respect to the comparison group. If RRR > 1 (i.e. greater than one), then the index can be interpreted to indicate *overrepresentation* with respect to the comparison group.

Table 4 depicts the findings for the cumulative relative risk of disciplinary action for African American males in CISD, with White males as the comparison group. The results indicate, on average, that African American males are overrepresented for disciplinary action when compared to their White peers.

Table 4
Cumulative Risk of Disciplinary Action for African American Males in CISD, 2005-2006

Group	Risk Index	Relative Risk Ratio	Interpretation
African American Males	0.96	2.03	Overrepresentation
Anglo Males ^a	0.47	_____	

^aAnglo males’ relative risk ratio is not reported because they represent the comparison group

In an effort to detail the discipline responses recommended by the school district for behavioral offenses, table 5 highlights the findings from a cross tabulation of the relationship between the most frequently cited infraction- disobedience- and the top 10 sanctions imposed in CISD. With regard to African American students, the district referred nearly 45% of these students to a three-day out of school suspension penalty for acts of disobedience. In this group approximately 30% of African American males were recommended for in school suspension when cited for this behavioral offense. In contrast, roughly 18% of White students received recommendations for restricted recess, a less punitive sanction in comparison to the previous two sanctions leveled against African American students for acts of disobedience. Additionally, within this group, 25% of White males who were referred for discipline received the same sanction that was imposed upon the larger group, restricted access.

Findings

Findings from this study were consistent with much of the previous research assessing the disparate disciplinary practices used by schools on African American male student cohorts. In calculating the relative risk ratio it can be concluded that this group of students is overrepresented in CISD school discipline sanctions. In addition to this overrepresentation cross tabulations revealed that African Americans, as a whole, receive harsher punishments (i.e., out of

school suspension and in school suspension) than their White peers for similar acts of disobedience. As a result, African Americans are being suspended at rates higher than that of their counterparts leading to missed school days and missed opportunities to learn.

Table 5
CISD Sanction Recommendations for Acts of Disobedience, 2005-2006

Resolutions	African American Males	African American Total	Anglo Males	Anglo Total	TOTAL Reports
Assigned School Detention	24.61% (770)	35.19% (1101)	18.34% (574)	24.64% (771)	3129
In School Suspension	29.60% (615)	43.41% (902)	15.16% (315)	19.39% (403)	2078
Out of School Suspension – 3 Days	29.01% (85)	44.71% (131)	13.99% (41)	19.80% (58)	293
Restricted Lunch	28.92% (260)	42.05% (378)	18.46% (166)	23.80% (214)	899
Restricted Recess	22.63% (208)	31.12% (286)	25.03% (230)	35.58% (327)	919
Conference with Student	28.23% (188)	44.44% (296)	15.62% (104)	21.77% (145)	666
Assigned Saturday School	19.82% (87)	33.49% (147)	12.76% (56)	18.45% (81)	439
Warning	26.10% (119)	39.04% (178)	14.25% (65)	23.90% (109)	456
Out of School Suspension – 5 Days	22.03% (13)	32.20% (19)	18.64% (11)	22.03% (13)	59
Conference with Parent/Student	24.93% (102)	43.52% (178)	13.93% (57)	23.47% (96)	409
TOTAL	(2447)	(3616)	(1619)	(2217)	9347

When looking at the number of days African American males are absent from the classroom, due in large part to out of school suspensions, it is possible that a more effective metric should be utilized to address this dilemma. Table 6, shows how the total amount of class

time missed by African American males- as a result of school district prescribed resolutions- tends to exceed this group’s total student population. Although, there are 3,587 African American males enrolled in CISD, they missed 3,714 school days over the duration of one academic school year.

Table 6
School Days Missed as a Result of Prescribed Recommendations by CISD, 200506

Sanctions	Number of Occurrences	Number of School Days Missed
Out of School Suspension-20 days	2	40
Out of School Suspension-15 days	5	75
Out of School Suspension-10 days	4	40
Out of School Suspension-5 days	218	1090
Out of School Suspension-3 days	479	1437
Out of School Suspension-2 days	309	618
Out of School Suspension-1 days	354	354
Extended Suspension-5 days	12	60
TOTAL	1383	3714

Results reported from the District’s standardized tests reveal yet another problem. Fewer than 48% of African Americans within CISD performed at proficient/advanced (P&A) levels for reading. Only 36% of this group was deemed proficient or advanced for fourth grade, seventh grade, and ninth grade reading. Fewer than 36% of African Americans scored at this level for writing, with just 23% of fourth graders scoring at the P&A level. Perhaps even more daunting are the scores related to science and math proficiency. Fewer than 19% of eighth graders received a P&A score for science, and just 7% of ninth and tenth graders met P&A standards for math.

Table 7
Proficient and Advanced Levels for Reading, Writing, Science and Math in CISD, 2005-06

Grade	Number Tested	% P&A
Reading		
3 rd Grade	544	47%
4 th Grade	513	36%
5 th Grade	570	46%
6 th Grade	616	40%
7 th Grade	553	36%
8 th Grade	570	38%
9 th Grade	649	36%
10 th Grade	454	41%
Writing		
3 rd Grade	546	27%

4 th Grade	512	23%
5 th Grade	570	34%
6 th Grade	615	24%
7 th Grade	550	31%
8 th Grade	570	28%
9 th Grade	648	24%
10 th Grade	452	26%
	Science	
8 th Grade	570	18%
	Math	
5 th Grade	569	35%
6 th Grade	613	23%
7 th Grade	551	12%
8 th Grade	570	13%
9 th Grade	650	7%
10 th Grade	456	7%

Discussion

What the research in general and the CISD data in particular has revealed is the internecine warfare that is being waged between schools and African American male populations. Especially disturbing is the constant supply of weapons of mass destruction to schools in their efforts to in many ways annihilate this group—weapons often supplied by entities both internal and external to the school context. Monroe’s (2005) study, *Why Are “Bad Boys” Always Black? Causes of Disproportionality in School Discipline and Recommendations for Change* stated:

Because school trends reflect currents of the national contexts in which they exist, core causes of the discipline gap are both internal and external to schools...I discuss three conditions the contribute to current disparities. They are (a) the criminalization of black males, (b) race and class privilege, and (c) zero tolerance policies (p. 46).

This paper has treated some aspect of each of these conditions and its relative impact on African American male populations, with a concentrated focus on one condition in particular—zero tolerance policies. The questions then become, what are the intended outcomes if schools focus on these disparities? What is the relevant story these disparities collectively and individually tell about the experiences of African American males who interface with discipline structures in schools? Is the discipline gap found to exist among African American males in CISD emblematic of the experiences that other African American males are experiencing in other ISDs across the country? By answering these questions, we risk being named culpable in this discipline disparity conundrum; however, culpability brings us a greater sense of awareness of how we can from our respective vantage points initiate change to address these issues.

Perhaps a relevant starting point to tackle the many problems associated with the disparities in disciplinary treatment and the meting out of disproportionate, inequitable, and uneven sanctions to African American males should begin with initiatives aimed at helping

schools and school districts better understand who these individuals are. For example, Hughes et al. (2006) in the article focused on debunking many of the commonly held myths about Black males in school state, "...transformation must begin with a radical attack on the myths that shape the thoughts and perceptions of individuals responsible for our educational systems; these individuals are ultimately responsible for enacting policies and procedures that are anabolic for black males" (p. 78).

Additionally, a focus on the cyclical 'catch-22' occurrences in CISD that promote the ongoing problems of African American males being sanctioned, leading to their absence from school, resulting in their lowered performance on key measures of academic importance must be circumvented. These problems in and of themselves might be viewed singularly, but their impact is absolutely multifarious (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005; Hughes & Bonner, 2006). What might portend to be the best approach at ensuring promise for African American males by way of what schools can do, is summarized in a statement by Day-Vines and Day-Hairston; these researchers state that counselors who "...understand the central features of certain culturally derived behavior and thought patterns can help promote pro-social behaviors among urban African American by developing and implementing culturally congruent intervention strategies" (p. 238).

Recommendations

While it is important to extract patterns of disproportionality in empirical assessments of school discipline practices; the mere recognition of such patterns suggest little about the practical strategies necessary to address ethnic disparities found in exclusionary discipline consequences-particularly out-of-school suspensions. To aid educators, administrators, and policy makers in their concerted effort to explore alternatives to managing student misbehavior, we have provided a total of nine- presumably germane- recommendations. The first four recommendations are applicable strategies to be considered by educators and administrators. The remaining six recommendations are applicable strategies to be considered by policy makers.

Educators and Administrators

Implement culturally relevant professional development (CRPD) for classroom management. This form of professional development should be implemented aggressively, meaning administrators should make attendance mandatory for all educators and training sessions should be held quarterly over the duration of three or more consecutive days. To derive the most benefit from CRPD, the administration should work collaboratively with professional consultants to present educators with a variety of seminars that emphasize, exclusively, specific ways in which they can effectively manage diverse classrooms.

It is important to mention that the type of CRPD recommended here, should remain separate from culturally responsive pedagogic training. Because the purpose of these training sessions is to focus on how to organize the classroom milieu and manage student behavior-without instinctively writing a referral at the first-sign of disruption or conflict- discussions of curriculum content and/or teaching strategies only appear to be distractive to the overall goal of this form of professional development. To this end, the seminars conducted during the professional development sessions should make explicit reference to academic performance only

in the context of how classroom management, not pedagogy, is a powerful influence on student achievement (Wang, Haertel & Walberg, 1993, 1994).²

Establish a discipline advisory committee. Administrators should actively recruit an ethically and culturally diverse group of educators to serve on this committee. The primary responsibility of these individuals should be two-fold. They are not only to review each of the referrals submitted to administration, but they are to determine the most appropriate consequence for the offense in question. The aim of this committee should be to ensure that each referral for disciplinary action is handled justly and that each individual receives the proper punishment for the offense committed.

Additionally, the disciplinary advisory committee should be able to present a variety of viewpoints concerning a wide-range of offenses. These varying perspectives should introduce a more subjective approach, to be used in combination with a more objective discipline policy, in assigning disciplinary consequences. This type of subjectivity can help to distinguish cultural forms of expressiveness from horseplay, as well as, horseplay from more serious and dangerous forms of misbehavior.

Enforce a 3-Strikes Rule for non-violent behavior offenses. This rule is to be implemented per academic school year by both administrators and educators. Its goal is to reduce the percentage of office referrals and out-of-school suspensions for non-violent forms of misbehavior (e.g., truancy, disobedience, profanity, disruption, etc.). With this rule, students are allowed up to three warnings- if in the classroom- or three referrals- if referred to the office- for non-violent offenses before they receive any form of exclusionary discipline consequence.³ After the third offense, if in the classroom, students can potentially face an office referral (i.e., after the third warning); or if referred to the office, students can face out-of-school suspension (i.e., after the third office referral). The option to suspend the student (i.e., out-of-school); however, is contingent upon the severity of the non-violent offense committed.

Referral for counseling/therapy. Those students who are repeatedly referred for disciplinary action are to be assigned priority to the school's counselors. They are to meet consistently for the duration of one semester. If it is determined at the end of the semester that the student needs additional counseling, administrators should work closely with parents to secure a private therapist for further treatment.

The referral for counseling/therapy is important primarily for rehabilitation purposes. Instead of excluding the student from the classroom (via out-of-school suspensions) for misconduct- which in turn, can jeopardize their ability to receive fundamental classroom instruction- administrators should seek a more rehabilitative alternative that helps students to reform their behavior. By recommending a repetitive offender to receive professional therapy, one is decreasing the odds that the student will continue to be disruptive, yet increasing their likelihood of improved academic performance. Here, we make the assumption that less

² We do not contend, in any manner, that pedagogy is insignificant. In acknowledgement of the education scholarship on the influence of cultural responsive pedagogy, we agree with scholars who assert that cultural sensitivity to teaching strategies can lead to significant improvements in the achievement of low-income students and students of color (Banks, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994). However, we do maintain that CRPD for classroom management is most effective when references to student achievement are positioned exclusively in terms of how performance can be enhanced when educators are able to effectively manage disorder in their classrooms.

³ It should be noted that the three referrals can, however, be sanctioned with the use of non-exclusionary discipline consequences (e.g., after school detention, Saturday school, in-school suspension, etc.) while still adhering to the principles of the 3-Strikes Rule.

disruption leads to increased instruction time, which likely results in a higher probability of learning; while more disruption is typically equated with classroom exclusion, and subsequently low achievement.

Policy Makers

Amend zero tolerance policies. As it stands, there is no legislation that prevents the use of zero tolerance for non-violent offenses. In some cases, the use of out-of-school suspensions or expulsions has been considered an excessive form of punishment- particularly when the offense is non-threatening or does not result in the physical harm of other individuals. All things considered, it is our recommendation that policy makers make an effort to amend, or revise, zero tolerance policies to reprimand only those students who commit violent offenses.

Provide an alternative means of education. Policy makers should implement legislation that requires schools to provide students- who are serving an out-of-school suspension or expulsion term greater than two days- with some type of formal education while excluded from classroom instruction. Alternative education, in this regard, can take one of two forms- access to instruction via home school or an alternative education institution. If able to garner a significant degree of community support, the utilization of substitute teachers is optimal for the former, while students enrolled in the College of Education at area/community colleges are most preferable for the latter.

Develop a universal discipline policy. Currently, several school districts make use of very different discipline practices when sanctioning student misbehavior. Although there is some level of continuity between the various policies, educators and administrators within school districts still tend to respond differently when governing student conduct. In the interest of consistency and clarity, we recommend that policy makers seek to establish a single universal discipline policy- one which can be used in all K-12 public education institutions across the U.S.

Establish a discipline database. In an effort to monitor discipline patterns, policy makers should require school districts to provide a quarterly report of all disciplinary action taken within the specified time frame. The report itself, should document specifics such as the date/location/type of offense, the name/race/gender/age/grade/GPA/SES of the offender, and the sanction imposed for the offense. This type of information, along with more descriptive data, should be reported between each quarter. This recommendation is fueled by an attempt to encourage policy makers to hold schools, and school districts, accountable for ensuring equitable disciplinary practices.

Impose fines on parents. Parents generally have a significant amount of influence on how their children behave. Unfortunately, some choose to take a hands-off approach on discipline matters that take place in school; thereby, making it more difficult for educators and administrators to manage disruptive behavior. In an effort to increase parental involvement, concerning matters of classroom management, we also encourage policy makers to hold parents accountable for their children's behavior by imposing fines for all violent and selective non-violent, offenses. This recommendation is not in any way some strategic attempt to allow districts to capitalize financially, but rather to make students think twice about being disruptive and to consider the monetary penalties that are likely to be imposed upon their parents for their individual misconduct.

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