What We Know About Reducing Disproportionate Suspension Rates for Students of Color
A Literature Summary

November 2012
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About REL Northwest

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What We Know About Reducing Disproportionate Suspension Rates for Students of Color: A Literature Summary

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Education Northwest

November 2012
Executive Summary

In Oregon and across the nation, educators are concerned about higher suspension rates for students of color, compared to White students. The Oregon Leadership Network (OLN) Research Alliance is a partnership of districts committed to using data and research to eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in their schools. As part of their multifaceted efforts, the districts requested a literature summary that addresses two research questions:

What schoolwide and classroom practices are associated with reduced racial or ethnic disproportionality in the rate of discipline referrals and suspensions for middle and high school students?

What do we know about the impact of practices that OLN districts use to reduce disproportionate rates of discipline referrals and suspensions in their secondary schools?

We reviewed over 8,900 studies on approaches to student discipline but found few that address these questions, and fewer still that do so using a rigorous research design. Although there are numerous studies that describe the problem of disproportionality in suspension rates for students of color, we found only 12 studies that described potential solutions. All but one of these were descriptive studies that identified classroom and school practices associated with reduced disproportionality and/or reduced suspension rates for students of color. Only one study, an experimental study of Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RiPP), provided evidence of its positive impact on reducing in-school suspension rates in schools with predominantly African American student populations. However, the intervention had no effect on the rate of out-of-school suspensions.

The descriptive studies report that students experience fewer suspensions if their teachers are caring and have high expectations for them to achieve. Structured learning environments that explicitly teach students social and behavioral expectations also have lower rates of racial disproportionality. Effective classroom management is particularly important for middle school grades. In high school, parental involvement in school is associated with reduced discipline rates. We found that teachers who had additional resources and professional development to help them address classroom misbehavior also had fewer problems.

The limited research contributes to the challenge of reducing disproportionate use of suspensions. While there may be other successful school or classroom approaches to this issue, they do not have evidence that supports claims that these approaches reduce disproportionate suspension practices. Additional research is also needed to examine the impact of programs on a variety of student groups, as the majority of studies focus on African American students, almost to the exclusion of other racial groups. The challenge of eliminating disproportionate suspension rates requires schools to develop and implement school improvement plans that will address the needs of diverse, multicultural student populations. The OLN alliance will use this summary to develop a strategic plan for reducing disproportionate rates of discipline and suspensions across the alliance and within their own districts.
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Reducing Disproportionate Suspension Rates
Overview

Disproportionate rates of suspensions for students of color, especially African American students is a local, state, and national concern (Gregory and Weinstein 2008; Kaufman et al. 2010; Skiba et al. 2002; Wallace et al. 2008). The Oregon Leadership Network (OLN) Research Alliance identified this equity concern as a high priority for their districts. The alliance members requested a literature summary to learn about education practices that are designed to reduce racial disproportionality in school discipline referrals. They also wanted to know what research says about the discipline practices that they currently use. The specific questions addressed by this summary are:

What schoolwide and classroom practices are associated with reduced racial and ethnic disproportionality in the rate of discipline referrals and suspensions for middle and high school students?

What do we know about the impact of practices that OLN districts use to reduce disproportionate rates of discipline referrals and suspensions in their secondary schools?

This summary is the first step in a planned multistep effort by districts to reduce disproportionately high rates of discipline referrals and suspensions for students of color. Districts plan to use the research on what is effective as a framework for assessing their own practices and to inform their strategic planning to eliminate racial and ethnic differences in discipline referrals and suspension.

What is the OLN Research Alliance?

The research alliance is a partnership between REL Northwest and members of the Oregon Leadership Network (OLN), which is a larger network that has worked together for more than a decade on issues of equitable practice and leadership development. The OLN Research Alliance is committed to using data and research to develop policies, programs, and practices that will increase educational equity for Oregon students.

The goal of the OLN alliance is to reduce disproportionately high rates of suspensions and high school dropout experienced by students of color. The alliance members include representatives of OLN districts, the Oregon Department of Education, Education Northwest (which operates REL Northwest), institutions of higher education, and several professional associations.

Students of color experience more suspensions

The OLN research alliance requested this literature summary in response to two independent reports that identified disproportionate use of exclusionary discipline (suspensions and expulsions) with students of color within their districts (Burke and Nelsestuen 2011; Stavenjord 2012). Both reports found that Black, Hispanic/Latino, Pacific Island, and American Indian/Alaska Native students experienced more suspensions and expulsions that removed them from their classrooms for longer periods than their White classmates. Several large-scale studies found similar results for Oregon, in other states, and nationally (Arcia 2007; Fabelo et al. 2011; Horner, Fireman, and Wang 2010; Losen, Martinez, and Gillespie 2012; Vincent, Sprague,
Reducing Disproportionate Suspension Rates 2

and Tobin 2012). Across all studies, African American, Hispanic, and American Indian students experienced suspensions at two to five times the rate of White students. Studies suggest that disproportionate rates of exclusionary discipline between White students and students of color may not be due to differences in behavior (Dinkes, Cataladi, and Lin-Kelly 2007; Fenning and Rose 2007; Losen and Skiba 2010). Bradshaw and colleagues (2010) found that Black students receive office referrals more often than White students even when teacher ratings of their behavior are similar. Moreover, differences in discipline responses occur more often for behaviors that require subjective judgment on the part of the teacher or administrator (Fabelo et al. 2011; Skiba et al. 2002). White students are more likely to receive referrals for more objective behaviors such as smoking, vandalism, or truancy (Skiba et al. 2002). In contrast, students of color are more likely to receive suspensions for subjective behaviors (or “discretionary offenses”) such as disrespect, disruption, perceived threat, and insubordination (Bradshaw et al. 2010; Fabelo et al. 2011). For discretionary offenses, the teacher decides whether the student should receive an office referral and the school administrator determines if the student will receive a suspension or other discipline action.

Most discipline referrals that lead to suspension occur in classroom settings (Gregory and Weinstein 2008; Horner, Fireman, and Wang 2010; Skiba et al. 2002; Vavrus and Cole 2002). Differences in discipline referral rates among teachers suggest that their competence in classroom management varies (Gregory and Weinstein 2008; Oliver, Wehby, and Reschly 2011; Skiba, Peterson, and Williams 1997). Teachers who develop positive, caring relationships with students, have high expectations for each student, teach self-management skills, and encourage student participation in decisionmaking have fewer discipline problems (McNeely, Nonnemaker, and Blum 2002). Teachers who make active efforts to learn about the cultural backgrounds of their students and who are sensitive to bias in curriculum and their own attitudes may avoid misunderstandings that lead to discipline problems (Milner and Tenore 2010; Morrison, Robbins, and Rose 2008; Townsend 2000).

In addition to disproportionate suspension rates, students of color experience harsher discipline consequences for similar offenses and a higher number of suspension days assigned per discipline incident (Fabelo et al. 2011). They receive suspensions more often for first-time discipline offenses than their White classmates for the same types of behaviors (Fabelo et al. 2011; Losen 2011; Vincent, Sprague, and Tobin 2012). Students of color also receive longer suspensions per incident compared to White students (Losen, Martinez, and Gillespie 2012). Vincent and colleagues (2012) found that African American, American Indian, and Hispanic students lost twice as many days to suspension as White students in one Northwest state.

For students of color, the disproportionate use of suspensions raises concerns about equity and the school’s legal responsibility to protect the civil rights of each student (Losen, Martinez, and Gillespie 2012; Skiba and Rausch 2004). Suspensions undermine the academic achievement of students by disrupting their connection with school and removing them from classroom instruction (Raffaele Mendez, Knoff, and Ferron 2002; Skiba and Rausch 2004). Schools are responsible for protecting the civil rights of each student to benefit from or participate in
educational opportunities regardless of race or national origin (Civil Rights Act 1964). Disproportionate suspension rates that remove students of color from classroom instruction can reduce their equal access to educational opportunities and lead to hostile learning environments (Milner and Tenore 2010).

**How the summary will help**

OLN alliance members requested this literature summary for three reasons. First, they do not know what practices are associated with reducing racial and ethnic disparities in school discipline. Thus, they believe that the findings of a literature summary will build a common understanding among alliance members. The members also believe the summary findings can inform their discussions and strategic planning.

Second, while there are studies of specific programs that address racial disproportionality, no single summary or review reports the research findings on specific programs used by the alliance districts. These programs include multicomponent programs such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), social and emotional learning (SEL) programs, culturally responsive classroom management, alternatives to suspension, and professional development about educational equity. The alliance members believe a single report on practices used by their districts would assist in their planning. They also believe it would help their efforts to increase the knowledge of educators, parents, and the community about the problem and possible solutions.

Third, alliance members now know the extent of the problem in their own districts. They also know that this problem exists across the state and the nation. Because of their concern about educational equity, the districts are ready to do something about this issue. However, they want to use two types of evidence to plan their interventions: (1) evidence that demonstrates linkages between particular types of practices and reductions in disproportionality; and (2) evidence about the effectiveness or lack of effectiveness of practices and programs they are already using.

**What we did to learn more**

The aim of this technical assistance project was to provide alliance members with a literature summary about practices associated with reduced racial disproportionality in discipline referrals and suspensions. We chose not to conduct a longer, more traditional systematic literature review because the alliance needed the summary for planning the upcoming school year. The procedures used for the literature summary included features to enhance the reliability of its findings, including a team with appropriate expertise, a narrow question aligned to the practitioners’ request, and well-defined procedures. Dr. Janice Jackson, an expert in the area of educational equity, was an external advisor to the project. She provided consultation throughout the project and participated in the meeting that shared findings with alliance members.
**Literature search process**

We began the work by conducting a search for all studies about student discipline practices that reported outcomes by race. We located the documents for review from four major EBSCO HOST and PsychInfo databases that focus on educational research. We also searched major news sources, such as *Education Week*, to find recently released research papers and reports. We conducted the database searches in two stages: (1) general searches for school and classroom practices associated with terms such as “discipline” and “race” and (2) searches for research on specific programs already used or of interest to the districts (see table 1).

**Table 1. School practices and programs in OLN districts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Whole School or Multicomponent</th>
<th>Alternatives to Suspension</th>
<th>Social and Emotional Learning</th>
<th>Professional Development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) | • Restorative justice or practices  
• School detention  
• In-school suspension | • Conflict resolution  
• Project Achieve  
• Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways | • Educational equity training such as Courageous Conversations  
• Double Check |
| • Safe and Responsive Schools | | | |

Source: Literature summary and OLN alliance members.

**Screening and review process.** We used a three-step process to select documents for inclusion in this summary. Figure 1 outlines the number of documents that we reviewed during each step.

*Preliminary screening.* During step 1, the librarian conducted a preliminary screening of the 8,948 hits obtained through the literature searches. The preliminary screening included review of each document’s title and brief abstract to identify studies that examined school-based practices designed to reduce discipline problems for students in middle or high school grades. After the preliminary screening, we retained 1,291 relevant for further review.

*Abstract review.* During step 2, the researcher reviewed the full abstracts of the retained documents to identify studies that were case studies, targeted elementary grades, or described small group or individualized interventions for at- or high-risk students. We eliminated those studies, leaving us with 214 articles for full-text review.

*Full-text review.* Our step 3 was to determine which descriptive or experimental studies reported discipline outcomes by race. We excluded any that used author-generated surveys as outcome measures or described interventions without evaluation data. We also excluded case studies and opinion or advocacy papers.

Of the 214 full-text article reviews, we retained 12 studies in the summary. Eleven studies describe general practices associated with reduced suspensions for students of color and one shared findings for a specific practice. We excluded over 70 percent of the documents because
they did not report results by race or ethnicity. We excluded the remaining documents because they targeted elementary students, examined outcomes not related to discipline, used author-generated measures, or described the intervention but did not report outcomes. Appendix A provides a detailed description of the methods used to retrieve and select research for this summary.

Figure 1. Literature review procedures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preliminary Review by Librarian</th>
<th>8,948 hits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract Reviews by Researcher</td>
<td>1,291 Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full Text Review</td>
<td>214 Documents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 Articles</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Findings

This section organizes the findings of the literature summary into two sections. The first includes the research findings for the summary on school and classroom practices in general. The second section reports the available research on specific programs used by the alliance members. The second section provides a brief description of specific programs used by the alliance members and, if available, the research findings about each program’s effectiveness and implementation considerations.

School and classroom practices

The practices described in this section reflect the findings of 12 articles included in the summary. This section summarizes the findings without making judgments about their relative importance to addressing racial disproportionality in suspensions. Consequently, the order of the list does not reflect the level of effectiveness or importance of the practices. Eleven studies
are descriptive and one is a true experiment. Descriptive studies report statistically significant relationships between the practice and reduced suspension or discipline rates for students of color, but do not prove causal relationships. Only experimental studies prove that a practice results or causes a desired student outcome. Table 2 contains a summary of the main findings for each study. In Appendix A, tables A2 and A3 provide detailed descriptions of the 12 research studies.

Strategies that promote efficient and effective classroom management are associated with both lower suspension rates and reduced disproportionality (Brackett et al. 2011; Raffaele Mendez, Knoff, and Ferron 2002; Tobin and Vincent 2011). Many of the practices align with those identified as important for culturally relevant instruction and positive classroom environments, including teacher responsiveness to the social and academic needs of the students (Morrison, Robbins, and Rose 2008). The practices identified in this literature summary include:

**Positive, caring teacher-student relationships.** The quality of the student-teacher relationships was associated with smaller discipline gaps and lower suspension rates for students of color (Crosnoe, Johnson, and Elder 2004; Gregory, Cornell, and Fan 2011; Gregory and Weinstein 2008; Murkuria 2002; Way 2011). Characteristics of caring teachers include:

- Showing interest in the welfare of the students,
- Wanting the students to succeed,
- Being sensitive to the students’ academic and social needs,
- Respecting the perspectives of students, and
- Giving positive recognition to students (Brackett et al. 2011; Tobin and Vincent 2011).

**High expectations for students.** Schools with lower racial discipline gaps had teachers and administrators who set high academic and behavioral expectations for students of color (Brackett et al. 2011; Eitle and Eitle 2004; Gregory, Cornell, and Fan 2011; Murkuria 2002). In addition to setting high expectations, teachers and administrators of schools with lower rates of suspension were vocal about their beliefs that students of color can succeed academically (Murkuria 2002; Way 2011). Teachers also communicated high expectations for students by using instructional strategies that engaged students in active learning and encouraged higher order thinking (Brackett et al. 2011).

**Structured school and classroom environments.** Well-organized classrooms have orderly transitions between instruction and noninstructional activities, positive recognition systems, and well-organized classroom routines (Murkuria 2002; Raffaele Mendez, Knoff, and Ferron 2002; Tobin and Vincent 2011).

**Parental involvement.** Administrators in schools with lower suspension rates were more likely to involve parents in the development of their schoolwide discipline plan (Murkuria 2002; Raffaele Mendez, Knoff, and Ferron 2002). They also believed parental involvement in school activities and school improvement decisions was critical to their schools’ success and the “most effective way of dealing with disciplinary challenges” (Murkuria, 2002, p. 445). They viewed strong partnerships with parents as important to reducing suspension and school discipline problems.
Staff members in schools with low suspension rates involved parents early by calling them to discuss discipline concerns before issuing their child an office referral (Raffaele Mendez, Knoff, and Ferron, 2002).

**Teacher and student resources.** Eitle and Eitle (2004) reported that schools with higher per pupil expenditures experienced lower rates of disproportionate suspensions for students of color. Teachers who had additional help in how to address classroom discipline issues effectively also had lower out-of-school suspension rates (Raffaele Mendez, Knoff, and Ferron 2002; Tobin and Vincent 2011). Examples of these resources included additional professional development, coaching, and opportunities to access assistance or consultation as needed.

**Preventive and proactive school discipline practices.** School environments that students believed were safe and had fair enforcement of rules encountered fewer problems with school discipline (Brackett et al. 2011; Murkuria 2002; Raffaele Mendez, Knoff, and Ferron 2002; Way 2011). Similarly, teachers who used behavior interventions to prevent student discipline problems as opposed to strictly enforcing school rules issued fewer discipline referrals to students (Raffaele Mendez, Knoff, and Ferron 2002; Way 2011). Schools with low rates of suspension were more likely to use restorative discipline responses such as referrals to school counselors, conferences with students and parents, restitution, and community service (Payne and Welch 2010; Raffaele Mendez, Knoff, and Ferron 2002). On the other hand, administrators of schools with high suspension rates were more likely to assign in-school or out-of-school suspension for misbehaviors and their use of alternatives to suspensions was limited.
Table 2. Summary of general research findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Descriptive studies of practices</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Brackett et al. 2011 | Students in grade 5 and 6 from 90 Chicago Public Schools | • Positive, caring teacher-student relationships  
• High expectations  
• Structured and efficient classroom routines  
• Effective behavior management techniques  
• Instruction that encourages higher order thinking and quality learning | |
| Crosnoe, Johnson, and Elder 2004 | 1994 National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health data from 132 middle and high schools | • Positive, caring teacher-student relationships | |
| Eitle and Eitle 2004 | 313 high schools and 415 middle schools from 40 Florida school districts | • More resources per child  
• Higher academic achievement | |
| Gregory, Cornell, and Fan 2011 | 5,035 grade 9 students in 199 Virginia schools | • High expectations  
• Positive, respectful teacher-relationships | |
| Gregory and Weinstein 2008 | 2,882 students enrolled in an urban high school | • Caring teacher-student relationships  
• High expectations | |
| Hinojosa 2008 | Teachers and students from a large Midwestern district | • Fair, caring teacher-student relationships | |
| Murkuria 2002 | Four middle school principals from predominantly African American (55% or greater) – two from schools with low and two with high suspension rates. | • High expectations  
• Higher levels of parental involvement  
• Respectful student-teacher relationships  
• Well-organized routines and structure  
• Schoolwide discipline programs | |
| Payne and Welch 2010 | National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools data from 284 public secondary schools (Gottfredson et al. 2000) | • Restorative discipline practices including referrals to school counselors, conferences with students and parents, restitution, and community service | |
| Raffaele Mendez, Knoff, and Ferron 2002 | 142 schools from a large urban district Qualitative data from 24 schools with high suspension rates and 24 demographically matched schools with low rates | For middle school:  
• Professional development in classroom management  
• More teacher resources to address discipline concerns | |
Behavior interventions focused on responding to students’ needs and using approaches to prevent misbehavior

For high school:
- Higher levels of parental involvement in school
- Schoolwide discipline that focused on alternatives to suspension

Tobin and Vincent 2011
- 46 schools (19 elementary, 17 middle, 6 high schools, and 4 alternative secondary schools)
- Positive rewards for expected student behaviors
- Efficient and orderly transitions between instructional and non-instructional activities
- Data-based decision-making to address patterns of problem behaviors
- On-going training and support from district personnel in behavior management
- Local resources to support individual students with multiple discipline incidents

Way 2011
- 10,992 students (from 1,132 schools) in grades 8 and 10
- Positive teacher-student relationships
- High expectations
- Schoolwide management that focus on fewer rules and less punitive responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farrell, Meyer, and White 2001</td>
<td>626 students in grade 6 at 3 middle schools. Ninety-six percent of the participants were Black students.</td>
<td>Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RiPP). The experiment found statistically significant decreases in in-school suspensions for RiPP schools. The rate of in-school suspensions was five times greater for control schools; however, there were no differences in out-of-school suspension rates between treatment and control schools.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. The study examines disproportionate rates of discipline referrals or suspensions.
Note: The 11 descriptive studies examine classroom and school practices that are associated with reduced racial disproportionality or lower discipline referral rates for students of color. Descriptive studies report statistically significant relationships (called associations) between the practice and student outcome, but does not determine if a causal relationship exists.
Programs used by districts

This section summarizes the literature search results for specific programs that districts use to reduce suspensions and expulsions. One goal of the literature summary was to find research that investigated the impact of these programs on eliminating racial disproportionality or, at the very least, reducing exclusionary discipline for students of color. The programs are organized into four categories: (1) multicomponent or whole school approaches, (2) alternatives to suspension, (3) social and emotional learning, and (4) professional development in educational equity (see table 1).

We found only one study, on a social and emotional learning program, which had a rigorous experimental design and looked at disproportionality as one of the outcomes. Some studies used rigorous research designs but did not disaggregate results by race or examine disproportionality. Some of the programs used by alliance members did not have evaluation studies, including restorative justice or courageous conversations. Below we summarize the findings for each of the four categories, with descriptions of specific programs available in appendix B.

Multicomponent, whole school approaches. Whole school programs use a systems-based approach that aims to increase safe and caring school environments through a variety of prevention and intervention strategies. This literature summary examined two multi-component programs, Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Safe and Responsive Schools.

Research findings on multicomponent approaches. PBIS has been the focus of previous randomized trials, but none reported results by race or by impact on reducing racial disproportionality.

Alternatives to suspension. The purpose of alternatives to suspension practices is to correct student behaviors without removing the students from classroom instruction or the school setting. School responses to discipline incidents range from mild interventions, such as talking with students or their parents, to extreme punitive actions that involve law enforcement or expulsion from school. Table 3 summarizes a continuum of school discipline practices commonly used by schools (Payne and Welch 2010).

Table 3. Continuum of discipline practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mild</th>
<th>Restorative</th>
<th>Punitive</th>
<th>Extreme punitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Student conference</td>
<td>• Restitution</td>
<td>• Suspension</td>
<td>• Court action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Parent conference</td>
<td>• Community service</td>
<td>• In-school suspension</td>
<td>• Expulsion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Verbal reprimand</td>
<td>• Work duties or tasks</td>
<td>• After-school detention</td>
<td>• Notification of police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Visit with counselor</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Saturday school</td>
<td>• Charge with a crime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Loss of privilege</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Payne and Welch 2010, p. 1036.
Research findings on specific alternative to suspension strategies. Our literature review did not find any research that examined the effectiveness of these strategies on reducing disproportionate discipline for students of color. We conducted separate literature searches for in-school suspension, Saturday school, detention, and restorative justice.

Social and emotional learning (SEL). The goal of SEL programs is to teach students to learn and apply skills that will maximize their social, behavioral, and academic success. The social competency skills taught by most programs include how to recognize and manage emotions, problem-solving skills, conflict resolution, self-management, and how to relate positively with others (University of Illinois 2005). Research suggests that students who participate in SEL programs have fewer discipline problems (Durlak et al. 2011). Effective SEL programs include the expected outcomes for students, use of sequential training approaches, and active instruction strategies. They also incorporate sufficient instruction time to ensure students are competent in the desired skills. Currently, the majority of SEL research examines its use with elementary-aged students or does not report results by race or ethnicity.

Research findings on specific SEL programs. We found one experimental study of Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RiPP), a social and emotional program designed to reduce school violence (Farrell, Meyer, and White 2001). The researchers examined the suspensions and discipline violations for 27 classrooms of sixth-grade students in three predominantly Black urban middle schools. Students who participated in RiPP had fewer referrals and in-school suspensions for violent offenses but there were no differences in the rate of out-of-school suspensions. The study did not examine the program’s impact on racial disproportionality in discipline practices. Appendix B provides a detailed description of this SEL program.

Professional development in educational equity. Many alliance schools address equity concerns though professional development. We conducted literature searches for research about two programs used or of interest to the districts, Courageous Conversations About Race and Double Check.

Research findings on professional development in educational equity. The search did not find any evaluation or research on the effectiveness of Courageous Conversations or Double Check interventions.

Limitations in the use and interpretation of this report

This literature summary has limitations that should be considered in using and interpreting its results. Although the need for more research to address problems of practice is a common finding, the relative nonexistence of studies addressing racial disproportionality in school discipline makes this especially true. While there are many articles and reports that describe practices that could reduce disproportionality, we have taken great care to only include studies that meet high standards of evidence for educational research. This conservative approach is meant to prevent schools from adopting unproven practices that may later be determined ineffective by more rigorous studies.
On the other hand, we want to caution readers that research findings that indicate no significant or inconsistent results may not provide conclusive evidence that the practice is ineffective. Although this could be true, it could also mean that the study did not report findings separately for students from different racial or ethnic groups. It could also mean low implementation fidelity because the school did not follow the developer’s directions or there was poor participation.

The research findings for practices described in this summary may not apply in the same way for all racial or ethnic groups, or for each student. Although race is a factor that is associated with higher rates of suspension, it is not the only reason that some students are suspended more than others. For example, gender, special education status, academic achievement, and age are also related to variations in suspension rates (Dinkes, Cataladi, and Lin-Kelly 2007; Mc Carthy and Hoge 1987; McFadden et al. 1992; Peguero and Shekarkhar 2011; Shaw and Braden 1990). Finally, this summary is intended to provide educators with information about effective practices and should not be used as the sole information source for developing district or school improvement plans. Effective and sustainable school practices must be a good contextual fit that targets a specific need and assimilates with the culture of the school. Despite these limitations, we hope this summary will help inform policymakers and educators about practices associated with reduced discipline referrals and, more importantly, disproportionate suspension rates for students of color.

Conclusions

The problem of racial disproportionality has challenged students for decades, but we have made little real progress to eliminate this problem. Students of color, in particular African American students, are suspended more frequently and for longer periods of time than their White classmates. Moreover, national reports suggest that the problem is increasing. Between 1973 and 2006, the percentage of Black students suspended at least once increased from 6 to 15 percent nationally. In 2010, one in six African American students was suspended, a rate that is more than triple that of their White classmates (Losen, Martinez, and Gillespie 2012).

Research on school discipline practices has been largely silent on the issue of racial disproportionality. Our literature searches of major education and psychology databases found 8,948 refereed journal articles, book chapters, and reports on school discipline practices. Of these articles, only 12 met the inclusion criteria for this literature summary. We excluded over 70 percent of the studies because they did not report student outcomes by race. An additional 10 percent were case studies or reports that did not meet the required standards for research. Another limitation of the available research was the focus on African American students almost to the exclusion of other racial groups. Because students from different cultural backgrounds may have different experiences related to school discipline and suspension, the challenge of reducing disproportionate suspension rates requires schools to consider the unique needs of different racial groups.
Despite these limitations, the literature summary identified practices associated with lower rates of discipline referrals and suspensions for students of color. High expectations, positive and caring teacher-student relationships, and structured learning environments were consistently associated with lower rates of suspensions. Schools that explicitly teach students academic, behavior, and social expectations also reported fewer discipline problems. Schools with low suspension rates also used a continuum of discipline responses, had more structure, and implemented well-organized routines, especially during transition periods.

The literature search for research about specific district practices found a rigorous evaluation of only one program, RiPP, that examined its impact on suspension rates for students of color. That evaluation analyzed RiPP’s impact on reducing suspensions in middle schools with predominantly African American student populations. The experiment found statistically significant decreases in in-school suspension rates for RiPP schools; however, it did not examine the program’s impact on disproportionate suspension rates.
Appendix A. Methods

OLN alliance members requested this review to learn more about practices associated with reducing racial disproportionality in rates of discipline referrals and suspensions. We chose to use rapid review methods because traditional systematic literature reviews typically require a year or more to complete (Cameron et al. 2007; Ganann, Ciliska, and Thomas 2010; U.S. Department of Education 2010). This timeline was not acceptable to alliance members because they wanted the information quickly to plan alliance work for the upcoming school year.

Why we did a literature summary

Rapid reviews of the literature have increased in use due to requests from policymakers and practitioners for timely literature summaries that focus on their specific needs. Studies examining the utility and reliability of information produced by these methods suggest that the overall results are consistent with traditional systematic reviews, and the users view the summary reports as valuable resources in their decision-making process (Khangura et al. 2012). Similar to methods used in systematic reviews, the methods used to conduct this literature summary included features that promoted rigor, including a team with appropriate expertise, a narrow question aligned to the specific alliance request, and well-defined procedures. Further, Dr. Janice Jackson, a Technical Working Group member, served as an external advisor throughout the project to ensure that the methods, analysis framework, and dissemination products would be of high quality and useful to practitioners.

Unlike traditional systematic literature reviews found in What Works Clearinghouse practice guides (U.S. Department of Education 2011), the literature summary did not include external review by a full expert panel to determine the levels of evidence supporting the effectiveness of the interventions. Instead, the report organizes descriptions of the studies found into two main sections: (a) practices associated with reduced racial disproportionality or lower suspension rates for students of color, and (b) specific programs used by or of interest to alliance members.

Literature search and screening procedures

We designed the literature search procedures to be thorough and highly selective of studies to provide reliable research results. Prior to beginning the study, we established guidelines for conducting the literature search that included screening decisions to select articles for retrieval and criteria to make final decisions about the articles to be included in the report. The process also included consultation and advice from an expert in educational equity, Dr. Janice Jackson, throughout the literature search and while writing the report. The following paragraphs describe the procedures used to complete the literature summary.
Janice Jackson, Executive Director of SCOPE

Dr. Janice Jackson is Executive Director of Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education (SCOPE). Previously, she was on the faculty of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, focusing on leadership development and organizational design. She provided support for its Urban Superintendents Program and other leadership development initiatives such as a Wallace Foundation–funded leadership project for states and urban districts. She has been a faculty member and researcher at two universities, working in areas ranging from teaching and teacher education to leadership development. Dr. Jackson has deep experience in running school systems, including having served in the leadership cadre of three major urban school systems and as a consultant to many others. She also provides support to schools engaged in improvement. She has worked in the policy arena at the federal level, as Deputy Assistant Secretary in the U.S. Department of Education. Dr. Jackson has also worked as a board member or consultant with a wide variety of major education organizations that support professional development; academic, social and emotional learning for students; and the pursuit of educational equity for each student.

Literature search procedures. The REL Northwest librarian conducted literature searches of four databases to find peer-reviewed journal articles, research papers, and reports that focus on educational research: ERIC (EBSCO Interface), Educational Administration Abstracts, Education Research Complete (EBSCO Interface), and PsychInfo/OvidSP. Consistent with methods in the What Works Clearinghouse Quick Review Protocol, Version 2.0, the librarian also searched a major national news source, Education Week, to find recently released research papers and reports (U.S. Department of Education 2010). For each database, the search terms used to find research were:

- “2000 to present” and
- “Research” and
- “Discipline”
- “Race”

The original guidelines for the literature search also included “middle school” “high school” as search terms. These terms were discarded as they excluded articles that referred to secondary education, specific grade levels, or other descriptors of school level.

The librarian also conducted separate searches of the same four databases and major news source using the above terms and the names of specific practices used or of interest to alliance districts, including PBIS, social-emotional learning, restorative justice, culturally responsive classroom management, alternatives to suspensions/expulsions (e.g., after-school/lunch detention, in-school detention, Saturday school, and Double Check), and professional development in educational equity. Table A1 summarizes the results of each literature search.

We also reviewed descriptive information about specific interventions from documents and websites. In addition to specific program websites, we searched registries of evidence-based practices, including the National Registry of Evidence-based Practices and Programs (NREEP) and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Model Programs. These reviews did not yield any additional practices that met the inclusion criteria.
Three-step review process. We used a three-step process to select documents for inclusion in this summary: preliminary screening by the librarian, full abstract review by the researcher, and full-text review by the researcher.

Step 1. Preliminary screening by the librarian. The librarian did a preliminary screen of the titles and shortened abstracts of 8,948 documents found during the literature searches. Following the preliminary screening, we retained 1,291 documents for further review. The librarian retained documents published after 2000 that described a school-based practice for middle and high school students. She excluded reports about practices that focused on elementary school students and opinion papers.

Step 2. Abstract screening by the researcher. During the second stage of screening, the researcher used the same criteria to review the full abstract of the studies retained during the preliminary screening. Of the 1,291 documents, the researcher retained 214 for full-text review. The
inclusion and exclusion criteria we used to make decisions about retaining or dropping a
document during steps 2 and 3 are explained below.

**Inclusion criteria.** We retrieved or retained documents for further review if they met all of the
following criteria:

- Published in English no earlier than 2000.
- Included a title or abstract containing one or more of the search terms.
- Comprised research studies, including randomized controlled trials, well-executed
  quasi-experimental designs with matching or equating of student samples on a
  baseline student-level measure, single-case designs, regression discontinuity designs,
  correlational studies, or qualitative designs with well-defined participant selection
  and data analysis procedures (U.S. Department of Education 2011).
- Were reports and documents that described policy and schoolwide interventions
  used by or of interest to alliance districts. These practices included PBIS, social-
  emotional learning, restorative justice, culturally responsive classroom management,
  alternatives to suspensions/expulsions (e.g., after-school/lunch detention, in-school
  detention, Saturday school, and Double Check), and professional development in
  educational equity topics.

**Exclusion criteria.** We excluded documents that described practices without evaluation data or
used author-generated surveys. We also excluded case studies and opinion or advocacy papers.

**Step 3. Full-text review.** Of the documents reviewed, 12 studies met the criteria for inclusion in the
literature summary. During this review stage, the researcher reviewed the full-text of each
study to determine if it met the inclusion criteria. If the inclusion of literature in the summary
was uncertain, a final decision was reached, through consensus, by the project team.

During the full-text review, we examined the content areas below:

a. Name of the intervention and main approach
b. Type of intervention (e.g., whole school or multicomponent, classroom management,
   social and emotional learning, alternatives to discipline, or professional development)
c. Key features (standards or key features of the intervention) and implementation fidelity
   considerations
d. Research methodology (e.g., participants, design, measures)
e. Significant findings (e.g., data analyses, including specific details about the subgroups)
f. Search source

We recorded this content in a “document summary” to ensure efficient organization of critical
information (Fixsen et al. 2005). We included research documents on school-based practices or
programs for students in grades 6–12, but excluded documents describing after-school and
summer programs. Lastly, we retained documents that reported school discipline outcomes by
student race or ethnicity. Tables A2 and A3 provide descriptions of each study included in the
summary.
Literature tabulation and organization. As mentioned earlier, this summary did not include a panel of experts ranking the level of evidence for each practice. Instead, we organized the findings into two main sections: (A) school and classroom practices associated with reduced racial disproportionality or lower rates of suspension for students of color and (B) specific programs used by or of interest to alliance members.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Participants and Type of Study</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brackett et al. 2011</td>
<td>Participants 2,000 students in grades 5 and 6 from 90 classrooms in Chicago Public Schools <strong>Type of study</strong> Descriptive study using multiple-methods and multilevel analyses to identify classroom factors that are associated with differences in student behavior</td>
<td><strong>Classroom factors.</strong> This study examined the relationships among the quality of the student-teacher relationships, classroom emotional climate, and student behavior. The study found a direct and positive relationship between classroom emotional climate and student behavior. An important influence on the classroom emotional climate was the students’ relationship with their teacher. Characteristics of positive classroom environments were teacher responsiveness to the social and academic needs of the students, efficient and effective behavior management techniques, efficient time management, teachers’ use of methods to maximize students’ engagement, and instruction that encouraged higher order thinking and quality feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crosnoe, Johnson, and Elder 2004</td>
<td>Participants 1994 National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health data from 132 middle and high schools <strong>Type of study</strong> Descriptive study using logistic regression analyses to identify classroom factors that predict suspensions and expulsions</td>
<td><strong>Classroom factors.</strong> Students, regardless of racial background, had fewer suspensions and expulsions if they had positive views of their teachers. Students who reported bonding with their teachers also had higher academic achievement; this was especially true for Hispanic girls. Schools with higher proportions of students from similar racial backgrounds also had lower rates of exclusionary discipline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eitle and Eitle 2004</td>
<td>Participants 313 high schools and 415 middle schools from 40 Florida school districts <strong>Type of study</strong> Descriptive study using logistic regression to identify school factors that are associated with disproportionate discipline rates for Black students</td>
<td><strong>School factors.</strong> Greater racial disproportionality in suspension rates was found in middle schools, schools that had fewer resources per child, lower academic achievement, and lower rates of school discipline problems. The study also found schools that had a more educated and experienced faculty were likely to have higher disproportionality, controlling for other school factors. Finally, the size of the Black student population was not a significant predictor of disproportionality.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gregory, Cornell, and Fan 2011</td>
<td>Participants 5,035 grade 9 students in 199 Virginia schools <strong>Type of study</strong></td>
<td><strong>Classroom and school factors.</strong> Schools with lower racial discipline gaps had teachers with high expectations for students and students who perceived their teachers as caring and respectful. Student perceptions of school rules as fair and strictly enforced were not associated with differences in suspension rates. The researchers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Participants and Type of Study</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Gregory and Weinstein 2008†</td>
<td><strong>Participants</strong> Study 1 included 2,882 students enrolled in an urban high school. In Study 2, there were 30 Black students with multiple suspensions. <strong>Type of study</strong> Descriptive study using multilevel analyses to identify classroom factors that are associated with disproportionate suspension rates for Black students.</td>
<td>Classroom factors. Study 1. Over two thirds (67 percent) of the referrals were issued for defiance of adult authority. African American students were overrepresented in discipline referrals for defiance. The rate of referral varied among teachers; a few teachers issued the majority of the referrals. Study 2. Students had fewer discipline referrals in classes taught by teachers they perceived as more caring and having higher expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hinojosa 2008</td>
<td><strong>Participants</strong> Teachers and students from a large Midwestern district <strong>Type of study</strong> Descriptive study using logistic regression to identify factors that are associated with suspension rates for African American students</td>
<td>Classroom factors. African American students who believed their teachers were fair and caring had lower rates of in-school suspension, but not out-of-school suspensions. Students who had greater access to resources (books, newspapers, and computers) and who came from two-parent families were less likely to be suspended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Murkuria 2002</td>
<td><strong>Participants</strong> Four middle school principals from predominantly African American (55% or greater) – two from schools with low and two with high suspension rates <strong>Type of study</strong> Descriptive qualitative study using direct observation, personal interviews, and document analysis to identify characteristics of schools with low suspension rates.</td>
<td>School and classroom factors. Characteristics of schools with low suspension rates had high expectations for students, parental involvement, mutual respect among students/teachers, well-organized routines and structure, and schoolwide discipline programs. Schools with high suspension rates did not have these characteristics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Type of study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payne and Welch 2010</td>
<td>294 public secondary schools – a subset of the National Study of Delinquency</td>
<td>Descriptive study using structural equation modeling to identify factors related to greater use of suspensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raffaele Mendez, Knoff, and Ferron 2002</td>
<td>142 schools from a large urban district Qualitative data from 24 schools with high suspension rates and 24 demographically matched schools with low rates</td>
<td>Descriptive study using a mixed methods design to identify differences between high and low suspension rate schools for students of color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Participants and Type of Study</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<td>For high school, the major difference related to parental involvement. Low suspension schools involved parents in development of the schoolwide discipline plan. They also involved parents early if their child was experiencing discipline problems. In high suspension schools, schoolwide plans focused more on punitive consequences for misbehaviors and use of alternatives to suspensions was limited.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Tobin and Vincent 2011¹      | **Participants** 46 schools (19 elementary, 17 middle, 6 high schools, and 4 alternative secondary schools) **Type of study** Descriptive study using separate linear multiple regression analyses of schoolwide, classroom, nonclassroom, and individual student systems to identify factors that are associated with disproportionate suspension rates for African American students | **School and classroom factors.** African American students were 3.11 times more likely to be excluded than their White peers. Factors that predicted disproportionately high rates of suspensions for African American students were:  
  * Effective classroom management that includes positive reinforcement for expected student behaviors  
  * Efficient and orderly transitions between instructional and non-instructional activities  
  * Data-based decisionmaking to address patterns of problem behaviors on an ongoing basis  
  * Ongoing training and support from district personnel  
  * Local resources to support individual students with multiple discipline incidents  |
| Way 2011                     | **Participants** 10,992 students (from 1,132 schools) in grades 8 and 10 with two-teacher responses for frequency of classroom disruption **Type of study** Descriptive study using multilevel regression modeling to identify grade 8 variables that predict higher rates of misbehavior in grade 10 | **School factors.** Students who perceived school authority as legitimate and teacher-student relations as positive were rated as less disruptive by teachers. Schools with more rules and that students perceived as strict had higher rates of disruptive behaviors. Fewer discipline problems was a characteristic of schools with higher proportions of students of color. High student expectations were also associated with lower classroom disruption |

¹ The study examines disproportionate rates of discipline referrals and/or suspensions.  
Note: The 11 descriptive studies examine classroom and school practices that are associated with reduced racial disproportionality or lower discipline referral rates for students of color. Descriptive studies report statistically significant relationships (called associations) between the practice and student outcome, but do not determine if a causal relationship exists.  
Source: Author’s analysis of studies.
### Table A3. Detailed description of specific program research study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Participants and Type of Study</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Farrell, Meyer, and White 2001 | *Participants* 626 students in grade 6 at 3 middle schools  
*Type of study* Randomized cluster trial to investigate the impact of RiPP on discipline referrals and suspension rates. Ninety-six percent of the participants were Black students. | Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RiPP). The experiment found statistically significant decreases for in-school suspension rates for RiPP schools. The rate of in-school suspensions was also five times greater for control schools; however, there were no differences in out-of-school suspension rates between treatment and control schools. |
Appendix B: Descriptions of Specific Programs

Whole school or multicomponent programs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of program</strong></td>
<td>Whole school, multilevel program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key features</strong></td>
<td>PBIS is a multicomponent approach that aims to prevent problem behaviors at whole school, classroom, and individual student levels. It is used widely in the alliance districts, across the state, and nationally. A representative school team that includes the building principal, a PBIS coach, teachers, education specialists, and noncertified staff members oversees implementation and quality assurance of the program components. The whole school components include (a) clearly defined school and classroom expectations designed to fit the culture of the school, (b) actively teaching students these behavioral expectations, (c) schoolwide and classroom acknowledgment systems that recognize positive student behavior, (d) correction procedures to address behavior violations, and (e) data-based decision-making procedures. PBIS also includes strategies for identifying at-risk students and building student-centered support systems to help them succeed in school. Finally, the program provides procedures for monitoring and sustaining implementation fidelity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td>PBIS developers recommend that professional development and coaching for the representative team that plans and monitors the program. Professional development topics include components of PBIS, strategies to develop and implement lesson plans to teach behavior and social expectations, and data collection and procedures for using data to make program improvement decisions. The program also provides a number of small group and individual student strategies that schools may use as needed to address their discipline concerns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Available evidence</strong></td>
<td>Bradshaw and colleagues (2010) investigated the impact of PBIS in 63 elementary schools. The study found reductions in office discipline referrals, though these were not large enough to be statistically significant. The experiment did find significant differences in grade 3 reading between the PBIS and control schools. A second experiment examined the impact of PBIS combined with a social and emotional program, Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RiPP) in 40 middle schools from 13 districts (Silvia et al. 2011). The evaluation found no significant results in student-reported aggression and victimization. However, the researchers indicated low participation and implementation for both interventions might have</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Neither of these studies examined the disproportionality or reported school discipline outcomes separately by race or ethnicity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Website</strong></th>
<th><a href="http://www.pbis.org">www.pbis.org</a></th>
</tr>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Program</strong></th>
<th>Safe and Responsive Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of program</strong></td>
<td>Whole school, multilevel program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Key features** | Safe and Responsive Schools uses a systems-based approach to improve the effectiveness of school discipline at the whole-school level. The goal of the program is strategic development of a school safety plan using a three-step model: (1) form a team of administrators, teachers, parents, school psychologists, and students that meets biweekly to carry out planning activities; (2) complete a comprehensive needs assessment to identify and prioritize school safety problems and the available resources to address them; (3) review best practices to identify evidence-based strategies that address the school’s specific problems, and (4) design a Safe and Responsive plan that includes whole-school prevention strategies and interventions for students who require additional support. The literature summary found no rigorous evaluations of this intervention. |

| **Implementation** | The developers recommend professional development for the representative team in the four phases and ongoing support of a coach. |

| **Available evidence** | A pilot study showed reduced office discipline referrals for middle and high schools that implemented the program (Skiba et al. 2002). The literature summary found no rigorous studies or evaluations that examined the program’s impact on disproportionate practices. |

| **Website** | http://www.indiana.edu/~safeschl/ |
# Alternatives to Suspension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>In-school suspension or after-school detention</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of program</strong></td>
<td>Alternative to suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key features</strong></td>
<td>In-school suspension or detention programs are alternatives to suspension that aim to reduce student misbehavior with minimal disruption to their classroom learning. Detention requires students to go to a designated area as a punishment for misbehavior. Students generally receive detention during their “off-school” time such as after school, during lunch, or on Saturdays. In-school suspension allows teachers to send disruptive students from their classroom to a supervised environment with minimal privileges. The goal is to provide educational experiences while preventing students from disrupting their own and other students’ learning. Students are isolated from other students and their privileges are restricted. They complete assignments from their classroom teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td>In-school suspension programs vary widely. Some programs require students to complete assigned schoolwork. Other programs such as the Student Advisory Center require students to participate in behavior or study skills curriculum with trained school personnel. The goal of these programs is to help students learn social skills that will prevent recurrence of problem behaviors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Significant findings</strong></td>
<td>The literature summary found no rigorous studies or evaluations that examined the program’s impact on disproportionate practices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Website</strong></td>
<td>To learn more about the SAC Program visit the National Association of Elementary School Principals at <a href="http://www.naesp.org/comm/mmwin00-01.htm">http://www.naesp.org/comm/mmwin00-01.htm</a>.</td>
</tr>
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# Restorative Justice or Restorative Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Restorative Justice or Restorative Practices</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of program</strong></td>
<td>Alternative to suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key features</strong></td>
<td>Restorative justice is an approach to addressing discipline incidents and conflict that makes students accountable for their actions while allowing students to remain in school. This practice focuses on teaching students about their problem behavior, implementing responses that will decrease future occurrences, and provide instruction that will promote acceptable social behavior. The concept of restorative justice originated in the legal system and the school model was developed as an alternative to punitive discipline models. The approach engages all affected parties, and students are held</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
accountable to the school community and given responsibility for problems. Restorative models are based on the premise that students who feel valued and connected to the school are less likely to act out.

A wide range of people are usually involved in the restorative justice process, including those who are directly or indirectly harmed by wrongdoing. Students are engaged in all aspects of the discipline process, including preventing conflict and problem solving. Practices include circles, mediation and conferencing, peer jury or youth court, community conferences, small-group conferences, problem-solving circles, and family conferences (Gonzales 2012).

Circles are used to bring people together to talk openly about issues and resolve conflict. In addition to teachers, administrators, and other school staff members, family and community members may be invited to participate.

Mediation is used to resolve conflicts between two students and conferencing is used when it is appropriate to involve other students, staff, and teachers. A trained mediator guides all parties in a process of developing responses to the issue.

Peer jury/youth court is a process in which student volunteers hear cases and make discipline determinations for minor school rule violations.

**Implementation**

The models usually require a 3–5 year implementation plan that gains commitment from the school community; develops a common vision with short-, medium-, and long-term goals; supports effective practice; develops aligned policies; and establishes an ongoing system of growth for all members (Gonzales 2012).

**Available findings**

The literature summary found one descriptive study that associated restorative practices with lower rates of suspensions (Payne and Welch 2010). No experiments were found.

**Website**

Various organizations offer restorative justice information on their websites.
### Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Program</strong></th>
<th><strong>Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways (RiPP)</strong></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of program</strong></td>
<td>Social and emotional learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key features</strong></td>
<td>Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways is a violence prevention program for middle schools. The goal of the program is to increase adolescents’ capacity and motivation to respond to developmental challenges in ways that facilitate social skill acquisition and acceptance of personal responsibility. The program uses a curriculum-based approach to teach students conflict resolution, critical thinking, and personal management strategies and skills and includes a peer mediation component. Students learn how to use a problem-solving model and specific skills for preventing violence. The program is included in the National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices from the Department of Health and Human Services. Students learn about the physical and mental development that occurs during adolescence, analyze the consequences of personal choices on health and well-being, learn that they have nonviolent options when conflicts arise, and evaluate the benefits of being a positive family and community role model. The curriculum includes 16 lessons per year with activities such as role playing, problem solving, behavioral repetition and mental rehearsal, team building, and small group work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td>The curriculum is intended to be cumulative, with each grade level building on the previous year. Therefore, during the first year that the program is adopted, the grade 6 lessons are used for all students to provide a common foundation in the RiPP skills. In the second year the grade 7 curriculum is used for students in both grades 7 and 8. Activities are scripted. The program is intended to be implemented by trained prevention specialists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Available Research findings</strong></td>
<td>The experiment found statistically significant decreases in suspension (in-school and out-of-school) for RiPP schools. The rate of exclusionary discipline was more than twice as high for control schools. The rate of in-school suspensions was also five times greater for control schools; however, there were no difference in out-of-school suspension rates between treatment and control schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Website</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.preventionopportunities.org">http://www.preventionopportunities.org</a></td>
</tr>
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</table>
## Professional Development in Educational Equity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Courageous Conversations</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of program</strong></td>
<td>Professional development on educational equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key features</strong></td>
<td>The professional development curriculum includes exercises, discussion prompts and tools, activities and checklists, and action steps for creating an equity team. It is accompanied by the <em>Facilitator’s Guide to Courageous Conversations About Race</em> that includes small- and large-group activities, sources for supplemental reading, and sample workshop agendas. At the heart of the curriculum are four agreements and six conditions. The four agreements are: (1) Stay Engaged, (2) Speak Your Truth, (3) Experience Discomfort, and (4) Expect/Accept Non-Closure. The six conditions are: (1) Focus on Personal, Local, and Immediate; (2) Isolate Race; (3) Normalize Social Construction &amp; Multiple Perspectives; (4) Monitor Agreements, Conditions and Establish Parameters; (5) Use a “Working Definition” for Race; and (6) Examine the Presence and Role of “Whiteness.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td>The curriculum provides a number of activities for educators. The developer also offers an online course for educators with nine classroom modules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Available evidence</strong></td>
<td>No evaluations found.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Website</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.prweb.com/releases/glenn-singleton/courageous-conversations/prweb8337944.htm">http://www.prweb.com/releases/glenn-singleton/courageous-conversations/prweb8337944.htm</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Double Check</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of program</strong></td>
<td>Professional development on educational equity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Key features</strong></td>
<td>This program offers a self-assessment framework for school personnel to increase their awareness of their reactions to problem behaviors from culturally diverse students. Staff members complete a checklist with Likert-type items. The framework includes five components: reflective thinking, authentic relationships, effective communication, connection to curriculum, and sensitivity to students’ cultural messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Implementation</strong></td>
<td>Staff members complete the checklists anonymously. The self-assessment process can serve as a needs assessment, and identify potential areas for conversation and professional development.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Available evidence</td>
<td>Developers are conducting pilot studies of Double Check in elementary schools.</td>
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<td>--------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="http://journals.cec.sped.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1707&amp;context=tecplus">http://journals.cec.sped.org/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1707&amp;context=tecplus</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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## Glossary of Key Terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disproportionality</td>
<td>Situation in which a particular student group has a significantly higher or lower rate of occurrence in a given category than a comparison student group (Indiana University, n.d.). For example, White vs. Black/African American students, males vs. females, limited English proficient (LEP) vs. non-LEP students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-school suspension</td>
<td>An action in which a student is temporarily removed from his or her regular classroom(s) for disciplinary purposes, but remains under the direct supervision of school personnel. Direct supervision means school personnel are in the same physical location as the student under their supervision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-school suspension</td>
<td>Instances in which a student is temporarily removed for disciplinary purposes from his or her regular school to another setting (e.g., home or a behavior center). This includes removals in which no Individualized Education Program (IEP) services are provided because the removal is less than 10 days cumulatively, as well as removals in which the student continues to receive services according to his or her IEP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusionary discipline</td>
<td>Administrative disciplinary actions that remove the student from classroom instruction or school, ranging from one period to multiple days. These actions include (a) in-school suspension, (b) out-of-school suspension, (c) expulsion, and (d) removal to an interim alternative education placement for students eligible for special education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discretionary offenses</td>
<td>Discipline offenses for which the school administrator has discretion in the type of discipline action to assign the student. Examples of discretionary offenses include defiance, truancy, disruptive behaviors, disrespect, or fighting. Discretionary offenses do not include weapons or other violations that federal or state policy requires automatic expulsion of the student (Fabelo et al. 2011; Losen and Gillespie 2012).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Definitions are adapted from Fabelo et al. 2011; Indiana University n.d.; Losen and Gillespie 2012; and Mahoney 2012.*
References


Governments Justice Center. Retrieved February 14, 2012, from


