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INTRODUCTION
This presentation examines inequity in school discipline and strategies to address it. Major topics include:

❖ National trends in disproportionate school discipline

❖ Key concepts and definitions

❖ Individual/relational factors: Implicit Bias and Cultural Competency

❖ System-level reforms: Restorative Justice
CONTEXT: THE STATE OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE
For decades, students of color and students with disabilities have been more likely to experience disciplinary consequences at school than their peers (McIntosh et al, 2014).

As emerging research reveals that out-of-school suspension can be harmful and counter-productive, schools have generally decreased suspension levels over the last five years. However, disparities by race and ethnicity remain unchanged (Harper et al, 2019).

Exclusionary Discipline and School Safety

A 10-year longitudinal study by the American Psychological Association concluded that exclusionary policies like suspension and expulsion do not improve school safety (Teasley, 2014).
POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS

What are potential solutions to address inequity in school disciplinary practices and outcomes?

Striving for Equity in School Discipline Through...

- Improving Cultural Competency
- Implementing Restorative Justice Practices
IMPROVING SCHOOL DISCIPLINE: KEY CONCEPTS
The terms “equity” and “equality” are often used interchangeably in K-12 education, but these terms are actually distinct.

**Equality** means every student and school gets the same access and opportunity to reach set goals.

**Equity** recognizes that some students and schools need additional supports to help them reach the same benchmarks of success.

Language verbatim from: ASBA.
KEY DEFINITIONS – EQUITY IN EDUCATION

Equity can be considered in several ways:

**Equity as a Principle**

“In education, the term equity refers to the principle of fairness.”

**Equity as a Process**

“Equity is the necessary path to achieve success for each student in our schools through the fair allocation and application of resources, based on need, to address gaps in access and outcomes.”

**Equity as a Destination/Goal**

“Educational equity is achieved when all students receive the resources, opportunities, skills, and knowledge they need to succeed in our democratic society.”

Language verbatim from: Glossary of Education Reform; Arizona School Board Association; American Institutes for Research, respectively
KEY DEFINITIONS – FACTORS IN EQUITY FOR SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

**Individual/Relational Factors**

- **Implicit Bias**
  Ideas and stereotypes that exist in our unconscious and can affect our thoughts and actions.

- **Cultural Competency**
  An individual’s awareness and understanding of cultural norms within themselves and others.

**Systemic Practices**

- **Zero Tolerance Discipline**
  School disciplinary policies that dictate punishments and quickly escalate consequences.

- **Restorative Justice/Practices**
  A concept drawn from the criminal justice system that focuses on acknowledging harm and repairing relationships.

Both individual/relational factors and systemic practices play a role in equity in educational settings, including equity related to school discipline.

Sources: NEA; Advancement Project, 2014; Kirwan; National Clearinghouse on Supportive School Discipline
WHAT IS IMPLICIT BIAS?
DEFINING IMPLICIT BIAS

Implicit biases are “... attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner” (Staats, 2014).

Implicit Bias...
- Affects everyone
- Affects real-world behavior
- Operates outside of our conscious awareness and may not align with our stated beliefs or values

For teachers, Implicit Bias...
- Can play a role in classroom instruction and/or student relationships without the teacher’s conscious awareness

Sources: Staats, 2014; Flannery, 2015; Garcia, 2018
In general, the goal of successful implicit bias training is to increase self-awareness, rather than to eliminate implicit biases.

- Doubt Objectivity
- Increase Motivation to be Fair
- Improved Conditions of Decision-Making
- Count (Use Data)

Reducing the Effect of Bias on Decision-Making

Source: Johnson et al, 2014 p. 47-48

- Counter-Stereotypic Training
- Exposure to Counter-Stereotypic Individuals
- Intergroup Contact
- Accountability
- Perspective-Taking
- Deliberate Processing

Reducing Implicit Bias

Source: Staats, 2014, p. 20-21
IMPACT OF IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING

What can we gain as educators from examining our implicit biases?

- Short-term interventions demonstrate immediate reductions in implicit bias
- At least one example of a long-term intervention demonstrates long-term reductions in implicit biases
- Implicit bias awareness is one piece of the puzzle

WHAT IS CULTURAL COMPETENCE?
DEFINING CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Cultural competence encompasses skills, knowledge, and attitudes. For educators, cultural competency “is the ability to successfully teach students who come from a culture or cultures other than our own” (NEA).

Studies suggest that cultural competency for educators can be conceptualized across five basic skill areas:
ASSESSING CULTURAL COMPETENCE

Sample statements to consider when thinking about your own cultural competence:

I am aware of my own culture and ethnicity.

I welcome a diverse group of clients and colleagues into the work setting.

I check myself to see if an assumption I am making about a person is based upon facts or upon stereotypes about a group.

I am committed to the continuous learning that is necessary to deal with the issues caused by differences.

I advocate for the marginalized and voiceless in my school/district among my colleagues, the students, and their communities.
WHAT IS RESTORATIVE JUSTICE?
DEFINING RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

In K-12 education, restorative practices...

- Address and discuss the needs of the school community
- Build healthy relationships between educators and students
- Reduce, prevent, and improve harmful behavior
- Repair harm and restore positive relationships
- Resolve conflict, hold individuals and groups accountable


- Concept developed in the criminal justice system
- Applied to educational settings as “restorative justice” or “restorative practices”
- Alternative to “Zero Tolerance” policies and other punitive disciplinary measures
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE – TIERS OF SUPPORT

- **Re-Building Relationships**
  - Intensive
  - Examples: Mediation, Conferences

- **Repairing Relationships**
  - Targeted
  - Examples: Classroom, Small Group Conferences

- **Re-Affirming Relationships through Developing Social and Emotional Skills**
  - Universal
  - Example: SEL Programs

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE – WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

Some common practices associated with Restorative Justice include...

**Relational Practices and Routines**
- ✓ School-wide community-building
- ✓ Teach students how to relate to one another based on school values

**Circles**
- ✓ Circles allow students and staff to speak and listen to one another in a safe setting
- ✓ Can be proactive (check-in) or reactive (problem-solve)

**Conferences**
- ✓ Informal – allow educators to engage with a student or group to address a concern
- ✓ Restorative – allow for accountability and give voice to victims of harm

**Peer Involvement**
- ✓ Involves students in the process for disciplinary consequences
  - ✓ Peer mediation for disputes between two students, peer juries for more serious offenses

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE – GOALS AND OUTCOMES

Compared to Zero Tolerance policies, which may alienate students who experience punitive consequences, Restorative Justice policies hold students accountable for causing harm as members of the school community.

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Zero Tolerance policies are associated with...

- Academic difficulties due to missed school time
- Increased alienation of students, leading to acting out, truancy, and/or dropping out of school
- Psychological trauma and mental health consequences

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Restorative Justice policies are associated with...

- Reduced suspension and expulsion
- Reduced number and intensity of fights/altercations
- Fewer classroom disruptions
- Improved sense of safety
- Improved communication

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Adapted from: Advancement Project, 2014, p. 10.

Adapted from: Kidde & Alfred, 2011, p. 17.
Implementation is a multi-year, gradual process:

Creating an Implementation Plan
- Establish shared vision
- Set targets for gradual implementation

Building Consensus
- Communicating value of Restorative Justice
- Listening, responding, collaborating

Professional Development
- Seek out strong training programs that cover Restorative Justice and concepts like Implicit Bias and Cultural Competence
- Ensure training is ongoing (not one-and-done)

Ensuring Sustainability
- Resource for years to come
- Evaluate, reflect, and improve
QUESTIONS
REFERENCES


“Cultural Competence Self-Assessment.” Hanover Research


REFERENCES, CONT.


Thank you.

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