

**WAYS TO IMPLEMENT INTERVENTIONS IN SCHOOLS IN ORDER TO
MAKE THEM SAFER, MORE INVITING AND PEDAGOGICALLY
MORE EFFECTIVE**

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**Handout for the 18th Melissa Institute Conference “Ways To Improve Community-based,
Educational and Psychotherapeutic Interventions: Lessons Learned, May 2014**

THE NATURE OF THE CHALLENGE

Educators are confronted with a major challenge. They are working with students who:

1. are living in poverty with all of their consequences,
2. are poorly prepared for schooling,
3. may have experienced some form of victimization
4. experienced some form of physical and/or mental disorders and accompanying disabilities.

The following illustrative data reflects the nature of the challenge.

Children Living in Poverty

In the richest country in the world, 22% of children under the age of 18 live in poverty. These 16.4 million children include 6 million who are under six years old. In addition, 45% (32.7 million of American children) live in families with income below 200 per cent of the federal poverty level. These children experience multiple stressors which have negative impact on their physiological, social, emotional and cognitive development. Keep in mind that 90% of brain growth occurs by age 5.

Achievement gaps have been found as early as 18 months of age for children of poverty. At two years of age, there is a 6 month achievement gap. By age 5, it can be a two year gap. Poor children start behind and often never catch up.

Poverty with its many accompanying cumulative risk factors have a significant impact on the development and functioning of the brain. These multiple risk factors may include a single teenage mother, malnutrition, exposure to unsafe environments (prenatally, as well as family and neighborhood violence), parental psychopathology (maternal clinical depression, paternal substance abuse and antisocial behavior), and victimization experiences (physical and sexual abuse, neglect, gang violence, bullying).

The poverty level of the family is correlated with the level of the child achieving academically. Consider the following:

- A) Students from minority families who live in poverty are 3 x more likely than their Caucasian counterparts to be placed in a class for the educatable delayed and they are nearly twice as likely to be held back a grade or two. Being held back a grade increases the drop out of school rate by 40%-50%. Being held back two grades increases the dropout rate by up to 90%. They are 3x more likely to be suspended and expelled and not graduate.

- B) The overall academic proficiency level of an average 17 years old attending school in a poor urban setting is equivalent to that of a 13 year old who attends school in an affluent school area.
- C) The school dropout rates for minority students is as high as 40%. These statistics take on specific urgency when we consider that 15% of American students are African American and 11% are Hispanic. If the present birth rates continue, by 2020 minority students will constitute 45% of school age students in the U.S., up from the current level of 30%. The implications of these changing demographics and the increasing academic and economic gaps are substantial.

Only 8% of children from lower SES complete college as compared to 31% from other SES groups.

Absence of School Readiness

25% to 35% of children who enter school in the U.S. are at risk of failing academically and socially which contributes to a high school dropout rate, as high as 40% in poverty and minority groups.

A study of mother's verbal interactions with their infant children (7 to 12 months) found that welfare mothers verbalized 620 words per hour, working class children heard 1250 words per hour, and children of professional mothers heard 2150 words per hour. Moreover, children of highly verbal families were asked more questions and these parents repeated and expanded on comments their children made. These differences showed up in later IQ differences and reading abilities. By the age of three, advantaged children have twice the size vocabulary of welfare children. Pre-reading skills are critical to school success.

By the time children enter school, children from poverty differ by between 2000 and 3000 vocabulary words, from middle and upper class children. Vocabulary is a predictive of reading comprehension by grade three and predictive of school success and school dropout. By grade three, 44% of students cannot read at mandatory proficiency levels. Reading competence is a "gateway" skill to academic success and high school graduation.

40% of Head Start children evidence language and social skills deficits. 20% exhibit disruptive behavior problems that undermine school adjustment. Up to 30% of Head Start children have clinically significant behavior problems.

The well known High Scope /Perry Point program reported that of those children who attended the preschool program, only about 7% became chronic offenders with four or more arrests. This compares favorably with the 35% rate of incarceration rate for children who did not participate in the preschool program, demonstrating the long term beneficial effects of early intervention.

By middle grade, poor readers might read 100,000 words a year, average children might read 1,000,000 and voracious readers as high as 10,000,000. From grades one to six students need to

go from knowledge of 5000 root words to 10,000 root words. For poor readers, they need to learn three to five words a day in order to catch up.

- a) A student who cannot read on grade level by third grade is 4 times less likely to graduate from high school by age 19 than a child who does read proficiently by that time. Add poverty to this mix, and a poor reading student is 13 times less likely to graduate on time than his/her proficient peer.
- b) About one in every 10 young male high school dropouts is in jail or juvenile detention, compared with one in 35 young male high school graduates. Young people who drop out of high school are 63% more likely to be incarcerated than peers with a four year college degree.
- c) In a report from Oregon State , "Fight crime : Invest in children" , they reported that about 68% of the states' inmate population did not receive a high school diploma. Moreover, they project that if Oregon could increase its high school graduate rate by 10 % they would prevent approximately 17 murders and 1300 aggravated assaults in Oregon each year.

EARLY LEARNING TRANSFORMS PEOPLE'S LIVES

Children Who Have Been Victimized

There are approximately 2 million cases of child maltreatment (physical, sexual abuse or neglect) each year in the U.S.

3 million children witness assaults against their mothers each year.

Virtually all inner ethnic minority children living in South Central Los Angeles witness a death. In New Orleans, 90% of 5th graders have witnessed violence and 50% are victims of some form of violence.

In addition, a large number of children in the U.S. will be a victim of natural disasters. Worldwide 66 million children annually were impacted by natural disasters. It is estimated that this will increase worldwide to 175 million each year due to climate change.

Incidence of Mental Disorders in Children and Youth

10%-20% of children and youth in the U.S. suffer from mental disorders.

As many as 3%-5% of school children are considered to have serious behavioral and emotional disabilities that require intensive coordinated services.

50% of youth in the Child Welfare system have mental health problems.

70% of youth in the Juvenile Justice System have mental health problems. Only 20%-30% of children receive specialized mental health care.

Latino children are most likely to go without mental health services.

Although children comprise 25% of the U.S. population, only one-ninth of health care funding is directed at them.

In summary, while any one of these risk factors such as living in poverty, being victimized, experiencing a natural disaster, having mental disorder adjustment difficulties, can contribute to poor development and adjustment, research indicates that it is the total number of risk factors present, that is more important than the specificity of the risk factor in influencing developmental outcomes. Risk factors often co-occur and pile up over time. For instance, children with 8 of 10 risk factors averaged 30 IQ points below those children who had No risk factors. In another study, students with 6 of 9 risk factors had a 4600% increase in the probability of IV drug use, a 500% probability of clinical depression, and 1200 % increase in suicide. In addition, they were 7x more likely to have sex before age 15. Thus, there is intergenerational transmission of risk factors.

The data summarized indicates that :

- 1) the U.S. would do better calling for an education program labeled “**Up From The Bottom**”, rather than “**Race To The Top**”;
- 2) non-academic social and emotional skills such as social competence, perseverance and “grit”, emotional regulation, delay of gratification, social supports and the like are critical to academic success. These competencies need to be nurtured, trained and evaluated, if we are going to leave NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND. (See www.melissainstitute.org for downloads for further supportive data).

THERE IS HOPE

In spite of these cumulative “high risk” factors, research indicates that:

1. One-half to two-thirds of such children evidence resilience and “beat the odds” and achieve both academically and socially. (See the Melissa Institute Website www.melissainstitute.org for a discussion of protective factors that nurture resilience; Meichenbaum’s book Roadmap to resilience www.roadmaptoresilience.org and Yoshikawa et. al., (2013) report on the impact of preschool preparedness.)

2. There are successful schools known as **90/90/90** schools where:

90% or more of the students are from poverty as evident in their being eligible for free and reduced lunch.

90% or more students are members of ethnic minority groups

90% or more of the students met district or state academic standards in reading and other academic areas.

Three factors characterize these successful schools (Marzano, 2001, 2003; Meichenbaum & Biemiller, 1998; Reeves, 2001, 2003).

Principal Leadership

Effective Teaching Instruction

Curriculum Choices

PRINCIPAL LEADERSHIP: ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

1. Ensure School Safety and a Safe School Environment

- See Attached Principal Checklist
- See www.teachsafeschools.org on ways to reduce bullying and harassment, gang influences
- -Use peer warning system

2. Create, Maintain and Monitor an Inviting and Engaging School Environment

- Be visible and engaged
- Bolster student-connectedness
- Use peer teaching
- Address needs of ‘high-risk’ students
- Involve teachers and staff in decision-making and professional development
- Engage parents (See www.melissainstitute.org Conference. Click Download by Meichenbaum 16th Annual Conference on Family-based Intervention for a 60 item School-initiative to increase Parent-involvement)
- Partner with local community members

3. Ensure Equitable School Discipline

(See the attached report on the need to eliminate disparities in how suspensions and expulsions are administered)

- Help teachers improve classroom behavior management procedures
- Ensure there is a clear and applicable Mission Statement and Code of Conduct Statement
- Employ student-based Restorative Justice Approaches

4. Monitor and Improve The Quality of Teacher Instruction

(See www.melissainstitute.org. Download 17th Annual Conference Handout by Meichenbaum on “Ways to improve instructional strategies: Use of ‘Kernels’ or Behavior Influence Procedures” and see Meichenbaum & Biemiller 1998).

- Encourage teachers to display proficient work in a highly-visible place. Include student work, group projects that reflect improvement. Encourage school pride.
- Be involved in evaluating student work: meeting with students and parents.
- Foster collaboration among teachers in jointly grading each others' student's work. Help generate a common standard across classrooms and grades.
- Ensure a "fit" between teacher skills and classroom demands.
- Provide professional development activities and discussion; share responsibilities with staff and students.
- Conduct frequent teacher performance assessments with immediate feedback and provide multiple opportunities for improvement (use a buddy and mentor system).

5. Make Informed Curriculum Choices

- Focus on the Core Skills of reading, writing and math. (*See www.readingteacher.net from the Melissa Institute*).
- Encourage student writing in all classes, including math. Focus on executive "meta-cognitive" thinking processes. "Write in order to think more clearly."
- Increase amount of instructional time and use interdisciplinary integrative themed-based instruction.
- Bolster student skills of curiosity, perseverance, grit, delay of gratification, planfulness, collaborative problem-solving and the like. See Carol Dweck, [Mindset: The new psychology of success](#), and Paul Tough, [How children succeed](#), and Don Meichenbaum and Andy Biemiller, [Nurturing Independent Learners](#).

PRINCIPAL'S CHECKLIST

The **PRINCIPAL'S CHECKLIST** enumerates the variety of Principal initiatives that can be conducted at the school-wide level (Primary Prevention), or with identified "high risk" students and their families (Secondary Prevention), and with students who have evidenced persistent behavioral problems and require more intensive wrap-around services and crisis management interventions (Tertiary prevention). This Checklist can be viewed as a type of **PRINCIPAL REPORT CARD**. It highlights the need "to pay attention to small things".

Primary Prevention

1. Principals should be a visible presence in greeting all students and parents visiting the school.
2. Conduct a formal review of all safety policies and school emergency plans and practices. For example, establish a regular schedule for safety drills.
3. Conduct a school safety assessment and identify any safety weaknesses and strengths and correct deficiencies.
4. Provide staff training on school safety, emergency management and bullying.
5. There are staff members trained in emergency first aid and CPR, and their identities and hourly locations are posted.
6. Connect with community law enforcement personnel, first responders to a crisis.
7. Establish a reporting system for bullying and safety concerns.
8. School exterior grounds have been assessed for security concerns by law enforcement personnel or by individuals trained in Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED).
9. All areas of the building and grounds are supervised and there are no obvious "dead zones" where problems can occur, including parking lots, loading docks, and interior stairwells.
10. The interior of the school buildings is well-lit, clean and reflects pride in school identity and the accomplishments of its student body.
11. Assess for not only the safety of the school and school grounds, but also assess for the safety of the routes students take to school. (Ask students to draw a map of how they get to and from school and/or their perceived school bus safety) Interview school bus drivers and implement intervention strategies, as required.

12. There are effective access control policies and procedures for keeping intruders out of the school.
13. There are effective policies and procedures for keeping weapons out of the building.
14. A rigidly enforced key control policy is in effect and sensitive locks are replaced every three to four years.
15. There are effective policies and procedures for keeping gang-related “identifiers” and behaviors out of the building and off school grounds.
16. Check to see if staff members feel safe at all times during the school day. Work to improve the emotional climate of the school.
17. The school has a well-formulated Mission Statement that is posted and shared with all parties, and underlies improvement efforts. Work to change norms and expectations about aggression and violence.
18. The school has a collaboratively written Code of Conduct that has been examined for currency. It is educational more than punitive, and defines desirable, as well as undesirable behaviors and resultant consequences.
19. Administration and teachers have established an Inviting Learning Environment that encourages school bonding and ownership from all groups of students, staff and parents. Set up a School Website, telephone hotline, Home-school Link. Be sure to have teachers contact parents when students are doing well in school. Involve students in establishing and implementing rules and activities.
20. Academic standards are high, and pride in achievement is emphasized and publicly expressed through multiple outlets.
21. Cultural, ethnic and other minority groups are valued and diversity is respected and honored. Bolster strengths of students and their families.
22. Parents are welcomed into the building and provided with opportunities and information to be full partners in their child’s education. Work with parents to improve parenting skills such as monitoring, supervising and academic support.
23. All teachers have received training in classroom behavior management, and 95% of disciplinary consequences are administered at the classroom level.
24. All students receive evidence-based classroom instruction in anger management, social problem-solving, and/or conflict resolution across multiple grade levels.

25. The school has a comprehensive school-wide anti-bullying program in place and systematically evaluates its effectiveness.
26. The school has implemented a student peer mediation training program.
27. The school has implemented a peer warning system that allows for confidential student communication to identified adults.
28. The school has a broadly represented Crisis Intervention Team that has been trained in crisis response and management.
29. Administration and school personnel have undertaken initiatives to foster community-based supports and partnerships. Increase the availability of youth development opportunities and civic activities.

Secondary Prevention

30. All teachers have received training on methods to tailor academic instruction to meet diverse student needs. Convey high, clear expectations, but be realistic and collaborative.
31. The school has undertaken a special initiative to improve students' reading achievement and monitor its effectiveness. (See the Melissa Institute Reading Initiative Program www.readingteacher.net).
32. Have a commitment to systematically collect data to evaluate intervention programs designed to reduce bullying, improve academic performance, improve parental involvement reduce absenteeism, suspensions, expulsions, and drop outs. Share this data with staff and provide Professional Development days for staff training on a needs basis.
33. Work to bolster student "connectedness" to school and encourage teachers to be supportive, look for the good in students and point it out to them and share it with others. Celebrate student contributions, not give up on students who made mistakes, and talk to them about their futures.
34. Check on the health of your students. (Make sure they have basic health needs met like vision and hearing problems, nutritional and safety issues like homelessness).
35. Since school alienation has been found to be a key factor in the development of juvenile delinquency, work to bolster student "connectedness" to school.
36. Supportive services staff are provided adequate time and relief from other duties to implement interventions for identified students at risk.
37. Existing interventions for at-risk students have undergone recent program evaluations to assess their effectiveness.

38. Administrators treat office referrals as teaching opportunities to augment disciplinary procedures.
39. Out-of-school suspension is exceedingly rare and used only for clear issues of student safety and when home supervision can be assured.
40. In-school suspension is used sparingly, only for the most serious offences, and it contains an academic support component.
41. School personnel have assessed the drop-out problem and implemented evidence-based dropout prevention programs.
42. The school has implemented a mentoring program for at-risk students.
43. Ongoing needs assessment and program planning are driven by authentic data from disciplinary referrals and academic progress monitoring, and interventions are linked to the data.

Tertiary Prevention

44. Students with chronic and persistent behavior problems are routinely provided with assessment-driven behavior intervention plans.
45. Students with chronic anger management and aggression problems are provided with evidence-based skills training by support services staff.
46. All school personnel have been taught and have practiced ways to defuse and redirect students who evidence aggressive and violent behaviors.
47. There are staff members professionally trained in student restraint and safe transport, and their identities are known by everyone.
48. Effective partnerships or wraparound arrangements with families, community mental health, law enforcement and social service agencies are maintained to support the highest risk students.
49. School personnel have been trained to identify and help students who live with neglect and violence.

**HIGH SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION RATES
DRIVEN BY INEFFECTIVE SCHOOL POLICIES
AND PRACTICES, NOT “BAD KIDS”**

*Research Collaborative Identifies Promising Initiatives To Address
Discipline Gaps by Race, Gender, Disability and Sexual Orientation*

WASHINGTON, D.C., March 13, 2014 – A group of 26 nationally recognized experts from the social science, education and legal fields – assembled three years ago with the backing of two large philanthropies – has compiled and analyzed a huge body of recent research that challenges virtually every notion behind the frequent use of disciplinary policies that remove students from the classroom.

The group, known as the Discipline Disparities Research-to-Practice Collaborative, found clear evidence that students of color, particularly African-Americans, and students with disabilities are suspended at hugely disproportionate rates compared to white students, perpetuating racial and educational inequality across the country. LGBT students also are over-represented in suspension.

The Collaborative further determined there is no evidence to support the premise that “bad kids” should be removed from the classroom in order to ensure that “good kids” can learn.

“Far from making our schools safer or improving student behavior, the steadily increasing use of suspension and expulsion puts students – especially students of color and other targeted groups – at an increased risk of academic disengagement, dropout and contact with juvenile justice,” said Russell J. Skiba, the Collaborative’s project director and a professor at Indiana University.

“And we are never going to close the achievement gap until we close this discipline gap,” added Daniel J. Losen, a member of the Collaborative and the director of the Center for Civil Rights Remedies at UCLA. “All schools see a wide range of adolescent misbehavior, but school responses vary dramatically. Some schools see an educational mission in teaching appropriate behavior and are successful at improving behavior without resorting to suspension and expulsion.”

Citing data from the U.S. Department of Education, the Collaborative said more than 3 million students in grades K-12 were suspended during the 2009-10 academic year, reflecting a steady rise since the 1970’s when the suspension rate was half that level. According to the Collaborative, the increase has occurred because school leaders either are so overwhelmed with money and testing demands that they gravitate toward what they perceive as “easy” discipline

solutions, or else they really believe that their school environment will improve if they can just get rid of trouble-makers.

“Discipline has become a management strategy for schools pressured by financial constraints, high concentrations of struggling students, substantial numbers of transient teachers/long-term substitutes and severe accountability mandates,” the Collaborative wrote. But there are promising alternatives that when embraced by school leaders and teachers, can effectively reduce both the need for discipline and its disparate effects, the group added.

Prevention programs that build “trusting, supportive relationships between students and educators” can be applied school-wide to reduce the likelihood of conflict. And when misbehavior does occur, it can be addressed through constructive and equitable “restorative justice” policies that reduce unnecessary discipline. These strategies focus on problem-solving instead of just handing out penalties.

“Student accountability is achieved when students take responsibility for their actions, recognize the impact of their actions on others and offer ways to repair the harm,” the experts added.

The Discipline Disparities Collaborative was launched in 2011 through The Equity Project at Indiana University with funding from the Atlantic Philanthropies and the Open Society Foundations. The Collaborative has met frequently since then around the country to compile and review recent discipline research. It also is funding other researchers to study unexplored aspects of the school discipline problem.

In releasing its findings, the Collaborative published three briefing papers, each addressed to a different audience: policy recommendations for district, state and federal officials; effective discipline alternatives for school personnel, and a description for researchers of recent studies and urgent, unanswered questions that should be addressed. Among the findings:

- There is no research support for the theory that schools must be able to remove the “bad” students so the “good” students can learn. “In fact, when schools serving similar populations were compared, those schools with relatively low suspension rates had higher, not lower, test scores.”
- Disparities in school suspension are worsening, meaning that some students are being pushed out of school more than others. For example, a study published this year found that three out of every four black middle school boys with disabilities in Chicago had received an out-of-school suspension.

- Given the extreme differences in suspension rates across different groups, the researchers concluded that unintended teacher bias is a real possibility. “Several studies indicate ... that racial disparities are not sufficiently explained by the theory that black or other minority students are simply misbehaving more.”
- New longitudinal studies at the state and national levels indicate that suspension is associated with a heightened risk of dropping out of school. Researchers “found that even being suspended out-of-school once was associated with a two-fold increase in the risk of dropout.” The increased risk of dropping out, in turn, increases the risk of juvenile delinquency.
- There is a dramatic disconnect between educational and juvenile justice systems. Their practices are, at times, even contradictory. For example, in many communities students who have been expelled are by definition violating juvenile delinquency laws and subject to arrest.
- Putting police in schools more often than not leads to the criminalization “of what might otherwise be considered adolescent misbehaviors.” The best available evidence “suggests that police presence in schools, particularly armed police, should be a very last resort in school discipline strategies.”

In addition to the main briefing papers, the Collaborative today published a set of three supporting papers providing research documentation addressing certain key issues:

- A focused review of the evidence does not support the commonly held belief that racial disparities in school discipline are due to more serious or severe behavior on the part of black students.
- A review is provided of efforts to explore “implicit bias,” the subtle and often unconscious beliefs and stereotypes concerning race and difference that may contribute to disparities in school discipline.
- A review is provided of common myths regarding the over-representation of students of color in school discipline and the facts that call these common beliefs into question.

The Collaborative expressed the hope that its work assembling the most recent and extensive evidence available would help persuade the education community and policymakers that harsh discipline policies don’t work.

“High rates of exclusionary discipline stifle educational opportunity and undermine our national goals for closing academic achievement and opportunity gaps for all children. Instead of helping students, the excessive use of exclusionary discipline is an educationally unsound policy that harms millions of school children every year.”

Today’s release of the Collaborative’s work follows the issuance in January of new federal guidance on school discipline policies and practices, outlining the civil rights obligations that all school systems face in administering discipline. It also provides a foundation for President Obama’s call to address school discipline issues as part of his “My Brother’s Keeper” initiative to help boys of color succeed in life.

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From: RTP Collaborative [equityiu@indiana.edu]
Sent: Thursday, March 13, 2014 5:48 AM
To: discipline-gap-l@indiana.edu
Subject: [discipline-gap-l] SUBJECT: NEW RELEASE-- Eliminating Disparities in School Discipline: What Works

Disparities in out-of-school suspension and expulsion by race, gender and sexual orientation are a critical issue in our schools.

Today, the Discipline Disparities Research-to-Practice Collaborative, a national group of researchers, educators, advocates and policy analysts, has released an important new contribution, the Disciplinary Disparities Briefing Paper Series (<http://rtpcollaborative.indiana.edu/briefing-papers>). Three papers, on policy, practice, and new research, present the most recent findings on disciplinary disparities, with a special focus on what can be, and is being, done to reduce disparities.

The Disparities Collaborative website (<http://rtpcollaborative.indiana.edu>) also contains supplementary papers on implicit bias, research showing that African American disproportionality cannot be accounted for by differences in student behavior, and a myths and facts sheet on disciplinary disproportionality. Finally, there are a host of resources including links to other reports, and a Resource Directory listing organizations across the nation currently working on these issues.

We encourage you to take a look at the Briefing Paper series (<http://rtpcollaborative.indiana.edu/briefing-papers>) and share this important new information on equity in school discipline with your networks.

Sincerely,

Russell J. Skiba, The Equity Project at Indiana University
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