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Policies to Eliminate Racial Disparities in Education: A Literature Review

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Racial disparities are ripe in the K-12 public education system. The Eliminating Disparities Collaborative is seeking to inform its policy-level interventions with promising practices that have been documented in the literature. This review of relevant bodies of literature connected to educational disparities aims to provide the members of the Collaborative with a knowledge base of what is working in other jurisdictions to improve racial equity in education.



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Executive Summary

In response to an increasing need to understand the reach of the literature and the research undertaken on initiatives to eliminate racial disparities, a literature review was initiated in 2012 for the Eliminating Racial Disparities Collaborative within the All Hands Raised initiative to improve academic outcomes for students in Multnomah County. This was an expansive undertaking – and at the end, we have drawn upon about 160 different articles, some of which were meta-analyses of an array of publications in a particular field.

The first section in this report is a summary grid that details each policy-based recommendation in this report. To this listing we have added some features, such as level of responsibility, the degree to which they reflect the priorities of the Coalition of Communities of Color, what might be called “low hanging fruit” (meaning they would be relatively easy to implement with some immediate impacts likely to result), synthesis indicator of particularly robust research, and what might be called “promising practices” that potentially can yield a more expansive impact on reducing racial disparities.

Subsequent sections include a detailing of policy features including an overview of the problem – sometimes theoretically, sometimes profiling the nature of the disparities involved, or their harmful impacts, followed by a synthesis of the types of policies that have been implemented to eliminate disparities. Most sections conclude with a statement about the quality of the literature in terms of its research base.

As of the writing of this version of the report, we have left open the first two columns of the grid. While there may be “obvious” responses to the “level of responsibility” decisions, it is likely that various forms of policies could be instituted at different levels. Accordingly, these are likely decisions that can be made by each jurisdiction. Second, the community priorities would need to be established by collective processes among communities of color, and there may be different priorities for each community of color. Both of these undertakings can be completed in the coming months as they are deemed a priority by the respective members of the Eliminating Disparities Collaborative.

The scope of this literature review is substantial. Approximately 160 articles and texts were uncovered that identified policy-level interventions to address disparities. More do exist, but the time expired for the available resources for this undertaking. We are reasonably confident that the majority of policy-level interventions to address disparities have been identified.

We are pleased to have been able to fulfil this request for research support from the Coalition of Communities of Color and the Eliminating Disparities Collaborative. The Center to Advance Racial Equity was established in 2013 to respond to community-initiated research requests that are able to strengthen advocacy practice. Based in the School of Social Work at Portland State University, we endeavor to respond to such requests as completely as possible.

With the utmost respect to the Coalition of Communities of Color and the members of the Eliminating Disparities Collaborative, we hope that this publication is able to effectively resource your advocacy work.

Dr. Ann Curry-Stevens, Director, Center to Advance Racial Equity

Key Features	Elements of Recommendations	Level of Responsibility (state, district, school)	Community Priorities	Low Hanging Fruit?	Robustness of research “backing” to reduce disparities	Promising Priorities with big impact
Racial Equity Policies and Implementation Practices	Public leadership from school districts to advance racial equity			X	X (other systems)	X
	Meaningful inclusion of communities of color.			X	X	X
	Engage with parents and students when building policies that affect them.			X	X	
	Budgeting that reflects equity, implemented via racial and economic impact assessments.					X
	Improve institutional accountability for equity.				X	X
	Engage in local advocacy to remedy legacy of segregation.			X		
	Implicate the macro policy context in eliminating disparities, with commitments to upper-level advocacy with local, state and federal policy.			X		
	Identify and celebrate success.			X		
Disparities Prior to Public School	Disclose disparities in Head Start access and outcomes, and if warranted, improve access to Head Start and Early Head Start programs for children of color.			X		
	Fund early childhood education.				X	
Teacher Recruitment and Retention	Minimize teacher attrition.					
	Recruit teachers of color more effectively.				X	
	Recruit teachers with commitment to stay in communities of color.					
	Build paraprofessional teaching opportunities.				X	X
	Advocate for the Minority Teachers Act to be operationalized.			X		
	Retain teachers of color.					
	Build creative solutions to the constraints imposed by NCLB.					
	Revise the construct of quality and build relevant assessment protocols.			X		
Student Voice and Decision-Making Involvement	Create robust teacher mentoring requirements as part of central human resources policy.				X	
	Make explicit policy-level commitments to student voice and participation in decision making on issues that affect them.			X	X	
	Involve youth in curriculum design and school climate improvements.					
	Create structures for Student Support Groups.			X	X (adults)	
Student Supports and Parent Engagement	Require schools to survey student perspectives on the qualities of their teacher and the concrete gains and learning they have achieved in classes.				X	X
	Support/require schools to provide systems for homework supports, as opposed to leaving these vulnerable to the individual capacities of parents.			X		X
	Deepen and diversify student and family access to books.			X		
	Gain input from parents on avenues to increase attendance levels and school retention.				X	
	Create policies to guide parent engagement that maximizes parent-determined priorities, maximizes accessibility and requires culturally-responsive engagement					

	methods.					
	Support parents of color and ELL parents to be involved.					
	Train for and encourage parental advocacy.			X		X
	Increase accessing higher education by deconstructing barriers.				X	
	Create explicit policies for integration of students and parents from new immigrant communities.					
	Build competency at supporting immigrant students for college applications.			X		
	Establish a culture that supports parental involvement of all parents, not those most easy to engage.				X	
	Require translation for school-home communications.					
	Collect school-level input from all stakeholders about the focus of parent engagement as well as the methods for this involvement.				X	
	Identify local and statewide exemplars in parent engagement and learn the specifics of how these initiatives have been implemented. Include Head Start in the list of exemplars.			X		
	Establish policy and dissemination of this policy that schools will never report citizenship status to immigration authorities.			X		
	Identify outreach and engagement practices that are relevant for the Asian and Pacific Islander communities.					
	Support parent-initiated and community-initiated programs.					X
	Revise assessment practices for parent engagement programs to be culturally-responsive.					
The Teacher-Student Relationship, Teacher Preparation and Teacher Quality	Build human resource departmental capacity to support the full range of teacher competencies in equity.				X	X
	Integrate relationship building as a core competency in teacher’s job descriptions and performance evaluation.			X	X	
	Work upstream with teacher training programs to ensure that equivalent attention and competency development occurs in the areas of content, pedagogy and relationships.			X		
	Hire teachers who have prerequisites for strongest student learning gains.					
	Create a student evaluation policy allowing students to evaluate their teachers.			X	X	
	Improve the quality of our teachers who are able to reduce disparities.					
	Improve teacher skills and accountability for equity-based instruction.				X	
	Create protocols to encourage and support team teaching.					
	Expose teachers to “best practices” teaching.			X		
	Implement the Minority Teacher Act.					X
	Retain teachers who work effectively with students of color and other student groups who face significant disparities.				X	X
Gain agreement of teachers’ unions to revise “last hired-first fired” seniority policies					X	

	that tend to gut emerging teachers of color from schools.					
	Improve teacher training preparation.					
	Improve retention of educators of color and educators committed to working with students of color.					
	Increase accountability of educators.					
	Create alternative licensure pathways for educators of color to expand supply of teachers of color.					X
	Create a student discourse based on empathy for student experiences and the struggles they face.			X		
	Expand use of positive reinforcement.				X	
	Do not reward high achieving teachers with reassignments to higher performing students.				X	
Classroom Pedagogy	Diversify the curriculum to reflect student cultures.				X	
	Establish policy regarding the use of “performance grouping” including consideration of banning such an approach.			X	X	
	Address the discourse of “mixed student bodies” and effective teaching practices for heterogeneous classrooms.					
	Build a shared instructional library of “differentiated instruction” and “culturally-responsive teaching” approaches.			X	X	
	Pilot expansion of “flipped classroom” teaching.					X
School Culture and Climate (including Discourse, Valuation, and White Privilege)	Build school climate policies that integrate prescribed characteristics that are measurable, inclusive and direction-setting.				X	X
	Incorporate accountability for school climate into state and/or district policy.					X
	Ongoing commitments to “unlearn” racism, deconstruct white privilege and relearn concrete methods to illustrate respect for people and communities of color.			X	X	
	Monitor school culture and establish concrete plans to make improvements at the school-level.				X	X
	Create support groups for students of color (also called student support networks).			X	X (adults)	
	Create partnerships with culturally-specific organizations to routinely train faculty and staff on the issues facing communities of color, including overviews of their history both in the USA and overseas.			X		
	Create/retain high expectations for students of color.			X		
	Expand validation of communities, students and families of color.					
	Locus of responsibility to remain with the education system.			X		
	Expand the role of school social workers and counselors as student advocates and system resources.			X		
	Eliminate damaging school culture and implicit bias.					X
	Training for all students annually in respect for human differences (or integrated into mandatory courses)					X

	Reclaim Native American languages.					
Extracurricular Activities	Promote involvement in extracurricular activities.				X	
	Eliminate barriers to participation in extracurricular activities.				X	X
	Provide flexibility for transfer students to join sports teams when they miss tryout periods.			X		
	Provide sufficient resources to make a wide variety of activities available for students.					
	Ensure that Black male youth have access to activities that protect them from the prison pipeline.					X
	Where students of color create groups based on their racial identity, ensure that these groups are afforded influence over school climate and that they are a resource for school personnel.			X		
Student Transfers and School Integration	Expand school transfer policies while simultaneously integrating schools and neighborhoods.				X	
	Promote school integration by boundary determinations that are inclusive of students at all income levels.					
	Aim for economic and racial integration within schools.				X	
	Create policy framework to assist midyear transfer students successfully integrate.			X		
	Provide prevention-based programs for high risk students who transfer schools, including early identification.					X
Discipline	Create & implement a “graduated discipline policy.”				X	X
	Continue Positive Behavioral Implementation and Supports (PBIS) programs.				X	
	Build “culturally-responsive PBIS” to address disparities.					X
	Integrate best practices for reducing disparity gap.					X
	Improve school climate with high relationships and high structure.					
	Establish comprehensive policy and procedural efforts to undo disparate discipline.				X	
	Disaggregate results by teacher specializations and perhaps by teacher.					X
	Expand the role of school social workers and counselors to assist with behavioral issues beyond individual levels.			X		
	End zero tolerance policies.				X	
Continue to use PBIS systems to reduce excessive discipline levels, but remain vigilant to disparities and adopt additional measures to address them.				X		
Exit Exams	Do not incorporate exit exams into the school system.				X	
Course Offerings in Advanced Placement & International Baccalaureate	Increase access to AP courses, across schools and within schools.					
	Ensure all schools have high academic standards that result in high student learning.					
	Promote AP enrollment by students of color within high schools.			X	X	
	Require AP enrollment of proficient students (as measured by PSAT test scores).				X	X
Ethnic Studies	Require curriculum to be available in all schools that affirms and centers the contributions of all students’ heritage to the fabric of the USA.					X

	Provide curriculum and school climate that affirms the ethnic and cultural identity of students of color.				X	
	Assign strong teachers to ethnic studies courses.					
	Expand offerings of ethnic studies courses.					X
Culturally-Specific Schools	Ensure that there is at least one culturally-specific school for each major racial grouping available for students to attend.					X
	Consider placement in culturally-specific schools for youth who are vulnerable to dropping out of school.				X	
Alternative Education Programs	Develop culturally-responsive policies for alternative education programs.					X
	Create alternative education programs in ways that build on best-practices as identified in the literature.					
	Disproportionate removal to alternative programs must be ended.				X	X
English Language Learner Programs and Special Education	Improve ELL quality, results and funding adequacy.				X	
	Review special education program data for disparities and quality.					X
	Encourage all teachers to learn some language of the students they teach			X		
Building Social Capital	Principals establish the culture of their schools and its local discourses			X		
	Network and mentor students to connect to cultures of affirmation and encouragement to stay in school.					X
	Social networks can be built to support students of color to access higher education.					
	As social networks are leveraged, key “responsive diversity practices” are demographic empathy, inclusive achievement and collective responsibility.				X	
School Funding and Location of Schools	Promote integrated neighborhoods on the basis of income.					
	Work upstream to build economic literacy about student outcomes, economic health of the region, and progressivity in taxes.					X
	Review the policies that guide the Portland Schools Foundation and eligible expenditures with fundraised dollars, and the equity formula.					X
	Retain the focus on improving the caliber of available schools.			X		
School-Year Structure & Length of Time in School	Increase Instructional Time.				X	
	Retain mandatory education to age 18.				X	
	Expand access to 9 th Grade Counts for students of color.				X (local)	X

Racial Equity Policies and Implementation Practices

The Problem: The reach of racial disparities in education runs broad and deep in Oregon, ranging from birth to higher education, and cover features that are part of the macro contexts of the school experience for youth, as well as those that precede involvement in school, that run throughout the school system, and that continue into higher education. The centrality of racial disparities in the lives of communities of color, and the economic and social wellbeing of all who reside in the region has been documented at length. Despite the logic of eliminating disparities, abundant road blocks exist. These barriers to solid progress are intellectual (with many believing that race is simply a proxy for poverty, and thus diminishing responsibility to address racial equity), ideological (with some continuing to believe that paying attention to race will simply make racial conflict worse and that the pathway forward are race-neutral or colorblind approaches to disparities), emotional (for white people, focusing on race and white privilege is uncomfortable), and cognitive (as too little is known about practices, policies and discourses that cause racial disparities and those that contribute to their elimination).

Leadership commitments to racial equity serve three key purposes: establish a discourse that asserts to all throughout the education system that racial disparities are intolerable, set a direction for decision-making throughout the system, and legitimates a series of initiatives that are essential for any system reform effort.

Policy-Level Solutions

- **Public leadership from school districts to advance racial equity**
 - a. Montgomery County Public Schools held racial equity as central to student success, achieving the following:
 - i. Improved reading scores among 3rd graders by 39 percentage points (Black) and 46 percentage points (Latino) from 2002 to 2009 (Toney & Rodgers, 2011)
 - ii. Enrollment in honors and AP courses – from 1/3 of Black and Latino students to 59% (Black) and 56% (Latino)
- **Meaningful inclusion of communities of color.** Being involved in developing policies and procedures relevant to their community allows their expertise, commitment and enduring motivation for real results to be mobilized in eliminating disparities. Miami's People Acting for Community Together (PACT) ensured resources went to lowest performing students in poorest communities, and increased accountability to the community. Involved schools showed steady improvement for 3rd and 4th graders between 2001 and 2005.
- **Engage with parents and students when building policies that affect them.** Says Gewirtz et al (2015), "educational policies and practices need to be developed with those they are designed to benefit, rather than 'done to' them. It is not enough for policy makers to seek to act in the interests of those who are socially excluded unless that involves respecting their values and choices" (p.670).
- **Budgeting that reflects equity, implemented via racial and economic impact assessments.** Budget and planning decisions were revised in a Minnesota school district to incorporate racial equity in terms of impact and budget on a decision to alter school catchment areas, including transportation routes. A 1999 decision was altered to reduce the number of children of color impacted from 77% to 36%, and to

assist two hard hit neighborhoods (Somali and Native American) in creating improved local solutions (Toney & Rodgers, 2011).

- **Improve institutional accountability for equity** (Toney & Rodgers, 2011)
 - a. Develop equity standards, such as:
 - i. Equitable treatment and access for all students
 - ii. Parent and community involvement from all populations
 - iii. Proportionate drop out and graduation
 - iv. Equal cultural representation across the curriculum
 - v. Ending tracking
 - vi. Ending unequal discipline levels
 - vii. Providing clear pathways to higher education for all
 - b. Reward attaining a school culture that supports, honors and creates achievement for all students (Toney & Rodgers, 2011)
 - i. Ensure decisions and policies are data-driven and that community-specific data is available at a granular level to capture community-defined populations (and that may shift across time). Improve data collection forms and practices in uniform ways across districts
- **Engage in local advocacy to remedy legacy of segregation.** An abundance of education challenges are caused by the absence of integrated neighborhoods on the basis of income and race. Deconstructing barriers (such as residential lending discrimination, inequitable economic development, limited private sector and public sector investment, absence of inclusionary housing policies, and city planning practices that favor more vocal communities) can be helpful for school district desegregation.
 - “Mobility related to housing problems” occurs with inadequate housing subsidies, unaffordable housing and unsafe housing (p.14-15, Orfield, 2010).
 - “Reduce subsidies for the affluent and increase subsidies for the disadvantaged and working class” (p.17, Orfield, 2010).
- **Implicate the macro policy context in eliminating disparities, with commitments to upper-level advocacy with local, state and federal policy.**
 - “The achievement gap closed substantially when school reforms were accompanied by the War on Poverty and desegregation strategies to create access to better schools, teachers and peer groups for Black and Latino students... a large part of the disparity in education among Black and Latino students is the result of extrinsic circumstances, such as concentrated poverty, racial separation and housing issues” (p.14, Orfield, 2010).
 - “Create housing subsidies [and other anti-poverty initiatives] that do not concentrate children in communities with poorly performing schools” (p.17, Orfield, 2010)
- **Identify and celebrate success.** Create a system for school and program recognition – not just for high test scores, but also for gains in levels (Ferguson, 2010).

Research Base for Solutions: The research base for these initiatives draws entirely from case study research profiles of successful school and school district initiatives. One field in which leadership commitment has been rooted in evidence-based research is in the private sector and its efforts to embrace diversity. In this field, a leading study of 32 companies was conducted internationally (ORC Worldwide, 2008). The key findings show that strong equity and inclusion performance is correlated with the following factors:

- Public values statements include diversity and inclusion (rather than generic values statements)
- CEO is held accountable for progress to the Board of Directors and compensation is tied to progress
- The Board is racially diverse
- The Board considers its own recruitment through a diversity lens
- CEO demands his/her executives to report on diversity progress, and “holds them accountable for both their personal behavior and for meeting objectives such as developing and mentoring diverse people” (p.2)
- Managers are trained in identifying and avoiding microaggressions.

This follows a study from DiversityInc (2009) of 11 CEOs and 100 chief diversity officers identified the following for creating inclusive workplaces:

- “Ensure that your CEO and leadership team are visible supporters of diversity and inclusion initiatives
- Integrate diversity into every aspect of your business... “(p.4)
- “Ensure your diversity and inclusion efforts also engage and equip white men to be a part of the dialogue and the effort” (p.5)
- “Incorporate standards for inclusive behavior into the performance-review process
- Directly link bonus to measurable results including recruitment, retention, promotion and supplier diversity” (p.6)
- “Help create a vibrant, sustainable pipeline of future employee candidates by supporting and developing initiatives that bolster the academic pipeline” (p.7)

In the area of systems change work that is typically incorporated within health and human services, we find that there are a set of reform elements that are beginning to consolidate around vision and policy, data systems, training, human resource improvements, budgeting, service-based practice competencies, community engagement and accountability structures. In child welfare disparity reduction efforts the following have emerged (drawing from Texas DHS disparity reduction model and from Annie E. Casey):

- a. Accurate data systems
- b. Leadership development
- c. Culturally-competent workforce
- d. Community engagement
- e. Cross-systems collaboration (with those serving the same population)
- f. Building awareness of the histories of racism, racial dynamics and strategies to undo racism.

Disparities Prior to Public School

The Problem: The birth to preschool environment influences later disparities. Issues such as birth weight, parental time for reading to children, availability of books at home, time spent watching television, nutrition, learning disabilities and lead poisoning (Barton, 2004; Farkas, 2003). Added to this list are the differential experience of more affluent students (more likely to be white) whose families can afford private preschools and learning supplements to ensure that they are ready for kindergarten, having had exposure to more learning opportunities and early education to develop skills for learning such as early reading and

cognitive skills (Zill, Resnick & McKey, 1998). While researchers have focused on the impact of Head Start programs and their relatively weak performance compared with private day care, we have an additional problem in our local region, that many children of color are not making it into the doors of Head Start programs despite being eligible for them (Curry-Stevens, Cross-Hemmer & Coalition of Communities of Color, 2011). Local students enter school with disparities already in place: they have worse levels of low birth weights, greater use of food banks, higher poverty, more single parent families, lesser access to Head Start, and, ultimately, compromised levels of kindergarten readiness (Curry-Stevens et al, 2010; Multnomah County Health Department, 2008). While our local kindergarten readiness data is under development, national studies illustrate significant disparities for communities of color, including “lower oral language, prereading, and premathematics skills, lower general knowledge, and behavior less well suited to the school’s learning environment” (p.1121, Farkas, 2003). Farkas goes on to attribute about ¾ of the disparities to social class variables (including but not limited to income – such as parental education and occupation).

The impact of these early shortcomings, according to Farkas (2003), is that about half of the racial disparities in evidence by Grade 12 could be eliminated if students were equivalently prepared to enter Kindergarten. Alternatively, it means that half of the gap is attributed to later experiences of students’ life in the education system. What begins, for African Americans, as a one-year gap with Whites in vocabulary at age 5 expands to a 4-year gap by the end of high school. This is evidence of an expanding achievement gap that has been amplified in our local schools (Curry-Stevens et al, 2010) and is shown to also exist in math and reading. Important to know, as well, is that Ferguson (2002) has examined data disaggregating student achievement by race and income and found that at higher income levels, racial disparities are greater.

This indicates that race is not simply a proxy for low income, and that the education system does an increasingly worse performance with students of color on eliminating the achievement gap (and other disparities gaps) as students get older.

Policy-Level Solutions

- ***Disclose disparities in Head Start access and outcomes, and if warranted, improve access to Head Start and Early Head Start programs for children of color.*** Accessing data on these patterns was difficult when the Coalition of Communities of Color was studying racial disparities in its research.
- ***Fund early childhood education***
 - Most benefit accrue from keeping participants out of criminal justice system and health care system, but other benefits include helping children and youth stay in school, have a higher IQ, adopt better educational skills, and have better jobs at higher incomes, including increases in tax revenues.
 - Cost benefit analysis of four such programs show a return on investment of between \$3 and \$17 for every dollar invested (including Perry Preschool, Abecedarian, Chicago and Elmira)

Research Base for the Solutions: The most dramatic of these studies is that of Farkas (2003) in asserting that ½ of disparities could be eliminated if student of color enter kindergarten equivalently ready for school. He draws this conclusion from a review of 13 published reports on preschool disparities where he finds that “all of these studies have found that significant portions, but not all, of the race gaps in school readiness disappear after controls for social class background” (p.1121).

Teacher Recruitment and Retention

The Problem: Brill and McCartney (2008) assert that, “there is not a shortage of teachers coming into the system, [instead] too many teachers are leaving the profession after only a few years” (p. 751). Factors contributing to attrition include class size and workload, student behavior, the school’s leadership and administration, facilities and resources, maternity leave, teaching seen as a temporary profession, poor mentoring and induction programs, and low salaries. Brill & McCartney conclude that “poor teacher retention is both a contributor to, and serious symptom of, this inequitable distribution of teacher expertise” (p. 755). Among teachers of color, men overwhelmingly choose to leave the workforce at higher rates.

Over the last couple decades there has been a strong call to hire more teachers of color. Reviewing 70 studies, Achinstein, Ogawa, Sexton, and Freitas (2010) found that:

1. Teachers of color have higher turnover rates than White teachers
2. “Policy amenable school-level conditions related to financial, human, social, and cultural capital can affect retention”
3. Teachers of color are more likely to work and remain in urban schools with high proportions of students from low-income, minority communities
4. Factors that influence teacher turnover are also affecting the quality of “hard-to-staff” urban school morale.

Financial compensation is a strong factor that influences teacher of color attrition. Teachers of color, in general, need higher wages—not because of vanity purposes, but rather because of financial obligations. For the most part, teachers of color are indebted in larger amounts than White teachers, and therefore in order to pay their higher student loan balances, they need larger salaries.

Though teacher retention is a national problem, low-income and minority schools experience this at much higher rates. Such schools are typically urban, also known as schools with 50% or more low-income and minority students, and are “more likely to have worse teacher retention problems and bear the subsequent costs more heavily” (p. 754, Brill & McCartney). Prince (2002) found that “the more impoverished and racially isolated the school, the greater the likelihood that students in the school will be taught by inexperienced/uncertified teachers” (p. 6).

The costs of retention are high. In 2004, an estimated \$2.6 billion was spent in teacher turnover and new teacher training (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2004). This is especially troubling considering that teacher turnovers occur half of the time in “high-need” schools, likely because many teachers entering the workforce are underprepared and under experienced. Lau, Dandy and Hoffman (2007) find that teachers serving these schools “tend to have fewer years of experience are apt to be less qualified, and are often unfamiliar with the serious issues that plague the schools” (p. 28).

Strong recruitment and retention is important to the lives of students of color. The Alliance for Excellent Education (n.d.) cites that “decades of research clearly demonstrate that a quality teacher, more than any other school factor enables students to learn and even overcome obstacles to learning, such as poverty and the achievement gap. The most effective teachers produce student gains almost four times greater than the least effective teachers... one in four high school classes is taught by a teacher without a

college major or minor in that subject. Students in poor and minority schools are twice as likely to have an inexperienced teacher. The same students are 61% more likely to be assigned an uncertified teacher” (para.1-2).

While Oregon has obtained an exemption from No Child Left Behind (NCLB), it is important to add to our literature the significant impact it has had on teacher retention at the national level. While its goal is to close the achievement gaps of minority students, students with disabilities, poor students, and new immigrants, drafters of this law failed to see the negative impact it would have on teacher retention. Teacher with tremendous amounts of experience have had to return to school, and pass new competency tests to comply with the new law. These new requirements may sound reasonable, but have come with costs, the extra time involved, and with little visible need. Many teachers choose to retire from the field. Also at play is that it measures “teacher competence with content knowledge” (Hill & Barth, 2004, p. 173). With regulations calling for 100% student proficiency by 2014, the burden has primarily fallen on teachers to redesign their instruction, focus primarily on academic learning, and redefine learning and success. The unrealistic pressure has led many teachers to retire. According to Exstrom (2003, as cited in Hill & Barth), “in increasing numbers our best teachers are choosing to leave the profession” (p. 174). With this shift, students are losing relationships that could have been long lasting, and schools continuously have to reestablish their team dynamics.

Driven to find teachers that will help them meet the federally driven guidelines of NCLB, principals across the United States are under pressure to raise the “quality” of teachers (Kersten, 2008). Given the federal pressure, administrators are driven to ensure that candidates be able to raise their school’s standardized test scores. Following the enactment of NCLB, district and state boards have increasingly used this evaluation metric to measure teacher efficacy and quality. While pre and post test score comparisons can symbolize learning, it is surely not the only tool for measuring holistic student growth. This pressure has led many of teachers committed to working in low-performing community schools to leave the field. This becomes even more controversial when considering that a large number of teachers of color begin their careers in these schools.

Branch (2001) identifies three reasons for why he thinks students of color do not see themselves in teaching roles.

1. “The lack of people of color participating in the knowledge-construction process for students in the public school system,
2. Fewer numbers of teachers who have the cultural framework to make instruction culturally relevant for students of color, and
3. Fewer role models who can say by their mere presence ‘you can be a teacher’ or other professional” (p.254-255).

In addition to the obstacles that contribute to attrition, another impediment to hiring teachers of color is the licensing procedure. 29 states require that candidates pass the Praxis standardized test—a test that replaced the National Teachers Examination (NTE) with the introduction of NCLB. Prepared by the Educational Testing Service (ETS), these set of tests have been found to be culturally biased against people of color. Though basic knowledge tests may be appropriate, it is imperative that test makers ensure that tests actually relate to teacher effectiveness.

Despite the hardships that teachers of color may experience, their presence is absolutely necessary in the classroom. In comparison to White teachers, teachers of color are more likely to incorporate critical

race thinking, and raise questions of social justice and anti-oppression. Lastly, their presence as leaders influences other students of color to also envision themselves as leaders in and out of the classroom.

Policy-Level Solutions

- ***Minimize teacher attrition***
 - a. Providing a menu of teacher supports, customized to their needs, will assist lessen attrition.
 - b. “Seniority clauses in union contracts” often prevent more experienced teachers from transferring to low-income schools.
- ***Recruit teachers of color more effectively***
 - a. Teach for America candidates are more likely to be of color (at 42%) compared with traditional academic graduates (at 33% from graduate programs and 37% from undergraduate programs) (Boyd et al, 2006, as cited in Grossman & Loeb, 2010).
- ***Recruit teachers with commitment to stay in communities of color***
 - a. Grossman et al (2010) report that substantially fewer Teaching Fellows and Teach for America (TFA) teachers left after the first year of teaching, and that they arrive already with two years of teaching experience, and that they are more likely to remain committed to working in low income areas.
- ***Build paraprofessional teaching opportunities.*** In order to close the gap between teacher experience and school needs, the AASU developed the Pathways to Teaching Program (1992) in hopes of recruiting more teachers of color to join the workforce.
 - a. “Savannah-Chatham County Public School District (SCCPS) entered into agreement with AASU to release 30-40 paraprofessionals, with pay, one day per week for four years, so that they could complete their education program at AASU” (Lau et al, 2007, p. 30).
 - By recruiting and investing in paraprofessionals that already worked in the school district, new teachers had a more informed understanding of what the community’s needs were. Participants represented a large demographic of people who were interested in the profession, but didn’t have the money to pursue higher education and credential degrees.
 - Of 105 graduates, “97 graduates remained in Georgia and were employed in low-income schools” (p.33, Lau et al, 2007). Over a period of 10 years, the retention rate of these teachers totaled to 95%, far exceeded the national average.
- ***Advocate for the Minority Teachers Act to be operationalized***
- ***Retain teachers of color.***
 - a. Role modeling is essential for students of color to build conviction of their potential to be teachers.
- ***Build creative solutions to the constraints imposed by NCLB.*** The Hillyear County School District (in response to their dissatisfaction with their evaluation process), changed the way in which they graded teacher quality (Rutledge, Harris, and Ingle, 2010). The study showed that despite principals’ desire to hire well-rounded, diverse teachers, principals in the study overwhelmingly felt pressured to hire teachers that could guarantee student test-score achievement. Their revised hiring practices included:
 - They implemented structures “favorable to candidates with strong professional characteristics.”
 - They took into consideration NCLB mandates (e.g. conventionally defined teacher quality).

- They took into account many factors that could influence how well a teacher could connect with students (p. 224).
- **Revise the construct of quality and build relevant assessment protocols**
 - a. The concept of teacher quality is subjective and measured by the following proxies, neither of which are adequate quality measures:
 - Teacher’s pre-service experience (e.g. their certification status, teachers’ own test performance, or their college education)
 - Practice-based measures (e.g. teaching experience, or test performance gains of students)
 - b. To reevaluate how teacher quality is measured:
 - Characteristics like preparation pathways and race or ethnicity should be added (Boyd, Lankford, Loeb, Ronfeldt, and Wyckoff, 2011)
 - Evidence supports the possibility that teachers of color can have a particularly positive effect on students of color (Dee, 2004).
 - Ensure that content, pedagogy and relationship capacities are incorporated (Ferguson, 2010).
 - Most controversial is test-based accountability.
 - c. Strong relational teachers are essential for effective work with students of color. Krater, Zeni & Carson (1994) conducted intervention-based research across nine years of individualized instruction with several hundred low-performing African American students, documenting the importance of highly relational, self-critical and engaged teachers in student success. Their criteria for teacher success is worthy of repeating:
 - “Build trust through affirmation, personal sharing, physical closeness, and assigning individual responsibility
 - Build high academic expectations through written and spoken comments, conferences and modeling peer response
 - Remain flexible regarding deadlines, assignments and expectations” (para.11, Webster Groves Writing Project, n.d.)
- **Create robust teacher mentoring requirements as part of central human resources policy.**

Mentoring has long been a strategy for teacher growth and retention. Among the many goals was to “provide beginning teachers with guidance and support from mentor teachers, and promote the professional development of beginning teachers, and retain beginning teachers” (Odell and Ferraro, 1992, p. 200). These goals are valuable, as over time beginning teachers have expressed disillusionment for the profession due to a lack of support. A good mentor-mentee relationship could help improve the quality of beginning teachers’ first few years. Odell and Ferraro’s study looked at “two successive groups of K-5 teachers who received year-long structured support from mentor teachers in a collaborative university/school system teacher mentor program” (p. 201). Teachers were located four years after their initial mentor-mentee experiences, and overall the study showed that these relationships were successful. They asked “Specify the extent to which your mentored experience influenced your attitude towards teaching” and found the response to be very positive (4.1/5.0)

The Research Base for Solutions: The literature covered in this section is quite wide and draw mostly on case studies and survey research. The problems are more robustly researched than the solutions.

Student Voice and Decision-Making Involvement

The Problem: Student voice is “a commitment to the facilitation of student agency and to the creation of policies, practices and programs that revolve around the students’ interests and needs” (p.23, Toshalos & Nakkula, 2012). It is fundamentally an act of democracy and a commitment that places student experience in the center of the education system. As consumers of services who bear most fully the outcomes and long term impacts of being the object of the education system, their experiences and perceptions need to be featured centrally as recipients of these activities. Extending this perspective are theories of adult education and popular education that suggest that students need to be much more than “empty vessels” (from Friere, 1970) for filling by educators, but rather active participants in the education experience whose voice and perceptions should matter. Extending again beyond their focus as mere objects is the idea that they also need to be subjects in constructing the education experience – for as the primary stakeholders, their perceptions need to infuse the work on eliminating disparities in education.

The general perception by youth is that policies that impact them are not strength based and are often consider its target (youth) as mere recipients of education and a group to control or track (Beattie, 2012; Bragg, 2007; Slee, 2006; Smyth, 2006a; 2006b) instead of social change agents (Checkoway & Richards-Schuster, 2006; Cook-Sather, 2002; 2006).

Omitting student voice results in lowered understanding of the needs and values of communities of color. Policy makers opt instead to prioritize parents’ or teachers’ input (Flanagan & Faison, 2010).

Policy-Level Solutions

- **Make explicit policy-level commitments to student voice and participation in decision making on issues that affect them.** Says on Coulston, “students are going to school, living by the deliberations and consequences that have been made by people who may not fully understand what it means to be a student in the 21st century” (para. 4, 2013).
- **Involve youth in curriculum design and school climate improvements.** Involving youth in curriculum design and promoting positive school culture advances long-term wellbeing (Joselowsky, 2007; Levine, 2008; McCombs, 2003; Mitra 2006; 2009; O’Donoghue, Kirshner, McLaughlin, 2002; Rodriguez & Brown, 2009). Additionally, strategies involving youth such as youth organizing (Renee, 2011; Moore, 2011; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2011; Dzurinko, McCants, & Stith, 2011; Chajet, 2011; McDonald, Geigel, & Pringuel, 2011) and youth in community governance (Zeldin, Camino, & Calvert, 2007) promotes youth voice.
 - The theory base here concerns positive youth development, civic engagement, giving those with the most invested the option to influence school systems. These are theoretically linked to lifelong wellbeing indicators such as employment, self-esteem and enrollment of post-secondary education
 - Early research on the role of educational leaders in enabling student voice has been found important for closing the achievement gap (Mitra, Serriere, & Stoicovy, 2011). Strong student

- voice has been found best supported by school's organizational reforms, larger institutional reforms and pedagogical shifts (Skrtric, Sailor, and Gee, 1996).
- Other fields within human services have advanced the role of consumer voice as an essential input into assessing quality of an organization. In social work, this effort has been most firmly advanced in the UK where researchers have determined that service user voice is essential for quality services to emerge (including Beresford & Croft, 2004; Butcher, 2008; Grogan et al, 2000; Crawford et al, 2003).
 - The National School Climate Standards (2009) incorporate a significant role for student voice and inclusion: "Facilitate students' desire and ability to share their perceptions readily (e.g., to enter into dialogues with adults and peers at school), emphasize interests and needs, stress options and choices and a meaningful role in decision making" (standard 3, indicator 3.1.2).
 - **Create structures for Student Support Groups.** Students with marginalized identities typically need the support of others facing similar situations before they can assert their needs to authorities.
 - **Require schools to survey student perspectives on the qualities of their teacher and the concrete gains and learning they have achieved in classes.** The most significant study in student voice is the Tripod Project (Ferguson, 2002, 2007; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010) that collects information from students on their perceptions of their teachers' classroom practices. What began as a study of suburban schools and the achievement gap on racial disparities and income has developed into a national initiative that provides student-based assessments of teacher competencies in the areas of their content knowledge, relationship building skills and pedagogical skills. Ferguson's work has firmly launched the importance of student perceptions of their educational experience.

The Research Base for Solutions: While the research base in student voice as having an impact on educational disparities is very thin (and needs to be strengthened), there are two important studies that are sufficiently significant for informing decisions to move forward with student voice policies. The first is the Mitra et al (2011) study is a case study of only one school where the principle intentionally led a student voice initiative in expanded democracy. The study combined monthly observations, interviews, and a survey of all teachers at the end of the year. The second is Ferguson's work with the Tripod Project that emphasizes that students have unique and essential perspectives of their teachers, and others extend this analysis to school climate in general. The research base of his project is very robust, with hundreds of participating schools and a survey of most students inside the schools. Note that the lead author of this report is a university professor which is an environment where student evaluations are required in every class and are used for merit-based raises, and are the primary tool for assessing instructional quality, and informing the decision to award tenure and retention. The idea that students do not have a formal voice in the assessment of their teachers is a little unfathomable.

Student Supports and Parent Engagement

The Problem: Students of color are struggling in the region with achieving academic success. This section of the literature review focuses on supports that can be leveraged with some confidence that they will be fruitful for improving academic outcomes. As parents are the key stakeholder in their children's schooling

experience, considerable attention is given here to what is known about policies that can generate more meaningful engagement with schools.

There are an abundance of poverty-related factors that help us to understand the nature of racial disparities, as poverty is more prolific among students of color. Examples of these factors include access to a computer and the internet, having an educated parent to support their learning, having housing stability, having a parent who has time available for such support, or having a parent with the confidence and skills to advocate with teachers and administrators (Ferguson, 2002; Barton, 2004; Farkas, 2003; Lopez, 2009). While schools are not expected to address the poverty of their students, earlier suggestions were that they should have an advocacy presence in various legislative arenas to improve the policy context with which families engage. We also detail some avenues that can serve to increase the safety net feature of the student experience in education.

Sometimes, addressing racial disparities simply means that more affluent and white parents simply need to get out of the way and not exert more than their democratic “fair share” of influence on policy and resource allocation. Parent engagement has long favored self-motivated parents who are aligned with dominant school culture, meaning white professionally-credentialed parents. This leaves many parents left out, to the detriment of both schools becoming the hub of their communities and the elimination of disparities. Without meaningful parent engagement across the student population, many school initiatives will continue to manifest disparities. It has been hypothesized that without parent and community involvement, no initiative to eliminate disparities should be rejected as unworthy of consideration (Hopson, 2013, personal communication).

Not only does lack of inclusion occur by neglect, but also by active exclusion. Parents of color typically “feel that schools have biases based on race, class, immigration status, and language that stand in the way of quality relationships between parents and schools” (p.4, CADRE as cited in Evans & Didlick-Davis, 2012).

Legislative changes set the stage more than a decade ago that catalyzed significant growth of attention to parent engagement. Over the last fifteen years, a number of federal policies have called for an increase in parent-involvement programming in schools. Two policies in particular, No Child Left Behind (NCLB) and the Educate America Act (ESEA) of 2000, spearheaded this movement. With its desire to close the gap between low and high performing schools, NCLB made it a requirement for Title I schools to create parent-involvement policies and programs that would “facilitate effective partnerships between parents and their children’s schools.” Similarly, ESEA called for all schools to increase parent involvement in order to ensure effective parent-teacher communication.

In response to these policies, many schools rushed to develop programs without assessing their community’s needs. A study conducted by Denessen, Bakker, and Gierveld (2007) indicated that principals knew their programs were not working, but continued to run them to meet federal funding requirements. Among the reasons why these programs were not working, principals acknowledged that language barriers and cultural differences were obstacles that had not been taken into account when designing programs, and therefore outcomes were poor. This left many educators asking the question: “Should schools expect parents to comply with the schools’ expectations and culture, or should the school take parents’ expectations and culture into account?” (p. 27). Though federal initiatives create a vision, improved implementation needs to take place at the local level. Administrators, teachers, and parents all need to be stakeholders in the creation of parent engagement programs.

Neglecting to maximize the effectiveness of parent involvement programs is a lost opportunity for

an abundance of positive possible outcomes: increased student achievement, integrating parents as educational partners, listening to parent priorities and insights on solutions, building schools as community capital that in turn can become political capital, and reducing disparities in all of these elements.

Schools need to determine (and engage parents in such dialogue) what they expect from parents. How best can school programs benefit parents and children? What are the specific goals schools have for integrating immigrant and minority communities? How can they be customized by each school? Though communication is considered a form of parental involvement, it is decision-making that actually gives parents the opportunity to become educational stakeholders.

With increasing diversity of the population, and particularly among school-aged children, the issue rises in priority. Historically, educational institutions have continuously failed to “adapt to the changing demographic” despite Latino students’ growth in “public schools and urban neighborhoods since the late 1980s” (Marschall, 2006, p. 1053).

A final caution: considering how difficult it is for families to go through the naturalization process, it is likely that numerous districts have families who identify as undocumented. Due to their status, many families avoid institutions as a means for which to protect their anonymity. Districts have a responsibility to consider this reality.

Policy-Level Solutions

- ***Support/require schools to provide systems for homework supports, as opposed to leaving these vulnerable to the individual capacities of parents.***
 - With a higher likelihood for parents of color to have lower education, limited literacy and ELL challenges, barriers emerge for parents to effectively resource their children’s learning.
 - In middle and high schools, parents can run a study center after school, with options including tutoring, organization and study skills, test proctoring to make up for missed exams, ESL training, test-taking skills, and writing college essays
 - Teachers Involve Parents in Schoolwork (TIPS) via John Hopkins University and Baltimore teachers that designs homework to require children to talk to someone at home about their homework: “In a study of 700 African American middle school students, researchers found that TIPS improved writing skills, grades and test scores. Parent involvement and teacher attitudes improved, and students were more likely to finish their homework. The longer parents took part in TIPS, the more students’ writing scores improved” (p.98, Henderson, 2007).
- ***Deepen and diversify student and family access to books.*** Leisure reading narrows as students get older, introducing disparities between 1st and 5th grade. Ferguson (2010) recommends having books at home.
 - McCoy Elementary School in Kansas City – Reading achievements increased when parents were given permission to borrow books from the school library, and the school increased the supply of books in Spanish. Parents read in Spanish to their children, and their children read in English to them. Teachers also did home visits with bilingual parents doing translation (Henderson et al, 2007).
- ***Gain input from parents on avenues to increase attendance levels and school retention.***
 - McCoy Elementary School in Kansas City – after school administrators debunked their own myths about devaluing education, they listened to Latino families about engagement. Latina mothers did not know that pulling their children out of school for trips back home was a

- problem. They then agreed to avoid trips when school was held and if unavoidable, they asked the teacher for homework to take with them (Henderson et al, 2007).
- Los Angeles school district requires an 8th grade test to enter high school. One middle school conducted parent-child workshops for 8th grade students at risk of not passing. Workshops were five sessions – looking at student-specific data (attendance, scores and grades) with counselors and a parent trainer, and talked about how to assist. Home visits happened to parents who did not regularly attend, and attendance went up. With the workshops, no student needed to be retained.
 - **Create policies to guide parent engagement that maximizes parent-determined priorities, maximizes accessibility and requires culturally-responsive engagement methods.**
 - A study of six parent engagement initiatives to reduce disparities in discipline determined the following features as instrumental to their success: “Schools must raise their standards about the relationships they need to have with parents in this community. We ask that schools face and answer our tough questions. Engage us, so that we fully play a role... [we] are seeking authentic engagement opportunities where [we] can fully participate in policy formation” (p.5, Evans & Didlick-Davis, 2012).
 - A study of high-performing Latino schools in Texas found these key practices to exist:
 - Schools engage parents in their homes rather than coming to school functions
 - Involve the extended family in school activities (neighborhood women tend to care about all local children)
 - Learn about the local culture (values, stories and traditions) and invite families to share these with teachers and the class.
 - Hire bilingual school staff, learn Spanish, and communicate with parents in Spanish.
 - Set up a family center where families can meet and talk in their language (Scribner, Young and Pedroza as cited in Henderson et al, 2007)
 - Parent Academic Liaison Program (PAL) in San Diego. PAL places certified teachers in high risk elementary schools to work to establish and sustain comprehensive parent involvement in these schools. PALS meet regularly with school staff to expand a culture of family engagement, identify high-need students and relevant resources, and support parent empowerment, including coaching parents to be leaders and advocates.
 - Study of Title 1 elementary schools (Westat, 2001, as cited in Henderson, 2007) showed a 40 to 50% improvement in reading and math when teachers did the following:
 - Met face-to-face with each family at the start of the year
 - Sent families materials each week on how to help their children at home
 - Called regularly to share student progress, not just bad news
 - Research study of schools with high parental satisfaction conducts in Alexandria showed the following three features as relevant to their satisfaction: being treated fairly and with respect, finding the school culture caring and nurturing with high communication and strong student progress, and having a voice that would be listened to by the district (Henderson et al, 2011).
 - Parent involvement programs cannot be designed top down. If schools want to improve their level of parent involvement, parents and guardians need to be a key piece of the design.
 - **Support parents of color and ELL parents to be involved in:**
 - Students’ education while at home

- School system itself
- Proactive approach by schools to share information with families
- ***Train for and encourage parental advocacy.***
 - Shumow and Loxam (2001) found that parents with efficacy (skills and confidence – or the power to have an effect) “are more likely to monitor their children and be involved in school. Their children tend to do better in school and feel happier, safer and more stable” (p.154, Henderson et al, 2007)
 - Engagement with families is a form of “cultural capital” that supports two-way knowledge transfer, and includes parental elements including “knowing how schools are organized, having a sense of entitlement to talk with teachers... and understanding the words that educators use” (p.139, Henderson, 2007). These types of knowledges are more strongly tied to middle and upper income families, and much less so among low-income African American families (Lareau & Horvat, 1999). In this study, “middle-class black families fared somewhat better, but only as well as working-class white families” (p.140, Henderson, 2007).
- ***Increase access to higher education by deconstructing barriers***
 - Tuition equity is essential for undocumented students to access higher education. Thirteen states offer tuition equity... soon to be 14 as Oregon has signed tuition equity into law.
 - Texas and New Mexico offer equitable access to state financial aid as well
 - Program interventions can be created (or mandated through policy) to prepare communities of color for higher education. Con Mi MADRE (Austin Texas) has a program achieving 76% higher education participation rates (557 of 733 Latina seniors). It provides culturally relevant programming in three key areas: college readiness, college enrollment, and college persistence. Programming includes: on-site campus meetings; educational conferences and workshops focusing on peer pressure, self-esteem, study skills, and college readiness; individual counseling; volunteer service; leadership development; parent support groups; financial literacy; college campus visits; mentoring; assistance with the college application process; financial aid; and college scholarships.
 - Improve college admissions criteria to support “class and race-based preferences concurrently... preference based solely on race could possibly be met with resistance by critics” (p.21, Tienda, 2010).
 - Reduce or eliminate use of standardized test scores for determining entry eligibility. These “tend to only predict a student’s first year grades and nothing more... they are not a good indicator of college completion” (p.21-22, Tienda, 2010).
 - Malagon and Alvarez (2010) challenge us to expand the definition of achievement “to include the personal qualities of students as they confront challenges and barriers along their educational trajectory” (p. 150).
 - Schools need to strengthen their college-going culture, and actively encourage to students to move forward with their educational journey. Remember that resisting secondary education does not mean resisting all other forms of educational development.
- ***Create explicit policies for integration of students and parents from new immigrant communities.***
 - Affirm that parents are crucial in providing students with the support they need to succeed in school.

- Details of one's immigration status should never be asked, but should always be considered by program designers.
- "Studies have found that because Latinos hold teachers in relatively high regard, they often view certain behaviors (e.g. asking questions about assignments or grades) as disrespectful" (Trumbull et al., 2001, cited in Marschall, 2006, p. 1057). As a result of this historic relationship with educators, Latino parents are less likely to engage in their child's education. In order for this to change, educators need to take a different approach to parent-teacher conferences and extra-curricular parent involvement programs. This does not just mean distributing paperwork in English and Spanish, it also means changing the way in which we hold conferences, and taking into consideration that working families do not always have the time nor experience with programs designed to amplify their voice/opinion. "Parent involvement is a multidimensional concept, referring most generally to a partnership between school actors and parents that promotes the 'social, emotional, and academic growth of children'" (National Education Goals Panel, 1999 as cited in Marschall et al., 2012, p.132).
- **Build competency at supporting immigrant students for college applications.** When it comes to preparing for college, parental involvement becomes vital. Immigrant parents are met with many challenges when wanting to provide support to their student. Language is one of the biggest barriers. If a parent is unable to ask questions, it is more unlikely that they will be able to represent themselves or their student. While many schools today think that translating paperwork into Spanish is enough, immigrant parents still need to have a relationship with their child's educational community (Lopez, 2010).
- **Establish a culture that supports parental involvement of all parents, not those most easy to engage.** Cultural differences can often isolate parent communities from integrating themselves into parent programs. Immigrant communities continue to be absent from most parent involvement programs, leading to the recommendation to specifically engage more immigrant families. Many researchers have looked into evaluating program efficacy in immigrant communities. An interesting addition to the literature shows that parental involvement not only increases educational outcomes for individual children but for the entire school. A 1996 study found that "a child's academic achievement did not depend so much on whether his or her own parents participated but on the average level of participation of all parents at the school" (p.12, Ho-Sui-Chu and Willms, 1996, as cited in Aberger et al, 2009).
- **Require translation for school-home communications.** Principals indicate that language barriers and cultural differences were the biggest obstacles to immigrant parent involvement.
- **Collect school-level input from all stakeholders about the focus of parent engagement as well as the methods for this involvement.** Kessler-Sklar and Baker (2000) conclude that "parental participation in all aspects of school functioning results in an enhanced school environment in which parents, teachers, and children develop a shared goal of high student achievement" (p. 102). Collaboration needs to be non-tokenistic and schools' expectations and cultures need to be responsive to their priorities (p.27, Denessen, Bakker, and Gierveld, 2007). Schools, in general, have very "ill-defined goals" in mind when creating these programs (p. 39).
- **Identify local and statewide exemplars in parent engagement and learn the specifics of how these initiatives have been implemented. Include Head Start in the list of exemplars.** Head Start has long served low-income communities of color, and adopts a goal of making parents educational

stakeholders. The Head Start Family Impact Project (1986-88) study included 102 families (42 white, 40 Black, and 20 Native American). Participants were assigned to either the enriched or regular treatment group, and assessments were made at the beginning and end of the school year. Study revealed that Head Start mothers are “no different than middle-class mothers in terms of self-esteem and sense of control in their lives” (p. 35). Children involved in the program also proved to score no differently (from middle-class children) with regards to competence and social acceptance. Families involved in the enriched treatment also tended to score higher than families not involved in this treatment. In comparing the pre and post assessments, the study showed that parents overwhelmingly became more interested in being stakeholders in their child’s education. Participation in the treatment programs greatly influenced their perception of themselves and allowed for them to be more involved in their child’s education.

- **Establish policy and dissemination of this policy that schools will never report citizenship status to immigration authorities.**
- **Identify outreach and engagement practices that are relevant for the Asian and Pacific Islander communities.** Despite a body of research on parent engagement, “little research on the parenting practices and parent involvement of Chinese and Asian immigrant parents” exists. Although stereotyped as being a high achieving and rule-following community, this generalization of Asian Americans is harmful to newer immigrant communities who have little experience navigating the educational sector.
- **Support parent-initiated and community-initiated programs.**
 - a. Jasis and Ordonez-Jasis (2012) assessed three parent involvement programs: La Familia Initiative, Charter School Parent Initiative, and Project Avanzado. These were well-liked programs that had been successful in getting funding. The research showed that participation led to increased engagement, and more meaningful experiences for parents. Their programs were (respectively) engaging new families with their child’s educational experience, designing various aspects of a parent-initiated charter school (function, landscape, lottery process, etc), and a community-based adult education program that aimed to serve parents who were migrant workers.
- **Revise assessment practices for parent engagement programs to be culturally-responsive.** Assessing parent involvement programs can be difficult, as measuring effectiveness is subjective to the researcher. The term “parental involvement” can mean many different things: communication, volunteerism, support for in-home learning, decision making, and collaboration (Matingly, Prislina, McKenzie, Rodriguez, and Kayzar, 2012, p. 551). Programs need to reflect the community’s needs, and must be designed to meet the cultural and historical needs of a population.

The Teacher-Student Relationship, Teacher Preparation and Teacher Quality
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The Problem: A positive student-teacher relationship is instrumental to student academic success (Ferguson, 2010; Barile, 2012). Weak engagement with schools is pronounced among students of color and classroom experiences (particularly relationships with teachers) are the most important to student engagement. Other features are also important – with peers, with administrators (particularly when discipline is involved), in extracurricular activities, and school culture/climate in general. Given that the vast

majority of student time at school is within classes, and that the teacher-student relationship is the primary relationship within classes, it is of heightened importance to educational disparities.

Student-based assessments of their teachers' competencies (in the areas of their content knowledge, relationship building skills and pedagogical skills) are shown to correlate to GPA scores (Ferguson, 2010). Ferguson's work has firmly launched the importance of student perceptions of their educational experience.

Policy-Level Solutions

- ***Build human resource departmental capacity to support the full range of teacher competencies in equity.*** This includes recruitment, selection, induction, mentoring, professional development, performance measurement, performance assessment and compensation (Darling-Hammond, 2012b).
 - On professional development: A meta-analysis of 1,300 studies, pared down to nine that met the What Works Clearinghouse evidence standards, showed that greater professional development hours by teachers "can boost their students' achievement by about 21 percentile points" (p.iii, Yoon et al, 2007). The study does not, however, examine impacts on disparities.
- ***Integrate relationship building as a core competency in teacher's job descriptions and performance evaluation.*** It is essential for student-teacher relationships to be caring and affirming and based on positive reinforcement (Ferguson, 2002 & 2007), and shown to matter more for students of color than for white students. Students of color are more likely to see help when they encounter problems if they have a positive relationship with the teacher.
- ***Work upstream with teacher training programs to ensure that equivalent attention and competency development occurs in the areas of content, pedagogy and relationships.***
 - Drawing from Ferguson (2002), teachers are not being sufficiently well oriented to the relational dimension of teaching.
 - Recruit pre-service teachers from students with higher GPAs, require that cooperating teachers be highly effective instructors and capable mentors, and that they collaborate in the determination of student teachers' preparedness for practice (Greenberg, McKee & Walsh, 2013).
- ***Hire teachers who have prerequisites for strongest student learning gains.*** From Darling-Hammond (2012b), students learn best from teachers who have "strong academic backgrounds, quality preparation prior to entry, certification in the field taught, experience (more than 3 years) and National Board Certification" (p.11) and that classrooms with these features "predict more of the different in student learning gains than race and parent education combined" (p.11, Clotfelter, Ladd & Vigdor, 2008, cited by Darling-Hammond, 2012b). In addition, Teach for America has higher standards for recruitment and generates teachers with stronger commitments to reaching less engaged students and who typically stay involved in low income and minority racialized schools (Grossman et al, .
- ***Create a student evaluation policy allowing students to evaluate their teachers.*** This practice has been linked to improved teacher-student relationships (and subsequently to reduced dropout), student perceptions of school climate, and a stronger likelihood "that students may actually believe that their teachers care about what they think, which may, in turn, improve the teacher-student relationships. However, only 7% of the public schools in our sample had such policies" (p.265, Barile et al, 2012).
- ***Improve the quality of our teachers who are able to reduce disparities.*** We need to increase the likelihood that teacher recruitment results in students who succeed.

- “A McKinsey study of twenty-five of the world’s school systems, including ten of the top performers, found that investments in teachers and teaching are central to improving student outcomes. They found that the top school systems emphasize 1) getting the right people to become teachers; 2) developing them into effective instructors and; 3) ensuring that the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction for every child.” (p. 3, Darling-Hammond, 2012).
- New Jersey combined early education and getting high quality teachers into high achievement gap regions that resulted in a graduation rate improvement for black male from 48% to 69% (between 2003 to 2008) (from Toney & Rodgers, 2011)
- **Improve teacher skills and accountability for equity-based instruction.**
 - “Equitable teachers...
 - Learn to see, hear and understand the child
 - Find out about children’s strengths, experiences, and prior knowledge
 - Have many tools for scaffolding understanding
 - Continually develop culturally responsive practices
 - Develop language
 - Reinforce students’ competence and confidence
 - Reach out to families
 - Culturally connected caring” (p.5, Darling-Hammond, 2012b)
 - Teacher effectiveness increases when teams plan curriculum together and student performance is assessed collaboratively, and also when teachers remain engaged with students for more than a year and when they teach the same course for more than a year (Darling-Hammond, 2012b).
- **Create protocols to encourage and support team teaching.** Arrange team teaching with leaders who understand culturally-responsive teaching and pathways to narrow achievement gaps (Ferguson, 2010)
 - High teacher quality involves building committed relationships, ability to control the classroom, able to clarify when concepts might confuse students, challenge students, and captivate their interest (Ferguson, 2010; Krater & Zeni, 1996).
- **Expose teachers to “best practices” teaching**
- **Implement the Minority Teacher Act.** “Today, minority students in Oregon’s K12 system make up 33.7% of the total population; however, only 6.53% of the teachers are members of racial/ethnic minority groups” (p. 8, Darling-Hammond, 2012)
- **Retain teachers who work effectively with students of color and other student groups who face significant disparities.**
- **Gain agreement of teachers’ unions to revise “last hired-first fired” seniority policies that tend to gut emerging teachers of color from schools.**
 - In New York City in 2009, administrators were able to retain newly hired teachers of color because the layoffs were budget related. While Oregon requires that seniority alone be used to determine layoffs, considerations might be allowed to revise some contracts to ensure that multi-linguistic, cultural understanding and community knowledge be added to job descriptions to ensure that culturally-responsive pedagogy, parental outreach and instructional content can be integrated into the classroom.
- **Improve teacher training preparation**

- Improve cultural competence/responsiveness of white educators
 - Integrate into pre-service learning
- “Candidates learn to teach or lead in well-designed and carefully-selected clinical settings under the direct guidance of expert practitioners while taking coursework that is practice-focused and tightly aligned” (p. 13, Darling-Hammond, 2012a)
- Improve standards for teacher training institutions (Orfield, 2010)
- **Improve retention of educators of color and educators committed to working with students of color**
 - Create salary equity across districts
 - Improve working conditions for educators working with high disparity and low performance schools
 - Provide mentoring supports by “carefully selected and trained mentor” (p.17, Darling-Hammond, 2012) and within competency-based frameworks
 - Nationally, 30% of teachers leave within first five years and cost of replacement is about \$15-20,000 (Darling-Hammond, 2010)
 - In Oregon, early loss of teachers costs at least \$40 million per year (EcoNorthwest, as cited in Darling-Hammond, 2010)
- **Increase accountability of educators**
 - Strengthen performance assessments for teachers (Darling-Hammond, 2010)
 - Introduce performance assessments for administrators (Darling-Hammond, 2010)
 - Teachers should stay in “constant touch” (p.95, Henderson, 2007) to promote a culture of accountability
- **Create alternative licensure pathways for educators of color to expand supply of teachers of color** (Toney & Rodgers, 2011)
 - Features of an alternative program in Illinois whose graduates are performing as well as, or better than, other beginning teachers (Goold & Rasher, 2010)
 - Sharing identities of student community, being a parent, entering field as second career or several years after graduation, and being a part of their own community
- **Create a student discourse based on empathy for student experiences and the struggles they face** – and build understanding of their challenges, not defeated by them.
- **Expand use of positive reinforcement.** High praise and positive reinforcements from teachers (self-reported) showed reductions in disproportionate disciplinary exclusions of African American students (Tobin and Vincent, 2011). Pay is not correlated with improvements in the teacher-student relationship (Barile, 2012).
- **Do not reward high achieving teachers with reassignments to higher performing students.** Such “rewards” actually reduce the teacher-student relationship (Barile, 2012).
- High poverty schools do not attract highly qualified teachers or retain them well

Research Base for Solutions

The Barile study is a nationally representative sample of 8000 high school students in about 450 schools, extracted from the 16,000 strong Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002. This longitudinal study allows tracking of earlier school experiences on later decisions to leave school and GPA levels. Ferguson’s study of teacher quality is based at Harvard and draws from a survey of 95 schools in 15 districts with a sample of 34,000 students. These are robust studies headed by researchers of national reputations.

Classroom Pedagogy

The Problem: This is not a comprehensive review of classroom pedagogy but rather a section that compiles certain instructional practices that can potentially be addressed by policy to reduce racial disparities.

There are an abundance of problematic classroom practices that contribute to disparities. To begin, “ability grouping” whereby students of similar skill levels are assigned to groups by the teacher (or self-selected by students) is a routine pedagogy in classrooms with more than 90% of first grade classes using this teaching strategy (McPortland, Coldiron & Braddock, 1987). Farkas (2003) renames this practice to one of “performance grouping” as illustrated skills are not an accurate reflection of ability. The consequence is that weaker students fall further behind. Such “streaming” practices were attacked for their inequities through the 1990s and these practices diminished. Updated data in 2013 shows, however, that ability grouping has resurged (Loveless, 2013) with 71% of Grade 4 teachers using “ability” as the basis of reading instructional groups, and 61% for math. Such practices are likely to have a detrimental impact on lower grouped students: “students who are grouped for reading instruction learn substantially less, and higher-grouped students learn slightly more over the first few years of school, compared to students who are in classrooms that do not practice grouping” (p.19, Lleras & Rangel, 2009, as cited by Loveless, 2013).

Loveless (2013) names an ideological foundation for the resurgence of performance grouping: that of the difficulty in teaching heterogeneous classrooms. A national survey of 1000 teachers indicated that 43% agreed that “their classes have become so mixed in terms of students’ learning abilities that they can’t teach them effectively” (p.60, Markow & Cooper, 2008).

Not only does effective instruction serve to improve retention and performance of students of color but so too it can reduce disparities in discipline. Education Northwest’s literature review for the Oregon Leadership Network Research Alliance (2013) illustrated that the following “school or classroom characteristics as statistically associated with lower suspension rates for students of color:

- Positive, caring teacher-student relationships
- High academic, social and behavioral expectations for students
- Structured school and classroom environments
- Parental involvement
- Teacher and student resources
- Preventative and proactive school discipline practices
- Social and emotional learning” (para. 3).

Policy-Level Solutions

- ***Diversify the curriculum to reflect student cultures.*** “Research shows that embedding students’ cultures into a rigorous curriculum boosts student achievement and expands opportunities for parent and community involvement” (para. 1, Education 2012). In a survey of educators who participated in training on this approach, 100% stated that it provided a “good process for closing the achievement gap” (ibid).
- ***Establish policy regarding the use of “performance grouping” including consideration of banning such an approach.*** Alternatives include grouping students on the basis of interest, randomly and by diversity.

Some districts or schools have banned the use of the practice, covering about 20% of the nation's teachers (Loveless, 2013).

- **Address the discourse of “mixed student bodies” and effective teaching practices for heterogeneous classrooms.**
- **Build a shared instructional library of “differentiated instruction” and “culturally-responsive teaching” approaches.** Innovations that have been successful in classrooms and departments are worth sharing across schools and districts.
- **Pilot expansion of “flipped classroom” teaching.** This creates web-based observing of the teacher's delivery of content as homework, and then providing students more expansive instructor assistance in applying their learning and practicing applications during classroom times. If students can readily gain access to the web (perhaps in after school programs at community or school centers), then there are promising opportunities
 - ELL and special education students get to review the video recorded lecture as often as they wish, rewinding it and slowing it down as they find necessary (Hadman, McKnight & Arfstrom, 2013).
 - The teacher becomes more available to students in supportive and engagement roles inside the classroom as the “lecturing” role is diminished. This should make teachers more responsive to providing individual assistance, having a less authoritative presence (as they are not lecturing at students) and thereby more available for relationship and encouragement.

School Culture and Climate (including Discourse, Valuation, and White Privilege)

The problem: Bias cannot help but influence our decisions – we have all been acculturated to believe certain things about certain groups of people. These biases exist in the ways we value “others” and they are tied to dynamics of the potential we believe exists in students, whether high expectations will inspire them or defeat them, and whether or not their academic weaknesses are tied to lack of effort or weak instruction. Such bias also plays a significant role in school discipline and whether or not students are to be believed, whether or not they will respond best to a “carrot” or a “stick,” and whether or not they are deserving of second chances (Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin & Moore-Thomas, 2012, among others).

Student experiences of a non-affirming environment contribute to their decisions to leave school: African American students “least likely to stay in school expressed low awareness of race and racism, low personal regard for being Black and a perception that other people do not value Blacks” (p.8, Chavous, 2003 as cited by Sleeter, 2011).

Bias influences relationships, as to additional and fundamental approaches to the engagement between teachers and other school staff and their students. Relationships matter to students, and are perceived to be as equivalently important as their teacher's substantive knowledge in topic areas and their ability to teach (Ferguson, 2007; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, 2010).

Dominant discourse embedded in school culture challenges many students of color. Some research suggests that there are cultural factors that are inclined to make students of color (particularly African American) disengage due to lack of valuation of an education, often correlated with notions of their proclivity towards oppositional behavior, or that peer culture deters students from applying themselves in school. An additional discourse suggests that Latinos do not value education and it is the lack of parental

supports that draw Latino students back into the family and away from education. These discourses are refuted by scholars who assert these are inaccurate myths that justify systems ripe with disparities. As critiqued by Diamond (2007), there is “no conclusive evidence that negative peer pressure is prevalent among black students or unique to their peer groups” (p.2) or that Latinos do not value education (Lopez, 2009).

Bias translates beyond perception into behavior, impacting people of color in their day-to-day lives. Framed as “microaggressions” (Sue, 2010; Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007) the construct brief refers to commonplace daily verbal, behavioral or environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial slights and insults towards people of color. One common feature is that perpetrators are often unaware that they engage in such communications, but the cumulative impact is pronounced on people of color. When studied in the workplace, impacts exist in the areas of productivity, attendance, demeanor, and mental health, which can stretch into physical health issues. Applying the microaggressions framework to education is an emerging field of interest (Allen, 2010; Lin, 2011; Sue 2010; Meeks, 2010). This builds on much earlier work on the psychological challenges facing students of color in education (including Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Utsey, 1999).

Bias translates into low expectations by teachers when they are tied to an emphasis on students’ deficiencies, with the impact that they feel less responsible for their students’ learning (Diamond, Randolph and Spillane, 2008). School cultures have different expectations for different students and become embedded in schools. If school leaders engage in practices designed to increase teachers' sense of responsibility for student learning, they can improve student outcomes. Complicating these dynamics is the not-infrequent peer culture whereby high-achieving Black and Latino students “suffer a popularity penalty” (p.12, Ferguson, 2010) that can be addressed in school culture.

Bias can have a particularly harmful impact on the welcoming and inclusion of parents of color. Some key elements of inclusion include front office treatment, greeting practices and seating arrangements at meetings, teacher responses to parents of color, response when parents complain and when they question professionals and their judgments, and responses to assertive students and parents of color. In addition, there are “hidden rules” that define one as insiders and outsiders include the following: don’t question teachers about your child, being involved means coming to established [white] forums like the PTA, being on time, not bringing children to meetings or volunteer activities, communicate with “proper” English, dressing similarly to teachers, being polite and holding eye contact (p.143, Henderson, 2007). These unspoken rules are typically an illustration of whiteness and exclude non-White populations – with a broader range including deference to formal authority, future orientation, competition affirmed, rugged individualism and anti-collectivism, Judeo-Christian holidays and spirituality and justice-orientations that emphasize intention rather than impact (from Singleton’s courageous conversations).

The importance of a positive school climate is confirmed in the literature, despite there being a lack of agreement about its definition. Positive school climate has been linked to student motivation, protection from futility, academic success, reduction in violence and problem behaviors, and overall student well-being (Brookover et. al, 1978; Eccles, 1993; Haynes et. al, 1996). It is important to note that some researchers have included student perceptions of equity, fairness, or exclusion as a dimension of school climate (Haynes, 1997; Zullig, 2010). Marginalized students are more likely to perceive negative school climates, characterized by inequitable treatment and low expectations for their success (Haynes, 1997; Mitchell, 2010). Explicitly, “a review of the literature reveals that a growing body of empirical research

indicates that positive school climate is associated with and/or predictive of academic achievement, school success, effective violence prevention, students' healthy development, and teacher retention" (p.181, Cohen et al, 2009).

One study of how 40 policy makers have operationalized school climate in policy reveals uneven, overly minimal and narrow expectations with even less robust evaluation and performance measures (Cohen et al, 2009). Arising from this uneven environment is a movement to build national attention and direction to adopting the construct of school climate. The National School Climate Center is leading the way in creating research-based best practices for improving school climates (see Appendix B for full inclusion of their standards and indicators).

Policy-Level Solutions

- ***Build school climate policies that integrate prescribed characteristics that are measurable, inclusive and direction-setting.*** The National School Climate Center has create a set of standards that guide school climate:
 - Develop a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate
 - Develop policies that promote social, emotional, ethical, civic and intellectual learning as well as systems that address barriers to learning
 - Promote practices that promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical and civic development of students and student engagement as well as addressing barriers to learning
 - Create an environment where all members are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically
 - Develop meaningful and engaging practices, activities and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice (p.3, National School Climate Center, 2009).
- ***Incorporate accountability for school climate into state and/or district policy.***
- ***Ongoing commitments to “unlearn” racism, deconstruct white privilege and relearn concrete methods to illustrate respect for people and communities of color.***
- ***Monitor school culture and establish concrete plans to make improvements at the school-level.*** Accountability measures requiring data collection from communities and students of color, and reporting back to these same communities on progress needs to be built into improvements in school culture.
- ***Create support groups for students of color (also called student support networks).*** Akin to “employee support groups” such gatherings offer the possibility to help students identify challenging situations, gain insights from each other, build collective voice, and efficacy to bring issues to the attention of teachers, staff and administrators. Administrators are advised to support these groups, and draw on them for expertise, to create action plans and to reach into specific communities of color.
- ***Create partnerships with culturally-specific organizations to routinely train faculty and staff on the issues facing communities of color, including overviews of their history both in the USA and overseas.***
- ***Create/retain high expectations for students of color.*** Build intolerance for lowered expectations for students of color.
- ***Expand validation of communities, students and families of color***
 - Update textbooks to reflect current student population

- “It is proven that students learn best when presented with material with which they can connect and in which they can see themselves” (p.11, Toney & Rodgers, 2011)
 - Learn the cultures of the schools’ students
 - In a study of high performing skills, cultural inclusion includes the following
 - “Students respected and responded to in warm and accepting ways
 - Student have opportunities to find connections between their lives and what they are studying
 - Students’ knowledge, culture and learning styles are considered and incorporated into class instruction
 - Teachers and school staff are familiar with their students’ home cultures and know how to work in multicultural settings” (p.121, Henderson et al, 2007)
- **Locus of responsibility to remain with the education system.** One beneficial element of NCLB is that schools formally became responsible for the achievement levels of all students, rather than students themselves bearing this responsibility. Schools became “failing” rather than students (Cohen et al, 2009).
 - When students do not achieve, the entire education system, particularly its teachers, needs to implicate rather than distance itself. A correlated element is the importance of directly confronting damaging discourses about students that imply students are cannot be educated, cannot learn or don’t value education. These discourses serve to dismiss the responsibility of teachers and administrators for the learning by students.
- **Expand the role of school social workers and counselors as student advocates and system resources.** Drawing from LeBeauf (2008), we find that these personnel need to be advocates for students and able to leverage comprehensive responses to needs, including confrontation of problems in teaching and administration.
- **Eliminate the following from school culture and implicit bias:**
 - Belief that some cultures do not value education and that some parents don’t care about education
 - Instead, start with this premise: “all families... want their children to do well in school – and can make an important contribution to their children’s learning” (p.115, Henderson, 2007).
 - School faculty is not responsible for student learning, if the barriers against them seem very high. When teachers “have negative perceptions about students’ abilities, they feel less responsibility for their students’ learning” (p.134, Henderson, 2007). Alternatively, it remains possible for teachers to appreciate the challenges face, and instead to catalyze an “enhanced teachers’ commitment and their sense of collective responsibility for students’ learning” (Diamond et al, as cited on p. 135, Henderson, 2007).
 - Internalized white privilege and superiority
 - Presence of micro-aggressions that are not challenged, given legitimacy or disciplined
- **Training for all students annually in respect for human differences (or integrated into mandatory courses)**
 - One program trains all students annually in Minnesota within a mandate from the region’s “Diversity Council” with the following objectives: “increasing knowledge, empathy, critical

- thinking skills, and self-esteem are linked to the long-term objectives of improving inter-group relations and reducing prejudice and discrimination.” (from SPARK, 2012)
- **Reclaim Native American languages**
 - Minnesota created a working group to inventory language revitalization efforts and to identify supports for retaining indigenous languages

Extracurricular Activities

The Problem: When youth are weakly connected to school, and when they are experiencing the school to be unwelcoming, they are unlikely to be involved in extracurricular activities. Such disconnection causes these youth to miss out on the protective features of extracurricular involvement, and the associated academic performance benefits (Knifsend & Graham, 2012).

Policy-Level Solutions

- **Promote involvement in extracurricular activities.** Such involvement “promotes positive school-related affects and greater academic performance” (p.379, Knifsend & Graham, 2012), with involvement in two activities generating the highest benefits. This involvement is understood to be a protective factor for early school leaving (Fredericks et al, 2004).
- **Eliminate barriers to participation in extracurricular activities.** This can be assessed in school climate dialogues as well as student voice groups whereby race-specific perceptions of barriers can be identified.
- **Provide flexibility for transfer students to join sports teams when they miss tryout periods.**
- **Provide sufficient resources to make a wide variety of activities available for students.** Where thin, build partnerships with community and business organizations to expand opportunities to engage in community-validated activities that support youth development, civic engagement and school engagement.
- **Ensure that Black male youth have access to activities that protect them from the prison pipeline.** Both Clark, Harris & Allen (2005) and Dotterer et al (2007) confirm that more involvement in extracurricular activities improves African American student connections to school. In a review of 28 after-school programs funded by Kellogg (Clark, Harris & Allen, 2005), the most promising programs were treatment in orientation, meaning they incorporated structured activities focused on academic enhancement, reading, mathematics, and verbal skills. Involvement reduces drug use, poor behavior in school and involvement in the justice system. Time spent studying is likely to increase. And when the student’s immediate family is supportive, school performance is likely to improve. Given the range of concrete benefits, and the reductions in costly justice system involvement, funding should be relatively easy to justify.
- **Where students of color create groups based on their racial identity, ensure that these groups are afforded influence over school climate and that they are a resource for school personnel.** Akin to Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), such gatherings offer benefits both for participating students as well as the school itself:

- Students can benefit from the opportunity to discuss issues with others who share the same experience and thus benefit from healing, support and build capacity to navigate difficult situations. They also can build voice and power when identity-based students come together.
- The school can benefit by seeing the student group as advisors for various school initiatives. The group can be a thermometer around culture and climate, and can provide insights on priorities and pathways to move issues forward.

Research Base for Solutions: The Knifsend & Graham study is based on a survey of 864 students, aiming to understand the correlation between extracurricular involvement, and students' GPA, academic engagement and a sense of belonging at school. Students of color were well represented in the study. The Clark et al study is an evaluation of 28 after-school programs explicitly focused on Black male youth.

Student Transfers and School Integration

The Problem: Communities of color face significant concentrations within specific schools, and much less in others, becoming today a form of segregation in the school system. The dynamic is one typically borne of residential neighborhood patterns which themselves emerge from historic segregationist policies, and current land use and development practices which reinforce segregation, particularly for African Americans. Housing affordability reinforces these patterns, deepened by uneven patterns of use of section 8 housing vouchers, exclusion of public housing in some neighborhoods, and the banning of inclusionary housing development practices – all of which would have maximized diversity of neighborhoods. Across the USA, while diversity in population is growing, “low-diversity, white dominated [Census] tracts” remains the largest type of Census tract and “remain stubbornly segregated” (p.77, Holloway, Wright & Ellis, 2012). Correspondingly, these tracts tend to be affluent in nature and able to create a fundraising base for parents to supplement school budgets.

While roundly criticized for allowing students to flee local, primarily low income African American neighborhoods, expansive transfer policies tend to hollow out funding for local schools and their subsequent ability to develop social, political and community capital. On the other hand, “integration policies” (which might include liberal school transfer policies) recently have shown a positive benefit. For African Americans, “one year of school desegregation increased the likelihood of graduating high school by 2.9 percentage points, increased annual adult earnings by 5%, reduced the probability of incarceration by 14.7 percentage points” (p.10, Toney & Rodgers, 2011). Research by Johnson (2011) confirms that children of color who attend integrated schools are likely to have higher incomes as adults. Integrated schools also benefit from cross-race relationships which in turn reduce racial bias and participation in microaggressions as adults (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

NCLB required that local educational agencies (e.g. districts, boards) provide alternative public school options to parents of all students matriculated in a school that was failing to make adequate yearly progress for two or more consecutive years. NCLB requires that districts give parents a choice of two or more schools, and “give priority to the lowest achieving students from low-income families” (DeBray-Pelot, 2007, p. 718). Two major educational dilemmas result from this policy:

1. If transfer students have a history of low performance due to “poor learning environments,” how will an immediate transfer guarantee positive results?

2. What will happen to the lowest performing schools if they continue to garner negative press?

Though giving parents options sounds appealing, a quick transfer is nothing but a short-term solution. Since transfer priority is given to the lowest performing students, what programs are in place at the new schools to help close the educational gap between them and their new higher performing peers?

Race to the Top policy prompted the practice of school closures to become common in urban communities. The strategy was implemented to improve failing schools. That said, school closures have disproportionately affected students of color from low-income communities (Lipman and Haines, 2007; Maxwell, 2006; Valencia, 2008, as cited in Kirshner et al, 2010). School closures have forced students to transfer to a better performing school, but studies show that “the high percentage of students (40%) who transferred to schools that were either on probation or in the lowest quartile of performance” (Kirshner, Gaertner, Pozzoboni, 2010, p.408).

- a. Only 6% of students transfer to top performing schools (p.408).
- b. Leaves people asking, ‘why are students transferring to low performing schools, if low performance was the root for their original school’s closure?’

This policy has created a culture of recycling students of color into low performing schools. Students and families that experience a transfer tend to express a sense of loss upon their school’s closure. For instructors, “teachers from receiving schools [also] worried that displaced students would bring down test scores at the new schools” (p. 408). Consequently, in Chicago alone, the percentage of black teachers has dropped from 45% in 1995 to 19% today. This drastic drop is a direct correlated with school closures (Dixon, 2013). Research has shown that closure has the potential to do more harm than good.

Attaining integrated schools (by both race and income) is important to the wellbeing of student education. The funding base of schools will be more equitable when students of all income levels are within each school. When schools are equitable, and disparities are eliminated, the economic health of the entire region will be maximized.

This section also attends to the challenges facing students who transfer midyear into another school. School transfers are highly linked with dropping out of school (Rumberger and Larson, 1998; South, Haynie, and Bose, 2007; Swanson and Schneider, 1999, as cited in Sutton et al, 2013), and performing poorly on standardized tests (Pribesh and Downey, 1999; Swanson and Schneider, 1999, as cited in Sutton et al, 2013). Transfer students are often left out of extracurricular opportunities that are crucial to having when applying to college, and could positively impact their transition into a new school: “Participating in school-sponsored extra-curricular activities may prove challenging for students who transfer during the middle of the year” (Sutton, Muller, and Langenkamp, 2013, p. 67). Because of tryouts or deadlines, students who may have been active in their former schools may lose the opportunity to engage in the same extracurricular activity at their new school. The inability to be a part of a group or team, or take on a leadership role may lead students to become less interested or invested in their schooling success.

Research primarily indicates that socioeconomic status and student mobility are strong indicators of who will transfer. In a historical context, this signifies that students of color are at a higher risk for transferring, falling behind, being isolated within school social contexts, and dropping out of high school. Prior research has focused on scheduled and unscheduled transfers that occur to due to family relocation. Little research exists on the experience of students that transferred due to disciplinary (violent and non-violent) or personal reasons. This lack of research affects our understanding of many communities, in particular communities of color. Research should be redirected to the following questions:

- a. “What are the educational experiences of students of color in continuation high schools?
- b. How do these experiences affect their educational trajectories as they matriculate into higher education?” (Malagon and Alvarez, 2010, p. 150-151)

Policy-Level Solutions

- ***Expand school transfer policies while simultaneously integrating schools and neighborhoods.*** “The year with the lowest level of the achievement gap, 1988, was also the year of highest integration. Segregation has gotten worse every year since then. We have lost all the progress made in school desegregation since 1967.” (p.15, Orfield, 2010). Students of color perform better in integrated schools, with success noted when the composition of the schools needs to be majority affluent (more than 50% middle income). If the majority of the school becomes low income, then the benefits of integration lessen, or even disappear (Rusk, 1998 as cited in Aberger et al, 2009). There are stronger achievement benefits for students of color in economically integrated schools than in high poverty schools with considerable resources (Aberger et al, 2009)
- ***Promote school integration by boundary determinations that are inclusive of students at all income levels.*** While race cannot be used as a basis for school selection or boundaries, income can be.
- ***Aim for economic and racial integration within schools.*** Cross-ability teaching (or “differentiated instruction”) needing strengthening as well as “cooperative learning” (Aberger et al, 2009).
- ***Create policy framework to assist midyear transfer students successfully integrate.*** There are very few policies or programs in place that address the needs of transfer students. Sutton, Muller, and Langenkamp (2012) reference Rumberger’s (2003) suggestions for policies that would directly help midyear transfer students, including that schools do the following:
 - Prepare for new student arrivals by ensuring extra spaces exist in required courses.
 - Create independent studies for course credit.
 - Use a variety of methods to encourage extracurricular activity participation (p. 79).
- ***Provide prevention-based programs for high risk students who transfer schools, including early identification.*** The more students have transferred, the greater the likelihood is dropping out of schools.
 - a. Comprehensive tutoring programs were provided for students entering grades 3-5 in Chicago public schools and given the opportunity to receive in-home tutoring. Parents were also open to receiving help and training—but only when relevant and culturally appropriate. The home-based tutoring component dramatically increased school performance. Program limitations included not being able to assist students belonging to certain home circumstances (e.g. chaos, death in the family, language barriers, socio-economic challenges). As a result, the program had little for students and families in these circumstances.
 - b. Special orientation and tutoring initiative for 174 at-risk students participating in two programs. One group of students were given a special orientation and provided with biweekly at-home tutoring. Second group of students participated in special orientation, home tutoring, and school tutoring. Results of this intervention indicated that little academic and social behavioral improvements were actually achieved. Limitations were that in order to qualify for this program, at-risk students needed to meet three requirements: be of low socio-economic background, be lagging in at least one area of a standardized test, and have experienced two or more life stress events within the last year. Students meeting all three of these challenges are

in need of more than just at-home tutoring. This could have drastically skewed the actual value of the program.

- c. On-site support and counseling, as well as linking to local networks. According to Wilson (1993) it takes families 12 to 18 months to feel at home in their new community. According to the Census Bureau of 1990, one fifth of all American families move every year (p. 223). Number is bound to have increased over the past 20 years. In response to this, a Maryland public school developed the New Student Support Group (NSSG). The NSSG was described as having two purposes:

1. “To provide information about the school and community;
2. To provide a setting for students to discuss their concerns about relocating” (p. 226).

Each week, transfer students were given the opportunity to meet someone new, and learn something different about their school. Wilson found that NSSG was helpful, but did not completely address the needs of transfer students in the classroom. Despite the support the program provided, transfer students still had a lot of catching up to do in classes that had already established a learning dynamic.

Research Base for Solutions: Until very recently, students have not been tracked well when they move between school districts, and even within districts little follow-up occurs. Given the high stakes for students of color for dropping out with increasing numbers of school transfers, it is important that we be able to assess the disparities facing this community locally, and establish an early intervention system to increase their chances of being successfully integrated into their new schools.

Discipline

The Problem: Disparities in school discipline are well-documented at the national and local levels. In addition to the negative experience of facing disciplinary action, students involved in discipline lose an abundance of instructional time being educated. This also holds true for in-school suspensions where educational program involvement is weakly available to students. The local discipline data (Multnomah County Commission on Children, Families and Communities, 2012) illustrate that students of color are excluded at twice the level of white students and that this pattern extends both to more mandatory behaviors such as fighting, drugs and harassment, and also to subjective behaviors such as disruptive behavior, and insubordination. In fact, students of color are disciplined at higher levels for subjective (and thus interpretive) reasons than for more serious incidents. The subjectivity of teacher and administrator decisions is important because these discipline decisions are deeply influenced by dominant discourse and factors such as assumptions about believability, intention, and aggression. Research conducted on the behavior of students of color reveals that students of color do not act out more often than white students (Skiba et al, 2000, 2010, 2011; McCarthy & Hoge, 1978; McFadden et al, 1992), showing that there is not a logical foundation for these disparities in discipline.

Zero-tolerance policies have been particularly problematic for students of color, being disproportionately applied to them with severe consequences on education, future occupational options and their sense of unfairness. The National Association of School Psychologists stated that “zero tolerance policies are ineffective in the long run and are related to a number of negative consequences, including

increased rates of school dropout and discriminatory application of school discipline policies” (para.1, 2001) and that “Black students receive more harsh punitive measures and less mild discipline than their non-minority peers, even controlling for socio-economic status” (para.5).

Policy-Level Solutions

- **Create a “graduated discipline policy”** that requires that the severity of the consequence is scaled in proportion to the infraction and that can overcome the differential selection at the classroom level and at the administrative level.
 - A study of discipline patterns in 364 elementary and middle schools showed wide variation by race, regardless of the nature of the incident. Called for is a graduated discipline policy where the severity of consequence is scaled in proportion to the seriousness of the infraction (Skiba, Horner, Choong-Geun, Rausch, May & Tobin, 2011)
- **Continue Positive Behavioral Implementation and Supports (PBIS) programs** which shows reductions in office discipline reports in a study of 69 schools with high fidelity to the program. But African American discipline rates remained at levels double that of Whites (White levels reduced at a similar rate). A more recent study of PBIS in 46 schools also shows reductions in disproportionate exclusions, with a follow up of eight schools (where there was high behavioral supports) showing a decrease in the relative rate index – meaning that there was a more significant positive benefit in the program for reducing African American discipline rates (Tobin and Vincent, 2011). Remember that this, however, is a minor slice of the 7,500 schools that use PBIS in the USA (as of 2009, cited by Bradshaw et al, 2009).
- **Build “culturally-responsive PBIS” to address disparities.** Vincent et al (2011) define this approach to include an emphasis on “cultural equity” and inclusive of:
 - Systematically promoting staff members’ cultural knowledge and self-awareness
 - Commitment to culturally relevant and validating student support practices
 - Culturally valid decision making to enhance culturally equitable student outcomes” (p.219, Vincent et al, 2011).
- **Integrate best practices for reducing disparity gap** (Jackson, 2012)
 - From a student perspective: increasing supply of someone who cares about me, I want someone who knows my name, who knows my family, who understands what's happening in my neighborhood.
 - Relevant curriculum: Instruction that find ways for kids to talk about their own lives, and what is important to them
 - Cultural awareness of student and their communities – so that one can understand the lives of students, improve relationships and understand the broader context of their behaviors
- **Improve school climate with high relationships and high structure** (Gregory, Dewey & Fan, 2011). Alternatively, schools with low support and low structure had highest racial disparities in discipline (study of 199 schools).
 - i. Suspensions cause students to be weary and distrustful of the education system, particularly when they are unjustified – the history of misuse as penalties contributes to this distrust (Brown, 2007)
- **Establish comprehensive policy and procedural efforts to undo disparate discipline.** A series of articles emphasize the following (Butler, Lewis, Moore & Scott, 2012; Dupper, Theriot & Craun, 2009; Osher et al, 2010; Skiba, 2010; Noguera, 2010):

- i. Provide adequate financial resources, staff training and development to facilitate cross-schools understanding of the complexities of school discipline. Ensure training includes conflict resolution, de-escalation skills and improved coping strategies.
- ii. Construct a team (school professionals with diverse expertise) to serve as advisors who can review disciplinary referrals and propose interventions to the administration.
- iii. Maintain a school database to track and report disciplinary trends. Tracking at the department and teacher levels are likely important.
- iv. Conduct regular independent evaluations of disciplinary practices.
- v. Schools need programs that teach students and teachers how to productively handle and resolve day-to-day conflicts in a manner that promotes mutually respectful and collaborative school climate. This improves classroom management practices with examples such as:
 - a. PBIS
 - b. Restorative justice system aiming for reconciliation
 - c. Character education
 - d. Emotional learning
 - e. Bullying prevention
 - f. Conflict resolution
- vi. Schools need to create classrooms where students and teachers can work collaboratively to set rules for classroom management to help transform classrooms from teacher-centered to person-centered.
- vii. Use suspensions as a last resort.
- viii. Redefine the definition of discipline beyond punishment.
- ix. Focus on eliminating problematic behaviors and not the students themselves.
- x. Increase cultural competence and sensitivity of teachers regarding race and poverty.
- xi. Implement in-school suspension programs that are effective for instructional time and for addressing behavioral challenges.
- xii. Implement comprehensive and preventative school-based alternatives that use both student and school change strategies, making alternatives to suspension and expulsion available.
- xiii. Increase collaboration with other community services.
- xiv. Improve the safety net for students by coordinating access to services (employment, health, human services, housing).
- xv. “Promote interaction and training between teachers who are most able to maintain classroom discipline and those who have deficiency in the area” (p.9, Noguera, 2010).
- xvi. Support students’ self-defined future goals.
- xvii. Institute “teaching coaches” in the classroom to ensure development supports are rooted in teachers’ everyday realities.
- xviii. Authentic self-assessment and reflexivity to address personal practice is needed from teachers, staff and administrators.
- xix. Inclusive curriculum (stated elsewhere) is important to “avoid minimizing the lives of the children in the classroom” (Skiba, p.6).

- **Disaggregate results by teacher specializations and perhaps by teacher.** A national study of 2002 longitudinal discipline data found differences in the type of teachers making discipline referrals to school counselors. English teachers were more likely to refer students based on their race, while Math and English teachers were more likely to respond to students' gender, previous disciplinary infractions, and teachers' postsecondary expectations for students (Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin & Moore-Thomas, 2012). Other teachers are less likely to use school counselors to assist with problem behaviors.
- **Expand the role of school social workers and counselors to assist with behavioral issues beyond individual levels** (Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin & Moore-Thomas, 2012). School counselors (particularly those with strong community practice skills and an ability to work with systems and policy change) are instrumental for engaging in the following:
 - i. Promote and advocate for systemic disciplinary approaches that address the disproportionality dilemma.
 - ii. Be included in discussions about relevant discipline and behavioral policies.
 - iii. Be on teams that oversee the implementation of disciplinary interventions.
 - iv. Assist in establishing culturally responsive curricula.
 - v. Disciplinary Policies must develop School-Family-Community Partnerships.
 - vi. School counselors should partner with community stakeholders to address disproportionality.
- **End zero tolerance policies.** Zero tolerance policies escalate referral, suspension, and expulsion rates especially for male students and students of color (Bryan, Day-Vines, Griffin & Moore-Thomas, 2012).
- **Continue to use PBIS systems to reduce excessive discipline levels, but remain vigilant to disparities and adopt additional measures to address them.** Office discipline reports have been shown across racial identities to be substantially reduced with the implementation of Positive Behavioral Implementation and Supports (PBIS) in a study of 69 schools with high fidelity to the program. African American discipline rates, however, remained at levels double that of Whites (White levels reduced at a similar rate). PBIS is essentially a risk management system that works within a prevention-orientation to behavior, with three levels of risk identified. Included in their framework is an approach for all students that emphasizes transparency on school rules, early notification of difficult behavior, and consistency of implementation.

Research Base for Solutions: Given that school districts are required to submit discipline data to their state education departments, the quality of research is generally strong.

Exit Exams

The Problem: Currently 26 states have exit exams (Oregon does not) and racial disparities are deepened with its inclusion. A study of California's 6-year old law (Reardon et al, 2009) shows that while white graduation rates do not change as a result of the exam, the graduation rates of the weakest (lowest 20% of g.12 students as tested in g.10) Black, Latino and Asian rates plummet by 19, 15 and 17 percentage points respectively.

- The overall graduation rates declined by 3.6 to 4.5 percentage points as a result of the exam
- In addition, failing an exit exam leads to higher dropout rates (Ou, 2009)

- These results are worse than the existing profile of student performance, with researchers anticipating that “stereotype threat” is to blame with the implementation of the high stakes exam

Policy-Level Solutions That’s easy! Do not incorporate exit exams into the school system.

Course Offerings in Advanced Placement & International Baccalaureate

The Problem: When students of color are inadequately prepared for higher education, they do not perform well. Currently across the nation, there are racial patterns of lesser access to the most robust courses and lesser success once in these courses. Nationally, there are lesser academic offerings in schools in low income neighborhoods, with (for example) Latino students having curtailed access to calculus and trigonometry courses (Adelman, p.xviii). Advance Placement (AP) courses are one way to introduce access to more rigorous, college-equivalency courses. While the vast majority of students have access to an AP class, the following student groups have much less access to a “complete AP program” (meaning at least one course in English, Math, Science and Social Science) in their high schools: Native American (18% lesser access than Whites), and Black (15% lesser access). While offering AP courses is key to access, that does not mean students of color enroll in them or successfully pass them. About 10% of schools nationally have equivalent participation rates across racial groups.

Looking at IB courses (again, national data), about 1-in-8 students participate in IB classes, while this level drops to 1-in-11 for Latinos, 1-in-16 for Native Americans, and 1-in-17 for Black students. The Asian student access level is 1-in-4, but this figure is not disaggregated for specific ethnic groups within the community (Theokas & Saaris, 2013, p.4). IB participation is much lower than AP and is less well researched for disparities.

Turning back to AP courses, we have the following details for Oregon. While the overall rate is 1-in-4 graduating students having taken an AP exam, disaggregated details show a far different experience. Disparities levels are much worse for Asian, Black and Native students. Here is the number of high school students who graduated in 2012 with at least one AP exam being taken during high school (College Board, 2013a):

- 1-in-1.4 White students (or 70%)
- 1-in-9 Asian and Pacific Islander students
- 1-in-6 Latino students
- 1-in-59 Black students
- 1-in-111 Native American students

Among these students who take these exams, White and Asian and Pacific Islander students are more likely to pass the exams. Their passing rate is 64% and 68% respectively, while the rate for Latino students is 51%, for Native American students is 61% and for Black students is 44%. Oregon’s access and success rate in AP courses is second worst among western states, surpassing only Idaho (Hammond, 2013, para.9).

Tracking into lower caliber and level courses serves to narrow life opportunities as prerequisites to move into higher levels of courses and higher education are not taken, and the teachers in lower level classes tend to be the least effective teachers (Oakes, Muir and Joseph, 2000 as cited in Aberger et al, 2009).

Additional features of AP-involved students have an impact on both financial and opportunity costs of higher education, as well as GPA levels in higher education. AP course credits can be transferred into college credit, thus making college tuition lower for these students. Additionally, students who have taken AP courses actually do graduate faster than students who have not taken AP courses (Morgan & Klaric, 2007), and gain higher GPAs than students who have not taken AP courses (Doherty et al, 2006). AP-prepared students take more college credits in their disciplines (College Board, 2013b), perhaps better preparing them for employment success upon graduating.

Policy-Level Solutions

- ***Increase access to AP courses, across schools and within schools.*** Access to and success within AP classes is linked to success in college, with students who gain AP credit in college “consistently outperforming non-AP students” (p.9, Murphy & Dodd, 2009). A narrative of the value of AP on a student’s transcript is that it is valued highly by admission offices “as a sign that an applicant seeks a school’s best resources” and that they are prepared for “college-level labor” (p.2, College Board, 2013b).
- ***Ensure all schools have high academic standards that result in high student learning.*** Strong high school experiences prepare students well for college, as “the strongest predictor of whether a student will achieve success in college is whether she had a rich and rigorous course of study in high school” (p.1, Theokas & Saaris, 2013). Building an environment whereby “rigorous courses are the norm, not the exception” (p.9, Theokas & Saaris).
- ***Promote AP enrollment by students of color within high schools.*** If the within-schools enrollment gap were to be eliminated, “the national missing student Hispanic and black gaps would close completely” (p.6, Theokas & Saaris, 2013). This refers to the fact that students of color are not participating in either AP or IB programs at the rates of white students. When they do, however, there are significant disparity reduction impacts.
 - a. Drawing from Theokas & Saaris (2013), we synthesize the following policy-level solutions:
 - i. Ensure all schools offer a minimum number of AP classes
 - ii. Report participation and success rates disaggregated by race at the school level
 - iii. Identify and share success stories at the school level
 - iv. Require state-level action where access gaps continue at both school and district levels
 - v. Assess reasons for disparities in access rates from teachers, students and administrators. Build an action plan to remedy these barriers that are unique to each school’s context. San Jose Unified School District undertook this approach, more than doubling participation of Latino students in both AP and IB, and improved pass rates for AP exams from 51% to 60%. Commitment to removing barriers and using individual conversations by teachers and administrators to recruit students – framed as an opportunity to “express confidence in the student” (p.8, Theokas & Saaris, 2013).
- ***Require AP enrollment of proficient students (as measured by PSAT test scores).*** A case study of Federal Way Public Schools (WA) automatically enrolled students meeting proficiency, requiring students to “opt out” of these courses rather than “opt in” (Theokas & Saaris, 2013). Principals led public support for the policy and schools used AVID supports to supplement student skills, and Americorp volunteers to assist during transition. The access gap has closed completely.

Research Base for Solutions: The College Board administers all AP exams in the nation and thus has records that are complete along with racial identifiers. The accuracy of the above data on access and passing rates is excellent. On data about the link between AP success and college success, the College Board draws from a 2007 study of 72,000 students from 27 colleges followed for five years. Note this study applies to students who attained a grade of 3 or higher on at least one AP exam. On the data about AP students taking a shorter time than non-AP students to graduate, the data draws from a study of 25,000 students in 4 cohorts, enrolled in the University of Texas at Austin between 1998 and 2001.

Proviso: AP courses may not, in themselves, be preparing students for success in higher education. As stated by Doherty et al (2006), “much of these students’ later success in college may be due not to the AP classes themselves, but due to the personal characteristics that led them to participate in the classes in the first place – better academic preparation, stronger motivation, better family advantages, and so on” (p.3). They might more accurately be a process akin to streaming for stronger students. We do not know the impact of placing less strong students into AP courses: “missing is a comparison of the college graduation rates of two otherwise similar groups of students, one of which enrolled in AP and pre-AP classes and the other of which did not” (p.3, Doherty et al, 2006). That said, the approach of Federal Way Public Schools to automatically enroll all proficient students is not vulnerable to this caution.

Ethnic Studies

The Problem: Currently, courses in history, English and social studies are, in fact, courses in Euro-American history and culture. Continuation of such practices serves to devalue the ancestry and influence of many cultures. While the most glaring of omissions of people of color has been remedied in textbooks, the following conclusion was reached: “Whites continue to receive the most attention and appear in the widest variety of roles, dominating story lines and lists of accomplishments. African Americans ... usually receive only sketchy account historically, being featured mainly in relationship to slavery. Asian Americans and Latinos appear mainly as figures on the landscape with virtually no history of contemporary ethnic experience. Native Americans appear mainly in the past... texts say little to nothing about contemporary race relations, racism or racial issues” (p.2, Sleeter, 2011).

Alternatives take diverse shapes, emphasizing the creation of culturally-relevant and affirming education content, typically delivered alongside more inclusive pedagogical approaches. The most developed curriculum exists in Tucson where Latino-affirming courses are taught in literature, history, and government. A comprehensive literature review of ethnic studies (Sleeter, 2011) concludes there is a “relationship between academic achievement, high level of awareness of race and racism, and positive identification with one’s own racial group” (p.8). When students do not value their own racial identity, they do not stay in school nor go on to higher education.

Features of ethnic studies include “explicit identification of the point of view from which knowledge emanates, examination of US colonialism, examination of the historical construction of race and institutional racism, how people navigate racism and struggles for liberation, probing meanings of [shared] identities, and studying one’s community’s creative and intellectual products, both historic and contemporary” (p.3, Sleeter, 2011). Such substance serves to students’ racial and ethnic identities, their place in history and their current contribution to the USA, alongside validating their experiences of racism.

Sleeter concludes that sustained curricular attention allows “students to see that their own heritage has worth” (p.13).

Frequently there is a negative discourse that a focus on racism creates conflict rather than remedying it. A study of high-achieving African American youth showed that “critical consciousness of race and racism helped them develop an achievement ideology to navigate a racially hostile environment and that a strong Black identity contributed to their sense of agency... students’ familiarity with individual and collective struggle did not curtail their academic success, but rather contributed to their sense of agency and facilitated their academic motivation” (p.8-9, Sleeter, 2011). In addition, university-level students of color expect curriculum to be explicitly focused on diverse racial content if it is to be attractive as a “positive climate for diversity” (p.389, Grunwald, Dey & Meyhew, 2005). Similar results from Sue found the same to be true in the workplace: African Americans expressed distrust to a colorblind organizational culture, and said they would not work for a company that portrayed itself in this way, experiencing a racial identity threat and “anticipated being treated more frequently in a biased manner” (p.217-18, Purdie-Vaughns et al, as cited in Sue, 2010).

Policy-Level Solutions

- ***Require curriculum to be available in all schools that affirms and centers the contributions of all students’ heritage to the fabric of the USA.*** Tucson’s Mexican American Studies Program has achieved tremendous results (Scott as cited by Save Ethnic Studies, 2011):
 - a. Graduated 94% of enrolled primarily Latino high school seniors, while non-enrolled students graduated at a rate of 83% (2010 data, a rate largely consistent with its six years of operation).
 - b. The number of students passing standardized tests improved in math (by 15%), writing (30%) and reading (36%) when students enrolled in Mexican American Studies (with these gains calculated by averaging test scores from 2005 to 2010).
 - c. Student surveys of participating students showed a homework completion rate of 98%, and dialogue with parents and caregivers about the content of learning is 95%.
- ***Provide curriculum and school climate that affirms the ethnic and cultural identity of students of color.*** Various studies show that high regard for one’s identity is correlated to high academic achievement (as cited by Sleeter, 2011). One study affirms that “students’ familiarity with individual and collective struggle did not curtail their academic success, but rather contributed to their sense of agency and facilitated their academic success” (p.8-9, Sleeter). Ethnic studies programs are usually part of broader reform effort and linked with culturally-relevant pedagogy, racial matching with teachers, and strong community linkages.
- ***Assign strong teachers to ethnic studies courses.*** The curriculum alone does not generate academic success, but rather instructors need to be unlearning their own implicit bias and relearning about dynamics of oppression and privilege (Krater & Zeni, 1995). Their words are powerful: “the students we had been losing most were often those with whom we had the least territory... African American males were ... the ones we were most likely to misread. We began to ask how our own cultural assumptions might be blocking these relationships” (p.35).
- ***Expand offerings of ethnic studies courses.*** A literature review on ethnic studies programs (Sleeter, 2011) defines the work as influencing academic engagement, academic achievement and personal empowerment. The studies show the following impacts of ethnic studies:

- a. “Both students of color and white students have been found to benefit academically as well as socially from ethnic studies... [and] plays an important role in building a truly inclusive multicultural democracy and system of education” (p.20, Sleeter, 2011).
- b. Middle school outcomes (study of three programs) created higher student engagement levels.
- c. Five literacy programs contributed to significantly improved literacy skills (with African American and Native students)
- d. Five curriculum programs (3 in social studies, 1 in literature and 1 in life skills) contributed to outcomes that improved achievement and sense of agency among students of color.
- e. Stronger infusing of diversity into curriculum “only marginally affects students’ attitudes because racial attitudes are acquired actively rather than passively” (Sleeter, 2011, p.viii)
- f. Positive impact on “democracy outcomes” in higher education occurs especially when cross-race interaction occurs (Sleeter, 2011).
- g. Only one study found negative outcomes but this was largely discredited for the problematic way in which cultural was operationalized.

Research Base for Solutions: The Tucson research examined graduation rates and test scores of all district high schools for 6 years (2005 to 2010), comparing high school graduation rates between enrolled and non-enrolled Mexican American Studies classes. The literature review by Sleeter emphasized systemic research on the impacts of ethnic studies on student outcomes such as test scores, graduation rates and attitude shifts. Qualitative research was also included.

Culturally-Specific Schools

The Problem: With the decades of work to promote race relations inside the USA, little has changed in terms of equity, inclusion and the attainment of full opportunity and self-determination for communities of color. Communities of color have been subject to genocide, segregation, assimilation, colorblindness, diversity and cultural competency. Little has been attained in terms of full equity and inclusion, although many of the most obvious and egregious injustices have been ended. Recently, Bell and Ridolfi (2008) chastised those working to eliminate disparities with “adoration of the question.”

Culturally-specific organizations are the preferred delivery model for health and human services over the last ten years by the Coalition of Communities of Color. Such services allow for enhanced experiences for clients (or by extension, students) as they enter such organizations as insiders instead of outsiders, and are validated in their specific cultural context. As well, such environments provide (as much as is possible) a respite from racism. Staff is much more likely to validate experiences of racism, have their better understand the experiences of clients and have their needs responded more fully through holistic interventions, including systemic advocacy work in more pronounced and visible ways (Curry-Stevens, 2013; Curry-Stevens, Cross-Hemmer and Coalition of Communities of Color, 2010). These organizations also become resources for the entire community, building assets, leadership development opportunities, advocacy, and integrated programming to holistically improve community outcomes.

Results of the culturally-specific schools NAYA’s Early College Academy and the SEI Academy in Multnomah County are superior to those of mainstream schools. They have been able to recruit and retain Native American and Black teachers and created educational environments where the graduation rates of these two schools are 88% and 98% respectively.

Across the nation, culturally-specific schools have primarily been Afri-centric or Native-specific.

Policy-Level Solutions

- ***Ensure that there is at least one culturally-specific school for each major racial grouping available for students to attend.*** Full embrace of one’s identity and culture is only possible in a culturally-specific context as one does not need to navigate mainstream “othering” dynamics and outsider experiences, and thus cultural attachment is a central goal of such schools (Shockley, 2008). A literature review of culturally-specific education programs (Dragnea & Erling, 2009) shows equivalent or significantly improved outcomes for students of color, although the research base is small and often characterized by anecdotes. Examples include two elementary schools (a comparison study) where double the levels of math proficiency were reached, more attended universities, and a third showed that the 5-year history of a school in Connecticut resulted in the doubling of the number of students proficient in math and reading.
- ***Consider placement in culturally-specific schools for youth who are vulnerable to dropping out of school.*** Africentric programming and schooling in a comparison study created “protective factors including racial identity, knowledge of African culture, self-esteem, and school behaviors” (p.319, Cherry et al, 1998).

Research Base for Solutions: The results of school studies draw from standardized test scores and graduation rates, thus making the core contributions of such schools clearly defined.

Alternative Education Programs

The Problem: Alternative programs have a disastrous rate of graduation (Hammond, 2012). While for some youth, such placements offer flexible programming, self-study, individualized attention, and customized pacing of learning. But students are sometimes pressed out of the regular school system when their learning needs are difficult to be responded to, or sufficiently irregular that they confound educators. These decisions are vulnerable to racial bias and damaging discourses about specific student groups. Over-representation of students of color is typical across the nation.

Policy-Level Solutions

- ***Develop culturally-responsive policies for alternative education programs.*** Students who get into alternative education through suspensions and expulsions are deeply challenged by loss of instructional time and with the psychological impacts of being excluded from mainstream schools. The following list of policy-level interventions draw from Brown (2007):
 - a. Schools and school districts must make a commitment to students that advance students’ academic and social-emotional development.
 - b. Schools should not withhold educational services for students who are suspended, even during in-school suspensions.
 - c. Better supports need to be developed to support students who are suspended or placed in an alternative setting to keep those students connects to their education.
 - d. Schools districts need to be committed to finding out more about what happens to students who are excluded from school.
 - e. Schools need to focus on student’s experiences from their own perspectives.
 - f. Create programs that contain the

- **Create alternative education programs in ways that build on best-practices as identified in the literature.** Although little is available disaggregated by race, one meta-analysis of 39 articles from 1979-2010 identified nine effective practices for use in alternative education settings (Flower, McDaniel & Jolivette, 2011):
 - a. Low student to teacher ratio (less than 20:1)
 - b. Highly structured classroom with behavior classroom management
 - c. Positive methods to increase appropriate behavior
 - d. School-based adult mentors
 - e. Functional behavioral assessment (FBA)
 - f. Social skills instruction
 - g. Effective academic instruction
 - h. Parental involvement
 - i. Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS)
- **Disproportionate removal to alternative programs must be ended.** Native American students (particularly those with disabilities) are most likely to be removed to alternative programs (Vincent, Sprague & Tobin, 2012). The study recommends the following:
 - i. Track outcomes for student populations that are small in number
 - ii. Involve parents in building school policy
 - iii. Expand teacher knowledge of students' cultures
 - iv. Continue to train and support teachers and staff to improve school culture

English Language Learner Programs and Special Education

The Problem: ELL programs have quite notoriously remained largely out of compliance with federal regulations. The model under which they typically operate (separate classes in the mainstream school) seems to need supplementation as students typically experience this as a form of segregation. Sometimes parents do not want their children in ELL programs for this reason and then students do not get any supplemental language instruction.

Alternative models could include dual language schools or programs whereby ELL students are not seen as deficient of enough English, but rather differently capable in a language to which others aspire to gain. There is also some difficulty with matching languages as the majority of ELL instructors speak Spanish and while this is the most frequent language spoken among ELL students, additional native languages could additionally welcome and affirm those with those who have various ethnicities.

Policy-Level Solutions

- **Improve ELL quality, results and funding adequacy**
 - Research indicates effectiveness is maximized when ELL students “learn collaboratively with their English-speaking peers and create genuine collaboration among ELL and mainstream teachers” (p.7, Toney & Rodgers, 2011)
 - Minnesota has achieved big improvements in standardized test scores, leading the way to close equity gaps between ELL and non-ELL students. After ten years of effort, in

2005, 68% of ELL had proficiency in reading, while 74% of non-ELL had proficiency. In math, the gap was closer at 73% of ELL compared to 76% of non-ELL.

- Progress is now challenged as the state has eliminated funding from 7 years to 5 years.
- Recommendations from the Portland Public Schools 2010 audit include:
 - “Establishing a strong monitoring and accountability system;
 - Provide better support and guidance to schools on their roles and responsibilities for ELL instruction;
 - Strengthen collaboration among the various parties that provide ELL program services” (p.35-38, Tracy, 2010).
- **Review special education program data for disparities and quality.** Typically over-representation of students of color and ELL learners occurs within special education.
- **Encourage all teachers to learn some language of the students they teach.** At the very least, learning their history is important.

Research Base for Solutions: The only concrete alternative program we found was that of Minnesota. There may be a more abundant literature to be found, and if uncovered, it would be beneficial to share with district schools.

Building Social Capital

The Problem: Social capital has been defined as “student and parental knowledge about how to ask and whom to ask in schools, networks of parents who share information on how to customize their children’s educational careers, and shared confidence and trust in school personnel” (p.1066, Mickelson, 2003). From this perspective, it is closely aligned with school culture/climate and the meaningful inclusion of students and families of color. It also integrates community as a key contributor and adds the construct of “active citizenship” to highlighting the importance of civic engagement in matters of one’s own educational life and more broadly into that of the school and community’s well being (Gewirtz et al, 2005). Mickelson goes on to implicate school organization, staffing and practices as creating problems which are potentially deconstructed through social capital endeavors, and the historic in the undue favoring of white middle class families and their possession of more social capital than less highly educated families of color.

New work extends the applications of social capital – and explicitly social network development – to the effectiveness of schools to address school reforms related to ELL supports (Peneul, Riel, Karause & Frank, 2009). Locally, Dr. Pat Burk and colleagues are studying statewide success stories in reducing racial disparities and finding that a framework of social capital helps distinguish the successes of these schools as they are working collaboratively and supporting mutual learning, accountability and higher expectations.

Social capital and social network development offers the possibility for sharing insights, resources and encouragement to improve standards and reduce disparities – maximizing local resources and creating collective investments that build on the best of what is available. Those operationalizing the approach typically work on a systems-wide approach, determining that all stakeholders can resource particular initiatives. In the literature, we see students, families, teachers and administrators as having unique contributions to addressing the problems and advancing solutions. Hargreaves and Braun (2012) assert that collective investments in student progress are essential to their success. Adding the context of “responsive

diversity practices” (p.84), related elements include demographic empathy, collective responsibility, and inclusive achievement. Details of this approach may be useful for early thinking about how to operationalize this framework and connect it to policy:

- “Demographic empathy: valuing the learner, and emphasizing the interconnectedness between schools and families as well as local and global communities
- Inclusive achievement: identifying, shifting and refining preconceived understandings and expectations within schools and communities about student capabilities
- Collective responsibility: structuring teaching and learning within each school so everyone is responsible for ensuring diverse students are prepared with the tools to successfully compete with mainstream peers” (p.84)

Much school culture has remained infused with White centrism and pedagogical and relational approaches to students have primarily been individually approached by teaching faculty. Reversing this trend is a promising reorientation.

A related problem is that most social capital initiatives in education fail to include parents. Researchers from the UK conclude that there is a “tendency for these schemes effectively to neglect the voices and perspectives of those who they are designed to help... overall , our data suggest that in some regards the social capital building agenda needs to be turned on its head and that we need to ask how the education system can be developed so that it can properly engage with the concerns and interests of parents” (p.663, Gewirtz et al, 2005). These same researchers identify that social capital has various forms and when initiatives are professionally constructed, they tend to emphasize “political and economic power and valued forms of cultural capital” (p.668) that are of importance to more affluent and professionally credentialed communities. When researchers found that most initiatives emphasized cultural and political capital in this way, the framework for low income and more marginalized communities was that of deficit, and not measuring up to the asset base of more affluent communities. Bonding capital, however, “refers to dense, tight-knit homogenous social networks of family or friends who can provide practical, emotional and psychological support and a safety net in times of crisis” and that is typical among most low income communities.

Policy-Level Solutions

- ***Principals establish the culture of their schools and its local discourses.***
 - Drawing from a survey of 8,000 principals and teachers in 164 schools (Louis & Wahlstrom, 2011), principals are well-poised to create and support social networks. Principles need to be supported in these efforts to notice damaging discourses, to catalyze discourse shifts, and to identify nodes and methods for shifting local culture. Explicit pathways that connect to social capital and cultural relevance include (as defined by Louis & Wahlstrom):
 - “Guiding a school to ‘chip away’ at cultural features that nullify or inhibit change
 - Helping members to understand the forces and conditions that will shape the future, ensuring cultural adaptations
 - Consistently check to make sure that aspirations for change are understood and that they result in observable new behaviors in schools” (p.56).
- ***Network and mentor students to connect to cultures of affirmation and encouragement to stay in school.***

- ***Social networks can be built to support students of color to access higher education.*** Relevant resources to be tapped into include “college information, assistance, contacts, emotional support and social norms... Latino students often rely heavily on family and friend networks for college information – networks that have high levels of trust but limited resources based on personal experiences” (para.8, Stephan, 2013).
- ***As social networks are leveraged, key “responsive diversity practices” are demographic empathy, inclusive achievement and collective responsibility.*** In research with Ontario’s largest nine school districts, Hargreaves & Braun (2012) determined that successful school systems emphasize that all are responsible for all students and improved teaching.

Research Base for Solutions: While the construct of social capital is just beginning to be seen in the disparities literature, a promising literature is emerging. We look forward to the arrival of Dr. Pat Burk’s research on social capital in Oregon schools in the near future!

School Funding and Locations of Schools

The Problem: School funding is inadequate across the region. In Oregon (the level at which such funding-related data is available), we are typically in the lowest 20% of funding practices for education, receiving a failing grade for the effort of the state of Oregon to fund its schools (Baker, Sciarra & Farrie, 2010).

At the local level, underfunding is exacerbated by funding raising efforts that are directly related to parental and neighborhood incomes. More affluent schools are able to fundraise for core activities such as paying for teachers. At Lincoln High School (in the PPS district), five teachers or staff are financed by fundraising activities (Hammond, 2012a). While ⅓ of funds raised must be contributed to an equity fund that is redistributed to more poor schools, being able to retain the lion’s share of fundraising efforts means that disparities will definitely be exacerbated by this uneven practice. In Ontario, Canada, from where the lead author originates, provincial policy bans the use of fundraised money to pay for staff, teachers, textbooks, or learning materials. The commitment to ensuring that fundraising does not create disparities is strong, and the policy serves to limit this differential financial access.

Other funding-related school patterns are those of course availability, class size and, debatably, teacher turnover and attrition. When schools are permitted to use fundraised dollars for course offerings and hiring more teachers, disparities between schools will rise, and these will have a racial pattern. So too do less affluent schools have weaker use of technology, ranging from access to computers (tends to be equivalently available across schools), the internet (where disparities appear), and ability to use the internet for classroom-based research (where disparities deepen) (Barton, 2004).

Teacher turnover in schools with lower funding and larger classes is greater. Ferguson (2002) perceives that teachers want to leave such schools, rather than the dominant perception that they want to leave the students in these types of schools. And when schools lose their teachers, they hire new teachers, who typically have less experience and a smaller “toolkit” for effective pedagogical practices. Numerous scholars have documented the correlation of new teachers, and less qualified (non-graduate degrees) teachers with schools with sizable lower performing students of color (Barton, 2004; Farkas, 2003; Ferguson, 2002).

Related to this dynamic is that of the fair treatment of teachers by school administration and the ways that this might filter down to students themselves. While long-hypothesized that fair treatment of staff has a ripple effect on the ways these same staff then treat their clients (Lopes & Thomas, 2006), a recent study in Finland shows that “organizational justice” experienced by teachers in turn affects pupils’ health (psychosomatic and depressive experiences), satisfaction with school, attendance, and academic performance (Elovainio et al, 2011). Organizational justice is operationalized in two ways, including “procedural justice” as the degree to which teachers find workplace procedures fair, to be able to challenge decisions, and to have decisions made constantly. Added to this is “relational justice” being the ability of supervisors to practice fairly, truthfully, and with kindness and consideration. The impact of injustice (operationalized in the above ways) is an important element of student experience.

Policy-Level Solutions

- ***Promote integrated neighborhoods on the basis of income.***
- ***Work upstream to build economic literacy about student outcomes, economic health of the region, and progressivity in taxes.*** A sufficiently strong tax structure to provide all our schools with the assets they need to achieve economic success for all students. Public will to achieve this has been tied up in legislative constraints for decades. Our schools need the resources to create the schooling environment that all our children deserve.
- ***Review the policies that guide the Portland Schools Foundation and eligible expenditures with fundraised dollars, and the equity formula.*** While generous, more funding could be directed into the equity fund.
- ***Retain the focus on improving the caliber of available schools.*** “There is virtually no evidence that charter, private or smaller schools are more effective at closing the achievement gap” (p.17, Orfield, 2010), with the exception of culturally-specific schools for students who can benefit academically in a context that prioritizes one’s culture.

School-Year Structure & Length of Time in School

The Problem: The length of the teaching year, along with what has become known as “summer fallback” (Farkas, 2003) has a disproportionately negative impact on students of color and low income students. Earlier research (up to 2001) suggests that achievement gaps do not increase during the school year but do so in the summer (Farkas, 2003) when low income students are believed to “forget” learnings at the same time that more affluent students get exposure to enriching learning content during the summer. Notice that fallback is a somewhat convenient lens to apply to the fact that our schools do an increasingly worse job at teaching our students of color as they move into higher grades. The gap in disparities is much larger in higher grades than in lower grades. While summer fallback can explain for this, more likely it is the fact that students of color engender less empathy and relational investments and are more vulnerable to damaging discourses as they get older (because the discourses become more harsh). As well, research by Ferguson (2010) provides challenge to the differential fallback explanation. His work shows racial disparities to be higher among more affluent students who presumably have increased access to enrichment activities during the summer months.

We do know that the most recent research (2010 year) for the 9th Grade Counts initiative through All Hands Raised does narrow disparities between Whites and communities of color. The average

improvement in credit accumulation was 15% for Whites, and 25% for Latinos, 34% for Blacks, 42% for Asian and Pacific Islanders and 56% for Native American youth. Bridging support to assist students of color prepare for high school serves to narrow the achievement gap.

Policy-Level Solutions

- ***Increase Instructional Time.*** Extending the school day and the school year, along with shorter summer holidays can bridge the “summer fallback” that students of color face (Wallace, 2010).
- ***Retain mandatory education to age 18.*** While Oregon already has this, exceptions can be made with parent consent if students are working and at least 16 years old. No penalties exist for “habitual truancy” and thus the policy is not enforced
 - Impact of one additional year of education (not disaggregated by race) is the following: 3.6% less likely to be unemployed, 5.5% less likely to be on welfare, 8.1% less likely to live in poverty, and 10.7% increase in annual earnings (Messacar & Oreopoulos, 2012)
 - Enforcement in Oregon is negligible and to be improved by policy and culturally, as opposed to enforcement or punitive approaches.
 - Retention can be improved with counseling, programs to reengage high-risk youth, mentoring programs, increasing expectations, high parent engagement, encouragement by teachers, creation of a caring environment (students who see teachers as caring and who receive guidance from them are less likely to drop out). Smaller class sizes can improve relationships.
 - Enforcement options include counseling, driver’s license withholding and community service requirements. Also in place are fines, misdemeanor charges, truancy school, imprisonment, and removal to child welfare. The benefits of different enforcement systems are not studied.
 - Other cited studies indicate improved wages, lesser disabilities, improved health, improved satisfaction with life, reduced arrests, reduced teen births, increased voting, and reduced imprisonment
 - 0.1 percentage points for whites and 0.3-0.5 percentage points for blacks per extra year of schooling (Lochner & Moretti, 2004).
- ***Expand access to 9th Grade Counts for students of color.*** Review of the achievement data (by credits gained in high school) for the 2010 cohort of students in this project show that disparities are reduced by having a more positive gain of credits by students of color than white students. White students still make important gains.

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Appendices

Overview of PBIS

PBIS is a graduated behavioral intervention system that aims to for transparency of expectations with students and expansive use of positive reinforcement.

1. Primary – school-wide systems for all. Here a school focuses on three to five behavioral expectations that are positively stated and easy to remember. Consistency across classes, teachers and administrators is emphasized. The key universal elements of PBIS include the following:
 - a. Trusting teacher-student relationships are essential for the creating positive classroom atmospheres and reducing discipline referrals.
 - b. Expected student behaviors should be acknowledged regularly in the classroom.
 - i. Disciplinary policies must move away from punishment to a more proactive approach that provides students with ongoing, direct instruction in appropriate classroom behavior (Barnhart, Franklin, & Alleman, 2008)
 - c. There must be orderly and efficient transitions between instructional and non-instructional activities.
 - d. Patterns of student problem behaviors should be reported to school teams, on a regular basis, in order for teachers to make active decisions.
 - e. Districts must provide ongoing training to school personnel who are responsible for action plans for improving student behavior.
 - f. Local resources should be used for students with serious behavioral problems to conduct functional assessment-based behavior support plans.
2. Secondary – systems for students with at-risk behavior, such as improved classroom management. An example of exemplars is included here (Lewis, 2007):
 - a. There are high rates of engaged time
 - b. There are high rates of student success
 - c. Teacher maintains student attention
 - d. There are smooth and effective transitions
 - i. Teach rules about transition
 - ii. Pre-corrects & advanced organizers
 - e. Clear group rules
 - i. Stated positively, succinctly, in observable terms, made public, enforced, small in number and taught
 - f. Positive climate
 - i. Communicate expectations for achievement
 - ii. Safe, orderly, and focused environment for work
 - iii. Smooth group prevention management strategies
 - g. Rapid pacing
 - h. Frequent questioning
 - i. Appropriate feedback given to students

- i. Always provide immediate feedback in the acquisition phase
 - ii. Always provide precise feedback
 - iii. Combine feedback with instruction
 - j. There are high expectations for student learning
 - k. Incentives and rewards are used to promote excellence
 - l. Personal interactions between teachers and students are positive
- 3.** Tertiary – Specialized and individualize systems for high risk students, including assessment and tracking of individual student reports that determines risk behaviors, precipitating factors, helpful routines, antecedents (such as peer conflict, family conflict, prior tensions with adults, hunger, lack of sleep), consequences that maintain or interrupt the behavior. Also recommended at the school level, schools with high suspension rates should be specifically targeted and receive intensive professional development to improve discipline practices. Furthermore, schools must develop action plans about how they are going to reduce out of school suspensions and enlist the help of on-site behavior specialists to implement and monitor the plan (Barnhart, Franklin, & Alleman, 2008).

National School Climate Standards (2009)

School Climate Standard #1: The school community has a shared vision and plan for promoting, enhancing and sustaining a positive school climate.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

1.1 School policies and practices support school, family, youth and community members working together to establish a safe and productive learning community.

- School, family, community and youth members agree to work on strategies to be implemented for ongoing school climate improvement.
- Policies and practices are regularly assessed to ensure continual refinement that enhances the quality of a safe and productive learning community.
- School, family and youth members collaboratively develop, publicize and model codes of conduct that support positive and sustained school climate.

1.2 Schools gather accurate and reliable data about school climate from students, school personnel and parents/guardians for continuous improvement and share it regularly with the school community.

- 1.2.1 Educational leaders regularly assess and monitor policies and practices and revise as necessary to determine the effectiveness of school, family and community members working together to support student learning, teaching and positive youth development.
- 1.2.2 Schools use multiple evidence-based methods of collecting data, such as surveys, observational methods and behavior reports, that recognize the range of factors that shape school climate (e.g., social norms, school connectedness, sense of safety, discipline, learning/teaching, leadership, absence rates and mobility).
- 1.2.3 School, family, community and youth leaders establish procedures for using school climate findings (including disaggregated data) to establish instructional and/or school-wide improvement goals and implementation strategies that will enhance student learning and positive youth development.
- 1.2.4 School climate reports are periodically provided that communicate effectively with all school community members and families about goals, benchmarks and progress.

1.3 Capacity building is developed over time to enable all school community members to meet school climate standards.

- 1.3.1 Capacity building includes developing infrastructure, classroom and school-wide prevention and intervention strategies/practices, and developing policy and systemic changes that promote positive school climate.

School Climate Standard #2: The school community sets policies specifically promoting (a) the development and sustainability of social, emotional, ethical, civic and intellectual skills, knowledge and dispositions and (b) a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

2.1 Policies and mission and vision statements that promote social, emotional, ethical and civic, as well as intellectual, skills and dispositions are developed and institutionalized.

- 2.1.1 Policies promote curriculum content, continued monitoring and standards for social, emotional, ethical and civic learning and are fully integrated into the classroom and school in ways that align with 21st century learning and with students' prevailing cultures, circumstances and languages.

- 2.1.2 Policies for instructional and assessment processes and standards are personalized in ways that model and promote mutual respect, caring and a psychological sense of community.
- 2.1.3 Accountability measures and data are used and monitored that directly demonstrate the impact of efforts to promote social, emotional, ethical and civic learning.

2.2 Policies and mission and vision statements are developed and institutionalized that promote a comprehensive system to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage students who have become disengaged.

- 2.2.1 Policies promote engagement and address barriers to learning and teaching while reengaging disconnected students through an intervention framework that generates a comprehensive and cohesive system of learning supports as delineated in Standard 3.
- 2.2.2 Policies ensure continuing development and sustainability of a comprehensive and cohesive system of learning supports.
- 2.2.3 Accountability measures, data and monitoring are used that directly demonstrate the impact of efforts to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging students who have become disengaged.

2.3 Policies promote use and monitoring of natural and informal opportunities (e.g., recreational and extracurricular aspects of classroom and school life, formulation of codes of conduct and fair enforcement of rules, mentoring, and informal interactions among and with students) to ensure they support the helpful norms of learning and teaching that foster mutual respect and caring; engagement; safety and well being; civil, pro social, responsible behavior; and a psychological sense of community.

2.4 Policies ensure the operational and capacity building mechanisms (including staff and student development) related to this standard are fully integrated into a school's infrastructure and are effectively implemented and sustained.

School Climate Standard #3: The school community's practices are identified, prioritized and supported to (a) promote the learning and positive social, emotional, ethical and civic development of students, (b) enhance engagement in teaching, learning and school-wide activities; (c) address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; and (d) develop and sustain an appropriate operational infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

3.1 Specific practices are designed to enhance engagement of every student through classroom-based social, emotional, ethical and civic learning and in school-wide activities.

- 3.1.1 Instructional and engaging practices focus on cognitive and behavioral learning as well as social, emotional, ethical and civic engagement.
- 3.1.2 Practices facilitate students' desire and ability to share their perceptions readily (e.g., to enter into dialogues with adults and peers at school), emphasize interests and needs, stress options and choices and a meaningful role in decision making, provide enrichment opportunities, provide a continuum of guidance and support and minimize coercive interactions.
- 3.1.3 Based on research about intrinsic motivation, practices are designed to maximize feelings of competence, self-determination and connectedness to others and to minimize threats to such feelings. Practices are designed to minimize psychological reactance by not overemphasizing social control strategies and not over relying on extrinsic motivation to promote positive social, emotional, ethical and civic behavior and learning.

3.2 Teachers and school administrators design specific classroom and school-wide practices to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged.

- 3.2.1 Practices include a full continuum of integrated systems of intervention designed to:
 - Promote healthy development and prevent negative problems;
 - Respond as early after problem onset as is feasible;

- Provide for those whose serious, pervasive and chronic negative problems require more intensive assistance and accommodation.
- 3.2.2 Classroom and school wide interventions are designed to:
 - Enhance regular classroom strategies to enable learning (e.g., improving instruction and classroom management practices for maximum engagement and reengagement of all students and to pursue response to intervention practices for those with mild to moderate learning and behavioral problems)
 - Support transitions (e.g., assisting students and families as they negotiate school and grade changes and many other transitions);
 - Increase home and school connections;
 - Respond to and, where feasible, prevent crises;
 - Increase community involvement and support (e.g., outreach to develop greater community involvement and support, including enhanced use of volunteers and community resources that fill priority gaps in the system of supports);
 - Facilitate student and family access to effective services and special assistance as needed;
 - Provide multiple opportunities for students to have leadership roles that enhance their commitment to school and to the development of themselves and others.
- 3.2.3 Classroom and schoolwide practices are designed to address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; these practices are developed into a comprehensive and cohesive system of learning supports that weaves together school and community resources.

3.3 School leaders develop and sustain a comprehensive system of learning supports by ensuring an appropriate operational infrastructure that incorporates capacity building mechanisms.

- 3.3.1 The school has administrative leaders who are responsible for the development, operation and sustainability of high quality practices related to this third standard (Practices are identified, supported and prioritized that (a) enhance engagement in teaching, learning and school-wide activities; (b) address barriers to learning and teaching and reengage those who have become disengaged; and (c) develop and sustain an appropriate systemic infrastructure and capacity building mechanisms for meeting this standard.). These responsibilities are delineated in job descriptions.
- 3.3.2 Sufficient staff are assigned to developing and sustaining such high quality practices.
- 3.3.3 Leadership and staff are provided continuous professional development in order to develop and sustain practices related to this third standard.
- 3.3.4 An effective school family community operational infrastructure is in place for weaving school and community resources together and for ongoing planning, implementing and evaluating the comprehensive system of learning supports.
- 3.3.5 The operational and capacity building systems related to this third standard are fully integrated with the school's mechanisms for improving instruction, management and overall governance.

School Climate Standard #4: The school community creates an environment where all members are welcomed, supported, and feel safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

4.1 School leaders promote comprehensive and evidence-based instructional and school-wide improvement efforts designed to support students, school personnel and community members feeling welcomed, supported and safe in school: socially, emotionally, intellectually and physically.

4.2 Students, their families, school staff and community stakeholders are regularly surveyed and are asked to indicate what the school should do to further enhance a welcoming, supportive and safe environment.

4.3 School leaders monitor and evaluate the prevention and intervention strategies designed to support people feeling welcomed, supported and safe and use that data to improve relevant policies, practices, facilities, staff competencies and accountability.

School Climate Standard #5: The school community develops meaningful and engaging practices, activities and norms that promote social and civic responsibilities and a commitment to social justice.

Indicators and sub-indicators:

5.1 Students and staff model culturally responsive and ethical behavior. This reflects continuous learning that builds knowledge, awareness, skills, and the capacity to identify, understand, and respect the unique beliefs, values, customs, languages, and traditions of all members of the school community⁵.

- 5.1.1 Curriculum and instructional practices promote curiosity, inquiry into and celebration of diverse beliefs, customs, languages, and traditions of all members of the school community.
- 5.1.2 Students have ongoing opportunities to provide service to others in meaningful and engaging ways in their school and in the larger community.

5.2 Relationships among and between staff and students are mutually respectful, supportive, ethical and civil.

- 5.2.1 Every student is connected to a caring and responsible adult in the school.
- 5.2.2 Social norms in the school support responsible and positive peer relationships.
- 5.2.3 Discipline procedures are aligned with the goals of supporting students in their learning and being respectful of all individuals; the goals are enhanced with authentic student-driven opportunities for reconciliation when appropriate.

5.3 Students and staff are actively engaged in celebrating milestones and accomplishments as they work to achieve meaningful school and community life.