B6 - Changing the Narrative: Engaging Black Families and Students to Address Disproportionate Disciplinary Outcomes

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Exemplar Presenter: Mike Lastra, Principal, Brooksville Elementary School, Hernando County Schools, FL

Key Words: Equity, Family, Youth Voice
Session Objectives

• Describe a rationale for including family and student perspectives when addressing disproportionate discipline.

• Describe a process for obtaining family and student perspectives on disproportionate discipline.

• Apply family and student perspectives to develop strategies that address disproportionate discipline.
Session Norms

• Avoid generalizations/ Use “I” statements
• This is a safe space: What is said stays, what is learned leaves
• Be supportive: Help everyone learn alternative approaches
• Be present
### Rationale: Is there a difference between school teams’ problem solving with and without family & student input?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WITHOUT Family/Student Input</th>
<th>WITH Family/Student Input</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hypothesis</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hypothesis</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>African American peers</td>
<td>Teachers and African</td>
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<tr>
<td>encourage bad behavior</td>
<td>American students lack</td>
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<td></td>
<td>positive relationships</td>
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<td>with one another</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Separate African American</td>
<td>Utilize half-day schedule</td>
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<tr>
<td>students so they have</td>
<td>to provide student-teacher</td>
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<tr>
<td>fewer same-race peers in</td>
<td>special interest clubs</td>
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<tr>
<td>class</td>
<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
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<td>There are misunderstandings</td>
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<td>regarding behavior between</td>
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<td>students, teachers and</td>
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<td>families, and relationships</td>
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<td></td>
<td>have become strained</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
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<td>Expand mentoring program</td>
<td>Provide teacher training</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>on mentoring</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Strategy</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Social skills instruction on</td>
<td>Administration accountability</td>
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<td>“respectful” behavior</td>
<td>for positive calls – phone</td>
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<td></td>
<td>log; script provided to</td>
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<td></td>
<td>make calls easier for</td>
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<td></td>
<td>teachers</td>
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Rationale: Is there a difference between school teams’ problem solving with and without family & student input?
Florida’s Process for Collaborative Problem-Solving

Handout: Equity Roadmap

1. Pre-Requisites
   - Leadership support
   - Commitment to forming relationships with impacted families
   - Person-centered, strengths-based approach
   - Data system
   - Tier 1 PBIS

2. Problem ID & Definition

3. Obtain perspective

4. Incorporate others’ ideas

5. Evaluate team ideas

6. Link ideas to interventions

7. Support interventionists

8. Follow up

Use data to drive conversations with your stakeholders, then incorporate your stakeholders’ ideas to provide culturally responsive supports.

20 schools in 5 districts
Problem Identification & Definition

- School leadership team uses **equity profile** and **problem definition template** to:
  - Confirm disproportionate outcomes for specific group(s)
  - Identify size of disparities
  - Identify how much of the “target” group(s) is impacted
  - Describe major discipline patterns for “target” group
  - Compare discipline patterns of target group to all other students
  - Identify vulnerable decision points (see Kent McIntosh)

Next Step: Obtain Perspective

Staff
- School-wide perspective on behavior
- Support for change
- Responsible for implementation

Students
- Unique perspective on disciplinary events
- Opportunity to build leadership/advocacy skills
- May increase engagement with school

Families
- Personal knowledge of cultural & historical contexts
- Opportunity to build relationships
- May become a resource for implementation

Community
- Facilitate partnerships with families
- Knowledge of cultural & historical contexts
- May become a resource for implementation
Starting the Conversations

• Teams opted to share disproportionality data with staff first
  – PLCs, staff meeting, grade level meetings

• Format for conversations:
  1) Establish context (national, state, local data)
  2) Ask open-ended question
  3) Record responses
     • Listen & confirm what you think you’re hearing
     • Technology may facilitate data collection & review
       – Nearpod
       – Padlet
Setting the Context:
2015-16 National Data/ 2018 OCR Report

[Bar chart showing data for Black, Hispanic/Latino, White, and SWD in terms of enrollment, school-related arrests, harassed/bullied by sex, race, disability, restrained, secluded, and OSS.]
Setting the Context:
Statewide PBIS Schools*

AVERAGE RISK RATIO FOR ODR ACROSS SCHOOLS WITH DISPROPORTIONATE OUTCOMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016-2017</th>
<th>2017-2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>2.55</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>1.45</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with an IEP</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>2.15</td>
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</table>

AVERAGE RISK RATIO FOR OSS ACROSS SCHOOLS WITH DISPROPORTIONATE OUTCOMES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2016-2017</th>
<th>2017-2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>1.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students with an IEP</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>2.80</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The Question:
Same for all stakeholder groups

“We’ve learned that disproportionate discipline is a nationwide issue and have started to investigate how that applies to our school. This is what we’ve learned...(insert your data summary here)

How does this match up to your experience with discipline at our school?”

You can share your own personal experiences, or those you’ve heard from other individuals.
Identifying Representative Focus Group Participants

- Consider:
  - The target group you’re trying to reach
  - The amount of discipline received by students in the target group
  - Students with no discipline issues
  - Shared characteristics within the target group that go beyond federal demographic categories
  - Grade level, academic level, ESE status, siblings who attend(ed) the school
Family-Centered Focus Group Logistics

• Ask **families** to determine:
  – Start time (allow time for family members to return from work/commitments)
  – Needs for:
    • Child care, language assistance, transportation
    – Provide food / make it comfortable for families to share
    – Follow-up to remind/confirm attendance

• Attend to group composition when identifying focus group facilitators
  – Race, power, overall supportiveness
  – Develop a script to ensure communications are on-point & effective
During the group

- Listen
- Be humble
- Be transparent
- Try to take others’ perspectives
- Use paraphrasing, summarizing, & other “active listening” skills to help people feel understood
  - Problem solving is not therapy, but helping others feel “heard” can be healing
Family Focus Group Questions
~90 minutes

1. Prior attempts to obtain their ideas about how to support student behavior

2. Same open-ended question as the staff received

3. Ideas for reducing disproportionate discipline

4. What they would like to see as next steps following the focus group

Share information about student focus groups, obtain permission slips
Student Focus Group Questions
~90 minutes

Ask the students about behavior & discipline at their school to get a general sense of how they perceive their school.

- What are your school rules/expectations?
- Describe what happens to a student if they don’t follow a school or class rule
  - Describe what happens and which rule was not followed.
- Does that happen to every student who does not follow that rule?

Share national trends in data & ask for students’ local perspective.

- Across the United States, schools are noticing that students of color are receiving office referrals at higher rates than other groups of students.
- We are interested to know how that compares to what is happening at your school. Do you notice that students of color are receiving more office referrals in your school? OR
- Do you see students treated differently about their behavior? Can you give me an example?

Find out what students would like to see so they may feel like they’ve been “heard.”

- What are some suggestions you have for improving behavior/discipline at your school?
Considerations for Student Focus Groups

• Consider students’ developmental levels
  – Be prepared if students gossip
  – Be aware of student perceptions of “authority figures”

• Maintain confidentiality

• Do not require participation
Sample Results of Stakeholder Feedback

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports
## Common Themes across stakeholders

### Faculty Statements

- Real life prison statistics are comparable to school statistics (1)
- They run the streets more; more freedom; less supervision (1)
- Instability at home, home life (3)

### Family Statements

- Occurs in law enforcement as well (3)
- Lack of parental involvement (3)
- Behavior starts at home with high expectations and follow up (3)
- It “takes a village” (1)
- Home environment. Lack of parenting. Lack of follow-up at home. (4)
- Parents are younger (1)
- More grandparents raising children (1)
Faculty Statements

Frustrated with school structure (1)
Students are sent to the dean because the teacher has already dealt with it (3)
Students are more abrasive toward the teachers so the teacher is less likely to work it out with them (1)

No comparable ideas were shared by faculty

Family Statements

Teachers need to be compassionate and patient (4)
School needs to be more understanding of home life (3)
We need to treat the whole child & be aware of their lives (4)

There is an inconsistency with consequences (1)
Discipline process may be unclear (1)
Progressive discipline is helpful (1)
We need programs instead of suspension (1)
Common Themes from Students
Grades 4-12

All grade levels:

- Increase student voice
- Teachers label based on past behavior
- Teachers don’t notice peers’ racial comments
- Teachers “like” some students better
- Students want teachers’ help

Secondary level:

- Articulated racial differences
- Not surprised by issue, reported their own experience
- Articulated differences across schools
Using the information

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports
Problem ID & Definition statement shared with stakeholders

Hypothesis #1
- Root Cause #1a
- Root Cause #1b

Hypothesis #2
- Root Cause #2

Hypothesis #3
- Root Cause #3a
- Root Cause #1b

Hypothesis Prediction Statements
Hypothesis Validation

Action Step
Linking evidence-based ideas to interventions

All ideas must be directly related to one another – ensure there is a link from the strategies back to the root cause, and also back to the original hypothesis.

**Hypothesis**
- Poor S/T relationships lead to disproportionate outcomes

**Root Cause**
- Negative dress code interactions first thing in the morning create poor S/T relationships
  - Is this idea directly linked to the hypothesis?

**Evidence**
- Ratio positive/negative statements during first hour of school
  - Can this evidence support the root cause? The hypothesis? Can it be used over time?
  - Add brief student climate survey

**Support Plan**
- Implement school-wide procedure for greeting students
  - Are these strategies linked to the root cause? Are they linked to the hypothesis?
- Establish positive & supportive steps for addressing dress code violations

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**Plan**
- Plan

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**Support**
- Implement school-wide procedure for greeting students
- Establish positive & supportive steps for addressing dress code violations
Culturally Responsive Implementation

• Prior to finalizing strategies: Include your target group
  – Share your data & your thought processes
  – Provide opportunity for stakeholders to validate your thinking
  – Provide opportunity to brainstorm strategies
    • Offer your ideas as a way to start the ideas flowing
  – Obtain consensus on 1-2 strategies (to start with)
  – Establish a plan for measurement & follow-up

Seek feedback early to increase buy-in
The Hernando County Experience
Mike Lastra, Principal
Brooksville Elementary School
Hernando County Public Schools

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports
Overview of Hernando County Public Schools

Hernando County Public Schools consist of:

- 10 Elementary Schools
- 3 K-8 Schools
- 4 Middle Schools
- 5 High Schools
- 2 Alternative Education Schools

Hernando County Schools Racial Demographics:

- 63% Caucasian
- 20.7% Hispanic
- 7.5% African American
Brief History of Disproportionality/Inequity in HCS

Hernando County seat is located in Brooksville, FL

Long History of Inequity

• Name change in 1856 from Pierceville to Brooksville
• Highest rate of violence in the United States during the 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries
• Neighborhood Zoning Law instituted in 1948
• Schools were segregated until 1969 although declared unconstitutional in 1954 / Desegregation Law of 1972
• Signs of Unification 1988
At Brooksville Elementary School:

- 30% of all written disciplines in 2017-18 came from only Black/African American students (11% of the population).
- Black/African American Students are 1.83 times more likely to receive a discipline than all students from other subgroups.
## Planning Family & Student Focus Groups

- Confronting our data
- Selection of Students
- Contacting Families
- Conversation upon contacting Students
- Conversation upon contacting Families

**Next Time:**
- Invite Families in Person
- Include Families that appear to be more challenging and or vocal
Facilitating Family & Student Focus Groups

- Developing a Rapport with Student and Family
- Setting the Tone for the Group
- Setting the Environment
- Following up with Families

**Next Time:**
- Sharing Feedback with Families
- Change time of meeting
### Reactions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family Focus</th>
<th>Student Focus</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Consequences are too quick/harsh</td>
<td>African American students are more likely to get in trouble and get suspended because they don’t cooperate as much</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Talking back” doesn’t necessary mean a write up</td>
<td>I sometimes get in trouble for doing things that are being done by other students but they don’t get in trouble.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents don’t understand the discipline process</td>
<td>I never have the chance to move my clip up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students getting “labeled” and not getting a fair chance</td>
<td>Non African American students don’t get in trouble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers aren’t calling parents until the issue is already a big one</td>
<td>I wish teachers were better at handling students that are frustrating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Only call when student is in trouble</td>
<td>I want teachers to call my mom before it gets too wild</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student and teacher relationship issues</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
Results and Impact of the Family & Student Focus Groups

Revealed:

- The wide range of poor relationship building skills of staff, families & students
- Open the eyes of those with unconscious biases
- Students feel singled out but unable to speak their truths
- Cultural differences with regards to what disrespect is

New Process:

- Teachers no longer write disciplines for Level 1 offenses such as classroom disruption
- ISS rebranded to In School Solutions
- Teachers must complete 3 interventions prior to making discipline referrals:
  - After Class Conversation with Student; Contact & Document Conversation with Family; Assign Lunch Detention
Making it Work

A Multi-Tiered System of Supports
Impact

• Root cause process jump-started ongoing home-school communication and positive school-community-family partnerships
  – Families members strongly advocate for ongoing sessions
  – Community day developed

• Personal lives were impacted (for the better)
  – Family member decided to become a teacher

• Eye-opening for schools/districts, “big win” systems change strategy
  – Administrator accountability, incentives and fidelity monitoring of positive phone call logs
  – Simple strategy resulting in significant change and impact
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Strategies</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fear, resistance</td>
<td>Work with community advocates to support the work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities with historical</td>
<td>Outside staff facilitate focus group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>issues around race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distrust of school staff</td>
<td>Ask families permission for school staff participation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educators’ desire to work</td>
<td>– Honor families decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with familiar groups</td>
<td>If results aren’t representative of target group,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time of day</td>
<td>repeat focus group</td>
</tr>
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PBIS Center Recommendations

1. Collect, use & report disaggregated discipline data
2. Implement a behavior framework that is preventive, multi-tiered, and culturally responsive
3. Use engaging instruction to reduce the opportunity (achievement) gap
4. Develop policies with accountability for disciplinary equity
5. Teach strategies for neutralizing implicit bias in discipline decisions

https://www.pbis.org/school/equity-pbis
Apply Tiered Logic to Family Engagement

- Strength-based phone calls home
- Interest surveys (students & families)
- Talking with community leaders
- Community-focused events
- Connecting on social media
- Understanding the prevalence of trauma in the community

Positive home visits
Personal invitations to events
Providing resource rooms/ resource nights
Walking students home
Listening sessions with focused groups
Push-Out to community centers & activities
Providing transportation, language support for school events
Strength-based phone calls home
Interest surveys (students & families)
Talking with community leaders
Community-focused events
Connecting on social media
Understanding the prevalence of trauma in the community

www.flpbis.org – Foundations/Family and Community Engagement
Sharing Data about Disproportionality

- Establish history of “safe” data sharing, set norms for feedback
- Avoid jargon, establish common understanding
- Keep it simple
- Listen, and don’t tell
School teams did not recognize how valuable family or student focus groups could be until they experienced one.
“A method of problem solving that tries to identify the root causes of problems or patterns found within data. “

Definition of “root,” from Merriam-Webster:

“The origin, cause or source of something; an underlying support.”

Available free of charge at: https://safesupportivelearning.ed.gov/sites/default/files/15-1547%20NCSSLE%20Root%20Causes%20Guide%20FINAL02%20mb.pdf
A 5-Point Intervention Approach for Enhancing Equity in School Discipline

Kent McIntosh, Erik J. Cirvan, Robert H. Horner, Keith Smolkowski, & George Sugai

Discipline disproportionality is one of the most significant problems in education today (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2013). The results of decades of research consistently show that students of color, particularly African American students (and even more so for African American boys and those with disabilities), are at significantly increased risk for receiving exclusionary discipline practices, including office discipline referrals and suspensions (e.g., Fabello et al., 2011; Cirvan et al., in press, Losen & Gillingham, 2012). These differences have been found consistently across geographic regions and cannot be adequately explained by the correlation between race and poverty (Noltemeyer & McLaughlin, 2010; Morris & Perry, 2016). Given the negative effects of exclusionary discipline on a range of student outcomes (American Academy of Pediatrics Council on School Health, 2013), educators must address this issue by identifying rates of discipline disproportionality, taking steps to reduce it, and monitoring the effects of intervention on disproportionality. Disproportionality in exclusionary discipline blocks us from the overall objective of promoting positive outcomes for every student.

Components of Effective Intervention to Prevent and Reduce Disproportionality

No single strategy will be sufficient to produce inclusive and sustainable change. Multiple components may be needed, but not all components may be necessary in all schools. We describe here a 5-point multi-component approach to reduce
Family-School-Community Alliance (FSCA)

Vision
Promote family, youth, and community engaged partnerships in research, practice, and policy to improve prevention and intervention in the systems and practices of positive behavioral interventions and supports and related multi-tiered systems of support toward improvement in valued outcomes.

- Workgroup of the PBIS Technical Assistance Center supported by the Office of Special Education Programs developed from e-book
- If interested in connecting with or participating in the workgroup, contact dminch@usf.edu for more information.
Contact Information and Resources

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OSEP TA Center on PBIS
• www.pbis.org

Association on PBIS
• www.apbs.org

Florida PBIS
Florida’s Positive Behavioral Interventions & Support Project

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https://www.youtube.com/user/flpbs1
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3) **QR Code:** Scan the code here (or in your program book) and chose your session from the dropdown Menu.