

# ACHIEVING EQUITY IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

## PBIS AND EQUITY IN SCHOOL DISCIPLINE

### A PROMISING AND PRACTICAL MULTI-COMPONENT APPROACH

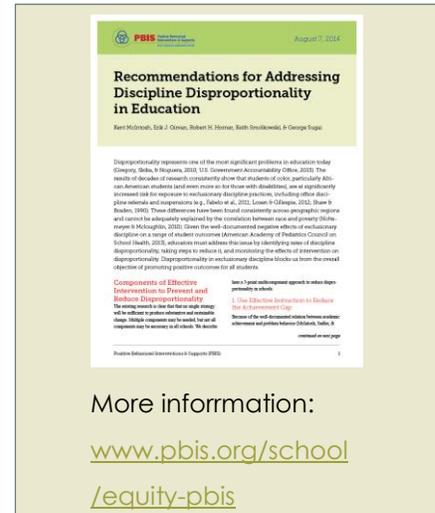
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Racial/ethnic disproportionality in school discipline has been evident for decades and has been increasing over time. Common approaches (e.g., one-time cultural sensitivity events) have been ineffective, and many existing programs may raise consciousness but do not provide educators with specific strategies to use in their classrooms. An approach that has been effective is embedding equity work within a PBIS framework.

No single intervention will be effective in achieving disciplinary equity. Instead, our current research indicates a 5-point multicomponent approach:

- 1. Use engaging academic instruction to reduce the opportunity (achievement) gap.** [Engaging academic instruction](#) teaches skills that are relevant to students' lives, builds on background knowledge and their heritage, includes high rates of student responding, and includes performance feedback. Students can achieve more when they see themselves in the lessons.
- 2. Implement a behavior framework that is preventive, multi-tiered, and culturally responsive.** PBIS in particular has been shown in multiple studies to significantly reduce the discipline gap. The PBIS framework is useful because it is flexible enough to be adapted to meet the needs of students, families, and the community. The Center has developed [tools](#) for identity development, assessing behavior support systems for institutional bias, and developing shared expectations with students, families, and community members.
- 3. Collect, use, and report disaggregated discipline data.** By disaggregating data, educators can assess whether our systems are effective for ALL students. However, using an equity lens with data is complex. The Center provides a [guidebook](#) for assessing disproportionality, drilling down to identify its root causes, and monitoring outcomes.
- 4. Develop policies with accountability for disciplinary equity.** The single most powerful intervention to address explicit bias is building discipline policies that not only limit the use of exclusionary discipline (e.g., suspension), but also promote the implementation of effective practices. Our [policy guide](#) provides seven key features of equitable discipline policies, with numerous examples.
- 5. Teach neutralizing routines to address implicit bias.** Our [research](#) shows that the majority of disproportionality comes from implicit (unconscious) bias, and that disproportionality varies based on the situation (e.g., location, time of day, type of incident). By identifying these decision points and teaching a strategy to use in place of exclusionary discipline, school teams have decreased the discipline gap.

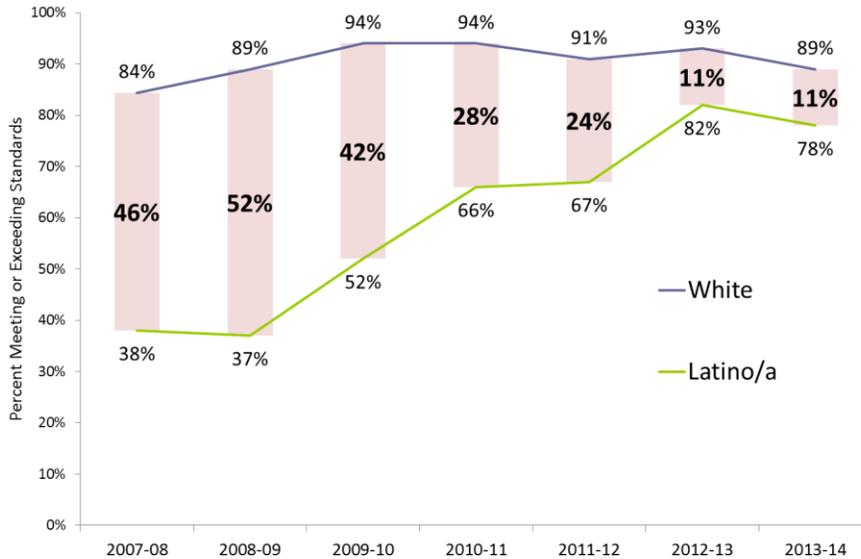
**Outcomes.** Our model demonstration work in schools in Michigan and Oregon show that the approach is feasible to implement, perceived as effective by educators, and reduces disparities in exclusionary discipline.



# CASE STUDIES: ENHANCING EQUITY THROUGH PBIS

## TIGARD-TUALATIN SCHOOL DISTRICT

Tigard-Tualatin School District (Oregon), which serves a large migrant worker community, has been implementing PBIS and academic Response to Intervention (RTI) for the past 20 years. In addition decreasing suspensions for students of color, they have increased state reading achievement scores for Latino/a students.

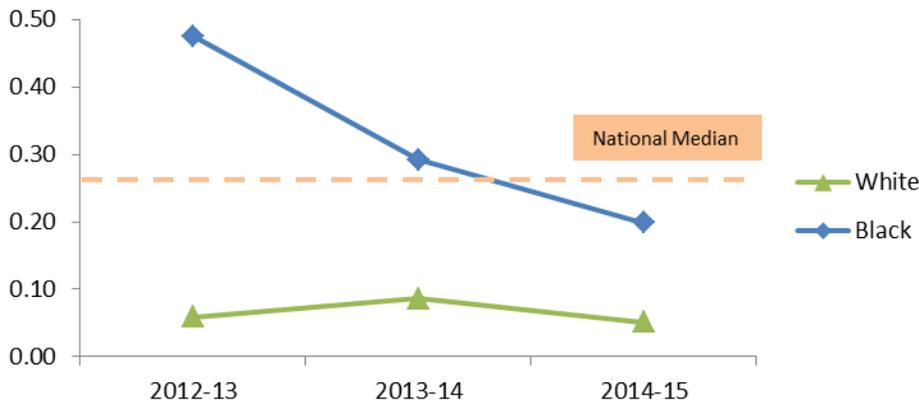


Source: McIntosh & Goodman, 2016

## IRVINGTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Irvington Community School (Portland Public Schools, Oregon) is an inner-city K-8 school that has been implementing PBIS for the past 4 years. After implementation, their use of suspensions dropped to below 10 per year. Through analysis of their [SWIS](#) data, the team found disproportionality in office discipline referrals for physical aggression on the playground, especially on the basketball court. Instead of blaming students for playing “street ball,” they clarified and retaught rules for the school’s court, reducing disproportionality dramatically.

### Office Discipline Referrals Per Day Per 100 Students



Source: McIntosh, Elwood, & McCall, 2016