

TURNING TO EACH OTHER
NOT ON EACH OTHER

**How School Communities Prevent
Racial Bias in School Discipline**

A Preliminary Report

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in cooperation with
The Applied Research Center

Turning To Each Other Not On Each Other

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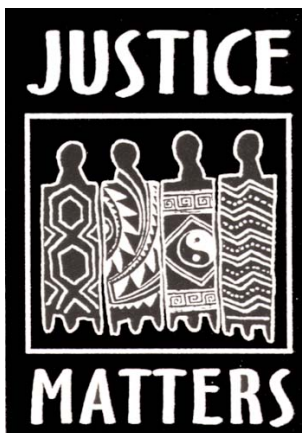
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DEDICATION

We dedicate this report to all those who have taught us about racial bias in school discipline:

To all the students and families who have shared their stories, their analysis, their hurt, and their strength;

To all the school staff who have shared their frustrations, dilemmas, insights, and skillful practices;

To all our colleagues who gently and persistently guided us to deeper understanding of this issue:

We hear your message about the urgency of this matter. We offer this report as part of our effort to put an end to this reprehensible state of affairs, taking full responsibility for any shortcomings.

-The Justice Matters Discipline Taskforce Force

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Executive Summary

The Crisis

Prevailing discipline approaches are incurring a high cost for both particular groups of students and society in general. To summarize:

- Glaring racial disparities characterize the outcomes of discipline decisions nationwide.
- Discipline is increasingly taking the form of removing students from school, leading to more and more students missing more and more school.
- School discipline contributes to moving youth into the criminal justice system in a variety of ways.
- Students who are suspended and expelled are more likely than their peers to drop out of school.

The Turning To Each Other Study

The Turning To Each Other study urges us to take action to address the discipline crisis and communicates ways that we might begin to do so. The research for this study began with a national search for "model" schools that use caring, thoughtful approaches that successfully prevent racial bias in discipline. A final selection yielded eight schools from which qualitative and quantitative information was gathered in the form of interviews and documents. The study describes each school and exposes key elements of their success. Distilling such lessons from model schools begins to create realistic solutions that will put an end to current unacceptable and problematic discipline approaches.

Key Findings

The schools featured in this study shatter commonly held myths about school discipline. A general expectation surrounding the discipline approach of schools composed predominantly of students of color and low-income students maintains that harsh discipline practices, suspension and expulsion, are necessary in order to ensure a safe and productive learning environment. The idea is that if such practices are not used, these schools will become violent, chaotic places. Behind this thinking is an assumption that some kids are just bad. These bad kids must be intimidated sufficiently or separated from the rest of the students so that everyone else may learn.

Although all of the schools in this study match the "problematic" demographic profile (predominantly students of color, majority of students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch), **not one of these schools relies on discipline approaches that exclude, alienate and discard students to create a compelling learning environment.**

Not only do the studied schools provide fairer and more caring alternatives to suspension and expulsion, **but they also create learning environments that are unusually safe and academically rigorous.** At El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, for

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example, there are no lockers because the trusting, family-like atmosphere prevents theft. There has never been a serious fight at Sankofa Shule. As soon as students look like they might fight, other students break it up or get a teacher.

Three of the high schools that are featured have graduation and college-going percentages in the high 80's and 90's. Many of the schools are well-known for their exciting, challenging curricula and effective pedagogy. Institutions like El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, Sankofa Shule, Central Park East Secondary School show that it is not necessary to suspend and expel "those kids" to create safe and productive learning environments.

Approaches that Make a Difference

Reverend Jesse Jackson, in other contexts, has challenged us to turn *to* each other, not *on* each other. **The schools featured in this study incorporate the idea of turning to each other in both their policies and their everyday practices.** Consistently, they turn *to* the students, *to* the families, and *to* each other to solve problems, rather than turning *on* students and families of color.

These schools emphasize approaches that invest in students' growth and development. Such approaches reject the notion that some young people are bad. Such practices resist writing off some students. Most importantly, these approaches and practices recognize and nurture each student's talents and moral core while refusing to treat some students as bad apples who must be discarded before they spoil the rest.

Recommendations

This study reveals that almost all of the selected schools share fundamental approaches that nurture safe and rigorous learning environments. These approaches extend beyond discipline practices to include those used in interactions throughout the school. The findings have led to the development of the following recommendations for action at both the school site level and higher levels of the school system.

At the School Site Level

- **Develop a school culture that is caring and culturally responsive.** Caring and culturally responsive school cultures seem most effectively developed when the school has a mission or set of principles that shape climate, pedagogy, and other practices. Rather than striving to shape students' behavior solely through a discipline policy, the schools create a community based on the mission or guiding principles, shaping the larger context of relationships which, in turn, influence student behavior. This comprehensive approach proves far more effective than a punitive policy in affecting student behavior and leads to safer schools, high achievement, and a desirable learning environment.

- **Develop discipline policies and practices that thoughtfully embody the school culture.** Discipline should be one of the schools' many arenas that support the growth of all students, rather than an arena distinct from those considered enriching. Instead of reflecting a lapse from school culture during which some individuals are discarded and written off, discipline should be an extension of a school's mission.

At the District, State and Federal Level

• **Develop policies, funding, and legislation that supports caring and culturally responsive school cultures.** Higher levels should:

1. Support schools to develop meaningful missions that develop caring, culturally responsive cultures;
2. Support schools to develop innovative practices that carry out their missions;
3. Assist with the development of small schools;
4. Provide funding for the activities and staffing that support the schools' missions;
5. Give schools freedom to hire and fire in ways that support their missions;
6. Create time for school staff to plan and to meet with students, families, and each other;
7. Provide sufficient professional development to support schools in effective implementation of their missions;
8. Monitor and intervene with schools that do not have caring, culturally responsive cultures.

PREFACE

An error means that a child needs some help not a reprimand or ridicule for doing something wrong. Marva Collins in "Marva Collins: Teaching Success in the City," Message, February 1987.

Fear of our children is at the heart of zero tolerance policies and other harsh discipline approaches in our schools. Guided largely by fear, the education system has sought to exert power and control over our children, and have abdicated their responsibility to guide, nurture, and protect. Our greatest challenge then, is to transcend a preoccupation with "power over" and to refocus energies toward developing the "power to do." Exerting "power over" children fuels the jail industrial complex, but does nothing to advance our collective aspirations. The "power to do" all that we can to insure that all youth have the opportunity to become self sufficient and productive adults fuels the education industrial complex and utilizes scarce resources toward the task of empowering rather than punishing.

"Power over" focuses attention on personal, rather than societal misdeeds. In this context it becomes rational to focus on youthful indiscretions and turn a blind eye to societal indiscretions like inadequate funding for public schools, or inadequate health care for all youth. Our charge is a simple one. We must arrest and abate irrationality.

Each and every day across America we are leaving children behind. In our state legislatures, on our school boards, in our schools and in our homes we have given up on America's great promise-our children. This amounts to a tremendous loss of human capital and underdeveloped talent, which in turn has a devastating impact on our communities and our nation as a whole. We must insure that all children, despite race or socioeconomic status, receive the support and resources that they need to traverse an increasingly complex world.

A commitment to insuring that no child is left behind must decidedly begin on the individual level. As adults we must first be persuaded that all life is precious and that all children have the potential to make a contribution to our society. Without this heartfelt recognition, all other efforts fail. The sanctity of all life must decidedly be at the foundation of all of our efforts on behalf of our youth. When we do not commit to the sanctity of life, contempt rather than love becomes the guiding force behind all of our actions.

When we commit to loving all children as we love our own children, we create a world rich with promise and hope. When we commit to leaving no child behind we are motivated to nurture rather than punish, to intervene rather than incarcerate and to love rather than loathe. When

we commit to leaving no child behind the adage that says "it takes a village to raise a child" takes on a new meaning, beyond that of a hackneyed phrase that is only applicable to our own children or those whom we deem to be redeemable. Instead, it becomes a rallying point to insure that no child-that no life-is lost to hopelessness and despair.

When teachers recognize that all children have promise, they teach differently and seek creative solutions to persistent problems. When legislators and school administrators recognize that all children have potential, they legislate differently and channel resources toward educating and away from incarcerating.

The greatest threat to harmony is segregation. Segregation has created divergent and conflicting realities that lead to misunderstanding and mischaracterization. We separate the poor from the rich and white from black and are befuddled by the fact that we act and respond differently to similar stimuli. If we desire a world with common frames of reference, we must begin at the same reference point. Children conform to the dictates and expectations of their environment. If we desire loving children, we must create loving environments.

The enemies in the war on our children are less defined by the color of their skin or by their ideology than they are by their capricious rule making, rigidity, irrationality and arbitrary cruelty. The proliferation of zero tolerance policies and other harsh discipline approaches is merely an expression of these characteristics and escalating anger toward our children. Zero tolerance policies represent macho posturing taken to the extreme. We must make those who lodge daily assaults on our youth understand that macho posturing is no substitute for sound and rational policy or fair and measured discipline. As U.S. Secretary of Education, Richard Riley has said, no punishment should result in the loss of educational opportunity. It is not beneficial to the child, nor is it beneficial to society as a whole.

As citizens, we owe it to ourselves to turn the tide. We owe it to ourselves to insure that those who impact the lives our children share our collective vision. We must make sure that they are forever mindful of the results that we desire, and that we expect them to conform policies directed toward our children to these desires.

Those of us who have made a commitment to the sanctity of all life must stand in the forefront of a new movement-a movement toward our children rather than away from them. Be it in Decatur, Appalachia or Chicago, we must venture to leave no child behind. Where there is hope there is life, where there is life there is possibility and where there is possibility change can occur. Keep hope alive!

Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr.

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INTRODUCTION

Jeffrey and Jerrold are cousins. They are in the same grade, but go to school on opposite sides of town. They are African American.

One morning, on one side of town, school bells greet Jeffrey as he makes his way to his usual seat in math class. Following roll call, the teacher starts the class by introducing a new math activity. After a few minutes, Jeffrey begins to tease a girl sitting next to him by throwing little pieces of paper at her. The teacher reprimands Jeffrey. A little while later, Jeffrey does it again, and, again, the teacher intervenes. Soon, when the teacher turns away from the class to write on the board, another student begins to throw pieces of paper. The teacher turns around and points at Jeffrey. "That's it," she says. "I've given you two warnings, and now you're going to the office."

"But I didn't do it this time," Jeffrey protests.

"I don't want to hear it," she replies, "You've been disrupting the class all week, and I won't have it disrupted anymore."

In the office, Jeffrey waits for the crowd of students before him to have their turn with the counselor. When it's Jeffrey's turn, the counselor calls Jeffrey's home, but there is no answer. "Your mother isn't home again." Then, with frustration, he adds, "She never seems to be home."

"Don't talk about my mom like that!" shouts Jeffrey.

"Don't you use that tone of voice with me!" replies the counselor.

"You better take back what you said! You don't know what you're talking about!" shouts Jeffrey, standing up.

"That's it," the counselor says, "You're going home!"

Meanwhile, Jerrold is also starting his school day. When he enters the school building, one of the teachers, Ms. Martin is doing "morning duty," greeting students and parents. "Good morning Jerrold," she says, "Give me that big smile of yours."

"Morning grandma," says Jerrold, calling her by the nickname that the students have for her.

Like his cousin, Jerrold is starting his morning with math and is also throwing wads of paper at his neighbor. His teacher comes up to his desk and speaks quietly so that no one else can hear. "Jerrold, do you remember that meeting we had when you explained how you get frustrated in class when you don't understand? Do you

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remember the idea your mom had about thinking of questions you can ask to get help?"

"Oh yeah," Jerrold says, "I forgot again." Jerrold thinks of some questions and asks his work partner for help. Ten minutes later, after another reminder from the teacher, Jerrold is calling out excitedly, "I understand it! I can do a problem all by myself. And I really understand it!" (This is a big breakthrough for him.) "That's great! I knew you could do it," the teacher says., walking over to him. "Do you want to tell the rest of the class at meeting time?"

The Challenge

The above descriptions of hypothetical schools form a sharp contrast to each other. The first situation illustrates practices which are commonly used in schools that disproportionately punish students of color. The staff in this school are hard-working, dedicated individuals who have good intentions for the students, but whose practices and approaches, reinforced and supported by general school policies, result in disproportionately punitive outcomes for students from certain racial groups.

The second situation depicts approaches consistent with those of the schools featured in this report. The practices and approaches that these schools employ successfully demonstrate that it is possible to use caring, thoughtful approaches that nurture each students' growth and development, thereby preventing the racial bias that characterizes school discipline nationwide.

The Turning To Each Other Study

The Turning To Each Other study urges us to take action to address the discipline crisis and details how we might begin to do so. The research for this report began with a national search for "model" schools that use **caring, thoughtful** approaches that successfully prevent racial bias in discipline. The model schools use caring, thoughtful approaches specifically when disciplining students and generally in interactions throughout the school. A final selection yielded eight schools from which qualitative and quantitative information was gathered in the form of interviews and documents. The report describes each school and exposes key elements of their success. Distilling such lessons from model schools begins to create realistic solutions that will put an end to current unacceptable and problematic discipline approaches.

Shattering Myths About School Discipline

The schools featured in this report shatter commonly held myths about school discipline. A general expectation surrounding the discipline approach of schools composed predominantly of students of color and low-income students, maintains that harsh discipline practices, suspension and expulsion, are necessary in order to ensure a safe and productive learning environment. The idea is that if such practices are not used, these schools will become violent, chaotic places. Behind this thinking is an assumption that some kids are just bad. These bad kids must be intimidated sufficiently or separated from the rest of the students so that everyone else may learn. Although all of the schools in this report match the "problematic" demographic profile (predominantly students of color, majority of students qualifying for free or reduced price lunch), not one of these schools relies on discipline approaches that exclude, alienate and discard students to create a compelling learning environment.

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rigorous. At El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, for example, there are no lockers because the trusting, family-like atmosphere prevents theft. There has never been a serious fight at Sankofa Shule. As soon as students look like they might fight, other students break it up or get a teacher.

Two of the high schools that are featured have graduation and college-going percentages in the high 80's and 90's. Many of the schools are well-known for their exciting, challenging curricula and effective pedagogy. Institutions like El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice, Sankofa Shule, Central Park East Secondary School, and the others show that it is not necessary to suspend and expel "those kids" to create safe and productive learning environments.

Turning To Each Other

These schools emphasize caring, thoughtful approaches, that is, approaches that invest in students' growth and development. Such approaches reject that notion that some young people are bad. Such practices resist writing off some students. Most importantly, these approaches and practices recognize and nurture each student's talents and moral core while refusing to treat some students as bad apples who must be discarded before they spoil the rest.

Reverend Jesse Jackson, in other contexts, has challenged us to turn *to* each other, not *on* each other. The schools featured in this study incorporate the idea of turning *to* each other in both their policies and everyday practices. Consistently, they turn *to* the students, *to* the families, and *to* each other to solve problems, rather than turning *on* students and families of color.

Goals of this Report

This report identifies and describes schools with promising practices for preventing racial bias in school discipline. The purpose of this report is to expose and communicate these practices and ideas in order to raise awareness and commitment to learning about and implementing such practices.

Specifically, the report aims to:

- 1.) **Show that schools with caring, thoughtful practices and approaches exist.** The profiles of each school convincingly prove the existence of schools with policies and approaches that invest in each student's development and recognize each student's talent and moral core. The research indicates that these schools are safe and, in many cases, academically outstanding. These kinds of schools are possible.
- 2.) **Shed some light on how these schools do what they do.** The profiles describe how the schools incorporate and implement these approaches into a range of practices and systems. The profiles examine the practices, policies, structures and school cultures that prevent the exclusion and alienation of some students.
- 3.) **Examine the connection between the schools' approaches and practices, and actual discipline outcomes.** Each profile describes the school's discipline outcomes including some quantitative information on suspensions and expulsions. This data provides

initial confirmation that schools with caring, thoughtful approaches successfully prevent racial bias in discipline.

The Discipline Crisis

Disciplinary approaches, practices and policies profoundly affect the educational experience of our children, the health of our communities, and the future of our society. Current, prevailing discipline approaches incur heavy costs in each of these areas—costs that are both unnecessary and preventable.

- **Students are losing time in school, in the classrooms.**

School discipline often takes the form of removing students from the learning environment, negatively impacting their education. Many suspended students never catch up once removed from the school setting (The Governor's Task Force to Study Alternative Programs for Chronically Disruptive Students, 1999).

- **Students are losing time in school in dramatically increasing numbers.**

The number of students missing school because of discipline decisions has risen drastically. School districts across the country increasingly rely on harsh punitive measures to discipline students. Suspensions have risen from 1.7 million (3.7% of all students) in 1974 to approximately 3.1 million (6.8% of all students) in 1997 (Cantu, 2000). The number of students suspended in Oakland grew 65% between 1992-93 and 1997-98. Chicago's expulsions rose 10,000% between 1993-94 and 1998-99 (Applied Research Center, 2000)!

- **School discipline approaches contribute to the criminalization of youth.**

Often, school disciplinary systems serve as the first step in the criminalization of youth. Increasingly, school officials turn to the police to handle school discipline matters. Students are arrested, are often put in detention, and are initiated into a relationship with the criminal justice system.

- **School discipline approaches are linked to negative long-term impact.**

Many studies have demonstrated that students who are suspended or expelled are more likely than their peers to drop out of school (DeRidder, 1990; Hahn and Lefkowitz, 1987; Wheelock, 1986; and Wu, Pink, and Moles, 1982).

An early introduction to the criminal justice system and dropping out of school have long-term negative consequences for students, including lack of job eligibility, poverty level life-time earnings, impaired ability to take care of families, need for public assistance, etc.

- **School discipline can cause significant heart-break.**

Project Respect, a San Francisco-based, nonprofit organization, reports on how prevailing discipline approaches affect the students and families they serve. They describe how students often feel rejected by the school. The students believe that the school would like to get rid of them, and that no one is on their side or cares about what they think or feel. Tired of being thought of as "bad kids," some students give up on trying to prove otherwise.

Parents relay that school discipline practices make them feel inadequate and ineffective as parents, rather than supported. They talk about how school approaches can come between

them and their children and, at times, even fuel a deterioration in family relationships and the family's capacity to work together to solve problems.

What is Racial Bias in School Discipline?

Statistics on suspensions and expulsions show that there are substantial disparities in the discipline of different racial groups of students. (Significant disparities also exist between students from different socio-economic backgrounds and between boys and girls. These disparities are often based on dynamics similar to those that lead to the racial disparities.)

On a national level, African American students are suspended at twice their proportion in the school population (U.S. Department of Education). In given localities, this disparity reaches as large as three times their proportion in the student population (Applied Research Center, 2000). The relative racial discipline bias towards Latino students is slightly more complicated. In some parts of the country, the number of Latinos receiving disciplinary punishments is proportional to their numbers in the population. In other areas, Latino students are expelled and suspended in numbers two to three times as high as their proportion in the population (Applied Research Center).

Less data is available for students of other racial groups, but anecdotal evidence suggests that Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, and others also receive disproportionate suspensions and expulsions in comparison with their proportion in a particular school's student population.

What Is Behind the Numbers?

Many are willing to concede that there are big disparities in the discipline that students from different racial groups experience. But they still wonder if this is due to racial bias. They want to know: what is going on that is leading to these numbers?

In order to understand how and why this bias results, we must make more complex the common, narrow conceptualization of racism. This narrow definition limits racism or racial bias to something perpetrated by bigoted individuals. In reality, however, racial bias is most often transmitted through systems, procedures, cultures and language--in short, the larger environment that shapes individual behavior. Racial bias in the schools is not an isolated phenomenon; it operates at a societal level through media images, housing segregation, public policy, etc., each of which have a major impact on what is happening at school.

Furthermore, characteristics of any one particular school are shaped by racial bias in other parts of the education system. Each school is affected by allocation of resources, the teacher preparation system, and a myriad of laws and regulations that often have an embedded racial bias. Often, individual educators who are committed to eliminating racial bias, find themselves caught in a system that is producing patterns such as flagrant racial disparity in discipline outcomes.

The following analysis outlines the three primary factors of schools that produce racial bias in discipline:

I. Misperceptions

"Misperceptions," in this case, means situations where one person perceives another inaccurately because of a stereotype or because of a cultural frame of reference that misinterprets the other's behavior.

The simplest example of misperception might be when a school adult (teacher, administrator, support staff, etc.) draws a conclusion about a student's behavior simply because of the group the student belongs to. Unfortunately, stereotypes abound which lead to rampant misperceptions: students of certain racial groups or who dress a certain way are thought to be in gangs; African Americans, especially boys, are thought to be violent, dangerous, and criminally inclined; etc.

Misperceptions also occur when a school adult misinterprets a student's behavior because of cultural differences (Arriaza, 2000). In some cultures it is permissible for young people to loudly express anger and frustration at an adult as long as they comply with the adult's demands. Young people who express themselves in this way are viewed as honest and genuine in this culture. In other cultures, though, such expression towards an adult would be considered highly disrespectful and an indication that the student was refusing to comply with the adult's demands.

Similarly, sometimes students misinterpret the behavior of school adults because of their different cultural frame of reference. This situation of misperception can also get them into the disciplinary system. For example, in some African American communities, adults give children direct orders such as, "Pick that paper up." At some point, an adult from a different culture might approach an African American child and say, "Would you please pick that paper up?" This student might respond, "No." This student may not intend to defy the adult; rather, he or she thinks that the adult is offering a genuine choice—otherwise, the adult would have given an order. The adult, on the other hand, might have a cultural frame of reference that would interpret such behavior as deliberately disrespectful and defiant.

Once misperceptions start, they can lead to bigger and bigger problems. The experience of Josh, an African American boy in a California school illustrates how this vicious cycle can start and grow:

A teacher had reprimanded Josh for talking during her lecture, but did not reprimand a White girl who behaved similarly. Josh was angry, but tried to contain his anger. Instead of losing his temper, he started clowning around. Of course, this got Josh into a lot more trouble. When it was time for Josh to go to his next class, he was still angry. Even though his next teacher hadn't done anything unfair, Josh still clowned around in the class. Josh and this second teacher then had some frustrating experiences which, in turn, shaped the teacher's perception of Josh. She, too, began to see Josh as a problem and was more likely to perceive his actions as misbehavior than she would the actions of other students.

In situations like the one that Josh experienced, the student reacts negatively to being perceived unfairly. The teacher may then react to the student's reaction, and the situation escalates into something serious. Often, damage will be done to the relationship between this student and teacher. From a single misperception and subsequent interactions, both student

and teacher may take away ideas and feelings about each other that affects their future behavior. As with Josh, this situation may affect other school adults' perception of the student, and the vicious cycle expands.

The problem of misperceptions is aggravated by the fact that there are vast differences between the racial composition of the teaching force and the racial composition of the public school student population. Teachers who come from different cultural backgrounds than their students cannot refer to their personal cultural frame of reference in order to make sure they are not misperceiving their students. And, these same teachers have few colleagues from their students' backgrounds to consult with. Teacher preparation programs fall far short of preparing them to understand cultural frames of reference other than their own and rarely push them to go beyond their stereotypes of other cultures.

Cases of misperceptions, often much more subtle than that of a bigoted individual projecting gross stereotypes onto students, produce disciplinary outcomes on a large scale that form the pattern of racial bias indicated by the numbers.

II. Racially Hostile School Environment

A racially hostile environment is another factor that contributes to a racially biased discipline system in schools. In this case, student "misbehavior" may be a response to a school environment that is, overall, racially hostile.

Picture a school where the adults in professional positions are White and the custodians and cafeteria workers are people of color. The curriculum overlooks the cultures and histories of students of color or covers this material in a cursory, inaccurate way. The special education classes have high numbers of African American and Latino students. The gifted classes are mainly White and Asian. Teachers' comments reveal negative stereotypes about the students' families and lifestyles. The norms and values of the school are very different from the ways of interacting common in many the students of color's home cultures. The knowledge and abilities that students of color bring to school are ignored. The language in which most classes are taught is different from the language spoken in the many of the students' homes. Few people in the school can communicate with immigrant parents in their language, and written material is rarely provided in their language.

How might some students of color feel? Invisible, labeled, judged, bored, alienated, disoriented, confused, helpless, despairing. How might such students behave? Well, they might act out.

Human beings of many cultures and ages tend to react in similar ways to an environment that is uncomfortable, hostile, or one in which they have little power. Consider the following example:

Project Respect (a San Francisco-based, non-profit organization) provides training for adults on understanding what is going on with students of color who act out in school. one training involves putting the adults in a simulated environment where they play the part of a learner. This environment is carefully constructed so that many of the adults do not feel comfortable or confident about the subject matter (salsa-dancing). Furthermore, many of the adults are unfamiliar with the language that the "teacher" is speaking (Spanish). Finally, many learners are labeled and tracked (placed in a salsa special education class).

What do the participants do in this environment? Some sit down and stop participating. Some leave the room. Others decide to ignore the teacher's instructions or do the opposite of what the teacher says in an effort to preserve some control in the situation.

The adults in this example, due to their lack of control in an uncomfortable and discriminatory environment, responded with defiance and withdrawal. Like these adults, students who are confronted every day with a racially hostile environment, act out in the same way and become, to some adults, "behavioral problems." In this way, a racially hostile environment is a key factor that contributes to the numbers of students of color who become discipline "problems"—producing the pattern of racial bias in discipline outcomes.

III. Discipline that Discards Students of Color

A third factor that contributes to a racially discriminatory discipline pattern is a punitive process that, ultimately, discards students of color. Perhaps a disciplinary situation comes about through situations of misperception or, sometimes, within the context of racially hostile environments. Perhaps not. Regardless of how the situation comes about, what happens when a student of color has done something that school adults perceive as misbehavior? Usually, a disciplinary process takes place that, through each of the steps of the process, frustrates, alienates, excludes and, lastly, discards students of color. The following paragraphs outline these different stages.

At the first stage, the intervention does not seek to understand the students' perceptions or the thoughts, feelings, attitudes and beliefs that are shaping their behavior. Mr. Cooper punishes Jasmine and Tito for disrupting the class. He never knows that Jasmine is refusing to do her work because she thinks Mr. Cooper always picks on her and the other African American students she sits with. Nor does Mr. Cooper know that Tito keeps playing around because he does not understand the assignment.

Upon this foundation—lack of understanding—the next stage in the process proceeds. The discipline approach does not nurture the student's learning or growth as a responsible, caring person. The school arranges for a conference with Marcus and his family because Marcus has exhibited some bullying behavior. During the meeting, school staff review several incidents of bullying, lying, and "immature" behavior. Finally, the counselor turns to Marcus and asks, "What do you have to say about this?" "I don't know what the big deal is," mumbles Marcus, without emotion. "That's just another example of how you don't care about other people's feelings," responds the counselor. "You are going to end up in jail if you keep up this attitude." Rather than structuring the situation so that Marcus can get involved without losing face, and instead of helping to build and develop Marcus's moral core, the staff humiliate him, tell him his character is uncaring, and put him in a situation that encourages him to act as if he does not care.

Often, at the third stage, the disciplinary intervention tends to exclude the student from the learning situation and the school community (through a referral to the principal's office, suspension, or expulsion). Students get behind in school, and feel that the school does not want them there.

Furthermore, in these situations, negative messages are sent to the families involved. The

disciplinary intervention often leaves parents feeling that the school has labeled them as bad parents, that the school does not care about their child, and that the school might even discriminate against their child. Mrs. Jackson knows that when the school calls her about her son, they think that she does not know how to control him. But, she is worried that the school singles him out unfairly and does not know how to figure out what is really going on with her son.

Ultimately, the disciplinary process often treats students of color as expendable, unwanted members of the school community. "I know they don't want me here," says Sonia. "They always think I did something bad, even before they find out what happened. They want to suspend me. They're just looking for a way to get me out of this school completely."

Although students of color are the most frequent recipients of this type of disciplinary intervention, White students also experience this destructive process. It is important to note here that all of the factors that produce a racially biased pattern of discipline contribute to problematic situations for all students. Any student can be misperceived. An uncaring school environment can be hostile towards any student, for a variety of reasons. Any student, regardless of race, might experience a discipline process that treats them as expendable members of our community. These problems in school discipline must be addressed as they affect all of our students. However, we must not forget that students of color are most likely to be targeted and impacted by these destructive practices and approaches.

Schools that Can Show Us How to Prevent Racial Bias in Discipline

The good news is that there are schools that are successful at preventing and/or overcoming racial bias in school discipline. This report examines eight of these schools. The selection of each was based on the set of criteria that follows.

Selection Criteria

Schools were selected based on their manifestation of two specific features. These qualities were chosen by synthesizing careful observations at several schools and helpful input from students, families, and school staff who have experienced disciplinary situations. Based on this thinking, the study assumed that the following two features might dramatically reduce racism in school discipline as well as other problematic aspects of school discipline: *outstanding school culture* and *meaningful approaches to school discipline*. (For a more detailed discussion of the school selection criteria than what follows, see "Appendix III".)

1. Outstanding School Culture

School culture is a set of beliefs, values, and attitudes commonly held in the school that shape people's behavior. School culture has a lot to do with whether or not discipline issues arise in the first place. Some school cultures treat people from different groups in different ways. In order to prevent racial bias in discipline, it is vitally important to understand the school culture from the perspective of students of color.

A **consciously and actively caring culture** does much to prevent, offset, or buffer all of the factors that lead to racial bias in discipline. Many school adults are caring individuals, but school cultures that are consciously and actively caring translate individual dispositions into

policies and practices.

School cultures that are grounded in the students' cultures and realities also prevent racial bias in discipline. These schools incorporate the cultures of their students and draw on their life experiences. These schools understand students as beings who come from socially situated realities that lead to particular knowledge, values, concerns, etc.

2. Meaningful Approaches to School Discipline

Of course, no matter how outstanding a school's culture, discipline will still be necessary from time to time. Major contributors to racial bias in school discipline are the actual practices and approaches adults use when disciplinary situations arise. Therefore, in order to eliminate racial bias, it is important to carefully choose discipline practices and approaches.

In contrast to prevalent processes, a meaningful approach to school discipline is one that treats students and their families with respect throughout the process. Meaningful discipline seeks to learn from students, nurtures their learning and growth as human beings, and finds ways to bring students more deeply into the school community. Meaningful approaches reduce reliance on exclusionary practices such as suspensions and expulsions. If exclusionary practices must be used, meaningful discipline shapes the way that such measures are implemented.

A California principal, Ms. Bennett, expelled a student, Julia, from her school (via a “disciplinary transfer”). Ms. Bennett believed in Julia's potential and was very concerned about her future. She contacted the principal of the school where Julia would be transferred. Ms. Bennett knew that most principals have a very negative idea of students assigned to their school because of disciplinary transfers. She assured the other principal that Julia was a “great kid who had made a mistake,” so that the school would be more welcoming to her. Ms. Bennett also made sure that Julia knew that she cared about her and was not rejecting her personally. She hoped that this transfer would help Julia learn by sending a message about how serious her behavior had been. She told Julia that she would be very interested in meeting with her after the transfer to see how she was doing.

This principal used the most exclusionary of practices in a way that respected Julia, encouraged her growth, and maintained a connection with her.

Overview of Study

The following chart may help to clarify the design of the study. The research started with a definition of the **problem** of racial bias in school discipline. The understanding of the problem led to the development of **selection criteria** for schools that would address the problem. After gathering information on schools that met the criteria, analysis yielded **findings** on the policies, practices and structures that schools used to embody the qualities described in the criteria.

Problem	Selection Criteria for Schools that Address the Problem	Findings
Situations that Produce Racial Bias in School Discipline	Qualities of Schools that Prevent Racial Bias	Practices, Policies, and Structures that Selected Schools Use
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Misperceptions 2. Racially Hostile School Environment 3. Discipline that Discards Students of Color 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Outstanding School Culture <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -caring culture -culture grounded in students' cultures and realities 2. Meaningful Approach to Discipline 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Practices 2. Policies 3. Structures

A Note on How the Report is Organized

Frequently, reports of this nature start with findings about major themes and then include descriptions of the entities that were studied as background information that supports the findings. This report reverses this usual order. The sections describing the schools in the study precedes a discussion of the key findings and major themes in order to encourage readers to read the profiles of the schools. The schools themselves convey a sense of excitement and what is possible better than any generalization could. Particular details of what a school is doing will resonate with readers and help them picture and understand what these schools are doing that is making a difference.

SCHOOL PROFILES

SCHOOL PROFILES

How the School Profiles are Organized

The school profiles are organized into four main sections.

"What's it like there?" provides an overview of the school. It describes the ways in which the school has an outstanding school culture and/or a meaningful approach to discipline. It describes particular practices the school uses, and the response of students and families to the school. These descriptions also detail how schools have codified or institutionalized their approaches in policies and structures.

"How did they get to where they are?" describes the process that schools took to develop outstanding school climates and meaningful approaches to discipline. This section is intended to provide a frame of reference for how long it might take other schools to make similar achievements as well as pointing out important steps along the way.

"What does it take to do this work?" discusses the school's use of resources, the way the school is staffed, training, and other elements that make it possible for them to achieve what they have. This section is intended to provide information about the kinds of policies and resources that will be necessary for other schools to develop outstanding school climates and meaningful approaches to discipline.

"What do the numbers say?" provides quantitative data that is helpful in understanding the school. The size of student enrollment may suggest whether or not the size of a school is a factor in its success. The racial composition of the teaching staff can be compared to that of the students to consider whether the relationship between teacher and student racial backgrounds makes a difference in discipline outcomes. Is it important for students to have a critical mass of teachers from their racial background?

Although the table for numerical data has space for a racial breakdown of suspensions and expulsions, the schools did not provide a racial breakdown of their discipline data. Boxes are left blank in the table in this section if the school does not collect data for the category in question. Unfortunately, many schools do not and are not required to keep comprehensive and consistent data on discipline. However, the total numbers for suspensions and expulsions tell how much these disciplinary approaches are being used in the school.

Note: To fully understand the data on suspensions and expulsions for each school, it is important to examine this data in context of what occurs in similar settings. It is also necessary to explore the way that suspensions and expulsions are implemented in order to understand the impact of these practices on the students. See "Appendix II: How to Analyze Data on Suspensions and Expulsions" for a comprehensive analysis of the schools' suspension and expulsion statistics.

CENTRAL PARK EAST SECONDARY SCHOOL

Central Park East Secondary School (CPESS) is one of the most famous public schools in the United States due to its leadership on a variety of major education reform issues. Founded in 1985, the school is based on the philosophy that children learn better in an environment where they are extremely familiar with their teachers and peers. The school's academic program stresses five "habits of mind:" 1.) Critical examination of evidence; 2.) Seeing the world through multiple viewpoints; 3.) Making connections and seeing patterns; 4.) Imagining alternatives; 5.) Asking, "What difference does it make?" The school is located in East Harlem and includes grades 7-12.

I. What's it like there?

At CPESS, everything is an opportunity for developing critical thinking skills. At most schools when an incident occurs (for example, something is stolen), many students accused of wrongdoing feel that no one ever really cares about or wants to hear their side of the story. At CPESS, however, the accused person is actively encouraged to argue his or her case and to do so by presenting evidence. It seems that the habits of mind such as examining evidence and considering multiple viewpoints apply to all aspects of school life.

Coaching

"Coaching" is a major strategy at CPESS, supporting its pervasive emphasis on critical thinking. CPESS encourages young people to think for themselves in all settings rather than telling them what to do. This general approach is referred to as "coaching." The concept of coaching is that school adults, rather than taking center stage through lecturing, etc., are on the side-lines providing support and guidance to students as the main players.

When it comes to discipline, coaching challenges the "compliance" mentality that focuses on adults making students follow rules. The idea is that everyone in the school belongs to a community with common values, and coaching helps students be true to these values. Adults support students in figuring out how to apply these values and involve them as participants in a collaborative problem-solving process when the values are not upheld.

This doesn't mean that adults do not tell students what to do. The expectation is that at times, adults will tell students what to do but that there will be an opportunity for students to talk to them about it later.

When there is a problem

What does coaching look like in a disciplinary situation? School adults who feel students aren't meeting their expectations begin by gathering information. They try to understand what might be going on with the student. They might touch base with colleagues who know the student. Then, a meeting of some kind will take place, perhaps with just the student, perhaps including the student's advisor, family, or others. That meeting will focus on identifying goals, problem-solving, and possibly determining consequences for the student. These consequences usually do not involve out-of-school suspension, and the consequences are negotiated on a case-by-case basis. Follow-up is also an important part of this process in an effort to acknowledge the student for improvements or to develop further plans.

Students can also take action if they feel an adult has been unfair, etc. They can request a meeting for a mediation with that adult. (They can also request mediations with other

students, and adults can request mediations with other adults or with students.) This opportunity helps students feel that they truly are participants in the community, and that adults will listen to what's on their mind (which is not to say that adults will always agree or do what they want).

Relationships

There is one factor that is fundamental in making all of this work—the relationships between adults and students. Adults and students are on a first name basis—one of the ways the school establishes a friendly atmosphere. Every student has an advisor who is specifically responsible for getting to know that student and his or her family. Much time is spent dialoguing with students alone or in small groups. Adults give students their home phone numbers and also call students from home.

II. How did they get to where they are?

Central Park East Secondary School was preceded by Central Park East Elementary School, which was founded by Debbie Meier in 1974. This successful school led to the development of two additional elementary schools based on the same ideas and approaches. The early years were difficult, however. Although Meier selected the original staff who shared many ideas in common, they experienced a lot of conflict and had to make many changes. They further developed their initial ideas through trial and error.

In 1985, CPESS was launched, starting with a 7th grade and adding a grade every year. In spite of the success with the elementary schools, CPESS initially encountered several obstacles. There were no models of similar high schools to draw on. The public—and the students—were doubtful about the absence of many factors of traditional high schools. They were concerned about the lack of a sports program, the different schedule, the decreased sense of freedom related to so many attentive adults, etc. Over time CPESS demonstrated its success.

III. What does it take to do this work? (resources, staff, training, etc.)

In terms of financial resources, CPESS raises money beyond what it receives from the school district. Some uses of resources that help the school establish its culture include reducing class sizes (25 students), supporting preparation time for teachers, and having a social worker and an aide who support the collaborative problem-solving and mediation processes.

CPESS students are involved in community service, one morning a week, which frees up the staff for meeting and planning. Finally, the commitment of the staff to carry out their vision, even though that means arranging for meetings at all hours and being available to make phone calls at home, is essential.

IV. What the numbers say

	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Latino	White	Other	Total
Students	47%		48%		5%	553
Staff						56
Suspensions						12
Expulsions/ Disciplinary Transfers						1

DEWITT CLINTON HIGH SCHOOL

Dewitt Clinton High School is based in the Bronx in New York City. Clinton is a “choice” school, which means that students from anywhere in the Bronx may apply to go there.

I. What's it like there?

Clinton students are known to say things about the school such as, "This is like my second home . . . no . . . this is like my first home." It's hard to believe that they are talking about a school with 4,300 students!

This enormous school does several things that make it feel like home to its students. There is something intangible in the air, a feeling of respect and caring that staff and students encounter when they first come to the school, something that draws them into its culture. This climate, "the Clinton way," is supported by a caring staff at all levels. "All levels" includes the custodians and cafeteria workers—who are considered important parts of the Clinton family. In fact, the custodial team is considered especially important because their duties are vital to the creation of maintaining the special climate of the school. One significant part of their role is to collaborate with other staff to make sure that all graffiti is painted over immediately and that the school is kept spotless.

House Structure

The caring atmosphere is also supported by a "house" structure that brings a sense of personal attention to each student. The school is broken down into ten houses. Each house has a supervisor, guidance counselor, coordinator, and family outreach assistant. Students can take courses throughout the school, but the house staff follow them throughout their four years. The result is that each student has specific people s/he can go to with a question or problem. The house staff helps students choose courses, talk over problems, etc. If a student misses a few days at school, one of the house staff will call them up or go to their house—not to intrude, but to show they care.

Supporting Student Interests, Expression, and Celebration

Clinton builds investment in the school community by being an active school. Whereas other schools may avoid activities such as assemblies, dances, etc. because of concern about problems that will arise, Clinton has an abundance of these events. If a few students act out, those actions will be addressed, but this is not seen as a reason for avoiding activities. The school has 8-10 dances a year which are open to the community at-large (an extremely unusual phenomenon in urban areas like the Bronx). There are frequent assemblies, guest speakers, concerts, an annual Rainbow Multicultural Talent Show, senior/staff sports events, etc.

The school offers many options for students to pursue their interests. There are a wide range of electives, teams, and student clubs. Student clubs provide another glimpse into the atmosphere at Clinton. Of the over 25 clubs, 6 or 7 are ethnic-specific, such as the Asian American club, the Indian club, and ASPIRA (a club for Latino students). At Clinton, each ethnic-specific club is composed of students from many races and ethnicities. They feel comfortable and enjoy being together in these settings.

Staff enthusiasm and slogans

The Clinton way and sense of family comes out in many other ways. Staff want to be at the

school and communicate their enthusiasm to students in many forms, including the variety of extra clubs and events. The school also uses slogans to re-enforce the specialness of the Clinton way. Slogans have included "Who cares? We care," "Never, never, never, never quit" and "Commitment to excellence."

Discipline

The Clinton staff have agreed to follow a standard discipline policy with particular consequences used for particular behaviors. But the implementation of this policy does not insist on following these steps in a mechanical way. If there is a behavior issue, the student may be sent to speak with one of the staff members of the house staff, with the Coordinator of Student Affairs, or with a Dean. One of these discussions may result in a solution. Parents may also be brought in to meet. The staff try to avoid suspension and pursue other options.

II. How did they get to where they are?

Clinton did not always have a good reputation. In fact, the school was almost closed in the mid-1980s. Originally a boy's school, it started to improve when girls were admitted. It also started to implement the house structure at this time, which has made an important difference.

III. What does it take to do this work? (resources, staff, training, etc.)

Clinton gets financial resources to do what it does from a variety of sources: school clubs, alumni, foundations. It has the largest high school alumni association in the country with chapters spread all over, which helps with fundraising. The school received foundation support to begin its house structure. However, the school has also made significant sacrifices within its budget to be able to provide staffing of the houses—it has increased class size to approximately 34 students in some cases. The school staff believe that this investment is well-spent.

In terms of staffing, the school works hard to make sure that staff who are not working out do not stay. In the last seventeen years, the school has had four principals, all of whom have been "pro-kid." This means that they support the activities and programs that are important to students. With such an administrative stance, the Coordinator of Student Affairs, a position that exists in all New York City schools, has had the support to be truly effective in planning activities for students.

Students apply to Clinton from all over the Bronx. 30% of the students are chosen from the applicant pool on a competitive basis, and the other 70% are randomly drawn from the applicant pool. 12,000 students apply for the 1,000 freshman slots every year. This means that students are very motivated to be at the school and are concerned about being sent to their neighborhood school if things do not work out.

IV. What the numbers say

	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Latino	White	Other	Total
Students	35%	6%	57%	2%		4,311
Staff	7%		14%	77%	1%	347
Suspensions						23
Expulsions/ Disciplinary Transfers						15

EL PUENTE ACADEMY FOR PEACE AND JUSTICE

The El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice is a high school in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York. El Puente's mission is to inspire and nurture indigenous leadership for peace and justice. El Puente is built around the themes of human rights, social justice, and connection to the Williamsburg community. Many of the El Puente staff are artists, and the emphasis on art and culture is apparent everywhere.

Before starting a school, El Puente was a center for youth with many programs and activities that continue today in addition to the school. More than a youth organization or a school, El Puente is a community participating in a movement for peace and justice.

I. What's it like there?

Bringing Students into El Puente's Community and Culture

Many people working in secondary schools that are trying to do something different face a major dilemma: How do you create a different school culture at the high school level when students have already been conditioned by years in traditional schools?

El Puente starts with a special orientation process for freshmen. Freshmen come to school for a full day of activities before the other students. They do icebreakers and team-building activities. They go on a tour of Williamsburg, learning about the issues that Williamsburg faces such as gentrification and a toxic environment. These new students learn how the El Puente community tackles these issues.

Facilitators and older students discuss what the freshman can expect at El Puente, and what might be different from what they are used to. "Why do we sit in circles? Why are the staff called facilitators? Why aren't there any lockers?" (There are no lockers because El Puente is a safe place, like being in a home, and there is no need to lock up possessions.) Facilitators talk about the twelve principles that underlie everything that goes on at El Puente (see Appendix I for a list of the principles). The students discuss any concerns and ask questions. This orientation is part of what Frances Lucerna, the principal, calls "giving young people an opportunity to own and integrate these values."

What keeps the process going during the year? A myriad of practices and activities build a sense of community that students become very invested in. Once students want to make the school work, the rules make sense to them.

Honoring Students' Cultures and Languages

El Puente builds this connection with young people by honoring and integrating the students' cultures and languages-both the culture of their heritage and youth culture. El Puente's curriculum, heavy emphasis on the arts, and celebrations manifest their approach. Many of the school adults share the students' cultures and live in their neighborhoods. The result, says Ms. Lucerna, is that "young people feel proud, connected, and engaged in a way that's very, very deep."

El Puente's emphasis on social justice, on learning about the problems the community faces and on taking action, also plays an important role. Young people see they can have an impact on the issues that surround them. This sense of their own agency offers an alternative to acting out from frustration and a sense of powerlessness.

Discipline

So what if, in spite of all this, a student breaks the rules? Consistent with El Puente's emphasis on the value of relationships, the response usually involves talking-one-on-one with the student, mediations and/or meetings of staff to plan what to do. There are standard consequences associated with breaking the rules, but before applying them, the staff discusses the situation. They try to understand the reason behind the behavior and whether or not there should be an individual plan for that student. They assess whether or not the consequences are relevant to the situation.

When something serious happens that violates the sense of safety of the community, the principal might meet with each class, giving them the opportunity to discuss how they were affected. Meanwhile, the student involved in the incident might be temporarily "in isolation," working in one of the staff offices. Sometimes, a student might be suspended in order to have time to reflect. A suspension would only come about as the result of the input of several people. As the situation gets resolved, there is a process to bring the student back into the community. It might involve the student meeting with people s/he has hurt and apologizing. Then there might be a meeting with representatives of the El Puente community (students and adults) in which the student formally re-enters the community.

II. How did they get to where they are?

El Puente developed its principles and practices in its twelve years of operation before starting the school. In many ways, it was a matter of transferring what they were already doing to the school context. However, there is an important difference between youth programs and a school; while it is a voluntary choice to participate in an afterschool program, it is mandatory for young people to go to school. This creates additional challenges. It took the first four years to establish the culture of the school, and it is still being refined (they are in their seventh year).

III. What does it take to do this work? (resources, staff, training, etc.)

The background and experience of the staff are an important resource in making this work possible. Many of them were staff for El Puente's youth programs before the school started and then studied to get teaching credentials. They feel their knowledge of youth development is very important. Many staff also draw heavily on their backgrounds as artists. Most of the staff live in the Williamsburg community.

The resources from the larger community-based organization (CBO) that the school is a part of help to make their work possible. Many of the staff that are funded by the CBO allocate significant time to working in the school.

IV. What the numbers say

	African Descent*	Asian/Pacific Islander	Latino	White	Other	Total
Students	5%		94%	1%		132
Staff				25%		12
Suspensions						10
Expulsions/ Disciplinary Transfers						0

* Students of African descent at El Puente are African American and Caribbean

Oakhurst Elementary is a neighborhood school in Decatur, Georgia. The school's population is based in a primarily low-income African American community. The school has done an excellent job in building trust with the students' families and the community.

I. What's it like there?

The way staff work with parents

What is special about Oakhurst Elementary School shines through in the way the staff talk about and work with each other and with parents. Research indicates that in the majority of schools, many parents of color and low-income parents do not trust school adults. They worry every morning when they send their children to school; will the school staff discriminate against my child because of race or because they look down on our lifestyle? Often, many things happen in the school that feed parents' concerns and push them toward opposing the school.

Oakhurst Elementary School is committed to providing a different experience for parents than this common one—to creating a place where "parents and students feel important and special" (Mary Mack, principal). School staff greet parents and students as they arrive in the morning, finding ways to compliment, inquire about, or encourage. Many celebrations throughout the year bring parents into the school, including two parent appreciation brunches. This is in addition to the scheduled conferences or drop-in visits. The principal and school staff look for reasons to appreciate parents.

Building trust through communication

Teachers demonstrate to parents their concern for the children in many ways. Weekly progress reports let parents know how their children are doing—and the efforts the teacher is making with them. This frequent communication prevents the distrust that can arise when, for example, the first time a parent learns of an academic problem is in the report card. School staff give parents their home numbers so as to be more accessible. School staff frequently visit parents if needed. They usually travel with another teacher, principal, or social worker. Parents tend to be very receptive to these visits.

If there is a problem with a child, rather than suspending the student, the principal will often drive the student home and sit down and talk with the parent. As a result, parents know that the school adults care enough to try to figure out what is going on with their child. Parents and children are not blamed for problems. School staff are willing to apologize to parents when they make a mistake. This openness can go a long way to changing the tone of a meeting or conference from a confrontation to a constructive discussion.

Making students feel important and special

The staff also go to lengths to make students feel important and special. Every child is viewed as different; the idea is to accept the student and build on who they are. Instruction accommodates these differences and recognizes the children's activeness.

"Now they're happy children"

If there is a problem, the staff take action in a positive way, before the problem has time to get worse. A meeting with the parent is quickly arranged in order to develop a plan. Such planning allows teachers to keep students in class rather than referring them to the office. As

teacher Nayijjah Nashid commented, "The students used to look so sad and angry . . . Now they're happy children."

II. *How did they get to where they are?*

A neighborhood school in a racially segregated area, Oakhurst Elementary School used to be viewed as a dumping ground, a low-status school where unwanted students could be sent. The school has turned this reputation around over a period of several years. The current principal, Mary Mack, has played a fundamental role in this change.

Ms. Mack seems to have fostered an atmosphere of genuine respect among the staff, beginning with her respect for them. School staff feel they are "on the same page," while acknowledging their individual interests and emphases. They find Ms. Mack to be relaxed and easygoing, someone they can disagree with without repercussions. At the same time, Ms. Mack makes her expectations clear and lets staff know when she feels they have some things to work on. Her commitment to making students and parents "feel important and special" is a consistent influence.

Staff development also plays a role in uniting the staff around its commitment to accepting and respecting students and parents. The staff has had in-depth training in literacy and has adapted an approach to teaching literacy that emphasizes the importance of viewing each child as an individual and working to find ways to build on what they bring, not blame them for failure.

It took about three years for the school's efforts in building relationships with the families to really get to the point where parents were no longer saying things like, "That teacher doesn't care about my child." Reflecting on the change in the school, Ms. Nashid says, "I told my husband my light would go out in Decatur. [But now] I wouldn't want to be anywhere else besides Oakhurst." Another teacher, Vicki Johnson, concurs: "I feel better about what's going on in that school than I ever imagined would be possible in public education." The school continues to get better every year.

III. *What does it take to do this work? (resources, staff, training, etc.)*

As mentioned above, the principal plays a key role in making this work possible. In addition, meaningful staff development has been critical. The school has a structure to support its teachers. New teachers or teachers who are having problems are paired with mentors and buddy teachers. Financial resources are allocated for event planning, staff development, and celebrations that take place. Finally, a willingness to go beyond the call of duty to develop relationships and keep on developing them when problems recur has been vital.

IV. *What the numbers say*

	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Latino	White	Other	Total
Students	96%			4%		194
Staff	50%			50%		14
Suspensions						5
Expulsions/ Disciplinary Transfers						0

PSJA (PHARR-SAN JUAN-ALAMO) HIGH SCHOOL

PSJA is a high school in South Texas, seven miles from the border of Mexico. Students come to the school from many different neighborhoods.

I. What's it like there?

Over the last three years, PSJA High School has been doing some things that have made it a very caring, friendly, and helpful place.

A School for Families

PSJA has become a place where students, their parents, and their grandparents, can go to school together. The school offers classes to parents and grandparents during the school day and after school. As a result, students' families are in the school all the time. Parents are also there to volunteer or participate in organizing activities (see below). The presence of parents and grandparents on campus builds a sense of community and lets students know how much their families value education and how much they see school as an important part of life. Students act differently since the school has become a family place.

School and Families Joining Forces for Change

The school's relationship with students' families does not end with providing classes for them. PSJA is part of the Alliance Schools Initiative which helps school staff come together with parents and community leaders to organize for improved education. The coming together process started when school staff walked through the school's neighborhood on a Saturday, knocking on doors. They invited parents to a meeting. They then had one-on-one meetings with parents, which led to larger meetings at people's houses to identify important issues in the school and community.

This process has produced a core group of school staff and parents who exercise a strong voice on issues that impact the school such as access to textbooks and re-zoning of their feeder schools. They often turn out 100 people to meetings with government representatives. The result is that parents feel that they have power to affect decisions about the school and they feel comfortable being there.

Long-term Relationships with Advisors

Beyond creating a strong school community for students by investing in relationships with their families, PSJA devotes significant resources to developing important relationships with the students themselves. Two and-a-half years ago, each teacher in the school became the advisor to a group of students. Students have the same advisor throughout all four years at PSJA. They meet with their advisors in a group once a week. The advisor's job is to get to know the students and their parents, and track what is going on with them so that they do not fall through the cracks.

The advisors also give lessons to their students on something called "choice theory." Choice theory talks about how all behavior is geared towards satisfying universal needs and provides problem-solving strategies for meeting those needs. Choice theory emphasizes the idea that people do not have to immediately react to a situation but can more effectively and responsibly meet their needs through reflection and problem-solving. The goal is to help students develop strategies for getting what they want—strategies that are productive for the students and responsible toward others around them.

This process seems to be making a difference for students who commonly make comments such as, "I really wanted to hit this student, but then I thought of my advisor saying, 'Don't do it. It's not worth it.'"

Discipline

The adults build on the choice theory problem-solving process when it comes to discipline. In the past, if there were a problem, the teacher would refer a student to the Assistant Principal, who would decide what to do. The student was never involved in solving problems. Now a lot of teachers use the problem-solving process to work with students instead of referring them. When they are referred, in addition to receiving a consequence, the Assistant Principal also works with them around problem-solving.

II. How did they get to where they are?

Many schools implement an advisory program (where an advisor meets regularly with a group of students) and then, later, encounter considerable obstacles and do not find it effective. A great deal of effort and planning went into the effective implementation of PSJA's program. The staff brings in an expert on choice theory (based in Los Angeles) on a regular basis to provide training. This expert meets with a core group of teachers who are responsible for training the rest of the staff. There is a separate binder of activities for each grade level. Even so, it has taken time for the approach to work, and not all teachers are equally effective at implementing it.

III. What does it take to do this work? (resources, staff, training, etc.)

PSJA schedules professional development for staff in a way where it can be provided as often as needed. The day is structured into four 90-minute periods. All teachers teach three of the four periods. When there is a need for professional development, it happens in "mini-sessions" or 45-minute blocks. A mini-session will be presented four times in the day so all teachers can receive it. This willingness to repeat sessions four times, instead of waiting until all of the staff can meet together, provides more opportunities for staff to learn.

PSJA receives \$40,000/year in Title I funds. It uses these funds for parent education and for training the staff in choice theory. The Alliance Schools Initiative provides support to schools by helping staff reach out to parents, helping the then newly formed groups to strategize about having an impact on issues and, finally, connecting them to other groups and resources.

IV. What the numbers say

	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Latino	White	Other	Total
Students			98%	2%		1,680
Staff	2%		87%	11%		112
Suspensions						42
Expulsions/ Disciplinary Transfers						23

RIVER EAST ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

River East Elementary School is located in East Harlem, New York. This staff-run school was started by a group of people who wanted to work with the ideas developed at Central Park East Elementary School. (See profile on Central Park East Secondary School for more information on this group of schools.)

I. What's it like there?

A Culture that Helps Students Handle Freedom

Visitors to River East may notice that while most students are in the classroom, quite a few students seem to be en route somewhere. No one asks these students for a pass. No one asks them where they are supposed to be. And indeed, it seems that these bustling students are doing what they need to do to go about the business of learning.

The staff at River East accustom the students to making many choices (with the help of adults). In Choice (or Work Time), students have control over as much as possible, having frequent options to choose the kind of work, who to work with, what materials to use, etc.

Freedom to shape their work is one of many reasons why students are highly engaged in River East's interactive, theme-based curriculum. Not only are students used to handling the responsibility of being able to move about the school, but they have little incentive to misuse this responsibility since they want to be inside the classroom.

The Art of Building Community

River East puts a lot of effort into building a sense of community. Adults are called by their first name to eliminate barriers between adults and children. The school comes together on a weekly basis for a town meeting. Each class takes turns running the meeting. This whole school gathering is just one type of meeting in which students regularly participate. Each classroom has a meeting area, which is used for class meetings 3-4 times a day. At class meetings, students review the day's schedule and, as a group, work out the challenges of daily life together. Here, students practice solving problems as a community.

Putting Culture and Race on the Table

Philosophically, River East believes that it is important to understand both the central role that racism plays in society and the strength that cultural diversity brings. These understandings push school adults to overcome the common, "deficit" orientation towards students and families. This orientation views families of color and low-income families in negative terms. Rather than falling into deficit thinking, the school views all students and families as an asset to the community.

Beyond a philosophical approach, River East engages issues of cultural diversity and racism in many other ways. The curriculum incorporates learning about culture as well as learning about oppression. Staff think carefully about these issues as they plan meetings with families and students. Students are encouraged to be pro-active on issues of racism and advocate for themselves and others. The result of all of this is that the school is a place where people can, and frequently do, raise and discuss issues of culture and racism.

Trust and Acceptance

The school's efforts to build community, develop relationships, and view individual and cultural

differences as assets instead of deficits has earned it trust from students and families. The school's unconditional acceptance of students and families has been very effective in terms of preventing the adversarial relationships that can be common in other schools.

Discipline

So, with all of this as context, what happens when behavior issues arise? The staff maintains high expectations of students in situations of conflict. They ask students to be very reflective. After an incident occurs, students are asked to think about what happened, what their responsibility was for what occurred, who was hurt, what they can do to make it better, etc. This reflection might take place in the context of one-on-one meetings with school adults, class meetings, meetings with the family, or reflective writing.

Consequences are decided on a case-by-case basis, based on the situation and the individual child's needs. Sometimes feedback or consequences suggested by other students are more effective than anything else. Sometimes a child will have an in-school suspension and will do community service by working in another classroom. This might happen if the student's actions had made others feel unsafe. The idea would be to take the student out of the situation until the situation could be resolved or until those who had been hurt had recovered.

II. How did they get to where they are?

According to River East Director, Sid Massey, a school like River East "better have the goods to start with—vision, commitment, ideas, flexibility, a collaborative approach towards kids and families—that will allow you to make mistakes as you go. But the evidence of being advocates for children and their families needs to be in the bedrock and practiced from the opening bell."

III. What does it take to do this work? (resources, staff, training, etc.)

First, River East has a very rigorous hiring process. The school is very clear about its approach. When a teacher applies, a group of teachers and parents visit the applicant's current classroom to observe. Second, all staff (except for the secretary) are considered teachers; each member of the staff in some way, provides direct support for students. Other important features include a 2-3 hour staff meeting every week, a staff retreat twice a year, and outside therapists that come in to work with some students and families.

IV. What the numbers say

	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Latino	White	Other	Total
Students	52%	2%	43%	3%		190
Staff	32%	4%	24%	40%		25
Suspensions						6
Expulsions/ Disciplinary Transfers						0

SAN FRANCISCO COMMUNITY SCHOOL

San Francisco Community School opened in 1972 with the goal of creating a learning environment where students, parents, teachers, and the community work together. The teachers, who elect a Head Teacher to serve as the site administrator every three years, run the school. The school encompasses kindergarten through 8th grade.

I. What's it like there?

The Meaning of Community

SF Community, as it is called, understands itself as a community in more than one way. It is a community because everyone, including parents and students plays a part in making a caring whole. Furthermore, the school functions as part of a larger community beyond the school boundaries. This means that many different types of people come into the school, and that the school goes out to the community to learn and to contribute.

San Francisco Community works to develop a community atmosphere in many ways. Adults are on a first-name basis with students to create a friendly, open climate. Because students are grouped differently for different activities, they are familiar with adults and students outside of their regular classes. A "Big Brother/Big Sister" program pairs younger and older students for tutoring and recreation.

The school also builds community through fun activities. Each year, the whole school comes together for a camping trip or a school picnic. Every other year they take an overnight trip.

Relationships with Parents

There are many different roles for parents at the school. A Steering Committee of parents meets regularly with the Head Teacher. Alongside school staff, parents help interview prospective new hires and attend staff meetings. Many events bring parents into the school during the day. Unusually successful at recruiting parents to spend time in the school, SF Community's classrooms are regularly enriched by parents working with students.

Support for Solving Problems

SF Community has processes in place to help its members deal with problems. All staff and students receive training in conflict resolution. Their particular model specifies a series of steps to follow in order to resolve conflicts. Some students receive extra training and become conflict managers. They are available to help other students solve problems. Since all school adults know how to use these steps, they can also be a resource to help students solve problems.

This conflict resolution process is not in place solely for students to resolve problems with each other. Adults use the process with other adults, and students and adults can call upon it to solve problems with each other.

All classes also have "class meetings." Class meetings are forums for members to share appreciation of each other, make plans, solve class problems, and to discuss problems that might be happening with a student or group of students.

Discipline

How does all of this affect school discipline issues? When there is a problem, adults and

students know each other and have a relationship upon which they can draw. If needed, they can utilize the school's problem-solving processes to help them resolve the situation.

SF community has a commitment to keeping students in school. Sometimes, students are assigned to an in-house suspension where they work in the office or in another classroom. The thinking behind this action is that sometimes, it can be helpful to remove a student from the environment in which they are having trouble and, at the same time, have them contribute to the school.

When a student is suspended, the parents understand. Because strong relationships have already been built with the parental community, parents are more ready to trust the school's decision to suspend their child than they might be in another school.

SF Community strives to balance the tension between the need for consistent discipline that creates a sense of fairness and the freedom to take individual situations into account. While the school leans to a consistent response to behavior, staff still make room to consider individual circumstances. Such factors such as whether it was the first time the student had violated the rule, whether or not the student had learned something from the experience, or whether or not the teacher had played a role in the problem, might be taken into account.

II. How did they get to where they are?

Many of the aspects of SF Community that are described here have been in place for a very long time (some components go back to the founding of the school). At the same time, through the school's participatory decision-making process, the school continues to evolve.

III. What does it take to do this work? (resources, staff, training, etc.)

The staff is very cohesive, which allows them to build the school as a strong community. Sometimes it takes a lot of work to maintain strong staff relations, and at times the school has brought in mediators. The staff goes on a two-day retreat every year.

Professional development and the staff retreat are two of the most important uses of funds that supports SF Community's distinct culture.

SF Community demands a lot from its staff because the staff, as a whole, are responsible for making the decisions that administrators usually make. They are asked to put a lot of time into staff meetings as well as professional development. They meet every week, rotating between business meetings and professional development.

IV. What the numbers say

	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Latino	White	Other	Total
Students	20%	14%	38%	19%	9%	292
Staff	11%	6%	6%	66%	11%	18
Suspensions						2
Expulsions/ Disciplinary Transfers						0

Sankofa Shule is a pre-kindergarten through 9th grade African-centered school in Lansing, Michigan. "Sankofa" is an Akan word that means return to the past to go forward. "Shule" is Swahili for school.

I. What's it like there?

Building on, not Penalizing, the Ways of Active Children

Sankofa Shule is set up to be effective with active children, a group that is often viewed as discipline problems in other settings (this is especially common with African American boys). Sankofa Shule's active students are very enthusiastic about the school and often complain about having to leave at the end of the day. They are drawn to the dynamic environment where teaching emphasizes experiential approaches, the use of all the senses, and individualized curriculum.

The day starts with classes in martial arts, dance, drumming, and foreign language (French, Japanese, Kiswahili, and Spanish). Subjects that are not usually thought of as active or experiential are made to be so. A math class might involve activities such as shooting baskets as a way to learn about fractions and percentages. Students are also drawn to the numerous fieldtrips—some of which visit nearby places, others travel to out-of-state or even international locations.

Ethical Principles at the Core of Everything

Sankofa Shule goes on to expose students to much more. African-based ethical principles shape all aspects of school life. For example, one important principle is "Heshima," a basic concept of African philosophy which means respect for life. (See Appendix II for more information on the ethical principles.) Everyday, in the morning and afternoon, the school comes together for affirmations. Together, they chant the ethical principles in call and response, review the purpose of the day in light of one of the principles, sing, and engage in other collective activities. In other settings throughout the school, the ethical principles are much-discussed.

The school rules are an extension of this principle-based approach. They use values to shape behavior rather than prescribing specific behaviors. The school has three rules: Respect Self, Respect Others, and Respect the Environment.

Discipline

Sankofa Shule has a complex system of rewards and penalties that reinforce the ethical principles. Students receive stars for carrying out the ethical principles and these stars go towards weekly rewards. Some penalties include spending time in the Ptahhotep room. This room is named for the author of an ancient Egyptian book in which Ptahhotep wrote to his son about how he should lead his life. When sent to this room, younger children write lines, repeating the three school rules. Older children are asked to write about what they did wrong, find a passage in Ptahhotep that relates to this, and then write about what they might do differently in the future.

Parents' Role in the Discipline Approach

A more serious situation might call for a "parental suspension." In this situation, a parent comes in and spends the day in class with his/her child. The idea is that the parent will have a

chance to observe what is happening. Parents and school staff then meet to develop a plan. The only time that there is an out-of-school suspension is when a parent does not come in for a parental suspension, or when there has been a fight. However, the school makes every effort to keep students in school and, at times will use an after-school detention instead of an out-of-school suspension.

Sankofa Shule looks to parents to work with the school. In a case where parents are not carrying out what is asked of them, it would be possible to prohibit the parent from re-enrolling his or her child. This, however, has never been necessary.

Students Internalizing Ethical Principles

It seems that the children of Sankofa Shule are internalizing the ethical principles. There has never been a serious fight at the school (anything beyond some brief pushing and shoving). As soon as something starts, other children intervene to break it up or to get a teacher. (This forms a sharp contrast to most schools where children encourage fighting and run to watch.) This is just one of many situations where students at Sankofa Shule take care of each other. As a result, students say that they feel safer at Sankofa Shule than they have ever felt before.

II. How did they get to where they are?

Sankofa Shule began in 1995-96 with pre-kindergarten through 4th grade and added a grade every year (currently through 9th grade). The school's principal, Dr. Freya Rivers organized and inspired a group of staff who shared a belief in children and the understanding that African American students were under-served. They believed that it was only possible to teach their children effectively by celebrating self-worth. At Sankofa Shule, they do this through teaching the richness, validity, and strength of African intellectual heritage.

The staff works well together, and everyone contributes ideas. The school continues to develop in a dynamic process, improving every year. Dr. Rivers says the school has not achieved the staff's complete vision yet.

III. What does it take to do this work? (resources, staff, training, etc.)

A school like Sankofa Shule needs the total commitment of all faculty members because it is founded on an interdependent system. The maintenance and creation of the overall environment depends on the participation of everyone in the school. Staff are heavily involved in curriculum development.

Sankofa Shule raises additional funds, which are needed for field trips and curriculum development. A before-school and after-school program that provides arts opportunities as well as tutoring complements the school's regular-day program.

IV. What the numbers say

	African American	Asian/Pacific Islander	Latino	White	Other	Total
Students	100%					164
Staff	95%	5%				20
Suspensions	100%					4
Expulsions/ Disciplinary Transfers						0

FINDINGS

Common Themes in Practices, Policies, Development Process, and Resources

Before discussing the themes that are common to many of the schools, it is important to acknowledge that the schools are quite different from each other in significant ways. Some schools give students a lot of freedom and choices; others do not. Some schools attribute their success to a structured program or set of procedures; other schools focus on relationships and general philosophies.

It is encouraging to see that schools can find so many paths to the same end. We know that every student, parent, and teacher is different. They deserve to choose between many excellent options.

This diversity of general approach to the education of students suggests that equally important to what a school does is how a school does it. Schools with seemingly opposite approaches are equally successful—in part because of the high quality, effort, and spirit of the work. Furthermore, many schools may use practices that appear to be similar to those of the schools in this study but are not getting similar results. Although a school may use the same general approach as the schools featured in this report, they may not use it as comprehensively and consistently; school staff may not have internalized it. Again, the how is as important as the what.

There are several striking themes that are shared by two or more schools. The tables and discussions in this section summarize these commonalities. Because of the small number of schools studied, these schools do not represent a sample of all schools that would meet the criteria. In other words, if 50% of the schools studied shared a particular practice, this does not mean that 50% of all schools that have outstanding school cultures or meaningful discipline approaches share that practice. However, the fact that several of the schools share a practice does suggest that it has significant promise.

Common Themes in School Practices and Policies

Consciously and Actively Caring Culture

	CPESS	Dewitt Clinton	El Puente	Oakhurst	PSJA	River East	SF Comm.	Sankofa Shule
Started school based on a mission	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Caring ethic is explicitly a central part of school	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	
Resources devoted to building strong relationships	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Parents play important role in school					Yes		Yes	
Invests in bringing students into school culture	Yes		Yes					Yes
Curriculum and pedagogy oriented to child/youth interests, modalities			Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
Emphasizes celebrations, clubs, and trips		Yes	Yes	Yes			Yes	Yes
Schoolwide problem-solving or conflict resolution approaches					Yes		Yes	

Note: A cell that says "Yes" means that this area came up as a major area of emphasis in the school. A blank cell means that the research did not identify this area for this school. Given the limits of the investigation, it is possible that schools that are blank in a certain category may, upon further investigation, turn out to be a "Yes."

Started the school based on a mission

It is quite striking that five out of the eight featured schools were started by a group of parents and/or staff. People came together to start a school based on a common vision or mission. This mission in turn unifies the school, shapes the school's practices and policies, and serves as criteria for hiring new staff. Newcomers (staff, students, and families) are recruited to the school based on this mission and are oriented to it when they arrive.

The mission of these schools seems to play an important role in the development of innovative practices that embody caring and respect for all members of the school community.

It is interesting to note that one school, Oakhurst Elementary, has a clear, unified vision

although it had not been founded by a group of parents or staff. Oakhurst provides some hope that schools that are not initially founded with a mission have some possibility of developing a common vision or mission that strongly shapes their work.

Caring ethic is explicitly a central part of school

Six of the schools explicitly stated that a sense of community, a sense of caring, or strong relationships with students and families is a core part of their philosophy. More than lip service, this explicit ethic informs many practices.

Resources devoted to building strong relationships

Seven of the schools devote significant resources to building strong relationships with students and families. In some schools, specific people are responsible for developing these relationships (such as those serving as a student's advisor at PSJA and the house staff at Dewitt Clinton). At other schools, all staff are responsible for developing strong relationships and must find time to have one-on-one meetings with students and families.

Parents play an important role in the school

Two of the schools invest significant resources in involving parents in the daily life of the school. Parents in these schools are very active in running the school, spending time taking classes there, volunteering in classrooms, and collaborating with school staff to organize around issues on the school's behalf.

Invests in bringing students into the school culture

Three of the schools explained how they carefully orient students and transmit the school culture to them. El Puente spends considerable time orienting students to the school in an inviting and meaningful way. Sankofa Shule explicitly teaches its principles through daily rituals and activities.

With some schools, students and families are introduced to the school culture before they become members of the school community. In these cases, the school's reputation precedes student enrollment. Even before officially signing on, families know what to expect and have already made an affirmative choice to be part of the school's culture.

Curriculum and pedagogy oriented to child/youth interests, modalities

Four schools discussed how they build learning around students' interests and the types of activities that children and youth are most drawn to. These schools make learning more active and experiential; they incorporate a variety of art forms into the program. River East also emphasizes the importance of children's play, what children learn from playing, and how to build on this.

Schooling that is built around children and youth's ways of being and that can accommodate their differences is one way of demonstrating caring for them. Such pedagogy and discipline also has great potential to prevent unnecessary conflict and "disciplinary" situations. Being active is no longer misbehaving.

Emphasizes celebrations, clubs, and trips

Five of the schools build their culture through collective experiences of joy and enjoyment. These schools emphasize celebrations, performances, trips, clubs, dances, assemblies, and

opportunities for students to pursue specialized interests.

Schoolwide problem-solving or conflict resolution approaches

Two of the schools teach all students and staff approaches to problem-solving and conflict resolution. School community members employ these approaches on a daily basis and use them as a guide or reference point when problems occur.

School Culture Grounded in Cultures and Realities of the Students

	CPESS	Dewitt Clinton	El Puente	Oakhurst	PSJA	River East	SF Comm.	Sankofa Shule
Students' culture plays an important role in major aspects of school			Yes					Yes
Explicitly addresses racism and cultural differences			Yes			Yes	Yes	Yes

Whereas all of the schools in the study emphasize an actively and consciously caring culture, only three or four emphasize a culture that is grounded in the cultures and realities of their students. This phenomenon reflects the general reality that there is little emphasis in the education world on students' cultures and social realities. The schools that do have such an emphasis often find it difficult to articulate the specific practices they use to create such a culture and the impact of these practices on their students. One factor that may produce such a difficulty of articulation is the lack of broader discussion about this subject; this makes it difficult to find language to describe what is happening. Nevertheless, there are some findings in this area.

Students' cultures play an important role in the school

Two schools especially emphasize and celebrate the students' cultures. Sankofa Shule, as an African-centered school, bases all aspects of the school—curriculum, pedagogy, principles, etc—on African culture. El Puente incorporates the culture of its primarily Puerto Rican and Dominican students into all academic disciplines as well as extensive artistic and cultural experiences. For both these schools, the particular cultural focus takes places alongside an emphasis on creating a multicultural environment—including the study and experience of many cultures.

El Puente also joins with the students' communities by addressing the injustices that they face. Staff and students study and take action to address the conditions that face their Brooklyn neighborhood—toxic environment, poor working conditions, lack of access to healthcare, etc. In this way, the school acknowledges and makes a commitment to the social realities of the students. (Since most staff live in the students' neighborhood, they are also addressing their own social realities.)

Explicitly addresses racism and cultural differences

Four of the schools explicitly acknowledge the existence of racism and other forms of oppression. Some of the schools incorporate the study of these phenomena in various disciplines. El Puente also studies traditions of resistance to injustice and the successes and triumphs

Turning To Each Other Not On Each Other

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coming out of these traditions. Sankofa Shule's curriculum is built to counter racist beliefs that exist in the dominant society and that shape traditional curriculum.

Some schools use their understanding of racism to inform how they work with students and families, to examine their own possible racial biases and to encourage other members of the school community to feel comfortable bringing up concerns about racism. SF Community is devoting considerable professional development resources to helping all staff learn how to "de-institutionalize racism" in the school.

Meaningful Approach to Discipline

	CPESS	Dewitt Clinton	El Puente	Oakhurst	PSJA	River East	SF Comm.	Sankofa Shule
School mission, values drives discipline approach	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes
School uses values instead of rules	Yes							Yes
Talking is a major part of discipline process	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes		
Consequences are case-by-case	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		No
Parents play important role in discipline	Yes			Yes				Yes
Reflection is an important part of discipline	Yes		Yes		Yes	Yes		
Actively minimizes exclusion practices	Yes	Yes		Yes			Yes	Yes

School mission, values drive discipline approaches

Most of the schools that have a strong mission or set of values incorporate these into their approach to discipline. People at these schools refer to principles such as the need to coach rather than order students, the need to make students and parents feel important and special, and the need to be a community when they spoke of their approach to discipline. Their mission and values are self-evident in many of their discipline practices. In other words, staff hold themselves to their values to determine how to treat students in disciplinary situations. (This contrasts sharply with schools that try to inculcate values in their students but do not use these values to shape their own practices, including their approach to discipline).

School uses values instead of rules

For two of the schools, their mission and values are actually used in lieu of rules. Rather than specifying prescriptions for how students should behave in particular circumstances, these schools provide students with a general philosophy for how to treat others and themselves. School adults help students figure out how to apply this philosophy to particular situations, or together they reflect on how the philosophy may not have been upheld in a past situation.

The approach of using values instead of rules places more emphasis on values that the school wants students to internalize than on prescriptions for behavior in highly specified circumstances. The meaning and purpose of a certain way of behaving is kept explicitly in the foreground. CPESS believes that focusing on values enables the school to stay away from a "compliance" approach in which adults tell students exactly how to behave. Using a common language about the community's values allows students and adults to collaborate effectively to figure out acceptable behavior. An approach that emphasizes values provides opportunities for students to learn and make decisions.

Talking is a major part of the discipline process

Four of the schools seem to use talking as their major approach to discipline issues. School adults talk to students and/or their families about what is going on. There are one-on-one meetings of various kinds that take place, conferences involving small groups, and class meetings. Some of the schools have structures for regular conversations such as advisory, support groups, and class meetings.

Reflection is an important part of discipline

Four of the schools believe that reflection is an important part of the discipline process. They see it as a crucial tool for the student's growth and critical to helping prevent further problems. This approach is very compatible with discipline practices that involve a lot of talking.

Consequences are given on a case-by-case basis

Four of the schools do not use set consequences for certain behaviors. Some of these schools have policies that set out consequences for certain behaviors, but do not necessarily, automatically apply them. Staff at these schools want to learn about the situation and discuss it before deciding which consequences, if any, would be most useful.

Parents play an important role in discipline

Three of the schools consistently and frequently involve parents in discipline issues. This involvement goes beyond informing parents of problems. The discipline process at these schools involves meeting with parents to solve problems and make plans in an in-depth way.

Actively minimizes exclusion practices

Five schools intentionally minimize using practices that exclude students from the learning environment (such as the use of suspension). In general, schools minimize such practices because they want to keep students in the learning environment and/or make sure they feel valued by the school community. CPESS especially tries to minimize suspension of students when they are new to the school and still in the process of bonding with the school community. Oakhurst staff are conscious of the way in which student suspension can foster parents' distrust. They develop alternatives to suspensions to demonstrate their commitment to parents.

Common Themes in What It Takes for Schools to Achieve These Qualities-Process and Resources

The practices and policies discussed above were made possible by many things—a process of school transformation that took place over time, resources, structures, staffing, etc. This section describes these various supports.

Process and Resources

	CPESS	Dewitt Clinton	El Puente	Oakhurst	PSJA	River East	SF Comm.	Sankofa Shule
Process: How did they get to where they are?								
Multi-year process		Yes	Yes	Yes				
Resources, structures, staffing								
Small size	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes
Additional funding	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Highly selective hiring			Yes			Yes		
Willingness to remove staff from school		Yes				Yes		
Substantial planning/meeting time	Yes					Yes	Yes	Yes
Emphasizes professional development				Yes	Yes		Yes	
Deploys staff so as to build relationships	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		
Principal's leadership plays major role		Yes		Yes				Yes

Multi-year process

Three of the schools explained that it took several years to develop the school climate and culture into its current form. In the case of two of the schools, the staff turned a previously problematic culture into the current successful school culture. El Puente was able to develop the school from the very beginning of its existence, and thus create the school culture right from the start.

Schools specified various reasons why many years were necessary for their culture to develop. Oakhurst needed several years' time to demonstrate a new commitment and respect to students and families of their community in order to overcome the pre-existing context of distrust. El Puente needed a critical mass of students who both embodied the school's culture and could help transmit it to newcomers.

Small Size

Six of the schools are small. Almost everyone at these schools commented on how vital the small size is to their ability to create a caring community. Smallness makes it possible for students and staff to know each other well and create a sense of intimacy.

The two larger schools in the study make efforts to create smaller communities within the school. Dewitt Clinton divides its students into ten houses, and PSJA assigns each student an advisor. Clinton's house staff and PSJA's advisory program closely follow their students throughout their time at the school, making an effort to build long-term relationships.

Additional funding

All of the schools except one mentioned that additional funding supports their ability to implement an outstanding school climate and meaningful approach to discipline. Many of the schools receive Title I Funding. Many raise additional funds. This funding supports planning time, professional development and, additional specialized staff. It also supports programmatic activities such as trips and events.

Many of the schools seem to be in need of funding beyond what they have been able to raise. Staff mentioned feeling overwhelmed by the demands of the work they are doing. They also talked about how their approaches require an extremely high level of commitment—some staff are reaching a point of exhaustion.

Highly selective hiring

Two of the schools engage in a highly rigorous and selective hiring process. Presumably, all of the schools with a strong mission have a more selective than average hiring process in that they hire staff that both express commitment to their mission and are capable of carrying out it out. Furthermore, a self-selection process probably occurs as people attracted to the mission choose to apply.

Willingness to remove staff from school

At many schools it is difficult to remove staff who are not supporting the school's approach. Administrators are worried about making waves by trying to get rid of people. While no school in the study claimed that they found it easy to fire staff, two schools are active in moving staff who were not supporting the mission out of the school. These schools find ways to let the staff member know that they would be more comfortable elsewhere.

Substantial planning/ meeting time

Four of the schools find ways to allocate substantial amounts of time to such activities as planning, meeting together, and developing curriculum.

Emphasizes professional development

Three of the schools draw on professional development activities to support them in their work. While the other five schools do not seem to rely as heavily on professional development, it is possible that schools trying to replicate their work might need significantly more professional development during the transitional phase.

Deploys staff so as to build relationships

Five of the schools shape staff members' duties with the explicit intent to build strong relationships with students and families. Dewitt Clinton created a series of positions associated with each house that focused on paying careful attention to all of the students in the house. At CPESS and El Puente, certain people play a coordinating role that supports the rest of the staff to meet with students and parents. At PSJA and CPESS, every teacher is an advisor to a group of students. At River East, support staff are deployed in a way that allows them to work directly with students.

Principal's leadership plays a major role

Three schools discussed the distinctive role of the principal. Sankofa Shule's principal founded the school, and recruited and inspired its staff. Staff at Oakhurst Elementary School view their principal as a strong, supportive leader who has made a pivotal difference. Dewitt Clinton has had a series of principals who have supported staff in establishing a “pro-kid” culture.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This study reveals that almost all of the selected schools share fundamental approaches to discipline that nurture safe and rigorous learning environments. These findings have led to the development of the following recommendations for action at both the school site level and higher levels of the school system.

At the School Site Level

- **Develop a school culture that is caring and culturally responsive.** Caring and culturally responsive school cultures seem most effectively developed when the school has a mission or set of principles that shape climate, pedagogy, and other practices. Rather than striving to shape students' behavior solely through a discipline policy, the schools create a community based on the mission or guiding principles, shaping the larger context of relationships which, in turn, influence student behavior. This comprehensive approach proves far more effective than relying on a discipline policy alone to guide student behavior and leads to safer schools, high achievement, and a desirable learning environment.

- **Develop discipline policies and practices that thoughtfully embody the school culture.** Discipline should be one of the schools' many arenas that support the growth of all students, teachers and adults, rather than an arena distinct from those considered enriching. Instead of reflecting a lapse from school culture during which some individuals are discarded and written off, discipline should be an extension of a school's mission.

At the District, State, and Federal Level

- **Develop policies, funding, and legislation that supports caring and culturally responsive school cultures.** Higher levels should:

- a.) Support schools to develop meaningful missions that develop caring, culturally responsive cultures;
- b.) Support schools to develop innovative practices that carry out their missions;
- c.) Assist with the development of small schools;
- d.) Provide funding for the activities and staffing that support schools' missions;
- e.) Give schools freedom to hire and fire in ways that support their missions;
- f.) Create time for school staff to plan and to meet with students, families, and each other;
- g.) Provide sufficient professional development to support schools in effective implementation of their missions;
- h.) Monitor and intervene with schools that do not have caring, culturally responsive cultures.

CONCLUSION

The schools in this report are inspiring, and they challenge us. They explode the myth that it is necessary to choose between harsh discipline of students of color and safe, academically productive schools. They demonstrate that it is possible to create schools for all students that are humane, caring places where discipline issues are minimal and, when they arise, contribute to everyone's growth and development. These schools carry rich information on the types of practices and approaches that can transform our nation's schools. We must act on this information. We cannot allow our children to continue to be thrown away when alternatives are available. We must find a way for people in all schools to turn *to* each other, not *on* each other.

APPENDIX I:

SUPPLEMENTS TO SCHOOL PROFILES

The supplements in this section contain additional information about each school. They contain additional background about the school as well as more specific details about the practices and approaches discussed in the "School Profiles" section.

Supplement to Central Park East Secondary School

More Details on Launching CPESS

CPESS was created, in part, to demonstrate that many ideas that work for younger children also work for adolescents, and that the nurturing atmosphere of an elementary school can also exist at the secondary level. Although the school has encountered many obstacles, several key factors have aided its success. All of the Central Park East schools have benefited from supportive superintendents who have provided flexibility in some areas of policy and practice. The launching of CPESS coincided with a new, flexible and creative Alternative High School division of the district. And, significantly, in the early challenging days, CPESS benefited from a relationship with the Coalition of Essential Schools, a national school reform organization that shared many of the fundamental ideas of CPESS and whose status provided support.

The Academic Side of CPESS

There are three divisions at CPESS. Division I includes 7th and 8th grade. The curriculum is organized into two interdisciplinary courses, one focusing on math and science, and the other on the humanities. Division II goes through the 10th grade and is organized in a similar way. At the end of Division II, students enter the Senior Institute. Each student, together with their advisor, draws up a personal program of study. They must complete 14 "Portfolios" (collections of work that demonstrate knowledge and ability in an area), along with traditional tests and a Senior Project.

Advisory Program

CPESS was the originator of the advisory program, a structure that brings a group of students together with a school adult on a regular basis for guidance and support. Advisories have now been implemented in many ways, some with an academic emphasis and others emphasizing developing social skills; even others focus on building a caring, supportive community.

Because teachers are overwhelmed with demands at CPESS, it is often hard for them to put much planning into advisory activities. For this reason, the relationship-building aspect of advisory functions as its most important role at this time.

The advisory program ensures that at least one adult will know each student and his or her family well. Students meet in a group with their advisors 2-3 times a week. Advisors are expected to check in with students' families every week or two. Many students feel that they can go to their advisors with problems. When an adult has a problem with a student, they turn to the student's advisor for help.

More Details on Working with Families

School staff are very successful at engaging parents to come to meetings that they set up. Part of this success occurs because school staff make an effort to arrange meetings at times that are convenient to parents. Sometimes, a staff person will meet at the parent's home. Staff commit to make meetings happen "by any means necessary."

CPESS uses an approach to family-school, problem-solving meetings developed by the Ackerman Institute for the Family. The Ackerman Institute provides support for building genuinely collaborative relationships between schools and families. They believe that distrust between parents and school staff can only be overcome through repeated and effective collaboration.

At CPESS, the family-school meeting involves the student, parents, the advisor, and possibly others. During the meeting, everyone's point of view is heard. There is an effort to understand whether or not the school can do something differently. If, during this process, there are other problems that need solutions, the group develops a plan.

As with all other problem-solving processes at CPESS, follow-up is critical to effectiveness. Unfortunately, this is the easiest piece to lose.

More Details on Consequences

Although consequences are negotiated on a case-by-case basis, some standard ones have been developed. Community service involves working for an hour after school, helping in teachers' classrooms and perhaps cleaning. In-house suspension involves doing schoolwork in a supervised setting in the school.

Every effort is made to keep students in school. There is only one major clear-cut rule in the school—no violence. A student who hits another student will receive an out-of-school suspension no matter who initiated the violence. There is, however, an exception to this mandate. Younger students might be assigned community service rather than out-of-school suspension, even for fighting. The thinking behind this exception understands that students who are newer to the school are not strongly bonded to the community yet. It is more important to keep these students in the school, than to use consequences that involve exclusion. A consequence that helps them to develop responsibility to the community, such as engaging in community service, is particularly important.

Challenges

CPESS is facing some tough times and some new challenges. In the past, CPESS's enrollment drew from all over New York City. Students and families who chose the school were highly motivated to be part of the community. CPESS is transitioning into being a neighborhood school. Even though neighborhood students still choose the school, it is not as profound a choice as when they were choosing to attend from anywhere in the city. With students who enter with less initial motivation to be at the school, the staff have to work harder to build the students' investment in the school culture.

Additionally, the requirements for high-stakes standardized testing are increasing significantly in the state of New York. These tests are deeply antithetical to CPESS's approach to learning and present a big challenge to the school in terms of preserving its central ideas.

Supplement to Dewitt Clinton High School

Dewitt Clinton's Academic Side

In addition to being a caring place, Dewitt Clinton intensely focuses on academics. The Clinton way means a "no-nonsense" attitude. School staff carefully scrutinize data related to academic outcomes and adjust and refine their work on a regular basis. The school has specific expectations for students in terms of academic skills like writing and computer literacy. The academic situation of individual students is monitored, and staff follow up with students when they appear to fall behind (e.g., not hand in homework).

There are a variety of supports available to students to help them meet the school's standards including such resources as mentoring, tutorials and a computer center.

Dewitt Clinton sees superb results from this academic focus. Clinton claims a 97% college admissions rate.

Other Programs and Services Available at Dewitt Clinton

Dewitt Clinton offers a variety of additional programs to meet the needs of its students. There is a childcare program for students who have children. To place their children in this program, parents must take a year-long course in parenting and may not fail any of their classes. The school also provides a substance abuse counselor and a clinic staffed by a nearby hospital.

More Details on Assemblies

Dewitt Clinton tries to arrange as many assemblies as possible that will recognize students and bring their parents into the school. The Coordinator of Student Affairs creates enough categories for student recognition to create assemblies of approximately 250 students and their families. Assemblies can range from honors for perfect attendance to recognition for passing all of one's classes. The certificates, t-shirts, and medals that students receive in these assemblies are very meaningful to them.

Supplement to El Puente

Background

El Puente is a public school that started through New York City's New Visions program which sponsored the development of several small schools. About half of the students come from outside of Williamsburg, and half are local. Like the residents of the Williamsburg neighborhood, students are predominantly Puerto Rican and Dominican.

El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice is, in many ways, a seamless extension of the pre-existing El Puente organization, which provided (and continues to provide) arts programs, health and wellness programs, tutoring, and community organizing and development activities. The school and organization share the same mission and values. They share a similar approach to youth, developing young people's capacity through skill-building activities and providing venues for building leadership in a context of community.

In addition to all of this, El Puente has been very successful at preparing students academically. 93% of its graduates are admitted to college.

El Puente's Approach to Curriculum-Passion and Purpose

El Puente's general curriculum illustrates how the school goes about helping young people find "passion and purpose" (Ms. Lucerna):

The curriculum is based on three ideas:

- 1.) viewing academic disciplines through the cultures of the students;
- 2.) integrating academic disciplines with each other and making them relevant to students and the community;
- 3.) bringing academic study together with community organizing and involvement.

El Puente believes that every academic discipline (math, science, etc.) has existed in each culture to further the quality of life of people in the culture. Accordingly, the curriculum brings in different cultures' approaches to these disciplines. For example, science might involve looking at how the Taino culture (an indigenous people of Puerto Rico) needed to understand certain aspects of physics to live on steep mountainsides.

At the same time, youth culture is integrated into the curriculum. For example, hip-hop is brought into a variety of academic subjects, and the school has an annual hip-hop showcase.

Finally, the curriculum often leads to action in the community. El Puente students have been involved in community issues such as poisonous lead in the soil, vaccinations, the building of an incinerator, the high incidence of asthma in the community, and police brutality.

El Puente's approach to curriculum would be well illustrated by describing the way that they use themes. Every year, the school has a theme that all classes and the afterschool program incorporate. The theme is studied through many disciplines and serves as the basis for artistic work and community activism. For example, sugar was picked as a theme because of its relevance to the El Puente community. Many of the families of El Puente students and staff come from Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, where sugar is a major export crop. The role of sugar on these countries' economies has had a major impact on the families of El Puente. At

the same time, Williamsburg is home to a sugar refinery, which influences the neighborhood's economy and pollutes its environment.

Staff at El Puente believe that New York's high-stakes testing requirements has a very negative impact on their curriculum. They think that one of the reasons that students seem less engaged in regular school than in the afterschool program has to do with the way courses must be taught in order to prepare students for standardized tests. El Puente is working with a consortium of other schools to advocate for students to be able to demonstrate their knowledge through alternatives to standardized tests.

Philosophy

El Puente draws on its mission and twelve principles to develop its general practices. These principles are fundamental in enabling El Puente to create a community. The principles help El Puente create practices that bring about a caring and meaningful school community instead of a bureaucratic institution divorced from the cultures and languages of its students.

Mission:

To inspire and nurture leadership and build bridges for human rights and community development.

Holism

Learning must be approached from the perspective of the whole person-body, mind, and spirit.

Development

Learning must be approached from the perspective of potential not deficit. Every individual's process must be respected.

Creating Community

The learning environment should facilitate the realization of a person's potential in the context of and for the good of her/his community/village and the larger collective.

Collective Self-Help

Intellectual self-reliance is drawn from the mutual resources, support, and the thinking of the learning community (member, facilitator, family, community). Everyone is a facilitator and everyone is a learner.

Mentoring

Each member of the learning community is a bridge for others' growth.

Love & Caring

The primary motivation of the learning process is the relationship of love and caring.

Safety

The learning process can only be nurtured and developed in an environment of individual and collective investments and respect.

Creativity

The learning process should stimulate the constant reinvention of our understanding and resources towards the creation of knowledge.

Mastery/Excellence

There should be a constant assessment of the self in the pursuit of excellence.

Respect

The acknowledgement and appreciation of the community and all the individuals that constitute the community.

Unity Through Diversity

Celebrating the differences and affirming our common humanity in an environment of trust, sharing, and compassion for each other and community.

Peace and Justice

Learning is the individual and collective practice of freedom. It creates the understanding of the historical, cultural, social, and political conditions, events, and issues that shape our world. It is a process that moves us to use our skills and insights to design and work towards a more equitable and just world for ourselves and the global community.

Holistic Individualized Planning Process (HIP)

HIP is an approach that guides how people at El Puente help each other. It is founded on the idea that people are most profoundly transformed through relationships. Everyone has resources and can help each other. For this reason, staff are viewed as participants, not as "the helpers." Goal-setting is an important part of HIP.

Through HIP, students develop a strong relationship with an adult mentor. They also participate in a reflection process with peers. In both of these forums, they share their goals and receive support to attain them. They are encouraged to think of goals that are for self-development but in the context of a community.

HIP weaves its way through many other activities at El Puente. There is a peer mediator program. Staff act as mediators for problems between other staff. What distinguishes HIP from other counseling and group processes is not a particular technique, but rather the emphasis on people taking time to be together and talk about what is going on with each other. It is defined by an in-depth approach that involves finding out what is really going on with someone rather than going through the motions of a procedure. For example, a HIP mediation might take a lot longer than other mediations. It is not enough for students to say they will not fight. HIP addresses the underlying problem.

Membership

Everyone at El Puente is viewed as a member. One of the things that freshmen are introduced to at orientation is what membership means, its rights and responsibilities. The membership process and pledge emphasizes that membership is voluntary and that students are actively choosing to become members. It also stresses the deeper meaning of membership—a choice to stand for the values espoused by the school community. For example, part of the membership agreement reads, "I have decided to become a member of the El Puente Movement for Peace and Justice."

Student ownership of El Puente is encouraged through many different vehicles for student input.

More Details on Orientation

Like other New York City high schools, students go through an application process. During this time, they have an interview with the principal or the counselor. Before the school year starts, they and their family receive important information in the mail. This information includes the school rules which are presented in a carefully selected context. First, the document lays out the mission of the school. Then, the rules are presented as measures that are necessary to make the school a safe place and to support the school's work to fulfill its mission.

The freshman orientation has varied in length from a day to a week. For many activities, students are broken down into groups of 10-15 students. Facilitators make an effort to touch base with each student in his/her group and get to know them. Students from the older grades play an active role in the orientation.

Sometimes students are concerned when they find out about some of El Puente's unique features such as not having lockers, being housed in a building that doesn't look like a school (the school is in a building that used to be a church), etc. It is important for them to be prepared for these features that they are not used to, hear the reasons behind them, and have a chance to discuss their concerns. (By the way, El Puente is very safe and there have been very few thefts over the years.)

More Details on Celebrations and Trips

Celebrations and trips play an important role in creating a special sense of community—a space about which people are excited and to which they want to belong.

El Puente has certain celebrations that occur every year such as a Three Kings Celebration in the Christmas season. This celebration is traditional in the Latino communities that make up the majority of the El Puente membership. This celebration features a performance of a play about the three kings. The performance involves people from the El Puente extended community—the high school, the afterschool program, El Puente afterschool programs at other sites, and other community members. Of course, there is a big meal as well. Additional yearly events include the Culture Bazaar and a Lyrical Poetry Jam.

Other celebrations respond to needs that come up at particular times. The student council has developed some celebrations and events that speak to student needs and interests. For example, the students were concerned that as the school grew, students from different grades did not really know each other. The student council developed "Bug-Out Day." For this day, students are part of mixed-grade groups and are assigned to a room and also to one of El Puente's twelve principles. Together, they plan activities related to the principle. On Bug-Out Day, the students rotate through the rooms, experiencing the activities they have designed for each other.

Trips have included activities such as a men's retreat or women's retreat where students and facilitators spend a few days at a cabin, in groups of 10-15 at a time.

Sacred Circles

El Puente takes safety seriously. When something happens to threaten the sense of safety, many steps are taken to acknowledge the seriousness of such a violation and to re-establish safety. Sacred Circles is one way in which they do this.

When a serious issue has erupted in the school, young people will ask to create a Sacred Circle. Everyone in El Puente participates in this—students, school staff, and all other El Puente staff, coming together in one big room. During a Sacred Circle, people share their feelings and concerns about what is going on. Hopefully, they come up with plans for how to respond to the issue.

Dialogues with Students

As the El Puente community has encountered obstacles and challenges, town hall meetings have been very helpful in ironing out problems. These are forums where students and staff come together as a community and have dialogues about problems.

One issue that has come up over the years has been whether or not it is permissible to wear hats. Through the town meeting process, staff and students worked out a compromise. It was OK to wear hats if they did not cover students' eyes, and if they did not wear them in certain settings where it would be disrespectful.

Over time, however, this agreement has been modified. The staff came to realize that how they themselves were dressing was sending students a message about the general acceptance of informality. This was not preparing students for other settings. One by-product of this realization was modifying the hat agreement so that now students only wear hats on Fridays.

An important part of what makes the dialogue work is that adults bring issues to the students for their input, while at the same time remaining clear about their own perspectives.

More Details on Approach to Discipline

Staff meet weekly to discuss students. They identify students they want to celebrate, and discuss problems that are happening with students. When there is a problem, the staff tries to understand what is going on. For example, if someone is tardy 8 times, the standard consequence is to give that student an F in a class. Before applying this rule, however, the staff consider special circumstances. If, for example, the student arrives to class late because she is the mother to a child, and yet, she has been making up all the work that she misses, an alternative agreement to an "F" might be reached.

These discussions may lead to creative plans. If, for example, a student has communicated that he is often around a lot of arguments at home in the morning which makes it difficult to get to school on time, a plan may be developed in which a facilitator would call this student every morning. The facilitator's call gives the student the energy to persevere with his day after a bad start.

Since about 70% of the students are in El Puente's after school program, it is easier for staff to arrange to meet with them after school—much easier at El Puente than at schools where students tend to leave right away.

When working with a student who has seriously violated the community's expectations, staff approach the situation in a serious, but loving, way. They try to help the student understand their concern and where it is coming from. They let the student know that they will care for him or her whether or not s/he did the action in question. They explain why it's important for the student to take responsibility for what s/he has done. And they try to go to the heart of why the

student did it.

When there is a serious incident, the crisis team gets involved. After getting the facts, the team comes up with a plan and tells the staff. Tasks are divided up—one person will check in with the student's family, another will talk to other students who were upset by the situation, etc.

The crisis team checks in with the staff to get their feedback and input. It is important for the staff who work with that student to feel that their opinion is heard and to be invested in the solution. The crisis team also pays attention to the staff's needs. Staff may be very upset about what is going on with a student and may need to talk to someone about it.

When a student is suspended, s/he is given specific questions for reflection. For example, s/he might be asked what commitment s/he is willing to make to the community, and what support s/he needs to keep that commitment.

More Details on Staffing

One staff person is completely devoted to facilitating the crisis team, facilitating weekly support groups for all students, providing workshops on conflict resolution, etc. This staff person is able to mobilize other staff in meetings with students and families, through coordination and follow-through.

Next Steps at El Puente

El Puente is working on a more formal staff development process and orientation strategies for bringing new staff on board. They recently had their first all-staff retreat in ten years. Currently, staff are receiving more formal training about HIP. They are pursuing other ideas for building common understandings of what their philosophy looks like in action.

With regard to handling discipline issues, El Puente is trying to enhance their work in two ways. First, they want to improve communication within the staff when there is a problem and make sure that no one is left out of the loop. Second, they want to institute an evaluation process so that when a crisis blows over they can learn from it and continue to improve.

Supplement to Oakhurst Elementary School

More Background on Oakhurst

In addition to 1st-5th grades, Oakhurst has a "kinderheim" program, a multi-age setting for 3-5 year olds. This is partially funded through Head Start. Oakhurst also houses Even Start, an adult literacy program with childcare for 0-3 year olds.

More Details on Making Plans for Individual Students

When things are not going well with a student, school staff and parents meet to do something about the problem as early as possible. What might a plan for a child look like? Perhaps there is a problem where one student is calling another student names. The intervention plan might call for the teacher to assess, in half-hour blocks of time, whether or not the student has called anyone a name. For every half-hour in which he or she did not call anyone names, the student might receive a happy face sticker or some other token. A realistic goal, as to how much the student could immediately cut back on the name-calling habit, is developed. If the student achieves this goal—measured by happy faces, etc.—then the teacher and parent agree to do something like give the child a special privilege. The parent provides input as to what the child would like. Then, the teacher communicates with the parent so each adult can follow through. If the student is successful, then the goal is raised to a higher level.

More Details on Building Relationships with Parents

The principal works to instill a sense throughout the school community that it is fine for people to disagree, and that no one will hold a grudge against them. She encourages parents to disagree in a respectful manner. If parents are disrespectful to school staff, the staff continue to behave respectfully and do not do things that might happen at another school if a parent became very heated, such as call the police. At a future time, the principal will speak to the parent and point out that in spite of their disagreement the school people did not disrespect him or her. In this way, she tries to set a tone of respect that can be carried into even the most difficult situations.

More Details on Consequences

The school does not tolerate fighting. At times if there has been a fight, the child might be "overnight suspended." The child does not miss school under this kind of suspension. Rather, a parent must bring the child to school the next day in order to meet with the staff. There are very few actual suspensions where a child misses school.

As has been described above, quick action taken in a positive way is a prominent feature of the school's response to problems. In many schools, staff define administrative support as administrators coming down hard on students with tough consequences when there is a problem. Although Ms. Mack's interventions tend to avoid harsh consequences, the staff feel very supported by her approach. They feel that she takes action right away and does not let problems grow. There are clear plans, and there is follow-through. They do not need to see a lot of suspensions to feel that the administrator is effectively supporting them.

More Details on Staff Relationships with Each Other

A culture has developed at Oakhurst Elementary marked by staff camaraderie. There is an understanding that although they may disagree with each other at times, they share the goal of doing what is best for the child and the family. When things are not working out well with a

teacher, the principal will sit down with that person and ask, "What can we do to make sure that you're doing what we need you to do?" Usually, the situation can be worked out.

More Details on Celebrations and Events

Oakhurst Elementary holds a "wiener roast" in the fall. All parts of the school are represented. Parents are invited to an open house to get acquainted with their child's teacher, the rules and philosophy of the school, and the curriculum. They are asked to fill out a survey so that topics of interest can be planned for them throughout the year. In a meeting/workshop format, the "Lunch and Learns" activity addresses topics that they have requested; then parents have lunch with their child/children.

There is luncheon before the Thanksgiving break. At the parent appreciation brunches, parents are invited to stay with their children for the rest of the day. The school also holds "make it-take it" craft workshops for parents. Children are allowed to come out of class and participate with their parents.

In the fall, children set a reading goal. Students who reach their goal can double dare their teachers to such acts as shaving off a beard (it happened). In the spring, students set another reading goal. Those who meet their goal participate in the school's annual trip to "Stone Mountain."

Supplement for PSJA High School

More about Student Demographics

About 30% of the students at PSJA are from migrant families and come to PSJA after the school year has started; often, many leave before it has ended.

More Details on Advisory

One aspect of the advisory approach that makes it effective is that the advisories go into each topic in great depth. Students have a chance to internalize the approaches they are being taught.

The content of advisory for the juniors and seniors is based on the "seven habits of highly effective people," which comes from the work of leadership expert Stephen Covey.

More Details on PSJA's Participation in the Alliance Schools Initiative

A core team of PSJA parents, teachers and administrators meet regularly with people from the central office of the district. This has reversed the more typical flow of power. Rather than having to turn out people to come to the district's meetings (e.g., school board meetings), the PSJA group has district administration attending their meetings.

In preparation for meetings with district and other officials, the action team meets and rehearses what they will say. The rest of the group has an important role as audience members. The high school drill team or student council provides childcare during these meetings.

New Programs

This year, PSJA initiated a series of father-son sessions at night. They had noticed that most of the participating parents were women, so they developed a program to involve more of the fathers.

PSJA is about to start a "parent academy." This activity will involve a series of four weekly evening sessions for parents on several topics such as: how the school can work better with the parents to support the students' learning, how to interpret report cards, attendance reports, test scores, etc. This academy is a new strategy to identify additional parent leaders to participate in the school's community organizing activities.

Challenges

While the advisory program at the school effectively impacts the relationships between students, staff, families and school adults, it still faces challenges. Not all teachers are equally effective at implementing the program. Staff turnover also presents obstacles to this program.

Supplement to River East Elementary School

More Background on River East's Philosophy

River East staff work hard at creating an "abundance of safety" for students. This safety creates a context where staff can hold the highest expectations for children's behavior and their responsibility towards each other.

Alongside these high expectations, school adults bring a strong understanding of child development and know that each child learns at different rates; some students may need to go through similar experiences several times before being able to make a change.

The acceptance and respect that staff have for the cultural differences within their school community's population also holds for the differences in learning styles of the students. River East does not see students as learning disabled; rather they see schools that cannot find ways to provide for the learners in their community as disabled.

One process that has helped River East build such strong relationships with its students and families has been the modeling they do for each other. The director provides a model in the relationships he builds with staff; teachers provide a model in their relationships with educational assistants. The idea is people have to experience something in order to transmit it.

More Background on River East's History and Process for Development

River East draws strength from the legacy of progressive educators and the Central Park East model. River East's stability is based in part on teacher empowerment. Staff took "courageous and vigilant" action in the early years to protect the role of teachers in the school (Massey).

Choosing to Come to River East

River East accepts students from anywhere in New York City. Parents who are thinking of sending their children there visit the school and are given tours by students. The Director then meets with the families and welcomes them. This process of learning about the school gives families the message that River East is a place where adults and children work together.

This process also provides parents with enough information to know whether or not they want to send their child there. Some parents do not feel that the school is a good fit for them.

Relationships with Parents

The school builds strong relationships with parents. Multi-graded classrooms give teachers and parents a chance to know each other over two years. The school's narrative report cards is one of many ways that teachers show parents that they know their children well and put effort into thinking about many different aspects of the child. Parents respond to this sense of commitment from the staff and share personal information about things that are going on at home that might not be shared in other schools.

More Details on Approach to Discipline

The staff rarely suspends a student formally (there was one such suspension last year), but, at times, does suspend students without noting it in the official records. In these cases, the school would have a conversation with the family that might lead to coming up with a plan

where the child is picked up and kept at home for a day. The student might then return to school with an alternate program for a day or two followed by a Family-School Conference to re-integrate the student back into her/his regular class.

The staff is not concerned that an individualized, case-by-case response to discipline will seem unfair to students. As part of their philosophy of recognizing and accepting individual differences, they do not try to hide students' differences from other students. They find that even kindergartners can understand that a particular student needs to be first in line, maybe all of the time.

Some Examples of Working with Students on Behavior Issues

One student was gifted academically, but behaviorally, had difficulty respecting other people's boundaries. The other students in the class appreciated many qualities about him including his mind, adventuresome nature, and the way he got excited about things. At the same time, they were very frustrated with the way he would call out in class. Students began telling him to be quiet. The youngest child in the class told him, "I'm going to have to ask you to step outside of the class." This feedback from other students made a big difference in his behavior.

There was one serious incident last year where a student brought a box-cutter blade to school. This was an expellable offense, and the school district wanted to transfer the student to another school. River East asked to keep the student. They found that the student had no place to go between the time when school ended and the time that his parents came home from work. During this interval, he had been spending time on the street. The school arranged for a River East graduate to take care of the student every day until his parents got home. They transferred him from a 4th grade class to a 5th/6th grade class that had a better environment for him. Through a variety of such supports, the situation with this student improved greatly.

Supplement to San Francisco Community School

More Background on SF Community

SF Community takes a hands-on approach to curriculum, emphasizing projects. The school year is divided into four segments. During two of these segments, students participate in classes based on grade level. During the other two segments, students participate in an interdisciplinary, project-oriented course called a challenge. These classes are mixed across grade level. All of the challenges in the school are unified around a common theme. Sometimes, students also participate in community service as part of the hands-on, project-based approach.

What Happens When a Student Wants to Use Conflict Resolution with an Adult?

Students can request conflict managers for resolving a problem with an adult. Students do not tend to make this request until they reach the middle school years. Even then, some students do not have the sense of power to think of making such a request. For those who do use it, they often find that the situation becomes significantly improved even if the outcome is not exactly what they wanted. To these students, it makes a difference to talk with the adult they have had a conflict with in the presence of someone else they trust. Furthermore, in such a setting, the emotion is not as high as it was when the conflict occurred.

Challenges

This year, there is a group of African American girls in the middle school who have not "bought in" to the school and who are having some conflicts with school expectations and rules. This group of students is new to the school; unlike many of the others, they have arrived in their middle school years.

The school is responding by trying to find ways to involve them more deeply in the school community, by developing clubs that would be of interest to them, etc. They have also put more effort into recruiting African American students at the middle school level to be conflict managers, since this is a high-visibility leadership role for students in the school. The experience of the school has been that when African American students who are leaders identify with and support the school, this influences other African American students.

Next Steps

The school is currently working to deepen its understanding of racism in schools and of cultural issues. Over the course of this school year, the school will be sending everyone on the staff to a two-day workshop entitled "Beyond Diversity: The Lens and Tools for De-Institutionalizing Racism."

Supplement to Sankofa Shule

More Background

Sankofa Shule's approach is comprehensive, including a curriculum, which emphasizes African culture and history; pedagogical approaches that are multi-sensory, eclectic, and individualized; rigorous expectations; and a holistic emphasis on body, soul and the mind.

More Details on the Ethical Principles

Education at Sankofa Shule is built on the principles of Khephera, MAAT, Nguzo Saba, and Sankofa. **Khephera** means "always striving to become, striving for excellence, always learning and doing" (Rivers, 1998).

Maat was a goddess of KMT (ancient Egypt). She represented several qualities that are used as principles to strive towards: Truth, Justice, Righteousness, Order, Balance, Harmony, and Reciprocity.

The principles of the **Nguzo Saba** were developed by Dr. Maulana Karenga and are based on African cultural values. They are Umoja-Unity, Kujichagulia-Self Determination, Ujima-Collective Work and Responsibility, Ujamaa-Cooperative Economics, Nia-Purpose, Kuumba-Creativity, and Imani-Faith.

Sankofa means "to go back and fetch it. It teaches you who you are and from whence you have come so that you will know where you are and where you are going" (Rivers).

More Details on Rewards and Penalties

Sankofa Shule involves students in the development of rewards and penalties, so that they will feel that they are part of this process. The school does not view rewards as a form of bribery but rather as a way of thanking students for their efforts.

Each student has a Khephera (always striving for excellence) notebook that contains the principles of MAAT, the Nguzo Saba, the Zulu Affirmation, goals for each month, and star sheets with homework assignments and monthly progress reports. The weekly star sheets have a pyramid of 100 blocks. Teachers reward students with stars on these sheets. At the end of the week, students that have above a certain number of stars go to the "Imhotep Room" for prizes and fun activities. Students with a slightly lower number of stars go to the "Anansi Room," for fun, though not quite as highly-valued activities. Other students go to a room where they work on homework or study.

The school also wants to reinforce students for working together (Ujima, the principle of collective work and responsibility). There are also rewards and penalties based on the total number of stars a class accumulates in a month.

Homework is included in this system of rewards and penalties to emphasize its importance.

Although the school has never expelled a student, some parents have moved their children to another school. This usually happens when parents disagree with the school's approach to discipline and do not want their children to receive penalties.

More Details on the Role of Parents in the School

Parents are also asked to earn stars-three a month. Parents receive stars by attending Harambe. Harambe means pulling together and is a gathering of parents, students, faculty, staff and community for a Rites of Passage Program based on the Nguzo Saba. Parents also receive stars for volunteering, completing rites of passage tasks, serving on school committees, donating supplies, and participating in the investment club. The investment club, called Ujamaa, was launched by parents through the Harambe activities. They also carried out a voter registration campaign.

Challenges

As the students at Sankofa Shule get older, the school faces new challenges. Some students have left the school during the middle school years because they wanted a sports program and a bigger school. They feel that the size of a school influences their social life. Also, the older students are questioning the school uniform policy, and the school is currently trying to work through this with them. Some of the rewards that were very motivating for younger students are less so for older ones and need to be adjusted.

The school is in need of additional funds in several areas. First, since Sankofa Shule writes its own curriculum, the costs for color copies of materials is considerable. Second, the out-of-area fieldtrips are quite expensive, and parents must pay whatever portion of the money that the school is unable to raise. Finally, Sankofa Shule would like to have access to a psychiatrist to work with some children around issues of violence.

APPENDIX II:

HOW TO ANALYZE DATA ON SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS

Comparison data for suspensions

When analyzing a school's data on suspensions and expulsions, it is helpful to have a frame of reference to understand whether the numbers are high or not. In terms of suspensions, one helpful number is the number of students suspended divided by the total number of students. If you convert this to a percentage, (multiply by 100), you can compare this number to other suspension percentages.

Here are some figures on suspension percentages to use for comparison purposes when looking at the schools:

National Suspension Percentages in 1996-97 (US Department of Education)

All Students	African American Students	Asian/Pacific Islander Students	Latino Students	Native American Students	White Students
7%	13%	3%	7%	7%	6%

However, the suspension percentages are different in elementary, middle, and high school. Here are the suspension percentages broken down by school level in four districts:

Suspension Percentages by School Level*

	Elementary School Students	Middle School Students	High School Students
Cleveland, OH	6%	69%	46%
San Diego, CA	3%	24%	13%
San Francisco, CA	1%	6%	3%
Seattle, WA	2%	18%	11%

* All data is for 1998-99 school year, except for Seattle, which is for the 1997-98 year. Data was provided by the Applied Research Center and the included districts.

The national figures for suspensions may be quite different from the figures of particular localities. In analyzing a school, it is helpful to refer to geographic areas that are similar to that of the school.

In terms of analyzing racial disparities within the schools that were studied, none of the schools provided a racial breakdown of their discipline data. Unfortunately, many schools do not, and are not required to keep comprehensive and consistent data on discipline.

Again, geographic areas with racial compositions similar to that of the school are the best point of reference. If a school is in an urban area and is composed of half African American and half Latino students, then the school's overall suspension percentage should be compared to an urban area with a similar racial composition.

Below is some data for suspensions in selected districts throughout the country (data made available through the Applied Research Center). This data is broken out for African American

students and Latino students for the purposes of comparison with the schools in this study, since almost all of these are mainly composed of African American and Latino students. The data is also broken out for White students, in order to compare suspension data of the featured schools with numbers of one of the racial groups that tends to be least suspended.

Suspension Percentages, Selected Districts

	African American Students	Latino Students	White Students	All Students
Austin, TX	31%	16%	8%	15%
Boston, MA	8%	5%	4%	6%
Cleveland, OH	31%	N/A	N/A	31%
Los Angeles, CA	22%	9%	8%	10%
Oakland, CA	25%	12%	6%	18%
Phoenix, AZ (High School District)	20%	11%	1%	4%
San Francisco, CA	9%	2%	2%	3%

Data is from various years from 1996-97 to 1998-99.

Comparison data for expulsions

When reading the data on expulsions in the school profiles, you will notice the use of another phrase, disciplinary transfers. Often the word expulsion is used to mean that a student has been expelled from a district. If a student is expelled from a school, but not from the district, a phrase such as disciplinary transfer is used.

Expulsion percentages are much smaller than suspension percentages. Here is some data on selected districts (data made available through the Applied Research Center and the included districts).

Expulsion Percentages, Selected Districts in 1998-99

	African American Students	Latino Students	White Students	All Students
Cleveland, OH	0.20%	N/A	N/A	0.21%
San Diego, CA	1.23%	0.56%	0.32%	0.55%

A word of caution about analyzing the data on suspensions and expulsions

This report has gone into some detail about the damaging effects of suspensions and expulsions. At the risk of appearing inconsistent, it is important to point out that suspensions and expulsions are not always damaging.

The context in which the suspension or expulsion takes place is very important. If, for example, a suspension takes place in a context where it is clear that school adults care about a student and are committed to his or her potential, if it is clear that the suspension is not a rejection, but, rather, part of a healing and growing process for all concerned, then a suspension might play a useful role.

When analyzing the number of suspensions that a school assigns, it is important to consider the descriptive information about the context in which suspensions occur.

Suspension Data for Each School and Relevant Comparisons

Below, the suspension data that was included in each school's profile is presented again next to relevant comparisons in terms of grade level and racial composition of the school. These side-by-side numerical comparisons make it easier to get a sense of whether the school's suspension rate is comparatively high or low. (Unfortunately, it is much harder to obtain data on expulsions, so it is not possible to present similar comparisons for the expulsion data.)

For each school, data is selected from geographic areas that reflect the racial composition of the school. If there is no data available from areas that reflect the geographic composition of the school, areas are chosen that reflect the median of the available localities.

All of the data is presented as "suspension percentages," that is the number of suspensions as a percentage of the total student population.

Central Park East Secondary School

	High Schools		African American Students		Latino Students		White Students	
Central Park East	San Diego	Seattle	National	Boston	National	Boston	National	Boston
2%	13%	11%	13%	8%	7%	5%	65	4%

Dewitt Clinton High School

	High Schools		African American Students			Latino Students		
Dewitt Clinton	San Diego	Seattle	National	Los Angeles	Austin	National	Los Angeles	Austin
1%	13%	11%	13%	22%	31%	7%	9%	16%

El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice

	High Schools		Latino Students		
El Puente	San Diego	Seattle	National	Los Angeles	Austin
8%	13%	11%	7%	9%	16%

Oakhurst Elementary School

	Elementary Schools		African American Students		
Oakhurst	Cleveland	Seattle	National	Cleveland	Oakland
3%	6%	2%	7%	31%	25%

PSJA High School

	High Schools		Latino Students		
PSJA	San Diego	Seattle	National	Los Angeles	Austin
3%	13%	11%	7%	9%	16%

River East Elementary School

	Elementary Schools		African American Students			Latino Students		
River East	San Diego	Seattle	National	Los Angeles	Boston	National	Los Angeles	Boston
3%	3%	2%	13%	22%	8%	7%	9%	5%

San Francisco Community School

	Elementary Schools		Middle Schools	
SF Community	San Francisco	Seattle	San Francisco	Seattle
1%	1%	2%	6%	18%

Turning To Each Other Not On Each Other

A Justice Matters Institute Report

Note: Unlike the other schools in the study that have student enrollments that are predominantly African American, predominantly Latino, or predominantly a balance between African American and Latino students, SF Community has a student enrollment balanced between African American, Asian, Latino, White, and other unspecified groups. For this reason, data on suspensions by racial group are not meaningful when analyzing the total number of suspensions at SF Community (since the data on the racial groups of the students suspended is unavailable).

Sankofa Shule

	Elementary Schools		Middle Schools		African American Students		
Sankofa Shule	Cleveland	Seattle	Cleveland	Seattle	National	Cleveland	Oakland
2%	6%	2%	69%	18%	7%	31%	25%

APPENDIX III:

METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

In selecting the schools for this report, Justice Matters Institute consulted with several national education experts with strong knowledge in the areas of school climate and culture, overcoming racism in education, and school discipline. The experts whose suggestions for schools were ultimately included were Gilberto Arriaza, Mark Gordon, Herb Kohl, Edmundo Norte, Geoff Rips, and Joan Wynne.

In addition to asking these people to identify schools that had outstanding school cultures and meaningful approaches to discipline, we also asked for schools composed of students from the groups that are usually disproportionately suspended and expelled. (This methodology successfully led to the identification of schools composed of African American and Latino students. However, it did not lead to the identification of schools with significant numbers of students from other groups that are disproportionately disciplined in some places, such as Native Americans and Pacific Islanders.)

Out of this consultation, 17 schools were identified across the country. Some of these schools were screened out because they did not meet the criteria for outstanding school culture or meaningful approaches to discipline. Some were screened out because their discipline outcomes, in terms of numbers of suspensions or expulsions, were high. Some were screened out due to lack of availability during the time this research was taking place.

Rationale Behind the School Selection Criteria

The school selection criteria were based on our understanding of the problem. Racially disparate outcomes in school discipline comes about in three primary ways: 1.) *misperceptions*; 2.) *racially hostile environments* and 3.) *discipline that discards students of color*.

To develop selection criteria that would prevent these root causes of racial bias, the Justice Matters Institute Discipline Taskforce drew on its experiences during many years of observing, working in, and consulting with schools. This previous work provided the opportunity to gather input from many students, parents, and school staff as well as to intensely study the dynamics related to discipline.

The selection criteria, 1.) *outstanding school culture* and 2.) *meaningful approaches to school discipline*, address each of the components that make up racial bias in school discipline. Outstanding school culture was further broken down into the areas of a.) *consciously and actively caring cultures* and b.) *cultures that are grounded in the students' cultures and realities*. Schools that meet these criteria either eliminate the factors that bring about racial bias in school discipline, or they buffer the harmful effects.

1. Outstanding School Culture

a.) *A consciously and actively caring culture* helps with the problem of misperceptions. If Mrs. Smith knows her students well and has close relationships with them, she might be more likely to take a second look to see if her initial perceptions are correct. Is Jaime intending to be rude, or is he just trying to let her know how frustrated he is? And she might be more likely to

listen to Tanicia when Tanicia communicates that she feels she has been perceived unfairly. Tanicia and Jaime might be more likely to overlook it when Mrs. Smith misperceives them, because they know that she basically cares about and respects them.

A consciously and actively caring culture can also buffer students from the effects of a racially hostile school environment. A caring culture does not necessarily eliminate a racially hostile environment. "Hostile" in this context means a setting whose impact is hostile to students of certain racial groups; it does not mean consciously hostile people. This study's definition of a consciously and actively caring culture does not include anything that would eliminate a racially hostile environment. The definition refers to policies and practices that treat individuals in caring ways, without necessarily being well-informed about them as culturally beings in a racialized society.

Nevertheless, a consciously and actively caring culture can do much to buffer students from a racially hostile environment. Feeling that Mr. Howard is on their side and having strong relationships with him and their other teachers buffers Jaime and Tanicia from the effects of an environment in which both of their cultures are often ignored or devalued. Further, as Mrs. Smith and Mr. Howard make an effort to know their students and families well, they have an opportunity to begin to learn about their students' cultures, how racism has impacted their lives, and make the school environment a more embracing and respectful space for all racial groups.

All of this might convince Jaime and Tanicia that the adults are on their side, and that the rules and consequences come from caring intentions, not from a desire to label, punish, or remove them. They may be more motivated to go along with the rules to please and give back to the adults who do so much for them.

Jaime's and Tanicia's parents might also feel more trust for the school. They worry less that school adults will pick on or hold negative stereotypes about their children. They can be more comfortable in supporting the school's approach to discipline.

Finally, in a caring culture, adults are less likely to use practices that discard and exclude students and their families.

b.) Cultures that are grounded in the students' cultures and realities, the second component of an outstanding school culture, also address racial bias in school discipline more directly and completely than even a consciously and actively caring culture. Some school cultures deeply speak to the struggles, hopes, dreams, and cultures of students and their families. (For example, see descriptions of El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice and Sankofa Shule in the "School Profiles" section.) With a grounding in the cultures of the students, Ms. Sherman is less likely to see Dante's behavior as a problem in the first place. Dante's school embraces his culture in curriculum, pedagogy, celebrations, and everyday interactions. Rather than presenting him with a racially hostile environment, the school's understanding of the passions and concerns of Dante, his family, and their neighborhood crosses the barriers of distrust that racism has erected between students and schools.

Dante, his community, and the school may share a number of clear, urgent common purposes. Perhaps the school actively works with the students' communities to address pressing community problems and injustices. Perhaps they share a common vision of how Dante can develop

in a way that will tie him more closely to his home community and family. Perhaps they simply share a perspective on what children need to grow and develop. With a clear, urgent common purpose shared between students and schools, a student's accommodation to support the rules that advance their shared purpose falls into place.

2. Meaningful Approach to School Discipline

A meaningful approach to school discipline directly addresses the problem of discipline that discards students of color. Rather than discard, meaningful approaches find ways to include students and develop them through the discipline process. At the moment of discipline, meaningful approaches find ways to believe in and build on students' potential.

The Inclusion of Elementary Schools

Of the eight schools featured in this report, two are elementary schools, and two combine the elementary years and the middle school years into one school. People who do not spend a lot of time in elementary schools may think that racial bias in school discipline is not a major problem at this level. In fact, racial bias in school discipline is a very important issue in elementary schools.

While elementary school students are not suspended and expelled at the same rates as middle and high school students, they do receive these consequences. Students who are not suspended or expelled may find themselves experiencing situations that reproduce the dynamics associated with these consequences. They may have interactions with school adults that leave them feeling rejected, seen as bad, treated unfairly and uncaringly, etc. Often, if a student begins to be viewed in negative ways and to react to these perceptions, a problematic dynamic of interaction springs up between students and school adults at the elementary school level which leads to suspensions, expulsions and even incarceration as the student grows older.

There is another reason why this report includes elementary schools with outstanding school climates and meaningful discipline policies—elementary schools often have more knowledge about how to develop these school qualities. They tend to emphasize caring, nurturing environments that support the growth of students in different phases of development far more than do schools for older children. However, much of what elementary schools do is transferable to secondary schools, and would vastly improve schools at this level. The elementary schools in the report convey important lessons for all schools.

Gathering Information about the Schools

Of the eight schools that passed through the screening process, between one and three members of the staff were interviewed. These interviews lasted from 45 minutes to an hour and a half. The interviews took place in person or by telephone, depending on the geographic location of the school. Some interviews were followed up with e-mails, faxes and notes with additional information.

The interviews covered all of the following areas:

- Nature of the school culture
- Impact of school culture on students
- Practices that embody or support the school culture
- Role of students' culture and of racial issues in the culture of the school, and the

impact of this on students

- Approaches to discipline, specific practices, and examples
- Process for school to develop its culture and approach to discipline
- Resources, structures, policy, staffing, and training that support the school's culture and approach to discipline

In some cases these interviews were supplemented by conversations with people who had observed the school and by a review of documents about the school. Each school was also asked to provide some quantitative data on students, staff, suspensions, and expulsions.

Methodological Limitations

It is important to note that these schools are too small of a sample to be representative of all schools with outstanding school cultures and meaningful discipline approaches. For example, unlike the schools in this report, half of the great schools in the U.S. are not in New York City! There are many kinds of schools that would have met our criteria that this methodology did not identify.

The methodology did, however, serve its purpose to identify some schools with outstanding school cultures and meaningful discipline approaches and to document and share their stories and practices.

Sources of Information for Each School

Central Park East Secondary School

Interview

Michelle Shannon, Peer Mediator Coordinator & Social Worker

Documents

"Building a School Community," a document for CPESS staff

Meier, D. *The Power of Their Ideas: Lessons for America from a Small School in Harlem* (Boston: Beacon Press) 1995.

Dewitt Clinton High School

Interviews

Bert Blanco, Coordinator of Student Affairs

Phyllis McCabe, Coordinator of Macy House

El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice

Interviews

Frances Lucerna, Principal

Hector Calderón, Teacher

Jennifer Calderón, Holistic and Integrated Group Process (HIP) Coordinator

Documents

List of twelve principles

Membership pledges

Literature for incoming families

Oakhurst Elementary School

Interviews

Mary Mack, Principal

Nayijjah Nashid, Teacher

Vicki Johnson, Teacher

PSJA High School

Interviews

Rene Ramirez, Principal

Geoff Rips, Fellow, Open Society Institute

River East Elementary School

Interviews

Sid Massey, Director

Louisa Acosta-Cruz, Teacher

San Francisco Community School

Interviews

Robin Sharp, School Reform Coordinator

Lisa Laskey, Deputy Director/School Coach, Bay Area Coalition of Essential Schools

Documents

School Accountability Report Card

Turning To Each Other Not On Each Other

A Justice Matters Institute Report

School website, www.sfusd.k12.ca.us/schwww/sch493

Sankofa Shule

Interview

Freya Rivers, Principal and Founder

Document

Rivers, F. *Heshima to Hotep: African Centered Steps to Educational Excellence*. (Lansing, MI: Freya A. Rivers) 1998.

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