Strategies for Reducing Bias in School Discipline Decisions

Equitable Access to Learning Conference

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University of Oregon

Handouts: http://www.pbis.org

Thank you…

- For being educators, advocates for our students, and devoting time to improving our society

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Overview

1. Complete some **activities** to explore disproportionality in school discipline
2. Share **an intervention approach** for enhancing equity in school discipline
3. Guide you through a **data** driven process to:
   - Identify **specific discipline decisions** with more disproportionality
   - Provide an **alternative response** for staff and administrators

Handouts: http://www.pbis.org
Warm-Up Activity: Implicit Association Test

- [https://implicit.harvard.edu/](https://implicit.harvard.edu/)
- Uses beliefs (stereotypes) and evaluations (attitudes) associated with social groups
- Example: Gender-Career IAT
  - Tests automatic association of MEN more with CAREERS (work outside the home) and WOMEN more with FAMILY

What is implicit bias?

- Unconscious, automatic
- Based on stereotypes
- We all have it (even those affected by it)
- Generally not an indication of our beliefs and values
- More likely to influence:
  - Snap decisions
  - Decisions that are ambiguous

Implicit Bias at Work

- Attractiveness
  - Real estate agents rated as more attractive sell homes for significantly higher prices (Salter, Mixon, & King, 2012)
- Height
  - One inch of height is worth $789 per year in salary (Judge & Cable, 2004)
Implicit Bias in Refereeing
(Carlson, 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Home game differential</th>
<th>Away game differential</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Boston College</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>-14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clemson</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duke</td>
<td>-12</td>
<td>-27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida State</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia Tech</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>-11</td>
<td>-11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miami</td>
<td>-11</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.C. State</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Notre Dame</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pittsburgh</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Syracuse</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>0</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia Tech</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wake Forest</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Implicit Bias and Race

“the challenge is not a small number of twisted white supremacists but something infinitely more subtle and complex: People who believe in equality but who act in ways that perpetuate bias and inequality.”

-Nicholas Kristof, The New York Times

FIGURE 10
Arrest Rates for Marijuana Possession by Race (2001-2010)

Source: FBI/Uniform Crime Reporting Program Data and U.S. Census Data
“African Americans are 2.07 times more likely to be searched during a vehicular stop but are 26% less likely to have contraband found on them during a search.”

Implicit Bias predicts the extent to which…

- **Police Officers** use force when arresting African American children as opposed to White children (Goff et al., 2014)
- **Arbitrators** decide labor grievances in favor of men over women (Girvan, Deason, & Borgida, 2014)
- **Pediatricians** recommend less pain medication for African American children than White children with identical symptoms (Cooper et al., 2012; Sabin & Greenwald, 2012)
Bias in Google Web Searches
(Sweeney, 2013)

- Likelihood of “Arrest Ad”
  - Black-sounding name: 60%
  - White-sounding name: 48%

Disproportionality in School Discipline (Losen et al., 2015)

- Poverty plays a role, but racial disproportionality remains, even when controlling for poverty
  - Anyon et al., 2014
  - Skiba et al., 2002; 2005
  - Wallace et al., 2008

Addressing Common Questions

“Isn’t it all really about poverty?”

- No evidence of different base rates of behavior for any subgroups
  - Bradshaw et al., 2010
  - Losen & Skiba, 2010
  - Skiba et al., 2014

“ Aren’t Black boys just more violent?”
Addressing Common Questions

“Are you saying that all teachers are racist?”

- No! Our research indicates that disproportionality comes from unconscious bias – that we’re not even aware of.
  - Banaji & Greenwald, 2013
  - Greenwald & Pettigrew, 2014
  - van den Bergh et al., 2010

A Multidimensional View of Bias

Two Systems for Decision Making (Kahneman, 2011)

- System 1: **Fast Decisions**
  - Automatic, snap judgments
  - Intuitive, unconscious
- System 2: **Slow Decisions**
  - Deliberate decisions
  - Allows for conscious attention
Discussion

Which decisions in schools are more likely to be snap judgments?

- Correcting a student’s behavior
- Sending a student to the office
- Picking which student to call on
- Deciding whether to call a student’s parent
- Suspending a student from school
- Grading students’ work

How do we begin to address racial bias without it backfiring?

We all believe that a student’s color should not fate him or her to negative outcomes. Discussing equity and race is uncomfortable. Creating discomfort without providing effective strategies for equity is not productive. There are many possible avenues to improving equity.
A 5-point Intervention Approach to Enhance Equity in School Discipline

1. Use engaging academic instruction to reduce the support gap (achievement gap)
2. Implement a behavior framework that is preventive, multi-tiered, and culturally responsive
3. Collect, use, and report disaggregated discipline data
4. Develop policies with accountability for disciplinary equity
5. Teach neutralizing routines for vulnerable decision points

What do we mean by engaging academic instruction?

- Explicit instruction
- High rates of opportunities to respond
- Quality performance feedback
- Progress monitoring and data-based decision making

(Hattie, 2009)
2. Make School Systems More Culturally Responsive

PBIS Cultural Responsiveness Companion
(Leverson, Smith, & McIntosh, in preparation)

- Identifies 15 critical features of behavior support
  - Describes the big idea
  - Identifies cultural responsiveness concept
  - Provides non-examples, examples, activities, and resources

1. Identity Awareness
   (staff/student/community)
2. Voice
3. Supportive Environment
4. Situational Appropriateness
5. Data for Accountability
Identity Awareness Activity (self-reflection on values)

- This activity can be completed for staff to reflect on their personal values and how these values:
  - Change over time
  - Shape the school culture
  - May vary from those of others
  - How these differences could raise conflict

5 Ways to Make School Systems More Culturally Responsive
(Leverson, Smith, & McIntosh, in prep)

1. Identity Awareness (staff/student/community)
2. Voice
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1. Identity Awareness (staff/staff/student/community)
2. Voice
3. Supportive Environment

Effects of PBIS on Discipline Disproportionality

- Vincent et al., 2011
  - Statistically significantly lower Black-White ODR disproportionality in 72 schools implementing SWPBIS than in 81 schools not implementing SWPBIS
- Vincent et al., 2009
  - Decreases in ODRs seen across racial/ethnic groups in 69 schools implementing SWPBIS
- Scott, 2001
  - Larger decreases in suspensions for Black students when SWPBIS implemented
- McIntosh et al., 2014
  - Sustained decrease in suspensions over eight years of SWPBIS implementation in an Indigenous school

Why start with a foundation of PBIS?

1. Proactive, instructional approach *may* prevent problem behavior and exposure to biased responses to problem behavior
2. Increasing positive student-teacher interactions *may* enhance relationships to prevent challenges
3. More objective referral and discipline procedures *may* reduce subjectivity and influence of cultural bias
4. Professional development *may* provide teachers with more instructional responses

(Greflund et al., 2014)
Which PBIS Features are Most Related to Equity?

(Tobin & Vincent, 2011)

- Examined change in Black-White Relative Risk Index for suspensions in 46 schools
- Two key predictors of decreased disproportionality:
  - Regular use of data for decision making
  - Implementation of classroom PBIS systems

Which features predicted decreased disproportionality?

- Expected behaviors defined clearly
- Problem behaviors defined clearly
- Expected behaviors taught
- Expected behaviors acknowledged regularly
- Consistent consequences
- CW procedures consistent with SW systems
- Options exist for instruction
- Instruction/materials match student ability
- High rates of academic success
- Access to assistance and coaching
- Transitions are efficient and orderly

Culturally Responsive PBIS Implementation

- Ensure equitable access to praise and acknowledgment systems
When we look for the behavior we want to see, we will see it more often.

**TFI Walkthrough Tool (pbis.org)**

**Procedure**
Randomly select staff and students as you walk through the school. Use this page as a reference for all other interview questions. Use the interview form to record staff and student responses.

**Staff Interview Questions**
- Interview at least 10% of staff or at least 5 for smaller schools
- Have you taught the school rules/behavioral expectations this year?
- Have you given out any ________ rewards for appropriate behavior ________ month ago?

**Student Interview Questions**
- Interview a minimum of 10 students
- Have you received a ________ for appropriate behavior ________ month ago?
- Have you taught the school rules/behavioral expectations this year?

**Culturally Responsive PBIS Implementation**
- Ensure equitable access to praise and acknowledgment systems
- Make the school’s hidden curriculum explicit and tailored to students
Common PBIS Activity: School-wide Expectations Matrix

- Clarify what is expected for students
- Create consistency among staff
- Reduce miscommunication
- Make hidden curriculum visible
- Sets a positive focus

Culturally Responsive Adaptation: Personal Matrix

- Aka “behavior dictionary”
- Tool to assist in “code-switching”
- The tweak:
  - Take school expectations and...
    - Add differences at home
    - Add differences in community
- Use after tailoring expectations to students, families, and community

5 Ways to Make School Systems More Culturally Responsive

(Leverson, Smith, & McIntosh, in preparation)

1. Identity Awareness (staff/student/community)
2. Voice
3. Supportive Environment
4. Situational Appropriateness

At NorKam, We CARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common Core</th>
<th>Classroom/Library</th>
<th>Hall/Cafeteria</th>
<th>Off-Campus</th>
<th>Assemblies/Performances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C Compass</td>
<td>We will +</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Accountability</td>
<td>accept the consequences of our actions</td>
<td>use our own work for tests</td>
<td>use recycling bins and garbage cans</td>
<td>remove help</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R Respect</td>
<td>use polite language</td>
<td>turn off and put away electronic devices</td>
<td>respect our neighborhood</td>
<td>give full attention to performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E Excellence</td>
<td>use manners</td>
<td>keep lockers free of trash</td>
<td>respect our environment</td>
<td>recognize and show appreciation for the efforts of others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expectation</td>
<td>At SCHOOL it looks like...</td>
<td>At HOME it looks like...</td>
<td>In my NEIGHBORHOOD it looks like...</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Be Safe</strong></td>
<td>Keep hands and feet to self</td>
<td>Tell an adult if there is a problem</td>
<td>Protect your friends and family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t talk back</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Be Respectful</strong></td>
<td>Treat others how you want to be treated</td>
<td>Include others</td>
<td>Include others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|                 | Do my own work             |                          | Listen to adults
| **Be Responsible** | Do my own work             |                          | Help your family out first |
|                 |                            |                          | Own your mistakes
|                 |                            |                          | Share credit for successes |
|                 | Help your family out first |                          |                                          |
|                 | Own your mistakes          |                          |                                          |
|                 | Share credit for successes |                          |                                          |
|                 | Have each other’s backs    |                          |                                          |
|                 | Own your mistakes          |                          |                                          |
|                 | Check in about what to do  |                          |                                          |

### Specific Expectation

During __________________ at school, the expectation is for me to ______________________.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At home this looks like...</th>
<th>At school this looks like...</th>
<th>Questions I have about how it looks at school...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Specific Expectation: Example

During independent seat work at school, the expectation is for me to work quietly by myself.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>At home this looks like...</th>
<th>At school this looks like...</th>
<th>Questions I have about how it looks at school...</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Get a snack</td>
<td>Sit at my desk</td>
<td>How do I know I’m doing it right?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go to the kitchen table</td>
<td>Use a volume level of “1”</td>
<td>What do I do when I’m done?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow the directions</td>
<td>Try every problem</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask my brother if I need help</td>
<td>Work until the teacher says to stop</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go play when done</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5 Ways to Make School Systems More **Culturally Responsive**
(Leverson, Smith, & McIntosh, in prep)

1. Identity Awareness (staff/student/community)
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5. Data for Accountability

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3. Using disaggregated data to assess and address equity

- Disproportionality Data Guide

http://www.pbis.org/school/equity-pbis

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Equity Problem-solving Process

1. Problem Identification
2. Problem Analysis
3. Plan Implementation
4. Plan Evaluation

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4. Implement policies with accountability for equity

- Equity Policy Guide

http://www.pbis.org/school/equity-pbis
5. How can we reduce implicit bias in our decision making?

What is a Vulnerable Decision Point (VDP)?

- A specific decision that is more vulnerable to effects of implicit bias
- Two parts:
  - Elements of the situation
  - The person’s decision state (internal state)

Situations: Options for Identifying VDPs

- Levels of specificity:
  1. All ODR/suspension decisions (general self-instruction routine)
  2. Identify VDPs through national data
  3. Use school or district data
SWIS Drill Down (www.swis.org)

Add demographic group of interest as a filter (click to "Include in Dataset").

Click each graph and compare to overall patterns.

National SWIS Data (2011-12)

3,026,367 ODRs
6,269 schools
47 states, plus DC

Office Referrals by Problem Behavior

Office Referrals by Location
Office Referrals by Time of Day

VDPs from national ODR data

- Subjective problem behavior
  - Defiance, Disrespect, Disruption
  - Major vs. minor
- Non-classroom areas
  - Hallways
- Classrooms
- Afternoons

Multidimensional View of Bias

1. Identify a demographic group of interest
2. Fill the top set of blanks with national ODR data
   - Behavior: Defiance/disrespect, Min/Major
   - Location: Classroom, Hallways
   - Time: Afternoons
   - Day: (no pattern)
   - Grade lvl: (no pattern)

Situations:
Activity - Identify VDPs worksheet

- Behavior:
- Location:
- Time:
- Day:
- Grade lvl:
3. Fill the middle left set with your school or district’s ODR/susp. data for White students
   - Behavior:
   - Location:
   - Time:
   - Day:
   - Grade lvl:

4. Fill the middle right set with data for your demographic group
   - Behavior:
   - Location:
   - Time:
   - Day:
   - Grade lvl:

SWIS Drill Down (www.swis.org)

Add demographic group of interest as a filter (click to “Include in Dataset”).

Click each graph and compare to overall patterns.

Stage 1 Behavior: White Students

Referrals by Problem Behavior

Drill Down

![Graph showing referrals by problem behavior for different categories.](chart.png)
5. For this group, what are some common student behaviors that push your buttons?

6. How might these specific behaviors be related to cultural differences?

7. How might these behaviors meet a functional need for these students?
Situations:
Possible behaviors/cultural basis

- Talking out (aka “overlap”)
  - Origin: churches and desired group responses to leader
  - Demonstrates engagement

- Emotional reactions to requests (aka “machismo”)
  - Origin: years of living in a society that marginalizes them, need for academic support?
  - Expect this kind of response from some
  - Not necessarily a response to you
  - Provide “peacock moments”

- Ignoring requests
  - Origin: need for academic support?
  - Functional alternative to defiance?
  - Rather than look bad than stupid
  - Identify parts of (a) task, and (b) request that may be aversive

Situations:
Responses to culturally-based behaviors

- May be desirable/adaptive outside of school
  - May work/be reinforced in other settings
  - Not necessarily “wrong” – just not for school

- Solutions
  1. Be explicit in teaching situational specificity (“code-switching”)
  2. Provide extensive practice
     - Example: operation signs
Who is supposed to model de-escalation strategies?

“I learned long ago, never to wrestle with a pig. You get dirty, and besides, the pig likes it.”

- George Bernard Shaw

Decision States:

Setting Events

- An event occurring before or with an antecedent that increases likelihood of a behavior
- Sets it up (slow trigger)
- Sometimes is present and sometimes is not
- Does not require one’s awareness
- Examples from students:
  - Lack of sleep
  - Headache/illness
  - Lack of food (e.g., no breakfast)
  - Fight with peer/parent/etc.
  - Failed a test in previous class
  - Didn't get an coffee this morning

Resource Depletion

(Girvan et al., 2014)

- As we become fatigued, our filters for appropriate behavior can be affected
- Effects of hunger (Gailliot et al., 2009)
- Decreases in willpower later in day
  - “The Morning Morality Effect” (Kouchaki & Smith, 2014)
  - Examples…

Resource Depletion in Action

Outcomes of parole hearings (Danziger et al., 2011)
1. What are some common VDP decision states for many adults in schools?

2. What do you think might be possible VDP decision states for you?

**Decision States:**
Activity - Identify VDPs worksheet

- Situation
- Decision state

**Two-step Neutralizing Routine for Staff:**

- When you see problem behavior, stop and ask yourself:
  1. Is this a VDP?
  2. If so, use an agreed-upon alternative response

**Neutralizing Routines for Reducing Effects of Implicit Bias**

- Setting event: Lack of positive interactions with student
- Antecedent: Fatigue
- Behavior: Loud complaints about work (subjective behavior)
- Consequence: Student leaves class (Escape social interaction)
- Alternative Response: "See me after class."

**What makes for a good neutralizing routine?**

1. If-then statement
2. Brief
3. Clear steps
4. Doable
5. Interrupts the chain of events
Neutralizing Routine Examples

- If this is a VDP…,
  - “See me after class/at the next break”
  - am I acting in line with my values?
  - delay decision until I can think clearly
  - ask the student to reflect on their feelings/behavior
  - take two deep breaths
  - recognize my upset feelings and let them go
  - “I love you, but that behavior is not ok”
  - picture this student as a future doctor/lawyer
  - assume student’s best effort at getting needs met
  - model cool-down strategy
  - know that’s Rock Brain talking to me

Neutralizing Routine: Activity - Identify NRs worksheet

1. Brainstorm possible neutralizing routines
2. Check if each idea has all 5 critical features
   1. Brief
   2. If-then statements
   3. Clear steps
   4. Doable
   5. Add space/delay between behavior and response

Two-step Neutralizing Routine for Staff:

- Can also be used as precorrection
  1. Am I about to enter a VDP?
  2. What are my values?
  3. When I see problem behavior, I’ll use the alternative response

Neutralizing Routine: Activity - Identify NRs worksheet

3. Decide on a single neutralizing routine for you (or the school)
4. Practice the neutralizing routine
5. Identify helping and hindering variables
6. Make a plan to maximize its use
Opportunities to build fluency

“If you inadvertently assist the student to escalate, do not be concerned; you will get another chance to do it right the next time around.”

- Geoff Colvin

We just discussed one kind of discipline decision…

- The staff decision to send a student to the office (i.e., issue an ODR)
- What about the administrator’s decision?

What is the strongest predictor of disproportionality in school discipline?

- The school principal’s endorsement of exclusionary discipline and zero tolerance policies.

(Skiba, Trachok, Chung, & Baker, 2012)

Two-step Neutralizing Routine for Administrators:
(Susan Barrett)

- When you have to handle problem behavior, stop and tell yourself:
  1. *Don’t just do something, stand there!*
     - Be sure you are ready to act in line with values
     - Get information from student and staff
     - Assess student-teacher relationship
  2. *Whenever possible, use an agreed-upon instructional response*
     - Teaches missing skills
     - Connects student to school and staff
The Restorative Chat
(Alton School District, Alton, IL)

1. Tell me what happened.
2. What you were thinking at the time?
3. What do you think about it now?
4. Who did this affect?
5. What do you need to do about it?
6. How can we make sure this doesn't happen again?
7. What can I do to help you?

Professional Development

1. Use data to identify:
   - The extent of the problem
   - Vulnerable Decision Points (VDPs)
2. Teach and practice:
   - Implicit bias
   - VDPs
   - Neutralizing routines
3. Follow up:
   - Ongoing coaching
   - Monitor progress with data

School Example

Urban K-8 School

Risk Indices

Referral Risk Index
Major, 2013-14

- Black/White ODR Risk Ratio = 2.67
Drill Down: Phys. Aggression on Playground

**Referral Risk Index (Ethnicity)**

- Black/White ODR Risk Ratio = 4.5

The School PBIS Team’s Intervention

- ODRs and observations indicated differences in perceived basketball rules
- Team clarified rules for staff and students
  - Aka “code-switching”
- Additional teaching, practice, and acknowledgement
- Monitor with ODRs and Black-White RRs

The School PBIS Team’s Intervention Outcomes

**Black-White Risk Ratios**

- Overall
  - 2013-14: **2.67**
  - 2014-15 (Sept to Dec): **2.0**
- Physical Aggression on Playground
  - 2013-14: **4.5**
  - 2014-15 (Sept to Dec): can’t calculate (1 ODR)
Big Ideas

- Thinking about and discussing solutions is the first step
- Pick a neutralizing routine and try it out
- Use your data to assess and monitor
  - If you don’t have the data you need at hand, advocate for it
- This is hard work – but you know how to do it!

Think-Pair Share and Steps Forward

- Turn to partner and share:
  - One aha
  - One ah...huh?
  - One next step

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Handouts: http://kentmcintosh.wordpress.com

References


References


