

# Minority Disproportionality in School Discipline: What We Know and What We Can Do

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Russell Skiba

Center for Evaluation and Education Policy

Indiana University

Presented to the NSBA Council of Urban Boards of Education

Chicago, IL

June 24, 2006

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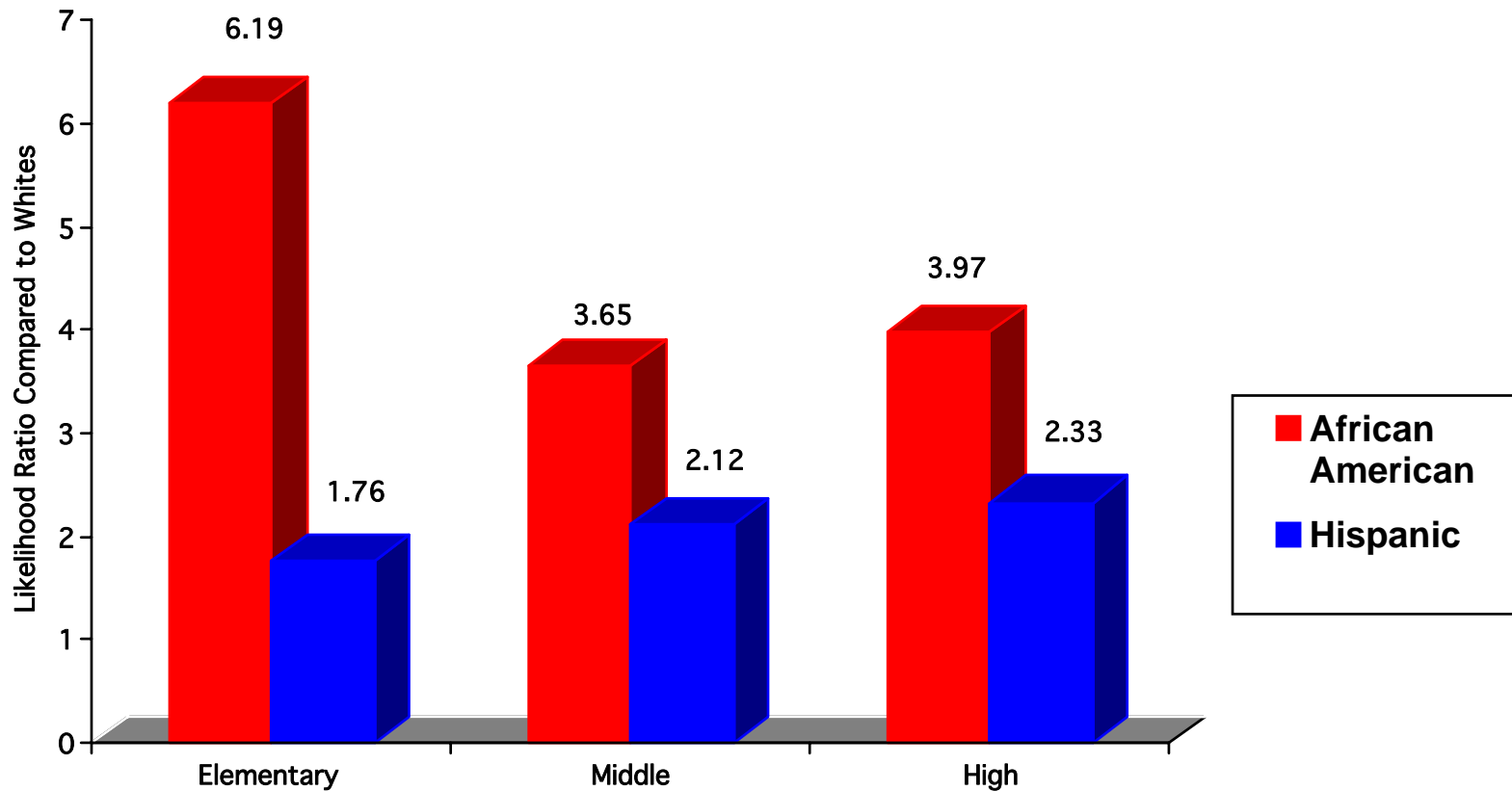
# Is School Discipline Fair?: 30 Years of Study

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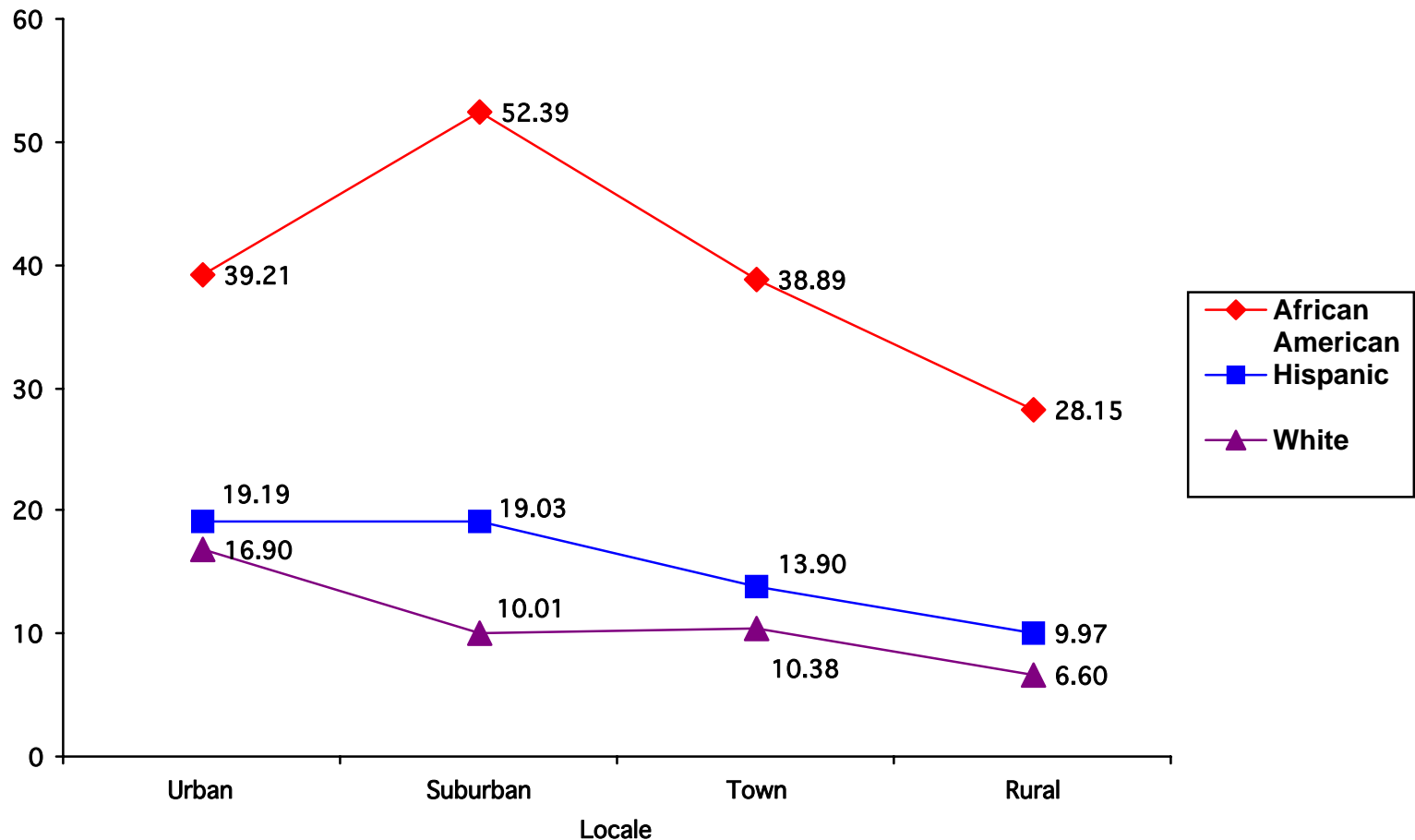
- ❑ CDF (1975): Black students suspended 2-3x as frequently
- ❑ Studies since find disproportionality in:
  - Office referrals
  - Suspension & Expulsion
  - Corporal Punishment
- ❑ Black males 16x as likely as white females to be suspended (Gregory, 1996)

# Out-of-School Suspension Comparison Ratios by Race and School Level

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# Out-of-School Suspension Incident Rate by Race and Locale



# Alternative Explanations of Disciplinary Disproportionality

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- ❑ Disproportionality is related to SES
  - SES and disproportionality correlate, but...
  - Effects of race remain after control
- ❑ Do black students misbehave more?
  - No supporting evidence
  - May in fact be treated more severely for same offenses

# What Behaviors are Students Referred For? By Race

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*Of 32 infractions, only 8 significant differences:*

- White students referred more for:
  - Smoking
  - Vandalism
  - Leaving w/o permission
  - Obscene Language

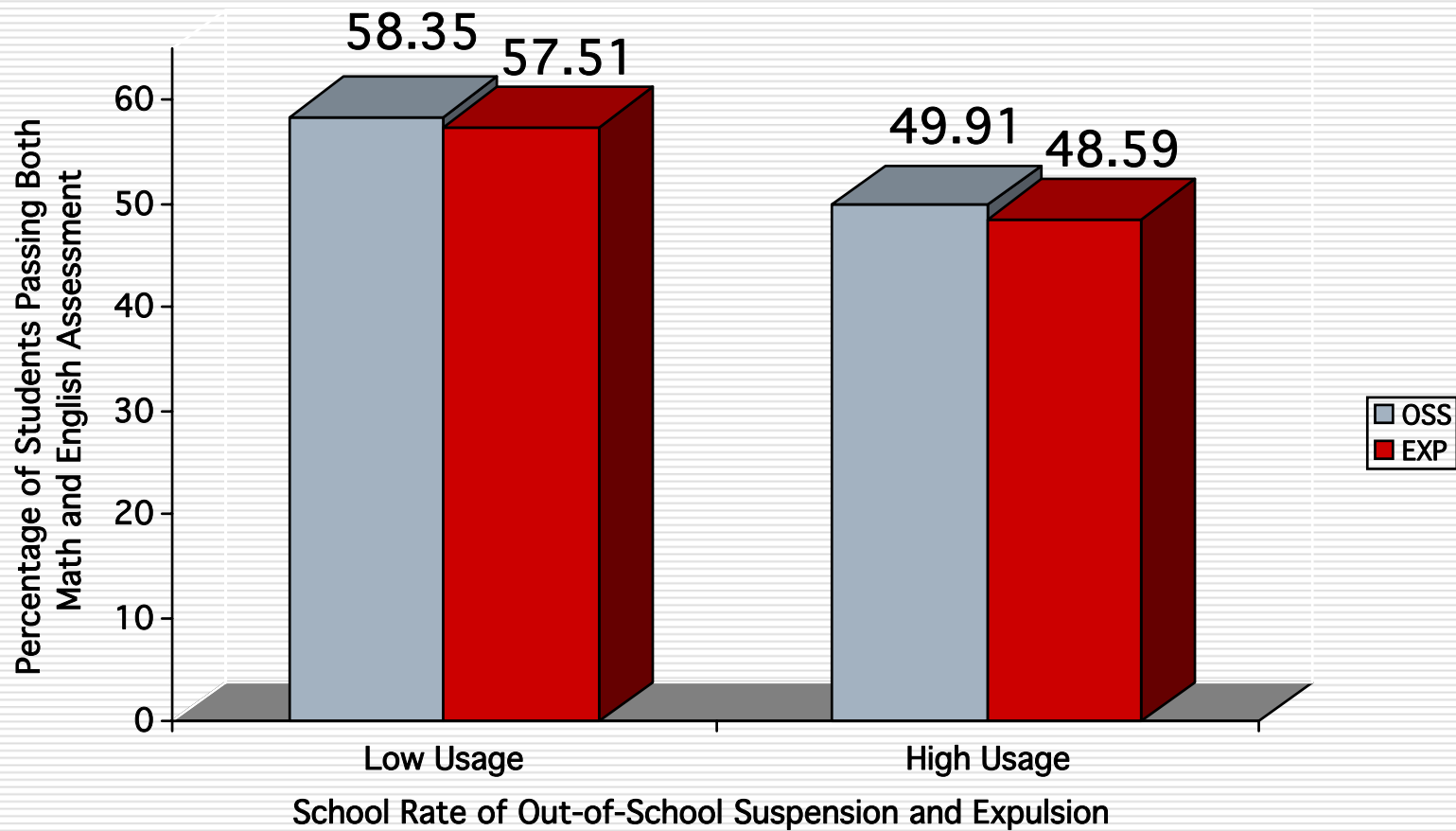
- Black students referred more for:
  - Disrespect
  - Excessive Noise
  - Threat
  - Loitering

# Improved Student Behavior?

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- ❑ 30-50% of students suspended are repeat offenders
  - “Suspension functions as a reinforcer...rather than as a punisher” (Tobin, Sugai & Colvin, 1996)
- ❑ Use of suspension correlates with
  - School dropout (school level) (Raffaele-Mendez; Ekstrom, 1986)
  - Juvenile incarceration (state level) (Skiba et al)
- ❑ Negative relationship between discipline and achievement?

# Percent Passing ISTEP by School Disciplinary Use (Adjusted for Demographic and Economic Indicators)



# Are There Alternatives to School Exclusion?

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- ❑ **Creating the Climate**
  - Bullying Prevention
  - Conflict Resolution/Life Skills
  - Classroom Management
- ❑ **Early Identification/Intervention**
  - Threat Assessment
  - Mentoring, Anger Management
- ❑ **Effective Responses**
  - In-School Alternatives
  - Functional Assessment
  - Restorative Justice

# What Do Effective Principals Do?

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- ❑ **No compromise on discipline, but...**
- ❑ ***Clarify expectations regarding office referrals and train staff in classroom management strategies.***
- ❑ ***Actively teach appropriate behavior through school philosophy and preventive programs.***
- ❑ ***Communicate and collaborate with parents.***
- ❑ ***Seek to reconnect alienated students through mentoring and anger management.***
- ❑ ***Develop creative options in the school and community to keep even those students who are suspended and expelled engaged in learning.***

# What Do Effective Principals Do?

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## ❑ **No compromise on discipline**

“We will not put up with misbehavior....You are here to learn and we’re going to do everything we can to provide the proper education. Your teachers are here to work with you. We’re doing everything we can to support you but then again we will not deal with any misbehaviors. That’s the bottom line. If you hit somebody you’re going to be suspended.”

# Clarify Expectations and Train in Behavior Management

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“Once you send a child to the office as a classroom teacher you give up a part of your control over that child. It sends a message to the child that you know you really don’t have control...

So I think as a school we’ve come to realize that it’s a lot better to handle the discipline within the team [of teachers] if we can because that sends a message to the student that the team has control.”

# Teach Appropriate Skills through Preventive Programs

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“There are 17 or so character values. Respect, cooperation, honesty, perseverance, caring, courage... our staff members have embraced it and you see it everywhere. You see it in the hallways. You see it on bulletin boards. You see it in the classrooms. The teachers take time to talk about those life skills... and then you begin also embedding this in your curriculum ... what you end up having are kids who are very respectful to one another, that are willing to work cooperatively.”

# Communicate and Collaborate with Parents

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*“[Teachers] know that if they send someone to the office, we shouldn’t be the first one to contact the parents about the problems the kids is having.”*

*“I have very few parents who get upset with me because a lot of times we’ve done a lot of interventions ... There’s no surprises. And I have to think the parents appreciate that through the entire process they’ve been part of it.”*

# Communication & Connection: All Students

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“Communication is really stressed, we’re increasing email, they do newsletters, really chatting, we have input forms [from parents]. I think it’s part of the culture of the building”

“Every time he [the principal] has the student body together he reminds them that if there is anything out there that’s lingering that’s dangerous to make sure that you bring it forward. He is just continually impressing upon the kids how important communication is.”

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# Communication & Connection: At Risk or Alienated Students

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“We look to intervene early if we see some things that are developing. We worked really hard helping teachers identify internalizers as well as externalizers...This isn't a way of identifying a student. Its more like trying to predict the problem and prevent it.”

“And all we asked was that an adult would meet with these kids once a week...I would have lunch with this child and we would play chess and we would talk and he would share things that were going on in his life...We saw that were making progress with these kids because really a lot of these kids didn't have anyone who really took an interest in them.”

# Creative Options for Challenging Students: At School

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“One comes in from 6 to 2 and the other from 10 to 6 and then in that cross between it gives them some time to also meet with the student if necessary, go to a class with the student they’re having particular trouble in... These students also have two counseling components a week from local counseling providers that we have here in our community and this is done on their own. ...The program has been very successful. Our suspension rate the first year we implemented it dropped 50%.”

“We absolutely do not believe in zero tolerance policies... If we’re going to expel a student probably 90% of the time we will expel them technically but we allow them back in school to return to school on what’s called a continuing education agreement....”

# Creative Options for Challenging Students: In the Community

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- ❑ Boys & Girls Club, Wayne County
  - Schools fax work for suspended students
  - Conflict Resolution, speaker programs
- ❑ Hamilton Centers
  - Collaboration with courts, DFC
  - 97% completion rate for students in program
- ❑ Allen County Youth Services Program
  - SOCAP: Case Facilitator assigned
  - Students Out of School (SOS): Students have performed over 5000 hours of community service

# Doing Discipline Differently: The Greenfield Middle School Story

Figure 1. Out-of-School Suspension and Expulsion Rates at Greenfield Middle School: 4-Year Average Comparison

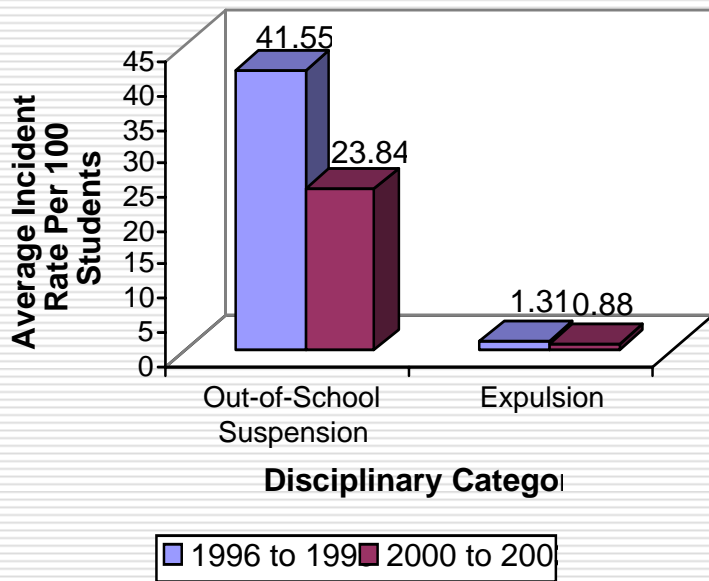
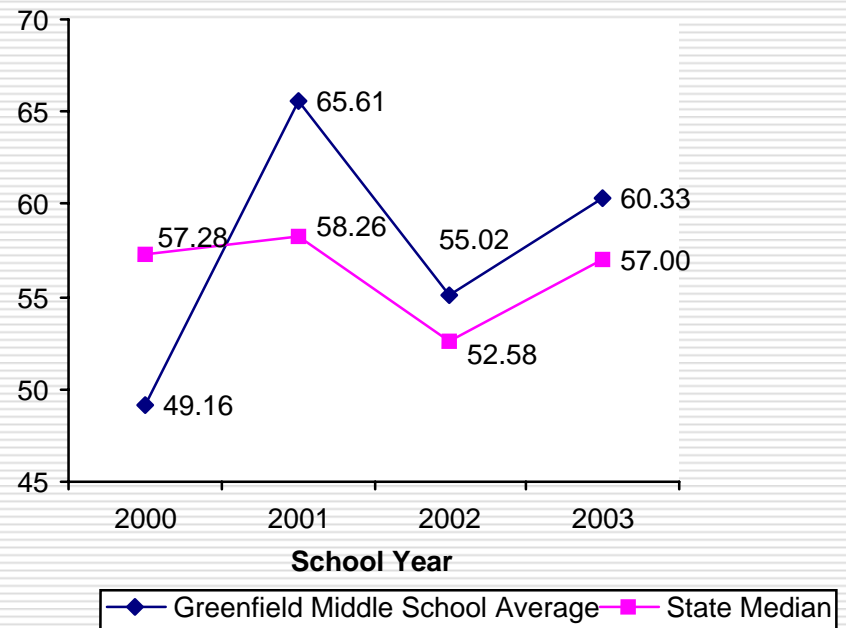


Figure 3. Greenfield Middle School Percent Passing ISTEP Compared to State Median for Indiana Middle Schools: 4-Year Comparison



# Reducing Suspension/Expulsion

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- ❑ Implement a Graduated Set of Consequences
- ❑ Teach alternative ways of getting along
- ❑ Improve communication and connection w/ students, parents
- ❑ Increasing available options

# Reducing Racial Disproportionality in Discipline

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- ❑ Teacher Training in Classroom Behavior Management
- ❑ Reducing Cultural Mismatch
- ❑ Avoid One-Size-Fits-All Discipline
- ❑ Use Data to Transform

# The SRS Philosophy: Increase Resources to Decrease Exclusion

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- ❑ Safe and Responsive Schools
  - 3 Year USDOE Grant
  - Teaching schools to develop comprehensive needs-based approaches to school violence prevention

# Studying Equity at Home: The LEAD Process

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- ❑ School/District Reflection
  - Data Mining
  - Discussions on Diversity
- ❑ Identify Actions of Greatest Potential Impact
- ❑ Develop a Plan
- ❑ Implement, Assess, Adapt

# What Should We Do?

## Steps in Addressing Inequity

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- ❑ Form a team
  - ❑ Look at the data on disparities
    - How great are the disparities?
    - In what infractions? In what consequences?
    - Which schools have largest discrepancy?
  - ❑ Develop hypotheses
  - ❑ Choose one; develop a plan
    - Expand team
  - ❑ Evaluate and adapt
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# What's Your Theory?

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- ❑ Poverty?
- ❑ Deficits in classroom management?
- ❑ Negative community influences?
- ❑ Lack of cultural competence?
- ❑ Negative peer culture?
- ❑ Historical discrimination?

# Questions to Ask When Disproportionality is Found

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- ❑ What do the preliminary data say?
  - ❑ What are your next steps?
    - Who will be on team?
    - When will it meet?
    - What data will be shared?
    - What is your plan for moving toward action?
  - ❑ How will you ensure that the topic of race is not avoided?
  - ❑ What is your schedule for reporting back?
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# Russ Skiba

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Center for Evaluation and Education Policy

509 E. Third St.

Bloomington, IN 47401

812-855-1240

fax: 812-856-8440

skiba@indiana.edu