

# A Logic Model for Educator-Level Intervention Research to Reduce Racial Disparities in Student Suspension and Expulsion

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Disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion, evident from early childhood, for students of color relative to White peers are a significant racial equity issue in the U.S. education system, with far-reaching effects. In this article, we present a logic model for educator-level interventions that have the potential to reduce disparate discipline practices and ultimately work toward a more equitable school climate. We describe how an integrated approach to supporting all children's constitutional right to a free public education, which is prevented by exclusionary discipline practices, must purposefully integrate social and emotional learning, classroom management, cultural competence, and racial equity approaches that target educators. Together, the integration of these approaches has the potential to impact initial, intermediate, and long-term education outcomes by enhancing educators' practices and raising awareness of their internal and interpersonal biases and role in perpetuating institutional racism in education. We conclude with recommendations for how this logic model can be used to guide future research to further our knowledge in this area to support educators in their practice and inform educational policy.

## *Public Significance Statement*

This article proposes that there are four critical approaches targeting educators that have the potential to reduce the incidence of harsh discipline practices, particularly exclusionary ones like school suspensions and expulsions, that disproportionately affect children of color and thereby constitute racially inequitable educational practice. These are: social and emotional learning [SEL] interventions, classroom management strategies, culturally competent teaching, and racial equity training. Rather than focusing on one approach alone, this paper suggests that these approaches need to be implemented concurrently so educators can enhance their personal and professional awareness, knowledge, and skills to support equitable relationships and instructional practices with students of color.

*Keywords:* race, equity, intervention, education, discipline

The disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion for students of color relative to their White peers are a significant equity issue in the U.S. education system. These disparities are evident beginning in early childhood and elementary school for Black children, particularly for Black boys (Carter, Fine, & Russell, 2014; Finn & Servoss, 2013; Skiba et al., 2011; U.S. Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights, 2016). Data examining disparities in how discipline practices are applied show that Black students are 2.19 (elementary school, including kindergarten) to 3.78 (middle school) times as likely as their White peers to be referred by teachers to the office for problem behavior (Bottiani,

Bradshaw, & Mendelson, 2017; Kaufman et al., 2010; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002).

There also are disparities in the harshness of the discipline practices, as Black and Latinx students are more likely than White students to receive expulsion or out-of-school suspension as consequences for the same or similar problem behavior. In southern U.S. states, in which racially disproportionate discipline is more pronounced (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, & Bachman, 2008), Black students were 6 to 7 times more likely to be suspended than their White classmates (Brown & Steele, 2015). Lifetime suspension rates are 48% for Blacks, 23% for Latinxs, and 21% for Whites (Musu-Gillette et al., 2016). These disparities are further illuminated when considering data showing that Black preschoolers represent 47% of those suspended yet make up only 19% of enrollment (Gilliam, Maupin, Reyes, Accavitti, & Shic, 2016), and that having a higher proportion of Latinx children in the class predicted an increased likelihood of suspension (Gilliam & Shahar, 2006).

Disparities in the rates and harshness of discipline strategies as applied to U.S. students of color constitutes inequity in action, as

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these practices disproportionately discriminate against and exclude students of color from their constitutional right to a free public education (American Civil Liberties Union, 2019). Whereas educational disparities are often discussed as the “achievement gap,” typically defined by comparisons between White and Black students, scholars have argued for a racial equity lens that focuses on the “opportunity gap” to explain racial/ethnic differences in academic achievement (Mooney, 2018; Putnam, 2015). This notion of an opportunity gap aligns squarely with the consequences of disproportionately high and harsh exclusionary discipline practices for students of color. Given that these disparities emerge as early as preschool (Gibson, Wilson, Haight, Kayama, & Marshall, 2014; Gilliam et al., 2016; Gilliam & Shahar, 2006; Vaught & Castagno, 2008) and are developmentally inappropriate for young children (Schachner et al., 2016), suspensions and expulsions negatively affect children’s development (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010), as they reduce opportunities for students to engage in academic and social learning experiences. The cumulative result is that students of color have fewer opportunities for instruction and to develop skills needed for school success (Reyes, Elias, Parker, & Rosenblatt, 2013).

Thus, frequent and harsh discipline practices, particularly exclusionary ones, constitute inequitable educational practices, leading to inequalities that contribute to lifelong disparities in indicators of health, well-being, and economic success (American Psychological Association [APA], Presidential Task Force on Educational Disparities, 2012; Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2014; Shollenberger, 2015). Indeed, such disparities are consistent with the second of the explanations for educational inequalities experienced

by students of color as identified by the APA’s Task Force on Educational Disparities (APA Presidential Task Force on Educational Disparities, 2012): (a) racial/ethnic groups experience social class differences that translate into educational disparities; (b) racial/ethnic groups experience differential treatment or bias in the education system; and (c) racial/ethnic groups respond differently to education practices (Quintana & Mahgoub, 2016).

In this article, we focus on this second explanation and present a logic model (see Figure 1), which posits that ameliorating inequitable discipline practices in the U.S. education system requires a comprehensive approach that (a) purposefully integrates social and emotional learning (SEL) and classroom management interventions with cultural competence and racial equity approaches that target educators; (b) constitutes a person-in-context approach in which educators’ interactions with students are shaped by their own intrapersonal experiences as members of specific racial and ethnic groups in the United States, along with the broader school ecology in which they work; and (c) concurrently considers how the implementation of educator-level interventions interacts with the context of the broader school ecology and sociohistorical dynamics as well as educators’ own intrapersonal experiences. Given the gravity of how racial disparities in suspensions and expulsions promote inequity of educational opportunity, we argue that a cohesive model is needed to inform future research as well as practitioners and policymakers who interact with students and make educational policy decisions. Drawing from existing guidance for developing a logic model (United Way of America, 1996), we next present our logic model followed by concrete recommendations for research.

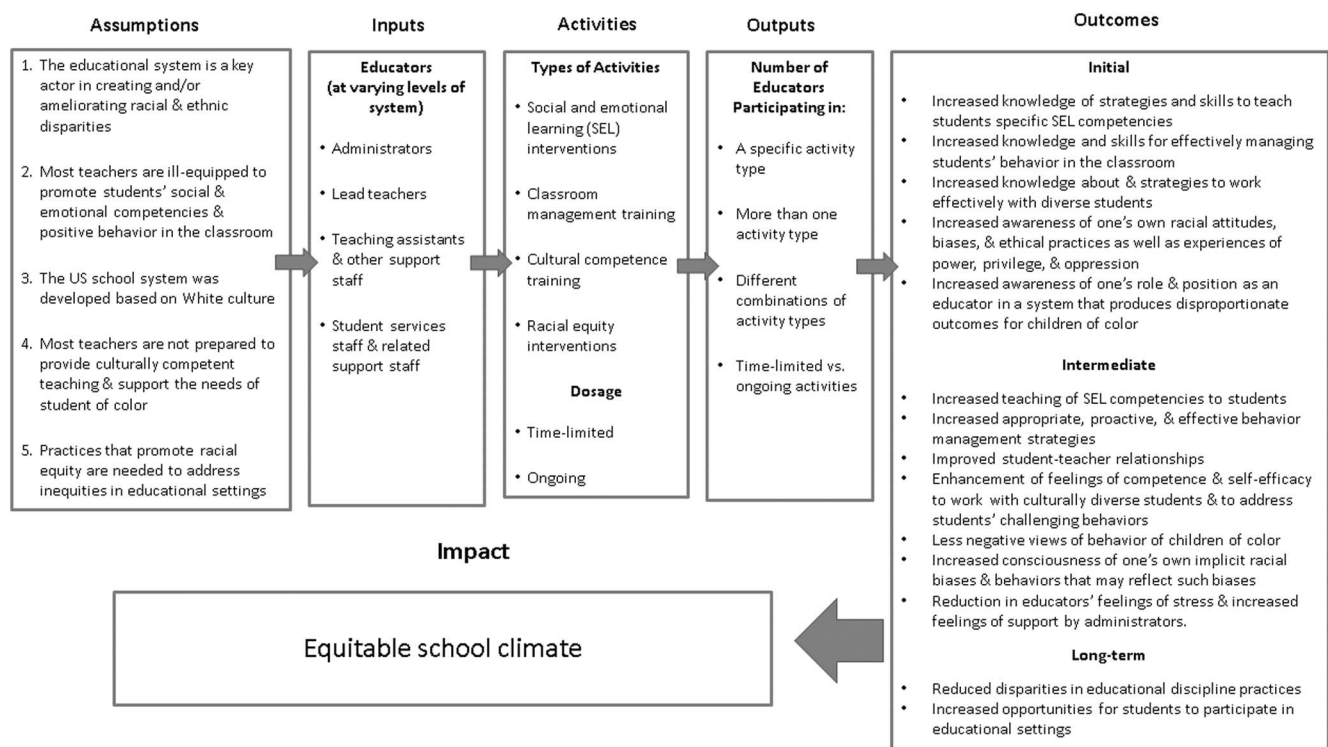


Figure 1. Logic model for examining educator-level interventions targeting educational disparities in suspension and expulsion practices.

## Logic Model Components

### Logic Model Assumptions

Our proposed logic model is based on several key assumptions about the manifestation and maintenance of racial and ethnic disparities in the U.S. education system. Several of these assumptions speak to systemic issues that, although they play out in the microcosm of a smaller education setting such as a school district or a school itself, are actually reflections of broader societal systemic issues related to race and ethnicity.

**Assumption 1: The educational system is a key actor in creating and/or ameliorating racial and ethnic disparities.** Differential treatment of racial and ethnic groups in the educational system is the enactment of racism at the institutional level. As such, discipline rates can be conceptualized as an indicator of institutionalized racism, which we recognize as “the unexamined and unchallenged system of racial biases and residual White advantage that persist in our educational institutions” (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 33). Further, it is the behaviors of individuals, primarily those in authority roles, that reinforce inequitable systems. For example, when primed to expect challenging behaviors, teachers were more likely to look at Black children, particularly boys, even when no challenging behaviors were present (Gilliam et al., 2016).

**Assumption 2: The majority of educators are ill-equipped to promote students’ social and emotional competencies and positive behavior.** Marlow and Inman (2002) randomly selected 100 educational institutions and found that less than one third had explicit courses on social and emotional competencies. Further, programs to address this area of development are rarely fully integrated into the daily classroom routine (Jones & Bouffard, 2012). Indeed, support for, and skills in, implementing classroom management strategies was a self-identified need for teachers, especially among first-year teachers, per a national survey of pre-K through Grade 12 teachers conducted by APA (Coalition for Psychology in Schools and Education, 2006). Not only do chaotic classrooms interfere with the educational and social goals of the school setting—they also contribute to high teacher stress and burnout rates (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). These data also suggest that preparing teachers on these topics needs to begin during preservice training.

**Assumption 3: The U.S. school system was developed based on White culture.** The U.S. education system is designed to reflect White cultural norms, which were maintained following racial integration (Anderson, 1988; Harry & Anderson, 1995; Vavrus, 2008). For example, Gardner-Neblett, Pungello, and Iruka (2012) found that the rich oral narrative skills among African American children have been overlooked in school settings, which are more likely to value and promote reading skills. In terms of discipline, Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) demonstrated experimentally that teacher responses, even when Black and White students behave in the same way, can contribute to racial disparities and are in part because of racial stereotypes.

**Assumption 4: Most educators are not prepared to provide culturally competent teaching and support the needs of student of color.** More than four in five U.S. public school teachers are White (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Policy and Program Studies Ser-

vice, 2016). Because U.S. teachers are less likely to reflect the composition of students of color, there has been a call for ensuring that teachers have the pedagogical knowledge and skills needed to engage diverse groups of students (Futrell, 2010), which they often lack (Smith, 2005). Students of color are historically less likely to have high-quality teachers who practice culturally responsive pedagogy and understand the complex history of race in the United States and the role it plays in the everyday existence of students of color (Fong, Dettlaff, James, & Rodriguez, 2014; Neal, McCray, Webb-Johnson, & Bridgest, 2003; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007). Thus, teacher education programs are pressed to alter how they prepare educators to work with students of color (Carpenter & Diem, 2013), which includes attention to racial equity concepts.

**Assumption 5: Practices that promote racial equity are needed to address inequities in educational settings.** Racial equity can be defined as “the condition that would be achieved if one’s racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares” (W. K. Kellogg Foundation, 2012). Racial equity interventions provide an in-depth examination of one’s own personal experiences with race and racism as well as the larger systemic and infrastructural dynamics that reify racism in the United States. Indeed, the personal experiences that reflect the complex interplay across cultural socialization, group dynamics, and cognitive processes have the potential to manifest as teacher-level racial bias in education. As most teachers are White, there is a need for them to critically engage in the concept of whiteness and the ways in which Whites benefit from racism and their White privilege (Carpenter & Diem, 2013; Vavrus, 2008). Teachers also must confront concepts such as colorblindness, cultural conflict that arises from operating from one’s own cultural references, the myth of meritocracy, and holding and acting on low expectations of specific groups—all of which are applicable to the education setting (Milner, 2010). For example, Pollock’s (2004) work on race wrestling, the purposeful and intentional struggle to productively discuss issues of race in education, stemmed from observations that educators have difficulty talking about racial difference and inequality on a daily basis, thereby encouraging individuals and institutions to actively “wrestle” with race.

### Model Inputs

In our model, we identify inputs as those individuals who are the potential targets of, or participants in, interventions that aim to reduce educational disparities. We focus on educators including lead or classroom teachers, teaching assistants and other classroom staff such as paraprofessionals, student services staff and other support staff (e.g., school counselors, interventionists), and school administrators. We target these specific inputs because they represent different levels of influence in the school ecology (e.g., power, decision making), in which interactions among these adults create a school culture that subsequently either directly or indirectly affects students’ experiences proximally (e.g., through student–teacher relationship) or distally (e.g., through school policies and the broader school climate).

### Activities

The extent to which educators are prepared to effectively serve the needs of all students has been identified as a key factor in

explaining educational inequities for students of color. These include building educators' knowledge and skills to address educational disparities, including approaches that teach students social and emotional skills, enhancing teachers' competence in classroom behavior management, promoting culturally competent and responsive practices, and engaging in internal examination of one's own role in and perpetuation of a racially inequitable education system and institutional racism across the larger society. Thus, we focus on four approaches, or activities, that have distinct goals but are complementary to one another. We argue that these activities must be considered concurrently to effectively address racial and ethnic disparities in discipline practices. Although we acknowledge the important literature citing the benefits of student-teacher ethnic match (Gershenson, Holt, & Papageorge, 2016; Hess & Leal, 1997; Steele & Aronson, 1995), we focus on approaches targeting behaviors or processes that are within an individual educators' control. Although interventions to increase student-teacher ethnic match are possible, we do not include those as part of our model given that educators themselves cannot change their race or ethnicity, and such interventions would likely occur at a different level (e.g., district-level policies) than that depicted in our model.

**Social and emotional learning and classroom management approaches.** The rationale for SEL and classroom management approaches to reduce students' challenging behaviors and subsequent suspensions and expulsions is twofold. First, these approaches address the reality that, for some children, support for social and emotional skill development is needed because of emergent or diagnosed disorders (e.g., attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, conduct disorders, anxiety disorders, autism spectrum disorders), and second, variation in skills among typically developing children and experiences adjusting to the expectations of the school setting. Indeed, there is evidence pointing to the positive impacts of SEL interventions, including long term, on student outcomes and aspects of the educational environment that may coincide with reduced likelihood for suspensions and expulsions (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; R. D. Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017; Weare & Nind, 2011). Thus, these approaches are included in our logic model because they have been hypothesized to reduce disparities in suspensions and expulsions by preparing teachers to work with students of color through enhancing teachers' practices in promoting students' social and emotional skills as well as managing students' behavior in the classroom using developmentally appropriate and proactive strategies (Ball, Anderson-Butcher, Mellin, & Green, 2010; Gilliam, 2005; Greenberg et al., 2003; Sugai & Horner, 2009).

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines SEL as

the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. (CASEL, 2018, para. 1)

CASEL's Framework for Social and Emotional Learning identifies five social and emotional competencies: self-awareness; self-management; responsible decision making; relationship skills; and social awareness via SEL curriculum and instruction, school-wide

practices and policies, and family and community partnerships that are coordinated across classrooms, schools, and homes and communities. As described in a recent meta-analysis of 82 school-based universal SEL interventions (R. D. Taylor et al., 2017), these approaches may focus on student-centered competence development, which often involve enhancing teachers' skills to use developmentally appropriate methods to support and teach students to acquire specific social and emotional competencies. For young children, SEL curricula (e.g., PATHS [Greenberg et al., 2003], Second Step [Committee for Children, 2012], Incredible Years Classroom Dina Program [Webster-Stratton & Reid, 2004]) provide a scope and sequence for teaching preschool and early elementary students social and emotional skills (e.g., emotion literacy, self-regulation, social skills, and problem solving). For middle and high school students, SEL curricula may integrate literature, role-plays, and other means to differentiate between physical and emotional harm, illustrate the emotional impact of human-environment and human-human interactions, and foster cross-cultural and perspectives awareness (H. E. Taylor & Larson, 1999).

Other approaches may have multiple components that include an environmental focus that integrates SEL into school practices or fosters school climates that are safe, well-managed, caring, and participatory (Zins, Weissberg, Wang, & Walberg, 2004). For example, Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (Duran et al., n.d.; Gilliam, 2005) supports teachers to promote the social and emotional health of all children and use evidence-based strategies to support children who have challenging behaviors. In addition, programs such as the Incredible Years Teacher Classroom Management Program (Webster-Stratton, 2006) provide professional development to teachers of preschool and early elementary students to use strategies grounded in attachment and social learning theory (e.g., relationship building, positive reinforcement, coaching, ignoring, time-out) and teach specific social and emotional skills. School-wide positive behavior intervention supports (Sugai & Horner, 2009) have been used across grade levels and include school-wide rules, routines, and physical arrangements to prevent initial occurrences of behaviors that the school would like to change ([www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)), whereas the restorative justice framework (Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006) focuses on repairing harm by addressing the nature of the misbehavior and the resulting damages.

**Cultural competence and racial equity approaches.** Despite evidence to support the efficacy of SEL and classroom management approaches to improve child behavior and teaching practices, none explicitly focus on race and ethnicity, critical to addressing racial disparities in suspensions and expulsions affecting the opportunity gap (Morris & Perry, 2016; Vaught & Castagno, 2008). The term *cultural competence* has been used by national organizations (e.g., National Education Association, 2017) to describe the knowledge and attitudes teachers need to work with students of color, and includes approaches such as culturally responsive teaching (Siwatu, 2007) and culturally relevant pedagogy (Ladson-Billings, 1995). As summarized in Larson and Bradshaw's (2017) review of cultural competence among practitioners, culturally competent and responsive teachers demonstrate cultural sensitivity, showing the ability to "discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences" (DeJaeghere & Zhang, 2008). Their teaching methods are culturally relevant (Hy-

land, 2005; Young, 2010), and they often incorporate views and histories of marginalized people into the curriculum (e.g., Epstein, Mayorga, & Nelson, 2011). They also understand and address discriminatory practices in school settings (Middleton, 2003). Finally, their interactions with students are characterized by setting high expectations (Rozansky, 2010; Young, 2010), using metacognitive strategies, understanding critical literacy, and connecting lessons with students' cultures (Rozansky, 2010).

Within the context of school mental health, Ball et al. (2010) defined cultural competence as (a) working effectively with individuals of different backgrounds, cultures, and languages; (b) valuing diversity and promoting tolerance and respect for others; (c) having knowledge of different cultural perceptions and applying culturally competent and ethical practices; (d) examining personal assumptions and biases; and (e) developing strategies for students and families to overcome racial and ethnic barriers within the education system. This includes self-reflection practices (Dray & Wisneski, 2011) to consider how sociopolitical factors (e.g., race) influence one's concerns (Day-Vines et al., 2007). Again, drawing from mental health (e.g., Schon, 1983), reflection practices in education include reflective supervision (e.g., Calderhead, 1989) and recent initiatives focused on coaching (Rush & Sheldon, 2011).

Yet even when efforts to prepare teachers to work with students of color via knowledge and skill-building professional development focus on specific cultural groups or students of color more broadly, these approaches may not address deeply ingrained and unconscious beliefs and attitudes individuals have acquired through their own lived experiences and how these beliefs and attitudes build to create and perpetuate institutional racism. Although some cultural competence and responsiveness interventions incorporate racial equity ideas, they may not necessarily have an explicit focus on operationalizing and addressing racism, which is at the core of implicit bias and racial and ethnic disproportionality in educational outcomes (Vaught & Castagno, 2008). That is, increased knowledge about Black or Latinx students and culturally competent and responsive instructional strategies may not fully address teachers' implicit racial biases. Thus, despite targeting educators at the personal level and helping them form an appreciation for, and awareness of, differences, relying on cultural competence approaches alone to address educational disparities

may diminish an understanding of the role of race and racism as a central mechanism of oppression and convey the misconception that racial and ethnic groups can be understood as a set of observable and predictable traits, instilling a false sense of confidence in staff about their knowledge of culturally different individuals and families. (De Jesús, Hogan, Martinez, Adams, & Lacy, 2016, p. 301)

In contrast, racial equity approaches focus on intrapersonal processes related to individuals' beliefs about, and experience with, race, racism, and White privilege, and includes cognitive and affective factors like attitudes, beliefs, and implicit and explicit bias. This latter approach reflects the idea that implicit bias—the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions—operates in an unconscious manner (Staats, Capatosto, Wright, & Contractor, 2014). Racial equity interventions directly challenge individuals' racial attitudes and biases, and issues of power, privilege, and oppression. They also promote active self-assessment and exploration of the biases that affect decision mak-

ing for communities of color (Chibnall et al., 2003; Johnson, Antle, & Barbee, 2009). Based on models of implicit social cognition (Amodio & Mendoza, 2010), racial equity interventions are conceptualized with the goal of limiting the influence of racial associations (e.g., implicit racial biases based on socialization in the U.S. context) on one's intended behavior (Mendoza, Gollwitzer, & Amodio, 2010). Hence, racial equity interventions may be a strategy to transform consciously held egalitarian goals (e.g., equity, fairness) into reflexively triggered actions that limit the behavioral expression of racial stereotypes. Thus, efforts to create an inhibition to one's own biases, such as participation and engagement in racial equity training, may enhance an individual's capacity to respond without bias. This may be achieved by the individual learning to actively control and eventually transform their perceptions of a stimulus that creates unwanted bias (e.g., race/ethnicity). Learning to challenge and transform one's racial biases appears to be a critical factor in limiting the expression of racist beliefs and behaviors.

As indicated, racial equity interventions are less prevalent in education settings, but their potential value can be seen in the child welfare and health care fields, which have pioneered racial equity interventions to address the disproportionate treatment of children of color (e.g., Abramovitz & Blitz, 2015; De Jesús et al., 2016; Fletcher, 2017; Johnson et al., 2009; Nelson & Hackman, 2013). As in Johnson et al.'s (2009) study conducted in the child welfare system, participation in a racial equity intervention has the potential to address disparities by increasing awareness of one's own biases through inward self-assessment and reflection. Using the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond Undoing Racism Community Organizing Workshop, child welfare staff became more aware of the implications of institutional racism, White privilege, and general, pervasive racial discrimination; participants also reported that the training positively impacted their professional behavior. A study utilizing the same intervention found that 62% of social workers increased their knowledge about race and structural racism (Abramovitz & Blitz, 2015). In both of these studies, and in a study by Krusky et al. (2012) in the health sciences, participants improved in knowledge and attitudes of race and racism. For work done in an education setting, Devine, Forscher, Austin, and Cox (2012) found reductions in implicit racial bias among undergraduate students following participation in an implicit racial bias intervention, with those concerned about discrimination or who reported using the intervention strategies showing the greatest reductions. In addition, intervention participants showed increases in concern about discrimination and personal awareness of bias over the duration of the study compared with the control group. Taken together, these studies illustrate the potential of racial equity training as an educational intervention to impact changes within the individual that translate into behavioral changes, including behavior in professional practice.

Thus, we argue that racial equity interventions confer additional advantages beyond the benefits of traditional cultural competence and responsiveness training through its explicit focus on concepts such as racism, implicit bias, power, oppression, superiority, and whiteness. Specifically, the theoretical rationale for including racial equity approaches in our logic model rests on the hypothesis that challenging educators to engage in the intrapersonal work needed to interrupt their own personal contributions to perpetuating institutionalized racism in education settings (e.g., the enact-

ment of behaviors stemming from implicit bias) will reduce disparities in school discipline practices. Such approaches serve as a complement to the inclusion of cultural competence approaches in our logic model, for which the theoretical rationale for potentially reducing disparities in suspensions and expulsions has been amply justified, and includes preparing teachers to work with students of color through promoting better understanding of the sociocultural experiences of students and using culturally relevant and engaging teaching methods.

## Model Outputs

*Model outputs* are defined as the accomplishments of the identified activities. We operationalize these outputs as the “reach” of the activities, measured by the number of educators who participate in the interventions listed as activities in the model. Thus, specific outputs would be the number of educators who participate in SEL, classroom management, cultural competence, or racial equity training interventions. In addition, it is important to know the number of educators who engage in more than one of these intervention types and the combination of interventions in which they have engaged. Further, given evidence on the limitations of stand-alone or one-shot professional development and other training efforts for educators (Flint, Zisook, & Fisher, 2011; Guskey & Yoon, 2009), we distinguish between the number of educators who have participated in time-limited versus sustained intervention activities (e.g., those that employ ongoing supports such as coaching), as this distinction speaks to the dosage of an intervention and subsequently its potential to impact outcomes.

## Outcomes

Our model identifies key short-term/initial, intermediate, and long-term outcomes reflecting changes in knowledge, skills, attitudes, or behavior resulting from the activities.

**Initial outcomes.** Because initial outcomes focus on the first changes experienced by those who participate in the intervention activities, they are very closely influenced by the goals specified for each intervention. In our model, these outcomes are the changes in knowledge, attitudes, or skills that educators experience as a result of participation. We define these outcomes as *initial*, because of the awareness raising experiences that may immediately occur as a result of (or even during) participation in an intervention. Thus, these changes would include increased knowledge of strategies and skills to teach student-specific social and emotional competencies (SEL interventions); increased knowledge and skills for effectively managing students’ classroom behavior (classroom management interventions); knowledge about, and strategies to work effectively with, diverse students (cultural competence interventions); increased awareness of one’s own racial attitudes, implicit biases, and institutional racism as well as experiences of power, privilege, and oppression (cultural competence, primarily racial equity interventions); and awareness of one’s role and position as an educator in a system that produces disproportionate outcomes for children of color (cultural competence, primarily racial equity interventions). A common thread among these initial outcomes is the idea that educators come to the classroom with their own set of socialization experiences that have fostered a set of beliefs about how to interact with students, and that these

beliefs significantly shape educators’ behaviors. Thus, we argue that participation in interventions such as those identified in the logic model must, at minimum, challenge or disrupt long-held cognitions that could be influencing educators’ behaviors that play a role in disparate discipline practices.

**Intermediate outcomes.** We define intermediate outcomes as those changes in behavior that result from the acquisition of increased self-awareness and new knowledge and skills. Whereas the initial outcomes are primarily cognitive in nature, intermediate outcomes are primarily behavioral, although these behaviors may not necessarily be observable. For example, the active noticing of the occurrence of implicit racial biases in-the-moment constitutes an unobservable behavior. This notion is similar to cognitive restructuring techniques used in cognitive-behavioral therapy, such as actively noticing intrusive automatic thoughts and working to change those thoughts in the moment (Hope, Burns, Hayes, Herbert, & Warner, 2010). Thus, we consider such behaviors as intermediate outcomes because actively working to change one’s thoughts (or actively working to notice them in the moment) is a behavioral skill that can result from intervention participation. In addition, intermediate outcomes are those that are more likely to develop over time and are unlikely to occur immediately postintervention. Further, some intermediate outcomes may depend on interacting with other outcomes (e.g., reductions in stress may depend on increased feelings of competence).

Accordingly, we highlight the following as key intermediate outcomes in the model: increased intentional developmentally appropriate teaching of social and emotional competencies to students; increased use of developmentally appropriate, proactive, and effective behavior management strategies; improved student-teacher relationships, evidenced by respectful and inclusive interactions with students; enhancement of educators’ feelings of competence and self-efficacy to work with culturally diverse students and to address students’ challenging behaviors; less negative views of the behavior of children of color; increased consciousness of one’s own implicit racial biases and behaviors that may reflect such biases; and reduction in educators’ feelings of stress and increased feelings of support by administrators. For these intermediate outcomes, one core theme is putting into action the knowledge or skills gained from intervention participation in real-life contexts. Another theme is the experience of positive reinforcement that we hypothesize will come from these actions (e.g., feelings of competence, reduced stress) that we hope would increase the likelihood of continued behavior changes leading to greater and sustained changes in a given educator’s educational practice and interactions with students.

**Long-term outcomes.** The key long-term outcomes specified in the model include reduced disparities in educational discipline practices spanning office referrals to suspension and expulsion practices. In addition, we include increased opportunities for students to participate fully in educational settings. Unlike the initial and intermediate outcomes, which focus on educators, these outcomes are ultimately focused on students. These outcomes are considered long term in that achieving them is dependent upon the realization of the cumulative and sustained effects that result from achieving the initial and intermediate outcomes.

## Impact

Taken together, we argue that the cumulative resulting impact from the integration of these approaches to address disparate discipline practices is a more equitable school climate. Such an integrated model is needed to jointly inform how we can make meaningful changes that will break down the manifestation and consequences of institutional and individual (conscious or subconscious) racism for students of color. Educators who have opportunities to learn new skill sets (e.g., classroom management, teaching social and emotional competencies, or culturally competent and responsive practices) may potentially continue to interact with students of color in ways that reify institutional racism in the absence of opportunities to engage in their own personal understanding of, and engagement with, racial equity concepts in their own lives and communities. Moreover, individuals who participate in racial equity workshops often leave motivated by a call to action and an evolving cultural lens (Obear & Martinez, 2013); this motivation creates ideal conditions for leveraging this enthusiasm and knowledge into specific ways of teaching and interacting with students of color that minimize the risk for the perpetuation of educational disparities.

To effectively reduce disparate discipline practices in education, there must be explicit efforts to address educators' personal experiences with race and racism to breakdown educators' biases and interrupt their differential treatment of students of color. Indeed, a commitment to racial justice requires efforts to address root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation, such as the elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or fail to eliminate them (MP Associates and Center for Assessment & Policy Development, 2013). Stereotypes or racial group reputations can undermine the goal of achieving racial equity and reducing inequities, as these belief systems guide assumptions about characteristics at either the collective or individual level and at any stage of the policy process (Soss, Fording, & Schram, 2008). Thus, SEL, classroom management, and cultural competency approaches alone cannot address these issues, pointing to the necessity of integrating racial equity approaches.

Finally, although this logic model can be applied across grade levels, we contend that this model may be most powerful when directed toward preschool and early elementary settings given research documenting that pathways to race/ethnicity-based educational disparities begin early (e.g., Burchinal et al., 2011; Chapin, 2006; Chatterji, 2006; Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006). Also, negative patterns of child behavior are less likely to be entrenched at this time (Tremblay et al., 1999, 2004), thereby making disparities in suspensions and expulsions a stronger reflection of adults' behaviors that can be modified via intervention.

## Recommendations for Future Research

To fully test the potential impact depicted in our logic model, the following gaps in research remain to be addressed.

### Increasing the Examination of Racial Equity Interventions in Educational Research

Despite evidence suggesting that implicit racial biases—which could be addressed by racial equity training—play a role in the

disproportionate rates of suspensions and expulsions (Ferguson, 2003; Neal et al., 2003; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015; Tenenbaum & Ruck, 2007), theory-driven, empirical studies applying a racial equity perspective in educational settings have been limited. Some studies have examined conceptual frameworks that include racial equity issues as part of a broader model (e.g., The Institute for Courageous Principal Leadership model [The Wallace Foundation, 2013], as studied by Raskin, Krull, & Thatcher, 2015). Other work has been primarily descriptive, with some researchers employing specific theoretical approaches (e.g., critical race theory; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001, in Vaught & Castagno's, 2008, ethnography with teachers) and others taking more general approaches (e.g., Carpenter & Diem's, 2013, qualitative examination of professors in educational leadership programs bringing conversations about race and racism into their courses). Still, existing studies utilizing a range of conceptual frameworks have not yet yielded a cohesive theoretical perspective for preparing educators on issues related to race and racism. Moreover, more experimental studies are needed of interventions that aim to reduce implicit bias and promote behavior that reflects racial equity principles and tailoring these interventions and studies to the educational context. This includes a call for more innovation in measurement techniques to validly reflect contextual issues in the education setting along with educators' experiences. For example, Payne and colleagues' (B. K. Payne, Cheng, Govorun, & Stewart 2005; K. Payne, Niemi, & Doris, 2018) research has demonstrated that the majority of people who complete tests of implicit bias show evidence of it, even if they do not think of themselves as prejudiced; yet these tests are often decontextualized. Thus, more substantive research is needed on the following questions:

- What measures need to be developed and validated to reflect implicit bias and equity issues in education settings?
- Does participating in a racial equity intervention change educators' knowledge and attitudes about race and racism?
- Does educators' participation subsequently affect their perceptions of children's challenging behaviors that could lead to suspension and expulsion?
- How do the effects of racial equity training vary by the race and ethnicity of the individual participating educators, as well as by the racial and ethnic composition of educators and children in a given school ecology?

### Integration of Approaches to Reduce Disparities in Education Discipline Practices

At the heart of this logic model is the argument that no singular approach that targets educators is sufficient to effectively produce the magnitude of change needed to contend with the multifaceted contributors to inequitable discipline practices in the U.S. education system. Yet such interventions are often implemented in isolation of one another. Thus, the primary questions to be examined here are as follows:

- Are educators who have participated in cultural competence and racial equity interventions more effective when applying skills learned in SEL and classroom management interventions?
- Are there greater reductions in disparate discipline practices when educators employ both SEL and classroom

management interventions with cultural competence and racial equity interventions compared with either approach used in isolation?

### Examining Educators' Mastery and Stress Experiences as Intervention Moderators

Our logic model identifies improvements in educators' mastery and stress experiences, which may include factors such as teacher efficacy, stress, and perceptions of the work environment, as intermediate outcomes resulting from educator-targeted interventions hypothesized to reduce disparate discipline practices. As we describe earlier, these outcomes are related to research on SEL and classroom management approaches that aim to support educators' management of students' behaviors and promote students' social and emotional competencies showing positive benefits of these approaches for educators themselves. However, it is critical to understand the extent to which educators' mastery and stress experiences interact with intervention participation. Specifically, research documents how difficulties managing student behaviors contributes to teaching stress (Klassen & Chiu, 2010), which, in turn, affects teachers' engagement with students (Kokkinos, 2007). Additional contributors to teacher stress include inadequate training and professional development, overloaded job demands, and a negative work environment or lack of support (Kyriacou, 2001). In addition, social support in the workplace, particularly from peers and supervisors, appears to play a central role in the transfer of new knowledge and skills (Burke & Hutchins, 2007; Tracey, Tannenbaum, & Kavanagh, 1995). Moreover, lower teacher self-efficacy, increased teacher stress and burnout, and perceptions of a negative work environment have been found to co-occur with increased rates of suspension (O'Brennan, Pas, & Bradshaw, 2017). Thus, the following questions remain understudied:

- Does the degree of educators' feelings of stress or burnout, perceptions of self-efficacy, and experiences of support from administrators make a difference in the effectiveness of interventions hypothesized to reduce disparate discipline practices?
- Are the moderating effects of educators' mastery and stress experiences more or less important to the effectiveness of SEL and classroom management interventions versus cultural competence and racial equity interventions?
- Do these moderating effects vary by educators' own racial and ethnic background, and/or the racial and ethnic composition of the student body, educators and administrators in the school, the district, and the community where the school is located?

### Conclusion

With this logic model, we demonstrate the importance of a comprehensive set of educator-centered interventions to address the disproportionate rates of suspension and expulsion seen consistently in the U.S. education system. This set should include SEL, classroom management, cultural competency, and racial equity approaches. Integrating these approaches emphasizes the shared importance of strong tools and skills for educational practices as well as raising awareness of implicit racial biases that

guide how educators respond to children in addition to the historical underpinnings and perpetuation of institutional racism in which educators play a role. Thus, educators may then be better equipped to teach students of color and break down entrenched patterns of institutionalized racism in the U.S. education system. It is only through a comprehensive, systematic approach to educational disparity that we can move the field forward and meaningfully address educational disparities affecting students of color.

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