THE HYPER-DISCIPLINING OF BLACK STUDENTS IN ONE SOUTHEASTERN STATE

by
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the degree of Doctor of Education

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Abstract

There is ample evidence in prior research to substantiate the hyper-disciplining of Black students nationwide. Using Bronfenbrenner's ecological systems theory, select factors influencing the disproportionate discipline outcomes for Black students were examined. Recent studies point to school-level factors, such as principal or administrator perspectives about discipline. Principal perspectives were analyzed with a quantitative survey sample of principals ($N = 57$) and four semistructured interviews from one southeastern state. A mixed methods convergent analysis confirmed administrator beliefs, attitudes, and values may influence their responses to behavior. An 8-month professional learning course was developed to facilitate administrators reflecting on their identity and beliefs as well as data, policies, and student voice. Within the course, principals will dialogue with other administrators and consider 10 promising practices from research to inform action steps. The professional learning intervention is designed to build administrators' social justice leadership capacity and can be measured using one group pre- and posttest evaluation. The next steps include piloting the professional learning intervention on a small scale before offering it nationwide. A reflection from the author completes this dossier.

Keywords: disproportionality, Black students, discipline, principals, schools, suspension

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my husband and best friend. You have always had my back and inspired me to take on new challenges. Thank you for encouraging me on this journey and for talking me through the moments when I felt stuck. I appreciate your intellectual curiosity and the insights you shared with me along the way. I am grateful for all the papers you read and the feedback you gave me to help me improve. Thank you for giving me strength and for being a true partner in every facet of our life together.

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Executive Summary

Research on K–12 school discipline outcomes demonstrates the pervasive disproportionate or hyper-disciplining of Black students in K–12 schools (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Mizel et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba, Arredondo, et al., 2014; United States Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2018). Hyper-disciplining is often calculated as the risk ratio of Black students who receive exclusionary discipline, defined as removing students from the learning envionment with in-school or out-of-school suspension (Girvan et al., 2019; Marcucci, 2020; Skiba et al., 2011). The impact of these practices on Black students is detrimental both socially and academically (Morris & Perry, 2016; Tobin & Vincent, 2011; Wolf & Kupchik, 2017).

Ecological systems theory (EST) is a model of nested layers representing the environment surrounding a focal individual (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The Project 1 literature review utilized EST to organize and analyze a curated list of factors connected to the hyper-disciplining of Black students from prior research. Schools level factors emerged as a compelling focus for further exploration (Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014). Of particular interest are the adults in the K–12 school building responsible for discipline decisions (Welsh, 2023); specificially, the K–12 principal or school administrator is in a unique position to advocate for justice (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Findlay, 2015). School principals have diverse beliefs about addressing discipline in K–12 schools (Mukuria, 2002; Welsh, 2023) and different perceptions of their role in the discipline process (DeMatthews et al., 2017). These differences may impact not only discipline outcomes but also the level of support given to teachers (Mukuria, 2002).

An empirical mixed methods needs assessment conducted as Project 2 included aggregate discipline data from one southeastern state, a quantitative survey ($N = 57$) measuring principals'

perspectives on discipline, and four qualitative interviews with principals. Descriptive measures were used to analyze extant data from the 2018–2019 school year. Results indicated Black students were twice as likely to receive in-school suspension and three times as likely to receive out-of-school-suspension compared to all other students, a result also supported by prior research (GAO, 2018; Mizel et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 2011; Slate et al., 2016). Furthermore, the highest risk ratio statewide was in third grade for both ISS (2.9) and OSS (4.6). The quantitative Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) results also aligned with prior research demonstrating diverse principal beliefs and attitudes (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Mukuria, 2002; Welsh, 2023). Four coded semistructured interviews with volunteer principals (see Lochmiller & Lester, 2017; Saldaña, 2021) extended this understanding with additional insight that a principal's personal values potentially influence discipline outcomes. The coding revealed two major categories of "flexible, student-centered" and "objective, consistent" approaches to discipline decisions, similar to DeMatthews et al.'s (2017) findings. The results of the mixed methods investigation of principals converged (see Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018) with the theme *administrators' beliefs, attitudes, and values may influence their response to behavior*. The convergent theme coupled with recent research calling for more support for school leaders (e.g., Welsh, 2023) provides the rationale for a professional development curriculum providing administrators an opportunity to reflect on their beliefs, attitudes, and values related to social justice for the promotion of equitable discipline outcomes in their schools.

The final project, Project 3, involved the creation of a professional development course designed to support principal leadership, a key role with the potential to disrupt disproportionate discipline (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014). The project was grounded in Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (TPB), which identifies intention as an important driver of

behavior (Ajzen, 1991, 2012; Steinmetz et al., 2016). The design of the intervention is flexible to meet the demands of administrators' busy schedules while providing time for reflection and dialogue (Rohlwing & Spelman, 2014; Wink, 2011). Administrators are asked to complete eight self-guided Nearpod modules and meet four times for synchronous Zoom sessions. The Nearpod modules are organized by the following topics: reflecting on identity, beliefs, data, policies, student voice; research-based prevention practices; and research-based intervention practices. The last topic provides the opportunity for administrators to build their action steps based on 10 practices identified in the framework for increasing equity in school discipline (Gregory et al., 2017). The intervention is evaluated using a one-group pretest-posttest design (Shadish et al., 2002) with the Social Justice Behavior Scale (Flood, 2019) and the Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) embedded in the first and last Nearpod modules as quantitative measures. Additionally, participants are asked after each Nearpod module and Zoom session to assess their intention to implement their chosen action steps. Each decision, activity, and content choice in the intervention is guided by research. Although this intervention has not been tested, it is ready to implement and evaluate the following year.

Project 1: The Hyper-Disciplining of Black Students Literature Review

Black or African American children are disproportionately or hyper-disciplined in K–12 schools across the United States, often using exclusionary discipline practices (Marcucci, 2020). In this literature review, the term *Black* will describe people who identify as Black or African American (A. Brown, 2020). Exclusionary discipline practices refer to punishments that remove students from the learning environment, specifically in-school or out-of-school suspension (Skiba et al., 2011). These consequences are damaging to students' social and academic success (Tobin & Vincent, 2011). Disproportionate discipline practices were first revealed as a problem by the Children's Defense Fund (1975) over 40 years ago (Bottiani et al., 2017; Triplett et al., 2014). This national report showed Black students were three times as likely to be suspended as White students in elementary school and twice as likely in secondary school. Additionally, the report indicated Black students experience twice the suspensions when compared with any other ethnoracial group (Children's Defense Fund, 1975). A more recent report from the United States Government Accountability Office (GAO, 2018) examined national civil rights data from 2013 to 2014. The report indicated Black students make up 15.5% of the student population and 39% of students experiencing out-of-school suspension. This 23-percentage point difference is evidence that this pervasive problem still exists in our nation (GAO, 2018). Despite extensive research since the Children's Defense Fund report's publication, there has been little change in the overuse of exclusionary discipline applied to Black students (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Mizel et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba, Arredondo, et al., 2014).

Prior research has revealed negative academic and social outcomes related to exclusionary discipline (Morris & Perry, 2016; Wolf & Kupchik, 2017). The academic effects include missed class time and instruction while students are suspended, which may also impact

engagement in learning (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2019). Students who experience exclusionary discipline demonstrate lower rates of academic achievement (Morris & Perry, 2016) and higher rates of school dropout (Noltemeyer et al., 2015). Lesser-known effects are an increase in the likelihood of criminal justice involvement (Skiba, Arredondo, et al., 2014), either as a victim or as someone accused of a crime (Wolf & Kupchik, 2017). Because Black students are more likely to be suspended (Mizel et al., 2016; Skiba, Arredondo, et al., 2014), they have a higher probability of experiencing the negative outcomes of exclusionary discipline identified in the literature (Wolf & Kupchik, 2017).

The increased prospect of criminal justice involvement may be related to the school-to-prison pipeline (Skiba, Arredondo, et al., 2014), which has similar outcomes by ethnoracial differences as school discipline. Prison demographic data illustrate this pattern. For example, the Black male population in state or federal prison was 3.8 to 10.5 times greater than the White male population in each age group (Carson, 2015). Furthermore, the largest difference between Black and White male prisoners was in the 18-and-19-year-old age bracket. These young Black men were more than 10 times as likely to be incarcerated in state or federal prison when compared with White men in the same age range. The adverse effects that American students, particularly Black students, may experience from exclusionary discipline can range from decreased academic engagement (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2019) to life-altering consequences such as school dropout (Noltemeyer et al., 2015) or criminal justice involvement (Skiba, Arredondo, et al., 2014).

Problem of Practice

In one southeastern state, the outcomes of disproportionate discipline follow similar trends as Black students are more likely to receive exclusionary discipline than other ethnoracial

groups, particularly White students (2018-2019 statewide extant data). Disproportionate discipline is quantified by incidents of in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion. The disproportionate discipline outcomes in one southeastern state are further evidence of a national phenomenon (GAO, 2018). This literature synthesis examines targeted factors (e.g., historical events, policies, practices) contributing to the hyper-disciplining of Black students.

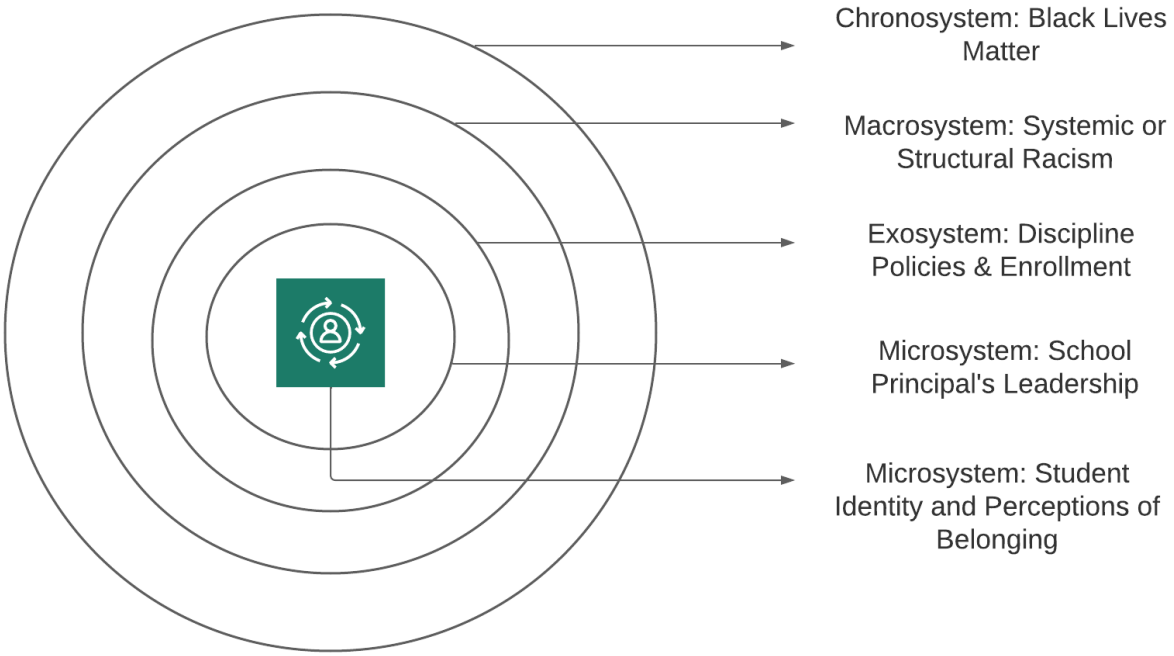
Theoretical Framework

Bronfenbrenner (1977) developed the ecological systems theory (EST) in response to research that, in his view, failed to account for the influencing context on behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). His model of the environment surrounding a focal individual is pictured with nested circles, like the layers of an onion. The outer layer, or chronosystem, represents the passage of time and includes events or transitions experienced by an individual. The macrosystem describes the values, beliefs, and societal norms within the culture of an individual. The next layer, the exosystem, involves at least one environment that does not directly affect the individual. An example of the exosystem is the effect of a parent's workplace on their child. Next, the mesosystem incorporates two or more settings (e.g., school and family) that both involve the student directly. Finally, the microsystem depicts the student's immediate environment, where events or interactions take place directly involving the student. Each nested circle can contribute to an improved understanding of an individual's perspective and experiences. Additionally, the layers reveal the proximal and distal influences on an individual. Although both influences have value, Bronfenbrenner (1977) found that proximal factors (e.g., microsystem) likely have a greater impact on the student when compared with distal layers.

Bronfenbrenner's (1977) EST frames the experience of Black students in this literature review. Figure 1.1 is a visual image of the concentric EST circles with selected factors influencing Black students in this literature review. In the chronosystem, the Black Lives Matter movement has heightened awareness of police brutality toward Black people in response to recent deaths (e.g., George Floyd; Silverstein, 2021). The focal point of the macrosystem is systemic or structural racism, which permeates society and establishes the current social order (Noguera & Alicea, 2020; Wilkerson, 2020). The exosystem relates to discipline policies, such as those found in a district or school code of conduct (Losen, 2011). Discipline policies often include zero tolerance, or automatic consequences for certain behaviors (Triplett et al., 2014), language from the criminal justice system (e.g., battery; Kayama et al., 2015), and subjective labels for behavior that may have multiple interpretations (e.g., disruption or disrespect; Smolkowski et al., 2016). Additionally, the exosystem includes Black enrollment, which relates to higher rates of punitive and exclusionary discipline (Morris & Perry, 2016; Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014; Welch & Payne, 2010). Finally, the microsystem includes school factors such as principal leadership, which considers their beliefs and perceived role in student discipline (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014) Furthermore, students' identity (e.g., gender, race) and student perceptions of belonging in their school is included in the microsystem.

Figure 1.1

Ecological Systems Framework: Factors Identified in the Literature Review



Factors Identified in the Literature Review

This section utilizes the EST framework (Bronfenbrenner, 1977) to review the literature related to the hyper-disciplining of Black students. Chronosystem influences (e.g., Black Lives Matter), as well as those in the macrosystem (e.g., structural racism),and the exosystem (e.g., discipline policies, enrollment) frame the outer layers of EST. The factors most related to student experience include school principal leadership and students' identities and sense of belonging (Bronfenbrenner, 1994).

The factors targeted in the literature are not exhaustive but have been curated by the author as primary themes in the research. Although student-level factors (e.g., race, gender, socioeconomic status) have been connected to student experience and outcomes, the larger body of literature points to school-level factors as a promising source of the problem (Skiba, Chung, et

al., 2014). The focus for change should rest with variables that are alterable at a school site (e.g., leadership), instead of unalterable human characteristics (Skiba, Chung et al., 2014). In other words, the problem is not the students but rather the need to change the current systems and practices to produce equitable outcomes.

Chronosystem: Black Lives Matter

The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement formed in 2013 to organize, campaign, and protest the violence that is repeatedly aimed at the Black Community (Howard, 2015). Many young students are organizing and getting involved in protests for BLM, demonstrating their desire to effect change (Zaveri, 2020). The acquittal of George Zimmerman, who shot and killed Trayvon Martin, increased the attention on BLM, which started as a hashtag on social media (Howard, 2015). The subsequent deaths of Michael Brown, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice, and Ezell Ford—and the failure to hold officers accountable in any of these cases—furthered the support for and expansion of the BLM movement, often manifesting in protests. Demonstrations continued after the murders of Eric Harris, Natasha McKenna, Walter Scott, Janisha Fonville, Jonathan Ferrell, Sandra Bland, Tanisha Anderson, Samuel DuBose, and Freddie Gray (Howard, 2015). The list of unjust murders continues to grow and now includes Philando Castile, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and others (O'Kane, 2020). Although the BLM movement may have started with a focus on police brutality, the activism goals have expanded to include a broader call for justice and anti-Black racism (Howard, 2015). Social media recordings (e.g., George Floyd recorded by Darnella Frazier, age 17) and movements such as BLM have made these tragic events more prominent in the lives of Americans (Deliso, 2021). Students attending school concurrently with BLM's efforts may be more likely to recognize injustices produced by systemic racism, such as disproportionate disciplining.

Macrosystem: Structural Racism

There is a growing awareness from BLM and other factors that racism is embedded in social policies (Bailey & Feldman, 2021). It is not just individual attitudes that need to change; it is also necessary to transform or dismantle institutions and policies that support the racial hierarchy. The effects of structural racism include mass incarceration and police violence, unequal medical care, redlining, and racialized segregation. Many of these historical racist policies still affect our social and cultural framework today. For example, policing has roots in slave patrols used to keep Black people subjugated both during and after slavery. This history forged a cultural connection between Blackness and criminality that is still evident in the mistreatment by police (Howard, 2015) and the disproportionate number of Black prisoners (Bailey & Feldman, 2021; Carson, 2015).

Exclusionary discipline consequences and disproportionate criminal justice outcomes for Black individuals may be related to broader systemic or structural problems in the United States. Structural racism signifies a type of racism that does not identify an individual (Noguera & Alicea, 2020). Instead, it refers to broader policies and practices embedded in our culture and society. Although policies and practices may not always be designed by people with racist intentions, if the result is inequitable outcomes for Black or other racially marginalized people, the policies and practices are unjust. Wilkerson (2020) referenced a caste system, writing, “Just as DNA is the code of instructions for cell development, caste is the operating system for economic, political, and social interaction in the United States from the time of its gestation” (p. 24). The system's invisibility supports its power and longevity; caste keeps everything in a fixed place (Wilkerson, 2020). The pervasive, disproportionate effects of exclusionary discipline on

Black students suggests something broader and more systemic than a few individuals in schools acting with racist intentions.

Medicine also has racist roots in eugenics, a belief in the biological difference of Black people, leading to dehumanization (Bailey & Feldman, 2021). Although eugenics is no longer taught, there remains an implication that Black people do not deserve high quality medical care (Bailey & Feldman, 2021). A recent illustration of this can be found in the health inequalities exposed through the COVID-19 pandemic, which has disproportionately harmed older Black and Latinx adults (Garcia et al., 2021). Garcia and colleagues (2021) argued that reduced health care access and quality, increased exposure to the virus, and the social condition of structural racism are inequalities at the root of these health disparities.

The practice of redlining was a government sanctioned process of making mortgages less accessible and more expensive to potential Black homeowners while undervaluing homes in neighborhoods with more Black families (Bailey & Feldman, 2021). Redlining, as it was upheld by laws in the United States, ended with the Fair Housing Act of 1968, but the damage of residential segregation took away many Black families' ability to pass wealth to future generations. Additionally, the residential segregation established through racist practices led to social disinvestment such as green space, school, employment options, and other qualities of advantage reserved for White families. The involvement of government, credit, real estate, and banks formed a multifaceted, structurally racist system of practices. In this way, we have inherited a fixed social hierarchy (Noguera & Alicea, 2020; Wilkerson, 2020).

A historical exploration of segregation and White flight in Kansas City offers one example of structural racism at work in the 1950s (Rury & Rife, 2018). Rury and Rife (2018) analyzed two school districts, using the pseudonyms Raytown and Hickman Mills, that attempted

to unite in the exclusion of Black residents. Raytown was more *effective* at excluding Black residents than Hickman Mills. Raytown seemed to demonstrate a collective interest, which may be viewed as *opportunity hoarding*, to ensure the town remained predominately White. Opportunity hoarding is a concept initially used by sociologist Charles Tilly, although the term has been used in multiple ways since originally defined. In this research, opportunity hoarding was used to describe the phenomenon of a predominately White community holding onto resources by keeping Black families out. The community decision to exclude Black people was evident in the police departments' harassment of Black individuals, real estate agents' remarks indicating there were no Black people in this area, and the extremely low enrollment of Black students in the local school district. One Black family who tried to move into the area on the outskirts of town had a Molotov cocktail thrown at their house their first night while others reported that avoiding Raytown was a standard practice at the time. Although examination of the events by Rury and Rife revealed specific individuals who contributed to the exclusion, keeping the town White would not be likely without large-scale community coordination. This is another example of the structural racism toward Black individuals rooted in history but still pervasive today.

Exosystem: Discipline Policies

Discipline is the degree of structure and order within a school, affecting everyone regardless of whether they obey rules or break them (Mukuria, 2002). The purpose of discipline policies in K–12 schools is to guide leadership decisions about what to do in response to misbehavior identified in discipline referrals by staff members. School discipline policies delineating when exclusionary discipline is applied are often outlined in a district code of conduct mandated under No Child Left Behind (2001). Exclusionary discipline refers to any

consequences, such as suspension, that exclude students from the learning environment (Marcucci, 2020). Suspension can mean out-of-school or in-school suspension (Noltemeyer et al., 2015). Out-of-school suspension (OSS) describes instances where students are removed for 10 or fewer days (Noltemeyer et al., 2015). In contrast, in-school suspension (ISS) refers to a consequence where students still attend school but are separated from their usual learning environment. There are variations in what ISS looks like in schools. Discipline policies have been influenced by zero-tolerance practices and the language of criminalization; they are also vulnerable to subjective interpretations of behavior.

Zero Tolerance Policies

The increased use of zero-tolerance policies has led to increased use of OSS (Losen & Skiba, 2010; Skiba, 2014), which has not effectively improved safety, reduced student misbehavior (American Psychological Association [APA], 2008), or produced equitable outcomes across all racial groups (Skiba, 2014). Although no agreed-upon definition exists, zero tolerance was coined in the 1990s and widely adopted in schools as a policy mandating set consequences for certain behaviors (APA, 2008). Zero tolerance policies apply exclusionary consequences without individual consideration (APA, 2008). The foundation of these policies often stems from an assumption that the source of student misbehavior is the student and their family, without considering the role of the school environment, the teacher, and school leadership (Losen, 2011). In a sense, it attempts to simplify a complex, multifaceted process.

Criticisms of zero tolerance include the risk of removing professional judgment (Gibson & Haight, 2013). Additionally, zero tolerance may lead to the unjust application of punitive discipline (Gibson et al., 2014), which may be seen in the disproportional outcomes for Black students (Mizel et al., 2016; Skiba, Arredondo, et al., 2014). There may be contextual

circumstances and motivations that change the interpretation of the behavior, but zero tolerance does not allow alternative explanations or consideration of context. Instead, the policy suggests it is more important to "send a message" (Skiba, 2014, p. 28) to be a deterrent for other students considering the same action. On balance, although zero tolerance may have serious negative effects, there are times where it is deemed necessary. For example, safety issues, such as a student who brings a gun to school, may require zero-tolerance policies to protect the other students who attend school (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2019). Overall, zero tolerance has increased use of exclusionary discipline, leading to increased racial disproportionality in discipline outcomes (Skiba, 2014) and evidence of harm (Triplett et al., 2014) without improving safety or behavior (APA, 2008).

History of Zero Tolerance and Criminalization

Zero-tolerance policies and criminalization are woven together in recent history. The focus on criminalization in politics and society shifted in the late 1960s after the Civil Rights Act (Parenti, 2001). In response to the perceived failure of President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty program, the rhetoric and spending began to move away from social and economic support programs (Giroux, 2003) aimed to reduce poverty. Instead, the spending now focused on containment and criminalization, beginning with Johnson's Omnibus Crime and Safe Streets Act of 1968. This movement continued during Ronald Reagan's presidency with the establishment of privatized prisons and the war on drugs (Giroux, 2003; Parenti, 2001). During the 8 years of the Reagan administration, the total prison population nearly doubled, increasing from 329,000 to 627,000 (Cullen, 2018). The 1990s was also a period of rapid expansion of zero-tolerance policies (Triplett et al., 2014). President Clinton continued this trajectory with the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (Giroux, 2003). This act, referred to as the *three*

strikes law, had the effect of increasing the prison population by putting repeat offenders in prison for life, regardless of the nature of the offense. Biglan (2015) argued that our tendency to respond to aversive behavior with more of the same does not produce prosocial behaviors; instead, a nurturing society is needed to change behavior.

During this decade, there was also a series of school shootings, such as Columbine in 1999, which increased the fear of violence in schools (Triplett et al., 2014). As society reacted with a criminal response to social problems, this approach also infiltrated schools, affecting youth (Giroux, 2003). Giroux (2003) described the shifting of blame in the rhetoric towards youth. Similar to our criminal justice path, policy followed this rhetoric, resulting in the implementation of randomized drug testing for public school students, which was approved by the Supreme Court in 2002. Fear of violence was the driving force behind much of the shift toward zero tolerance and the increased use of punitive and exclusionary discipline. In schools, Triplett and colleagues (2014) called attention to the injustice of increased punishment falling on racially minoritized individuals, although the incidents causing the fear were mostly committed by White gunmen in suburban or rural schools. Zero-tolerance policies are created to reduce serious incidents such as violence, but as a result of these policies has been to subject racially minoritized students to codified structural violence through exclusionary discipline. Therefore, zero tolerance must be viewed through the lens of structural racism (Triplett et al., 2014), particularly when considering the far-reaching negative effects of zero tolerance and criminalization on youth experiencing exclusionary discipline. These discipline policies have helped build a conduit for the criminal justice system for youth, especially Black youth (Giroux, 2003).

Criminalization Language

The use of language related to the criminal justice system may be connected to more severe exclusionary responses and affect the way students describe their own behavior (Gibson et al., 2014; Haight et al., 2015, 2016; Kayama et al., 2015). Through interviews, Kayama and colleagues (2015) found criminal language was used by all three groups of stakeholders (i.e., students, caregivers, and educators). For example, 43% of caregivers, 32% of students, and 84% of educators used words such as *self-defense*, *offender*, *infraction*, *crime*, *assault*, *felony*, and *misdemeanor* when describing students' behaviors; these terms also appear in discipline codes of conduct. One of the dangers of couching school discipline in criminal justice language is the potential for that language to be used as a justification for a more severe disciplinary response. For example, a student's commission of *assault* conveys the idea of a more serious incident than *hitting* another student; the label placed on a behavior may influence the adult's choice of a consequence. In addition to the potential for change in interpretation and response, there is a danger that students may internalize this language. Haight and colleagues (2016) interviewed a student named Craig, who was a *repeat-offender* for fighting. If Craig were to internalize the criminalized label, it could become part of his identity. Using language related to a criminalized identity may reinforce the messages students hear from other sources (Kayama et al., 2015). Ferguson (2000) identified a "hidden curriculum" in the words schools use to identify behavior and ways Black youth can be marginalized and labeled as criminally inclined. Although some may counter that language is "just words," words are laden with feelings that convey information (Wink, 2011); words have power. The criminalized language used in school to describe discipline events may contribute to disproportional punitive outcomes by escalating the

interpretations of behavior; this also may negatively affect the students' perceptions of themselves and how others perceive them.

Subjective Discipline Referrals

The discipline variance between students may also be related to subjective rather than objective office referrals (Girvan et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2002; Smolkowski et al., 2016). Subjective office referrals (e.g., disrespect, disruption) have more room for ambiguity whereas objective office referrals (e.g., possession of alcohol, vaping) are not as open to different interpretations. Skiba and colleagues (2002) found White students are more likely to receive office referrals for "smoking, leaving without permission, obscene language, and vandalism" (p. 334). In contrast, Black students are more likely to receive referrals for "disrespect, excessive noise, threat, and loitering" (p. 334). Furthermore, research indicates Black students are more likely than White students to receive a subjective office referral interpreted as a major incident to be addressed by an administrator versus a minor classroom offense (Smolkowski et al., 2016). Vavrus and Cole's (2002) qualitative study of two classrooms demonstrates the difficulty in defining the complex sequence of events leading to a student's removal from class. Instead of suspension being preceded by clear violation of school discipline policy, it could also be a moment where one disruptive act is singled out and addressed. This process of singling out more often affects students who are culturally and linguistically diverse; in this way, a minor classroom disruption can result in a suspension.

Furthermore, Girvan and colleagues (2016) studied the office referral records of 1,154,686 students to assess the relative contribution of objective versus subjective discipline to disproportionality. The findings indicate that a large portion of the variance in disproportionate discipline referrals is due to racial disparities in subjective discipline referrals (e.g., three times

for middle school). Previous studies support the same finding that subjective office discipline referrals are likely a contributing factor to disproportionality for Black students (e.g., Skiba et al., 2002, 2011). The findings related to subjective office discipline referrals suggest implicit bias as a contributing factor to disproportionate discipline (Girvan et al., 2016).

Implicit Bias. Implicit bias related to behavior may be defined as *inappropriate stimulus control* influencing how behavior is interpreted (Smolkowski et al., 2016). Implicit bias does not always lead to biased decisions, but it can support discriminatory behaviors (Carter et al., 2014). Implicit bias is suggested by the increased rate of office referrals for Black students, even when socioeconomic status and differences in behavior are ruled out as factors (Skiba et al., 2002). Subjective office referrals (e.g., disruption, disrespect) may be an opportunity for the implicit bias of an adult to influence discipline outcomes (Girvan et al., 2016; Shi & Zhu, 2022; Skiba et al., 2002; Smolkowski et al., 2016).

In addition to the connection of implicit bias and subjective office referrals, implicit bias has also been observed in preservice versus trained teachers. Glock and colleagues (2019) explored the effect of cultural diversity in schools through the lens of teacher perceptions towards students who are ethnically minoritized in Germany. Using randomly assigned vignettes, preservice teachers revealed a negative perception of culturally diverse schools related to increased effort required to meet students' needs. Experienced teachers who were working in ethnically diverse schools also demonstrated negative implicit bias, although it was less negative than preservice teachers. The finding of implicit bias in Germany (Glock et al., 2019) supports the likelihood that structural racism can influence educator attitudes even before they have classroom experience.

Okonofua and Eberhardt (2015) conducted an experimental study finding teachers were more likely to view repeated incidents as a connected pattern of troublemaking behavior with Black students. Furthermore, in addition to being connected, the infractions recorded with Black students were treated as more extreme. In other words, the first infraction informed the teacher's perception of the second infraction. Although acknowledging evidence of implicit bias, Okonofua and colleagues (2016) suggested that focusing on either teacher bias or student misbehavior is the wrong approach as it is one-sided. Alternatively, they argue to consider the toxic social-psychological dynamic that develops between students and teachers. Fueled by stereotypes, teachers and students may misperceive each other's actions in the classroom, leading to discipline referrals. Since Black students are often seen as troublemakers, which is rooted in historical stereotypes such as the notion of the *dangerous* Black male (Carter et al., 2014), students' actions may be misperceived by teachers. Eberhardt (2019) wrote, "Disparities are the raw material from which we construct the narratives that justify the presence of inequality" (p. 297). Implicit bias related to Black student misbehavior has the potential to go unnoticed, but it is one factor that leads to disproportionate discipline outcomes.

Effects of Exclusionary Discipline

Exclusionary discipline may lead to negative academic outcomes if used as a frequent means to modify students' behavior. A common rationale for suspension is to increase school safety (APA, 2008) by discouraging other students from engaging in inappropriate behaviors (Noltemeyer et al., 2015). However, exclusionary discipline does not address underlying causes or teach problem-solving or conflict resolution skills (Gibson et al., 2014; Marcucci, 2020). Additionally, scholars have found negative academic effects to be associated with suspension (Morris & Perry, 2016; Noltemeyer et al., 2015; Wolf & Kupchik, 2017). Noltemeyer et al.

(2015) conducted a meta-analysis of 24 studies on suspension and its effects. Their work demonstrated suspension has a statistically significant negative relationship with academic achievement and dropout. Of note, 64% of their analysis focused on the effects of OSS since there is more research on this type of exclusionary discipline than ISS. Students experiencing ISS may have the benefit of being in a structured environment and completing schoolwork. However, OSS and ISS both remove students from classroom instruction with their teacher, which may have a detrimental effect on academic achievement.

Morris and Perry (2016) found similar outcomes from a 3-year study of Grades 6 through 10, indicating strong evidence of the harmful effects of suspension on academic achievement. Using records from a large, urban public school district, the study participants were students (*N* = 16,248) from 17 schools. The findings indicated that suspended students score lower on end-of-year academic progress measures. Students who are often suspended have been found to have a lower performance even in the very years in which they are suspended more frequently, demonstrating the immediate effects of suspension on students.

In addition to the negative academic effects in school, Wolf and Kupchik (2017) looked at the long-term effects of suspension using a multiwave dataset that covered 14 years from the National Longitudinal Survey of Adolescents. Their study tested if students who are suspended before Grades 7–12 experience negative outcomes in adulthood. They found suspension was linked to the likelihood of an adult committing criminal acts, experiencing incarceration, or becoming a victim of a crime. This was evident even when controlling for a myriad of student- and school-level variables, such as drug use and academic achievement (Wolf & Kupchik, 2017). This evidence suggests that exclusionary discipline is likely to produce short- and long-term negative outcomes for both academics and social competence in all students.

As Black students are more likely to be suspended (Mizel et al., 2016; Skiba, Arredondo, et al., 2014), they have an increased probability of experiencing the negative academic and social outcomes described for all students (Wolf & Kupchik, 2017). Morris and Perry (2016) identified the disproportionate likelihood of suspension for Black students as an important factor in the racial achievement gap. Although socioeconomic levels and home supports may also be factors in the racial achievement gap, the school practice of suspension may explain approximately one-fifth of difference in academic performance between Black and White students (Morris & Perry, 2016). The main difference among socioeconomic, home supports, and suspension factors is the school has some control over how often suspension is assigned to students whereas students' socioeconomic levels and home supports are not within their purview.

Exosystem: Enrollment

Researchers have found a correlation between the percentage of Black students and the rates of punitive discipline. Racial threat theory suggests that, as the proportion of Black students increases, the perception of threat also increases (Edwards, 2016; Welch & Payne, 2010). The increased perception of threat may be a contributing factor to the hyper-disciplining of Black students. Welch and Payne (2010) claimed to conduct the first multivariate study to test the effects of racial difference on punitive school discipline. The researchers used principal, teacher, and student questionnaire data from 294 public, nonalternative middle and high schools to test racial threat theory. The results of ordinary least squares regression estimates showed adults in schools with high numbers of Black students are less likely to respond to behavior restoratively; instead, they are more likely to employ punitive consequences. This finding was supported regardless of the socioeconomic status of the students (Welch & Payne, 2010). Similarly, Morris

and Perry (2016) found suspension rates to be higher for Black students, even when controlling for socioeconomic status.

Skiba, Chung, et al. (2014) conducted a multilevel analysis using discipline data to examine the degree to which student, behavioral, and school characteristics predict discipline outcomes. The sequential multinomial logistic regression demonstrated the strongest predictor of OSS was Black enrollment. For comparison, the weight of Black enrollment was only slightly less than the likelihood of fighting resulting in OSS.

Edwards (2016) also explored the association between race and punishment using data from the first follow-up survey for the National Educational Longitudinal Survey. The sample of 10th graders taken in 1990 included (N = 8,328) White and Black students in 745 schools. The results indicated that, in racially mixed schools, Black students were treated the same as White students. In contrast, in mostly Black or mostly non-Black schools, Black students were more likely to be sanctioned when compared to White students. Multilevel analyses indicated a significant and positive relationship existed between the percent of Black students in a school and the odds of being suspended. Disproportionality may be more likely to occur in environments that are more segregated, suggesting diversity in school populations may be a positive force to increase in discipline outcomes. The term *diversity* includes all kinds of differences, but in this case, it is being use describe differences in racial identifications (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). This is especially concerning as a recent study found that in the 100 largest school districts nationwide, Black-White segregation has increased by 35% from 1991 to 2020 (Pendharkar, 2022). Black enrollment and thereby segregation may be another school-level factor that contributes to the hyper-disciplining of Black students, especially in schools with increased segregation.

Microsystem: School Principal Leadership

Principals' perspectives on discipline are a school-level variable likely impacting disproportionate discipline outcomes (Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014). DeMatthews and colleagues (2017) grouped principals (N = 10) into categories based on how they understood race, behavior, circumstance, and context in their disciplinary decisions. The three categories were *overt racial justifiers*, *flexible and cognizant disciplinarians,* and *rigid rule enforcers*. Overt racial justifiers used harsh discipline to teach students consequences while assuming students were not receiving this accountability at home. Flexible and cognizant disciplinarians saw discipline as a teaching tool, believed parents were doing their best, and considered the effects of exclusionary discipline on a student's well-being. Rigid rule enforcers believed flexibility showed weakness, created bias, did little to curb behavior, and did not prepare students for the future. This group expressed a belief that flexibility in discipline decisions resulted in bias because rules were not applied the same way for all students. In the rigid rule enforcer view, even unfair circumstances due to teacher error should result in disciplinary consequences without regard to extenuating circumstances. In support of this view, one principal related that sometimes the purpose of discipline was to teach that life was not fair. Although these three types of principals are generalized¸ the shared perspectives may serve to illustrate different ways individual principals view the application of discipline policies. Although each principal valued the importance of adherence to school rules, they demonstrated a difference in the way they interpreted their role. The principals' perceived role appeared to influence their judgment about what was fair and consistent. Therefore, principals' interpretation of fairness may impact how they apply discipline policies within their schools. For example, one principal expressed that his job was to thoroughly investigate the incident and base the decision on the evidence and follow district guidance;

otherwise “it's not fair” (DeMatthews et al., 2017, p. 536). A principal’s approach to their role and their view of what is fair can produce different outcomes for students; leaders who are overt racial justifiers and rigid rule enforcers may be increasing the number of suspensions under their supervision.

Principals may have different views or ability to exercise their autonomy in the application of discipline policies. Mukuria (2002) investigated the role of administrators in four urban middle schools with over 55% Black students using a comparative case study method. These four principals with at least 3 years of experience were identified in a large school district as the two highest and lowest suspending schools. Similar to the grouping of principals identified by DeMatthews et al. (2017), the two principals in the low-suspending schools were grouped based on similar beliefs and practices (Mukuria, 2002). Principals with low suspension rates placed a high value on teachers, had a flexible interpretation of the code of conduct and suspension policy, implemented alternative consequences, and developed a strong vision for their schools. This vision included a schoolwide prevention system built with input from students and other stakeholders. In contrast, high-suspending principals had patterns that reflected opposite beliefs and practices. Principals in high suspending schools did not seem to respect or value teachers’ input; in response, teachers distanced themselves from administration. Additionally, these high-suspending principals viewed the district discipline policy as a blueprint to guide their decisions of whether to suspend a student, instead of using their discretion. Furthermore, high-suspending principals did not convey a strong vision or implement alternatives to suspension. In contrast, principals with low suspension rates saw flexibility in district discipline policies.

Findlay (2015) explored the discretion used by Canadian administrators (N = 10) in discipline decisions through qualitative interviews. The researchers found the principals

frequently used their discretion in discipline decisions and were influenced by their value systems, internal influences (e.g., preferences, perceptions, assumptions), and external influences (e.g., resources, stakeholder expectations, and context); these multiple influences meant a careful balance in decision-making was required. This was especially true considering the impact of these decisions may have on students, including their perceptions of fairness, as well as their academic engagement and achievement. The different approaches of using discretion and following the district codes of conduct to the letter may produce different outcomes for student discipline. Principals may be able to disrupt and change school discipline trajectories depending on how they perceive their role, their leadership approach, their interpretation of fairness, and their application of discipline policies.

Microsystem: Identity and Perceptions of School Belonging

Black Females

Black females experience more exclusionary discipline when compared with other females (Crenshaw et al., 2015). Black females are more likely to be removed from class than other female subgroups (Blake et al., 2011; Smolkowski et al., 2016), which may reduce their learning opportunities when compared with their peers (Welch & Payne, 2010). Disproportionate discipline is often measured using relative risk ratio (Girvan et al., 2019). Relative risk ratio (RRR) is an estimated measure that determines underrepresentation or overrepresentation of target groups; it is commonly used to compare frequency of discipline between subgroups (Blake et al., 2011). An RRR of 1 means there is no disproportionality between the groups being measured. If the RRR is 2, then the target group is twice as likely to receive a consequence as the comparison group. Blake and colleagues (2011) researched elementary and secondary female students (N = 9,364) in a Midwestern urban school district. Their findings indicated Black

females were overrepresented in all discipline sanctions and twice as likely to receive both ISS and OSS when compared to other female students. In comparison with White females, Black females were nearly twice as likely to receive an OSS and four times as likely to receive ISS. The most common reasons Black females were suspended were defiance, dress code violations, inappropriate language, and physical aggression. In contrast, White females were more frequently suspended for truancy when compared with Black females. These findings align with the notion that discipline disproportionality for Black students may be more related to subjective rather than objective reasons for suspension (Girvan et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2002; Smolkowski et al., 2016).

Black females may experience different expectations and responses from educators based on the stereotypes associated with an embodiment of a female identity paired with a Black identity. Race-based and gender-based stereotypes found in the research may include behavior that is loud or aggressive (Morris, 2007) or other behavior that is not congruent with traditional expectations of *ladylike* behaviors (Blake et al., 2011). Morris (2007) observed similar patterns related to teacher beliefs about femininity in his 2-year ethnographic study at a public middle school. He noted that teachers frequently instructed Black females in how to practice *ladylike* behavior, which teachers described as being quieter and more passive. While these stereotypes existed, Morris (2007) also observed that the strength and willingness to stand up to others emerged in academic and non-academic interactions with Black females. In the classroom, Black females were more active participants, willing to speak up and ask questions. Additionally, Black females were willing to stand up and compete with the males. In this way, Black female behaviors may be understood as strengths instead of deficits.

Black Males

Stereotyping Black male behavior and dress may contribute to the high rates of discipline experienced by Black males. Research indicates Black male students face the highest rates of exclusionary discipline (Skiba et al., 2002) and corporal punishment, where it is still practiced (Gregory, 1995). Ferguson (2000) viewed this overuse of punishment as the means to create social differentiation. Black males in school endure the same stereotypes pervasive in society (Caton, 2012). These stereotypes can include an association with aggression (Morris, 2005), danger (Carter et al., 2014), and criminality (Caton, 2012).

Ferguson's (2000) ethnographic study cited a long list of behaviors contributing to the most disciplined category of students in school. Her statistical examples include a description of students who are defiant, disrespectful, use profanity, refuse to work, fight, and make lewd comments. In addition to behavioral stereotypes, student intentions or threat level may also be interpreted through their dress. Morris (2005) conducted qualitative research exploring this phenomenon. "Tuck in that shirt!" (p. 25) was a repeated phrase in Morris's field notes. His study demonstrates the cultural conflict arising from outward appearance.

Educators seemed to encourage Black male students to conform to gender norms with dress and manners with the rationale of preparation for future job expectations (Morris, 2005). Although this may appear admirable, Morris (2005) observed the frequent corrections were mostly directed toward Black and Latino males, not White and Asian students. The correcting of Black and Latino males may be an example of the different ways teachers perceive student dress depending on race (Caton, 2012). Besides the tucking of shirts, meaning can also been attached to Dickies brand pants favored by Black and Latino students (Morris, 2005). One Black fifth-grade teacher associated Dickies brand pants with prison, implying a connection with

criminality. This example demonstrates how clothing may lead to interpretation of behavior or motive (e.g., aggression) based on stereotypes. This is further illustrated by one student named "Jackson," who appeared White despite dressing and speaking in a style like Black male students. Jackson described himself as "White chocolate;" he was reprimanded for behaviors such as not doing his work. Morris (2005) noted on two separate occasions that Jackson was not told to tuck in his shirt although Black students nearby were reprimanded for wearing the same style. Students in Allen's (2017) study (N = 4) expressed that some teachers stereotype their behavior, write them off, or put them under surveillance. From the students' perspective, this may be one reason educators did not appear to notice or feel threatened by Jackson's style of dress (Morris, 2005). Black male behavior stereotypes, including style of dress, may contribute to how students are viewed by educators and lead to increased exclusionary consequences.

Black male students' responses to hyper-disciplining can lead them to resist or internalize the messages they receive about Black masculinity (Allen, 2017). These messages may be communicated by removing students from the learning environment using exclusionary discipline. Allen conducted an ethnographic with four Black males, which was part of a more extensive study (N = 10) in a Texas middle school. One student narrative described a classroom for students being disciplined. From the student's perspective, on-campus suspension (also known as ISS) is an opportunity to escape the classroom environment, talk on his phone, or "just chill" (p. 278). More importantly, he could escape from an environment where he felt he was under surveillance but not seen. This idea of surveillance, absent from connection or relationship, was described by students in several studies, specifically taking the form of teachers who do not take the time to get to know students as individuals (Allen, 2017; Caton, 2012; Morris, 2005). Possible outcomes may include students' absorption of the culturally and intellectually deficient

narratives associated with Black masculinity (Allen, 2017). The evidence of this was seen in students' expressions of personal or cultural deficits, such as their own self-discipline, when it came to academic achievement. In this case, Black male exclusion from class can only serve to set students up for a problematic future (Caton, 2012).

LGBTQIA

There is growing research investigating the unique experiences of Black LGBTQIA youth related to discipline disparities. LGBTQIA includes students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex, queer/questioning, or asexual. Just as traditional gender may be characterized by accepted roles in society, students who identify as LGBTQIA have a different experience as they may not feel they fit into accepted roles both in their racial and gender identities (McCready, 2004). McCready (2004) explored the difference in marginalization between Black heterosexual and gender nonconforming and gay students. The National School Climate Survey (Kosciw et al., 2015) indicated lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, or questioning (LGBTQ) students of color have higher frequencies of victimization than White LGBTQ students. Snapp and colleagues (2015) identified how processes experienced by racially/ethnically minoritized people might be like those experienced by LGBTQ youth. Considering the intersection of race and nongender-conforming youth identities, youth with underrepresented identities (e.g., Black, LGBTQ) experience discipline disparities. One hypothesis is that school staff consider identities through the lens of normalcy, where some identities are appropriate and others are not acceptable. In focus groups (N = 31), students shared examples of receiving consequences for public displays of affection (PDA) when same-sex couples engaged in PDA without correction. Another student experienced a strong rebuke for applying make-up in class, but this behavior appeared acceptable for gender-conforming

students. In an interview conducted by McCready (2004), one Black male high school student shared how he complained to the head of security about having a book thrown at him. The head of security's response was to ask the student what he did to deserve it. Gender nonconformity likely creates a different kind of marginalization based on the unique identities of students.

Perceptions of School Belonging

In addition to the use of the suspension, educators have some control over how students experience the school environment, which some may refer to as *school climate*. Although perceptions of school belonging may not be purely a microsystem factor (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), it was placed here with the view that the climate affects how students perceive the environment. It could also be argued that school climate is the exosystem and microsystem working in tandem, which affect the student experience. Schools with high rates of discipline for Black students when compared to other racial groups may be sending a message that Black students do not belong. In addition to missing instruction, students may lose engagement and a sense of belonging in school; they may even begin to feel devalued (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2019). Bottiani and colleagues (2017) conducted a quantitative study (N = 19,726) in 58 rural and suburban Maryland high schools. They used a statewide school climate survey to determine the relationship between Black-White discipline disparities, perceived school belonging, perceived equity, and adjustment problems. Discipline disparities refers to the differences in discipline outcomes for subgroups, which may be observed by students. Perceived school belonging and equity are both measured through student self-reporting; they refer to a student's perceived connection to their school environment and whether they believe they are treated fairly. Adjustment problems are also self-reported and refer to externalizing psychological symptoms. Bottiani et al.'s (2017) findings revealed a statistically significant

negative association of discipline disparities between Black and White students with Black students' sense of school belonging. Lower levels of perceived equity and higher adjustment problems were also associated with Black and White discipline disparities. Furthermore, the researchers noted that schools with higher suspension rates for Black students also had more Black students reporting adjustment problems; no association was present for White students. These findings suggest that increased school suspension for Black students compared to White students may result in Black students not feeling a sense of belonging with the school environment. Since White students were not being suspended at higher rates, they likely did not have a reason to feel a lack of belonging. The difference in responses by Black and White students also suggests students perceive injustice, and it may affect their connection to a school environment.

Myrick and Martorell (2011) conducted similar research to explore middle school students' (N = 320) perceptions about the relationship between perceived discrimination and social competence; the findings revealed a negative relationship. Social competence or social skills may be lower when students perceive discrimination. Findings from both studies (Bottiani et al., 2017; Myrick & Martorell, 2011) suggested the importance of a student's sense of belonging related to positive social outcomes. Black students' observations and perceptions of discrimination may be barriers to their ability to experience a positive school climate. Heilbrun and colleagues (2018) surveyed seventh- and eighth-grade students (N = 39,364), revealing a connection between a higher perception of structure and support from adults and students matched with a lower incidence of suspension and racial disparity. High rates of disproportionate discipline for Black students are not conducive with efforts to make every student feel included and supported.

Promising Responses to the Hyper-Disciplining of Black Students

The longer and harsher disciplining of Black students must cease (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2019), along with the resulting negative academic (Morris & Perry, 2016; Noltemeyer et al., 2015; United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2019) and social effects (Bottiani et al., 2017; Myrick & Martorell, 2011; Skiba, Arredondo, et al., 2014; Wolf & Kupchik, 2017). The hyper-disciplining of Black students is influenced by structural or systemic racism (macrosystem), discipline policies (exosystem), enrollment, and school principals' application of these policies (microsystem), which impact students' experiences in school (microsystem). Although factors organized by EST (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) have been the focus of this literature review thus far, recent research has pointed to the targeting of school-level factors to improve disproportionate outcomes in school discipline (Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014). Welsh and Little (2018) broke down school-level factors, further suggesting discipline disparities are more likely due to school practices, teachers' classroom management or characteristics, and principals' perspectives. The next section considers the research on promising school-level practices explored using the lens of a different theoretical framework (Gregory et al., 2017).

Theoretical Framework

Gregory and colleagues' (2017) framework for increasing equity in school discipline (FIESD) includes 10 promising principles categorized as "(a) intrapersonal (educator beliefs and attitudes), (b) interpersonal (quality of individual and group interactions), (c) instructional (academic rigor, cultural relevancy, and responsiveness of instruction), and (d) systems-level (access to behavioral supports and avenues for collaborative approaches to resolving conflicts)" (p. 254). In addition to focusing on school-level factors, FIESD has the added advantage of including both prevention- and intervention-oriented actions (Gregory et al., 2017).

Woven through each of the 10 FIESD promising principles is culturally conscious implementation, which is vital to ensure the interventions benefit students from historically marginalized groups by considering the beliefs and behaviors shared by a culture and the historical connection (Gregory et al., 2017). The historical connection includes the acknowledgment of socioeconomic and racial segregation that has created disadvantages such as unequal education opportunities. Schools have the power to create, shape, and regulate social identities through the hidden curriculum of school rules and labeling practices, which represent the hegemonic culture (Ferguson, 2000). Hegemonic cultural values and forms define who is worthy and who has potential in school (Ferguson, 2000), thus perpetuating structural racism. The acknowledgment of current inequity (Gregory et al., 2017) is essential for using and applying the FIESD, which is used as an organizing framework to examine existing intervention research on disproportional discipline interventions in this chapter.

Supportive Relationships

The first principle in FIESD is supportive relationships (Gregory et al., 2017). Anyon and colleagues (2018) conducted a qualitative study examining the discipline strategies used in low-suspending schools. In the Denver Public School District, these schools have been working to improve racial discipline gaps for almost 10 years; the district even set a goal to have a 3% or lower discipline rate for all subgroups, especially Black students. Focus groups and semistructured interviews from a sample of 198 educators from 33 schools indicated a priority on building relationships, which staff serving minoritized students mentioned more frequently. Staff shared that their relationships with students helped them identify the root causes of behaviors. Moreover, within the context of relationships, staff felt better equipped to assign consequences that reflect problem-solving and growth opportunities instead of relying on traditional

punishments. Staff clarified that relationships did not mean low expectations but rather loving accountability. Relationships also appeared to make chosen interventions and consequences more effective for producing change. Practices for building relationships among teachers in the study included greetings, advisory periods, staff visibility, home visits, morning meetings, and positive contact with caregivers. The building of relationships also extended to creating family connections; in addition to the high value placed on home visits, staff mentioned engaging with parents, making positive phone calls, and keeping them informed of their child's experiences. This research reveals the value of relationships in creating a supportive environment for all students.

Another example of supportive relationships can be found in the application of restorative practices (RP), which can change the way adults and students interact in school (Gregory et al., 2016). Because rebuilding relationships is central to RP, wrongdoing presents an opportunity for collaborative problem-solving in response to conflict. Schools may also use RP to proactively build community, with strategies like daily circles to help students establish relationships and shared responsibility for the climate. In addition to social support, RP is a process that values students' voices. Gregory and colleagues (2016) conducted quantitative research with two large high schools to measure student-reported teacher respect and examine whether there was a decrease in defiance or misconduct discipline referrals for Asian/White or African American/Latino students. Subjective discipline referrals (N = 1,154,686), such as defiance and misconduct, may relate to implicit bias (Girvan et al., 2016). In this study, the survey results indicated students reported higher teacher respect and better student-teacher relationships with teachers implementing RP (Gregory et al., 2016). Additionally, results demonstrated fewer racial differences between students who received defiance/misconduct referrals. This result may

indicate equitable practices as research suggests that historically minoritized students are more likely to receive subjective discipline referrals (Girvan et al., 2016; Smolkowski et al., 2016). Furthermore, research indicates that students of different races/ethnicities may experience RP implementation the same (Gregory et al., 2016), suggesting a culturally conscious approach.

Tobin and Vincent (2011) explored the specific strategies within Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) that may effectively reduce disproportionate discipline outcomes for Black students. The researchers used the RRR to measure the level of disproportionality in a sample of schools ($N = 46$) from four states. Additionally, they used the Self-Assessment Survey to determine which strategies successfully reduced disproportionate discipline. Multiple regression analysis resulted in statistical significance for a 4:1 positive to corrective acknowledgment at -8.12 ($p = .003$), demonstrating the importance of a positive classroom environment where students receive acknowledgment more than correction. Tobin and Vincent (2011) also noted that trusting student-teacher relationships are particularly important for Black students. These results align with Caton's (2012) findings of the value of increasing levels of belongingness to the school's environment. Students have an increased sense of belongingness where they feel supported and nurtured. In contrast, one student claimed their teacher was not aware of his strengths because they did not know him. Relationships may be a protective factor in schools, helping teachers resist implicit bias and making students feel cared for and connected.

Bias-Aware Classrooms and Respectful School Environments

The second principle in the FIESD is bias-aware classrooms and respectful school environments (Gregory et al., 2017). Schools exist within the context of bias stemming from societal norms (Mansfield, 2014); therefore, implicit bias exists in schools because it exists in society. Implicit racial bias refers to subtle bias (Girvan et al., 2016) held unconsciously by a

person (Gregory et al., 2017). Research suggests educators' disciplinary decisions may be affected by negative associations with certain racial stereotypes. There is a connection in the research between school climate outcomes and inequitable school discipline outcomes (McIntosh et al., 2021). McIntosh and colleagues (2021) conducted a quasi-experimental study in one state by providing 4 full days of equity-focused SWPBIS professional development training to 25 school leadership teams throughout the year. The participating schools included those with persistent low academic performance and a population made up of 86% or more Black students. The descriptive results, measured as the average change from 2017–2018 to 2018–2019, demonstrated improved school outcomes through increased climate ratings and the decreased use of exclusionary discipline. Although the results are promising, it is difficult to establish causality as schools were likely implementing other interventions to improve their outcomes. This type of intervention may need further investigation to isolate the impact of professional development on school outcomes.

The GREET-STOP-PROMPT (GSP) intervention is one developed to feasibly address discipline disparities for Black male students (Cook et al., 2018). Implicit bias and vulnerable decision points (VDP) may be related, resulting in Black students being disciplined more frequently for subjective office referrals, such as disrespect or disruption (Girvan et al., 2016). The GSP intervention incorporates proactive classroom management, teacher self-awareness of implicit bias, and appropriate response strategies (Cook et al., 2018). This study took place in three large elementary schools that implemented SWPBIS and had risk ratios indicating Black males were over 2.5 times as likely to receive an office discipline referral compared to all other students. The staff first learned the GREET and STOP components; GREET is an acronym to help teachers prevent problem behavior and STOP helps teachers neutralize implicit bias that

may lead to disproportionate discipline outcomes. Cook et al. (2018) identified that GREET stands for (G) greet students at the door; I reinforce students contingently, specifically, and frequently; (E) establish, review, and cue behavioral expectations; (E) engage students by providing numerous opportunities to respond; and (T) take time to deliver wise feedback. Stop stands for (S) stop and do not do anything in response to problem behavior, (T) take a deep breath, (O) observe what is happening with an open attitude, and (P) proceed positively.

Finally, the last step teachers learned was the PROMPT component, designed to help teachers respond to behavior effectively. Prompt stands for (P) proximity control or moving toward the student, (R) redirection strategies which may involve simple requests, (OM) ongoing monitoring and praise of targeted behavior, (P) prompting of desired behavior through calm and concise verbal command articulating what student should do, and (T) teaching interaction, which uses an empathy driven correction. Overall, GSP effectively reduced risk ratios in all three schools, although they were not eliminated. In addition to staff reported feasibility, pretests and posttests demonstrated a significant 15% increase in students' self-reported feelings of belonging and school connection. This intervention incorporates multiple parts of FIESD and demonstrates promising school-level results.

Academic Rigor

Academic rigor with a culturally conscious approach is the third principle identified in FIESD (Gregory et al., 2017). Academic rigor is in place when student potential is promoted through high level learning opportunities and high expectations (Gregory et al., 2016). Yeager and colleagues (2014) considered how historically minoritized students may interpret teacher feedback with mistrust. Utilizing three double-blind, randomized field experiments, Yeager and colleagues tested this intervention designed to repair mistrust between educators and minoritized

adolescents. Mistrust has been developed over time as Black students experience bias in school (Gibson et al., 2014). The researchers hypothesized that removing this mistrust barrier may result in positive benefits over the long term for minoritized students (Yeager et al., 2014). The first two studies in a suburban middle school tested what happened when researchers provided wise feedback to students in the intermediate performance range; this wise feedback communicated a message that teachers knew the students could reach the high expectations they had for them. Students had 1 week to revise, and 59% made changes to their essays. In this first study, researchers found historically minoritized students had increased motivation to revise their papers. To further investigate this phenomenon, researchers repeated the study the following year with a new group of students and added a requirement to turn in a revised copy of the paper. Independent coders and teachers confirmed that the greatest increase was among Black students who had reported low trust in the school, although all students benefitted.

The third study expanded these findings with an attributional retraining intervention in an urban public high school in New York (Yeager et al., 2014). In this third study, some students watched testimonials from older students who looked like them; these students shared that their teacher gave critical feedback because they believed in their students, cared, and knew they could meet the expectations. In contrast, the other two student groups completed puzzles and viewed placebo testimonials. All three groups of students were given a hypothetical essay with feedback from a White teacher and asked to interpret the teacher's critical feedback. The consequence of this intervention had both immediate and longer-term effects on students by improving grades and reducing failure in courses. The results indicated a 40% closing of the racial achievement gap. This intervention was a response to the chronic mistrust that was getting in the way of historically minoritized students benefitting from teacher feedback due to

skepticism about teacher motivation, along with potential teacher bias. Although the interventions described one-time efforts, Yeager and colleagues (2014) encouraged the development of a culture of high academic expectations while incorporating the messages of wise feedback into daily classroom experiences. Gregory et al. (2017) recommended that each of these principles be incorporated using a culturally conscious approach. Yeager and colleagues' study is an example of actively addressing the mistrust that can become a barrier to the achievement of historically minoritized students. Therefore, academic rigor with a culturally conscious approach does not just mean high expectations for all students; it also means critically reflecting and addressing what gets in the way.

Culturally Relevant and Responsive Teaching

Culturally relevant and responsive teaching is the fourth principle identified in FIESD (Gregory et al., 2017). One example of this is in the application of a classroom check-up, which was adapted by researchers using the SWPBIS practice of increasing praise within a schoolwide acknowledgment system (Gion et al., 2020). Two public schools in the Pacific Northwest were participants in this study where Black students were over 2.5 times more likely to receive a discipline referral than other students in the school. Two teachers from each school were selected by their principal based on their need for classroom behavior support; their class population was 25–75% Black students. Baseline data indicated low levels of teaching expectations and a low ratio of praise to reprimands, along with a higher rate of reprimands for Black students.

The intervention began when teachers with similar data patterns were given a personal matrix activity to promote the development of culturally responsive expectations, a praise preference assessment tool, and a strategy for coaching with visual performance feedback. The personal matrix activity gave teachers a greater understanding of students' perspectives as they

compared classroom expectations to those in the home or neighborhood. Next, the praise preference assessment allowed students to share how they like to be recognized for good behavior, which teachers reviewed by individual student and class aggregate. Finally, Gion and colleagues (2010) adapted the classroom check-up coaching model by providing visual feedback disaggregated by student ethnoracial differences after teachers set individual goals using their baseline data. The intervention decreased reprimands for Black students, which was previously higher than other students; furthermore, data indicated an increased rate of praise for all students. Additionally, a social validity survey demonstrated teachers felt the intervention was effective, acceptable, and a good fit for their setting. Although this intervention shows promise for teacher support, the individualized coaching required may be a resource barrier for schools with limited personnel.

Leaders are in a key role to model and prioritize implementation diversity-related initiatives; Young and colleagues (2010) investigated principals' self-efficacy to implement their district's diversity plan. Specifically, principals were chosen because they are essential to implementing the district's strategic plan. Researchers interviewed 22 principals, in addition to observations, reflective journals, and document analysis. Through a smaller case study including four principals, it became clear that the principals had been responsible for implementing the diversity plan, even though evidence suggested the district and board lost interest possibly due to competing initiatives. Payno-Simmons (2021) saw a need for districts to align the work of improving equity with other district initiatives; otherwise, competing initiatives may take priority status over equity initiatives. The lack of interest from district leadership and board members likely affected principals' views on the diversity plan (Young et al., 2010). Qualitative data indicated that principals were confused about the responsibilities, the vision, and what diversity

even meant to their schools. The principals expressed that although they supported diversity, they did not have the self-efficacy needed to implement the plan. Additionally, all four expressed they felt uncomfortable discussing these issues, and many felt they did not have the skills to solve conflicts related to diversity. In the end, the lack of clarity, district support, professional learning, follow-through, and vision led principals to believe this was not a district priority. Unfortunately, there was no real change or impact from the attempt to implement a diversity plan in the district. Young and colleagues concluded that leaders can create an inclusive environment with positive exchanges among diverse groups if they can build their self-efficacy in responding to cultural differences. This study suggests cultural competence as a district goal, and the development of principal self-efficacy may be a precursor to implementing culturally relevant and responsive teaching in every classroom.

Opportunities for Learning and Correcting Behavior

Opportunities for learning and correcting behavior through the lens of cultural competence is the fifth principle included in FIESD (Gregory et al., 2017). Nese and colleagues (2020) researched the use of an Instructional Alternative to Exclusionary Discipline (ISLA), which is a model providing opportunities for learning and correcting behavior similar to RP. Instead of students being sent to the principal's office to wait for a consequence, ISLA provides students with immediate support. The support is provided in a behavioral support room and includes a student-guided function-based assessment and targeted behavioral skills coaching. Students are prepared to return to class with a practiced reconnection conversation card, and the teacher and student are provided with support to restore their relationship. Nese and colleagues conducted a mixed-methods study to examine the impact of ISLA in two middle schools. The results indicated this process of embedding RP instead of traditional pathways to exclusionary

consequences via the principal's office showed promising results. In addition to a staff survey indicating this was a feasible intervention, there was also a decrease in lost instructional minutes and the number of students receiving exclusionary discipline in both schools.

Data-Based Inquiry for Equity

The sixth principle moves from prevention to intervention, recommending the use of data to identify specific components of the discipline process producing conflict or inequitable results (Gregory et al., 2017). Discussing race and equity should be done within the context of examining disaggregated data to determine what disparities are occurring (Carter et al., 2014). Additionally, there should be discussion around interactions that create the data and context of those interactions. In response, Carter et al. (2014) recommended continued monitoring of disaggregated data to ensure the interventions built to respond have had an impact. McIntosh and colleagues (2020) considered the effects of principals being sent monthly discipline reports in a double-blind randomized control trial. This experimental test included public K–12 schools (N = 35) where Black students were twice as likely to be assigned a discipline referral when compared with White students. The intervention group of 17 schools showed no meaningful changes except an increased likelihood the principals would view the reports.

In contrast, Scott and colleagues (2012) published a case study describing how disaggregated data might be analyzed and responded to within the context of a large high school. The researchers described the mindset shift that took place over the course of 2 years where faculty initially found conversations related to race uncomfortable and grew to address the outcomes more directly. The shift took place as the data analysis disproved initial hypotheses that minority disparities in discipline might be due to inexperienced teachers or academic content challenges. The faculty grew to use the contextual predictors in the data, such as time and

location, to build prevention plans to address disparities for students in discipline outcomes. Although, the staff did not want to use SWPBIS as a framework, many similar practices were used to respond to behavior, such as increasing use of prediction and preventions (Scott et al., 2012) while ensuring behaviors were well defined to remove subjectivity (Girvan et al., 2016). Ideally, these solutions developed through data-based inquiry should include shared decision-making with a focus on creating a democratic and caring learning environment for students (Banks et al., 2001).

Problem-Solving Approaches to Discipline

The seventh intervention principle identified by Gregory and colleagues (2017) is the recommendation for school personnel to come together and develop plans in response to analyzing discipline data. McIntosh and colleagues (2018) implemented a four-step process in a case study with a K–8 urban school to reduce disproportionality. The first step is to identify the extent of the problem. The researchers used absolute rates by subgroup and risk ratios to measure the level of disproportionality. In the case study school, Black students were almost four times as likely to receive an office discipline referral as White students. Additionally, the discipline rate for Black students was .48 compared to .06 for White students. The second step of the process is to drill down and determine what are the vulnerable decision points (VDPs) at the school level that may be contributing to the problem. In the sample school, the VDP was physical aggression while students were playing basketball. Drilling down into root causes revealed students were using different basketball rules, which was an important discovery that indicated it was not misbehavior resulting in the disproportional discipline of Black students. The third step of the process was to plan to prevent the VDPs from occurring by applying one set of rules to all students to ensure safety. The NBA rules were taught to students in small groups and individual

one-on-one lessons. The last step is to evaluate the plan to ensure it is being implemented and then measure its effects. Teachers reported statistically significant increases in self-efficacy in a survey format, and the office discipline referrals dropped to only one incident on the playground.

The 3-year Michigan SWPBIS Equity Pilot (Payno-Simmons, 2021) utilized three points from the 5-point intervention approach for enhancing equity in school discipline designed by McIntosh et al. (2018) with a case study examination in Michigan. The first step was collecting and reporting discipline data disaggregated by race and ethnicity. The next step was implementing a preventative, multitiered behavior framework, and the final step was teaching strategies with the aim of neutralizing implicit bias when teachers make discipline decisions. To reduce discipline disproportionality, educators need to consider the impact of systemic racial bias and deficit thinking about diverse cultures (Payno-Simmons, 2021). With district support, the Michigan SWPBIS Equity Pilot helped a middle school establish a team-based problem-solving process that included problem identification, analysis, implementation, and evaluation. The leadership team of one middle school examined data monthly by subgroup and followed the four-step problem-solving model. In the 2016–2017 school year, the problem analysis led to a drill down that examined behavior patterns by type, grade level, location, time, and motivation (Payno-Simmons, 2021) following McIntosh and colleagues' (2018) recommendations. The precise problem statement resulted in an action plan including steps such as professional learning on implicit bias and improving data collection accuracy (Payno-Simmons, 2021). The staff engaged in six professional learning sessions, two of which focused on what it means to embed sustaining and culturally responsive practices within SWPBIS. The equity specialists from the Michigan SWPBIS equity pilot embedded relevant activities; one activity gave staff the opportunity to reflect on their own culture. In response, the staff chose to focus on increasing

feedback from parents and community members. For example, at a town hall, stakeholders (e.g., parents, community members, students) provided feedback on the proposed discipline definitions for disrespect and defiance. Additionally, the principal sought input from students who had experienced disproportionate discipline. The staff also wanted to learn strategies to neutralize implicit bias and VDPs, with many even requesting more time to practice the strategies. The PD was a direct result of the needs identified during the equity data meetings each month.

Three visible changes were highlighted from this pilot study (Payno-Simmons, 2021). The first was a shift toward increased ownership the school demonstrated over their racial discipline gap. Second, there was a focused examination of their adult practices and school systems with the intent of making them more responsive to their Black students, instead of using their prior deficit constructs. Specifically, the observed change was in how the leadership team began to describe their interactions between the staff and students, including less assumption of negative motivations for behavior. The final shift was the noticeable change in the staff emphasis on bridging the gap between school and home by providing parents with positive feedback, creating structures to center parent and student voice, and building relationships. The barriers included time for adults to explore and reflect on how systems, practices, and people may contribute to the discipline gap. Since humans are born and grow up with the cultural patterns they are taught at a young age, the practice of critical reflection can help individuals move away from reference culture through criteria based on preference (Pedersen, 2000; Wink, 2011). The data results from this intervention built on a SWPBIS foundation indicated a decrease in the discipline gap between Black and White students from 3.95 to .43 over a 3-year time span for this one middle school (Payno-Simmons, 2021).

Inclusion of Student and Family Voice on Causes and Solutions of Conflicts

Principle 8 in FIESD is the integration of student and family voice through a culturally conscious lens (Gregory et al., 2017). Educators have the power to operationalize social justice initiatives (Mansfield, 2014) and move schools to inclusive environments through participatory decision making (Friend & Caruthers, 2015). Student voice is often referred to in the literature as a role for students in decision-making and evaluation, such as feedback on school policies (M. Brown et al., 2020). M. Brown and colleagues (2020) pointed out the varying levels of stakeholder participation from mere tokenism to genuine shared decision-making, originally based on Hart's (1992) ladder. Mansfield (2014) demonstrated the value of student voice in her 2 years of ethnographic research at a young women's leadership school. Mansfield used a layered approach to determine what could be learned first through observation, then by conducting a survey, and finally through semistructured focus groups. Although insight was gained through the observations and survey, in speaking directly with students, the researcher discovered new information about how students were being bullied on the bus and in the neighborhood. Administrators and educators were unaware of what students were experiencing despite student descriptions of the positive relationships they had with the adults in the building. For this reason, Mansfield argued for seeking student voice to strengthen learning spaces and guide school leadership decisions.

Students can provide first-hand accounts of what is going on inside and outside school walls (Mansfield, 2014). Gregory et al. (2016) suggested explicitly providing students with opportunities to share aspects of their identity, community experiences, and encounters with bias or racism. Moreover, with a better understanding of the realities of what students are experiencing, educators can constantly adjust their practices to become more culturally conscious

(Mansfield, 2014). Winn (2016) advocated for educators to engage in critical dialogue with stakeholders around topics such as belonging, which may impact student learning and teacher practices. Mansfield (2014) described this ongoing evolution as "true transformative and social justice leadership" (p. 426), which looks both inward and outward. To increase students' active participation in school improvement, policy makers and educators who are used to dominance may need to adjust the power structures so students can experience freedom and exercise agency within schools (Friend & Caruthers, 2015).

Friend and Caruthers (2015) suggested a flexible framework designed to shift student roles from passive recipients to collaborative generators of new ideas and knowledge related to equity and diversity. Including students, not only in providing feedback, but in analysis of data and implementation is an example of participatory action research. Friend and Caruthers conducted videotaped interviews of elementary (N = 144) and secondary (N = 28) students to test their framework. Effecting meaningful change in schools involves a new way of knowing and seeing; this must be accomplished through active student engagement and specifically putting previously excluded groups at the center of this process. The voices who are given an opportunity to share their perspective after a conflict, specifically families and students with less influence on policies, is a matter of equity (Gregory et al., 2016).

Reintegration of Students After Conflict or Absence

Principle 9 of FIESD addresses the need to develop processes to support students' reintegration into the community for different reasons, including long-term suspension (Gregory et al., 2017). After receiving punitive exclusionary disciplining, students likely feel alienated and disconnected from the school community (Gregory et al., 2016). Bottiani and colleagues (2017) found that Black students who attended schools with disproportionate discipline self-reported

adjustment problems and lower levels of school belonging; these characteristics were not found with White students. Allen and colleagues (2016) defined school belonging as a person's feeling of connection to a school within a larger social system. Students need to be able to reestablish this connection, rebuild positive relationships, and reengage in learning; without a process in place, this may not happen naturally (Gregory et al., 2016). Some districts are developing programs to provide students with support when they return from an absence to increase their likelihood of both academic and social success. One example is facilitating a restorative justice circle upon s student's return, which Winn (2016) advocated for all novice teachers to be trained to conduct as a minimum requirement. Training would provide new teachers with the strategies to cultivate connections and communication by asking questions and establishing values. Without a process facilitated by adults, students may not have the social or emotional skills to reconnect on their own (Gregory et al., 2016). This process should also support students making up schoolwork from their absence; students involved in the juvenile justice system may have missed several weeks of school, which can compound the challenge. Wraparound supports may be offered to students in partnership with community organizations to provide the needed support; there are benefits in making this a coordinated effort between schools and community support services, as the school may need the additional resources. Examples of services may include after-school employment, mentoring programs, and family support.

Multitiered System of Support

The tenth principle in FIESD is the use of the multitiered system of support (MTSS) framework, which is a systematic method of including both prevention and intervention strategies while using data to drive decisions (Gregory et al., 2017). MTSS was designed using the public health model that organizes support in tiers while gradually intensifying support

options based on student need. SWPBIS follows a response-to-intervention logic beginning with universal support, such as lessons focused on expected behavior and acknowledgement for all students (Vincent et al., 2015). Upon this foundation, students who do not respond may be given a targeted intervention, and those who do not respond to the targeted intervention or have significant needs may receive individualized support. The research associated with SWPBIS has offered the most extensive investigation into the effectiveness of MTSS for reducing discipline disparities (Gregory et al., 2017). SWPBIS was designed to create positive, predictable, and safe environments where students are more likely to succeed academically and behaviorally, but it was not specifically designed to reduce discipline disparities (Vincent et al., 2015). Furthermore, the results of prior research have demonstrated inconsistent findings associated with SWPBIS effectiveness in reducing discipline disparities, which has led to the intentional integration of culturally conscious practices within the SWPBIS framework (Gregory et al., 2017). Since SWBIS focuses on adult behavior and is led by a team of adults, SWPBIS might be modified as to meet the needs of culturally diverse students by changing adult practices (Vincent et al., 2015). Suggestions include emphasizing cultural awareness, using data-based decision-making with disaggregated data, and revising codes of conduct to include more prevention and less emphasis on exclusionary consequences. Since SWPBIS is already implemented in many schools across the United States, building on this foundation to improve equitable outcomes makes sense, although it must be done with an intentional focus on increasing equity both academically and behaviorally.

The Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) implemented SWPBIS (2006–2007) first and then added RP (2014–2015; Hashim et al., 2018). Using the tiered framework of SWPBIS, they implemented RP to build community for all students (Tier 1), to repair harm in

response to conflict (Tier 2), and to reintegrate students to the school community who had been suspended or truant (Tier 3). The district removed the suspension option for willful defiance and centralized discipline procedures requiring principals to obtain approval before suspending. Although it is unclear what caused the results, researchers indicated a decrease in suspensions and a narrowing of the suspension gap between Asian, Black, and White students. These results suggest that districts may begin to address inequities in school discipline by taking proactive measures and changing policy (Hashim et al., 2018). It also suggests MTSS can be used to organize the work of RP by providing students with a continuum of support.

Conclusion

The FIESD includes actions to reduce disproportionate discipline that can be categorized as preventative, intervention-oriented, or in some cases a combination (Gregory et al., 2017). These 10 components are intended to be applied with a cultural conscious foundation; without this, they may not provide the desired support to students who have been historically marginalized. A culturally conscious foundation means practitioners must approach the intervention with full recognition of past and current socioeconomic and racial segregation systems, resulting in unfair advantages for the White culture. The 10 FIESD principles are (a) supportive relationships, (b) bias-aware classrooms and respectful school environments, (c) academic rigor, (d) culturally relevant and responsive teaching, (e) opportunities for learning and correcting behavior, (f) data-based inquiry for equity, (g) problem-solving approaches to discipline, (h) inclusion of student and family voice on conflicts' causes and solutions, (i) reintegration of students after conflict or absence, and (j) multitiered system of supports. Although these are 10 separate principles, the application may involve a combination. For example, Hashim and colleagues (2018) described LAUSD's efforts to reduce disproportionality

first by implementing SWPBIS, which is an example of a multitiered system of support (Principle 10). Next, the district centralized suspension decisions and created a ban on the willful defiance due to the racial disparities identified in the assignment of consequences related to this label (Gregory et al., 2016; Hashim et al., 2018). This response may be viewed as data-based inquiry for equity (Principle 6) in Gregory and colleagues' (2017) framework. Finally, within their MTSS, LAUSD implemented RP, which was intended to create supportive relationships (Principle 1) and provide a positive process for inclusion of student and family voice (Principle 8; Hashim et al., 2018). Moreover, RP provides a reintegration process after conflict or absence (Principle 9), as well as opportunities for learning and correcting behavior (Principle 5). There are still many questions to be answered, and it is unclear which combination of principles produces the desired effect (Gregory et al., 2017).

The 10 FIESD principles frame potential pathways to improve equitable outcomes in our discipline systems. Recent research points to a focus on school-level factors rather than characteristics of students and their behaviors as contributing to disproportionate discipline (Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014). The factors related to disproportionate discipline identified in this literature review using Bronfenbrenner's EST (1994) include the BLM movement (chronosystem), systemic or structural racism (macrosystem), discipline policies and enrollment (exosystem), and principal leadership, as well as student identity and perceptions of belonging (microsystem). Although these factors were all found to be related to disproportionate discipline outcomes, principal beliefs and their perceived role in student discipline (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014) need further investigation. This is especially relevant as principals' perspectives on discipline were found to be a predictor of OSS (Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014). This principal focus is also identified in earlier research connecting low-suspending

principals (Mukuria, 2002) with the use of discretion (Findlay, 2015) in their interpretation of discipline policies, although recent research suggests administrator discretion may be a driver of racial disparities in suspension (Shi & Zhu, 2022). In order to address racial disparities, adults must work through issues of race and resulting stereotypes which have been shaped by history and still produce a difference in lived experiences (Carter et al., 2014). The value of leadership cannot be underestimated (Young et al., 2010), and there is ample support in the research for offering more guidance and resources to principals and administrators as a path toward disrupting disproportionate discipline (e.g., DeMatthews et al., 2017; Mukuria, 2002; Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014; Welsh, 2023). Therefore, Project 2 included a mixed methods needs assessment to better understand principals' beliefs and perceived role in the discipline process.

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Project 2: Needs Assessment

Nationwide, Black students are punished more frequently and more severely than students from other ethnoracial groups (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2019). This has been a longstanding outcome experienced by Black students (Children's Defense Fund, 1975; United States Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2018), which is rooted in historical practices of structural racism (Wilkerson, 2020). The negative outcomes of disproportionate discipline include an effect on academic performance (Morris & Perry, 2016) and an increased likelihood of dropping out before graduation (Noltemeyer et al., 2015). Life trajectory may also be impacted by the school-to-prison pipeline, which increases the chances of Black students ending up in the criminal justice system (Skiba, Arredondo, et al., 2014; Wolf & Kupchik, 2017). This outcome is further illustrated in data showing that Black young adults between 18 and 19 are 10 times as likely as White young adults to be incarcerated (Carson, 2015). Although principals are not solely responsible for these outcomes, the negative outcomes faced by Black students make it imperative to find a way to influence school leaders to become social justice leaders (DeMatthews et al., 2017) and prioritize the development of discipline systems designed to produce equitable outcomes for Black youth.

An empirical needs assessment study was conducted within one southeastern state to better understand discipline outcomes and principals' perspectives related to discipline. The needs assessment was developed based on literature that suggests school-level factors such as principal leadership are important considerations for disproportionate discipline (DeMatthews et al., 2017). School principals have different beliefs about discipline (Mukuria, 2002) and perceptions of their role (DeMatthews et al., 2017) in the discipline process. These beliefs and perceptions may be influenced by personal values, context, time, assumptions, and stakeholder

expectations (Findlay, 2015). Although a quantitative survey ($N = 57$) revealed there are distinct perspectives among principals across the state, qualitative interviews ($N = 4$) revealed the contrast may be due to the values that lead to principal actions. A better understanding of how to influence principal beliefs, attitudes, and values related to the discipline process has the potential to produce better outcomes for Black students. The results offer a rich understanding of the depth and breadth of the problem. Furthermore, this needs assessment provides insights about principals' perspectives that can be applied to an intervention designed to support their efforts to improve equitable discipline outcomes.

Context

In one southeastern state, the hyper-disciplining of Black students continues to be a pervasive problem as evidenced by this needs assessment. The demographic data that follow are intended to provide the context of the needs assessment by presenting descriptive data related to schools, students, and principals statewide. In 2019, 2,302 schools existed within 212 school systems throughout the state. The schools were attended by 1,834,778 students in elementary, middle, and high school. Black/African American students represent 37% and White students represented 39%; when combined (76%), these ethnoracial groups made up the majority of students in the state in 2019 (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Statewide Student Demographic Data

Grade level	Hispanic or Latino	American Indian	Asian	Black/ African American	White	Pacific Islander	Two or more races
PK	15%	.17%	3%	37%	41%	.08%	4%
K	17%	.22%	5%	36%	38%	.10%	5%
1	17%	.21%	5%	36%	38%	.10%	5%
2	17%	.21%	4%	37%	37%	.09%	4%
3	17%	.18%	4%	37%	37%	.10%	4%
4	17%	.18%	4%	38%	37%	.11%	4%
5	17%	.21%	4%	37%	37%	.11%	4%
6	17%	.18%	4%	38%	37%	.11%	4%
7	17%	.18%	4%	37%	38%	.12%	4%
8	16%	.20%	4%	36%	39%	.11%	4%
9	16%	.22%	4%	37%	39%	.12%	3%
10	16%	.18%	4%	37%	40%	.09%	3%
11	15%	.22%	4%	36%	42%	.13%	3%
12	14%	.18%	4%	37%	41%	.10%	3%
Total %	16%	.20%	4%	37%	39%	.11%	4%

Statewide Data on Principals

Statewide data collection systems indicate there were 2,323 principals in 2019. In this year, 40% (N = 928) were male and 60% (N = 1,395) were female. Furthermore, 60% of principals identified as White and 37% as Black/African American, which were the two largest ethnoracial groups (see Table 2.2).

Table 2.2

Statewide Principal Demographic Data

Total number of principals	Hispanic or Latino (n = 25)	American Indian (n = 3)	Asian (n = 3)	Black/ African American (n = 852)	White (n =1,403)	Pacific Islander (n = 2)	Two or more races (n = 35)
2,323	1%	0%	0%	37%	60%	0%	2%

Additionally, the average experience for principals was 23 years (± 4.71) with an average annual salary of $103,750 (± 19,754). In terms of education, 59% of principals in 2019 earned a Specialist's degree and 26% earned a Ph.D. or Ed.D. (see Table 2.3).

Table 2.3

Statewide Principal Highest Level of Education & Years of Experience

Total number of principals	Bachelor's degree (n = 9)	Master's degree (n = 345)	Specialist's degree (n = 1364)	PhD/EdD (n = 605)	Average years of experience (± 4.71)
2,323	0.4%	15%	59%	26%	23

Purpose

The long-term academic and social outcomes of hyper-disciplining Black students point to the importance of solving this problem in K–12 education. This may be especially difficult as there has been little progress nationwide since 1975 (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Mizel et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba, Arredondo et al., 2014). Using Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological systems theory, Project 1 considered current events, such as Black Lives Matter and the recent racial reckoning sparked by the murder of George Floyd (Silverstein, 2021). There is also evidence that discipline policies, often outlined in a code of conduct, may contribute to the inequitable outcomes for Black students (Fenning & Rose, 2007). Often, discipline policies emphasize exclusionary discipline in the form of suspension (Fenning & Rose, 2007), and Black students are typically assigned an increased amount of exclusionary discipline (Skiba et al., 2011). Furthermore, there is evidence of a relationship between a higher proportion of Black students enrolled in a school and increased rates of exclusionary and punitive discipline (Morris & Perry, 2016; Welch & Payne, 2010). Although all of these distal factors (Bronfenbrenner, 1994) are related to disproportionate disciplining, school-level factors have emerged in the literature as the recommended focus for researchers seeking to reduce disproportionality (Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014). This is partially due to the research findings ruling out student-level factors such as socioeconomic status and racial differences in behavior in connection with disproportionality in discipline (Skiba et al., 2002). Skiba, Chung and colleagues

(2014) suggested exploring principals' perspectives on discipline, instead of a previous focus on individual students' attributes (e.g., poverty) to improve equity in school discipline. Ideally, the district policies, Black enrollment, and the school principal's leadership were areas to further investigate with this needs assessment. However, due to the evidence in the literature and the ability of the researcher, the scope of this needs assessment focused on the extent of the problem in one southeastern state while exploring principals' beliefs, values, and perception of their role. The researcher's objective was to better understand the outcomes related to school discipline statewide, as well as the perspectives of the principals.

Research Questions

The following two research questions guided the study:

1. To what extent are K–12 Black students disproportionately disciplined when compared with all other students in one southeastern state?
2. What are principals' perspectives on discipline practices in K–12 schools in one southeastern state?

The quantitative portions of the needs assessment, including state extant data (2018–2019) and the Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) for principals, were used to address both research questions; the qualitative portion (i.e., principal interviews) addressed the second research question.

Method

The purpose of the needs assessment was to investigate the problem of practice in one southeastern state and better understand the extent of disproportionate discipline and the perspectives of K–12 principals. Quantitative research provides data that are useful for studying large numbers of people (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), which were used to answer the first

research question. Mixed methods research, which combines both quantitative and qualitative research techniques (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004), were used to answer the second research question. Mixed methods designs respond to research questions and hypotheses by collecting and rigorously analyzing quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). In these situations, this approach has the potential to offset the weaknesses and harness the strengths of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Mixed methods also connect paradigms or worldviews that typically divide researchers; instead of one perspective, multiple worldviews are welcome (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018; Johnson et al., 2007).

The mixed methods approach was chosen because it was a good fit for the second research question (see Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Using mixed methods to understand principals' perspectives on discipline provides an opportunity to seek different types of knowledge (see Golafshani, 2003). Including qualitative data to explore principals' perspectives allowed the researcher to get a better understanding (see Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) by studying principals' own words recording during semistructured interviews.

This needs assessment used a convergent mixed methods approach (see Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). Convergent design includes different but complementary data, which is collected and analyzed separately before being merged and interpreted by the researcher. It is a pragmatic approach for the second research question because it elevates both descriptive statistics and participant voice. The researcher collected responses from the Principal's Perspectives Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) for the quantitative data and conducted four separate interviews with principals who had completed the survey and volunteered to meet online for a semistructured interview. Both data sets were analyzed separately and then merged to consider where they might align and diverge (see Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). The underlying

philosophical assumption for the convergent design is pragmatism, which draws on many ideas of *what works* by using different approaches while upholding a value for both subjective and objective knowledge (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018; Johnson et al., 2007). The convergent design was used in this mixed methods evaluation because a pragmatic stance determines which methods are appropriate to answer research questions (Mertens, 2018). Mertens (2018) highlighted how an evaluator's philosophical position can affect their chosen research methodology. As Creswell and Plano-Clark (2018) pointed out, it is crucial to make those perspectives transparent.

Critical pedagogy supports transparency through the process of naming and reflecting critically before action (Wink, 2011). Throughout the interviews, I engaged in reflexive journaling to increase my awareness of potential bias and examine my positionality within the research. Meyer and Willis (2019) suggested reflexive practice can reveal the influence of the researcher on the data findings and interpretation, in addition to ethical considerations. The increased self-awareness from reflexive journaling can help the researcher make decisions from a place of increased self-awareness. By examining my own positionality in relation to the principals in my study and my prior experience as an assistant principal, I could be attentive to the beliefs and experiences that are part of who I am as a researcher. For example, as a state employee, I support districts and schools with their discipline processes. Although I have no authority over principals and what they choose to do, my role could be interpreted through a lens of power or influence since I have access to state leaders with decision-making authority. As a former administrator, I could be viewed as an indigenous insider (see Banks, 2015) to the participants of the principal interviews. Banks (2015) described an indigenous insider as someone who is perceived to be aligned with the perspectives, behaviors, beliefs, values, and

knowledge of the sample population. Because of my experience in administration, it could be challenging to withhold my own values, especially when I agreed with a principal's perspective, recognized the support in the research for their practices, or experienced something similar. I used reflexive journaling during the research process to help me set my intention on remaining neutral while collecting data in order that I might lift the voices (see Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018) of the principals who were living their discipline systems. My intention in acknowledging my perspective was to prioritize the interest of Black students while bringing empathy from experience to the complex challenges faced by a K–12 school principal.

Participants

The first research question was answered with extant data from 2018–2019 to determine the extent of disproportionality in discipline in one state. To investigate the second research question, the sample was a convenience sample of 57 principals from one southeastern state. Of note, most of the participants (78.8%) led schools with student populations of 1,000 or fewer students (see Table 2.4), and 40.3% of principals led elementary schools (see Table 2.5). In this dataset, 23% (n = 36) were males and 73% (n = 41) were females (see Table 2.6).

Table 2.4

Size of School Led by Survey Participants

Total number of principals	0–500 students (n = 16)	500–1,000 students (n = 29)	1,000–1,500 students (n = 9)	1,500–2,000 students (n = 2)	3,000–3,500 students (n = 1)
57	28.0%	50.8%	15.8%	3.5%	1.8%

Table 2.5

Grade Bands of Schools

Total number of principals	Elementary (n = 23)	Middle (n = 13)	High (n = 12)	Blended (n = 9)
57	40.3%	22.8%	21.0	15.8

Table 2.6

Survey Participants' Gender

Total number of principals	Male (n = 36)	Female (n = 20)	Other/Prefer not to say (n = 1)
57	63%	35%	2%

Additionally, 23% of principals self-reported their race/ethnicity as Black/African American (n = 13) and 71% (n = 41) as White (see Table 2.7). Sixty-three percent of principals who participated had over 5 years of experience as the school leader (see Table 2.8).

Table 2.7

Survey Participants' Race/Ethnicity

Total number of principals	Black/African American (n = 13)	White (n = 41)	Other (n = 2)
57	23%	71%	4%

Table 2.8

Survey Participants' Years as a Principal

Total number of principals	0–2 years (n = 4)	3–5 years (n = 17)	6–10 years (n = 14)	10–20 years (n = 18)	20+ years (n = 4)
57	7%	30%	25%	31%	7%

After the 57 principals from the statewide sample completed the quantitative Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004), four of these principals were interviewed. The volunteers included three principals from the eastern part of the state and one principal from the north; all four principals were from different counties/districts. Three out of four participants came from rural districts and one principal came from a suburban area. Each participant identified as male and had been at their current school for 5 or fewer years (see Table 2.9).

Table 2.9

Interview Participant Demographic Data

Participant	Grade levels	Student size	Years at current school	Total years as a principal	Race/ Ethnicity	Gender	Context
A	PreK–8	500–1,000	0–2	0–2	White	Male	Suburban
B	9–12	500-1,000	3–5	10–20	Black	Male	Rural
C	PreK–5	0–500	3–5	3–5	White	Male	Rural
D	3–5	500–1,000	3–5	3–5	White	Male	Rural

Measures and Instrumentation

Extant data were analyzed using in-school and out-of-school suspension (Noltemeyer et al., 2015) as measures of exclusionary discipline, since both involve removing from the classroom (Marcucci, 2020). Out-of-school suspension (OSS) describes incidents where students are removed for 10 or fewer days (Noltemeyer et al., 2015); in-school suspension (ISS) often involves students attending school but not in their classrooms.

The quantitative Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) was used to evaluate principals' perspectives on discipline. The survey was administered through email using Qualtrics. In addition to the Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004), the questionnaire included demographic questions to better understand the participants.

Disciplinary Practices Survey

The Disciplinary Practices Survey was first developed by Skiba and Edl (2004) for the purpose of conducting research on perspectives of school principals in Indiana. Skiba and Edl's research set out to increase understanding of principals' attitudes toward school discipline and explore the extent to which principals' perspectives and attitudes related to disciplinary outcomes. The original survey was composed of 60 questions organized into seven content areas: (a) attitude toward discipline in general, (b) awareness and enforcement of disciplinary procedure, (c) beliefs concerning suspension/expulsion and zero tolerance, (d) beliefs about the

responsibility for handling student misbehaviors, (e) attitude toward differential discipline of disadvantaged students or students with disabilities, (f) resources available for discipline, and (g) attitude toward the availability of prevention strategies as an alternative to exclusion. The 49 questions, which were available in Skiba and Edl's publication, were used in this dissertation and participants responded with the same Likert scale used in the original research (*strongly agree*, *somewhat agree*, *neither agree or disagree*, *somewhat disagree*, *strongly disagree*). The reliability of this scale is $\alpha = 0.67$ (Skiba & Edl, 2004). In addition, the researcher added demographic questions asking participants to identify their race/ethnicity, gender, years of experience as a principal, years of experience as a principal at their current school, grade levels supervised, and approximate school size. Finally, the participants had the option of signing up for a 60-minute follow-up interview by submitting their contact information.

Qualitative Interviews

The semistructured interviews were designed to be no more than 60 minutes. The following interview questions were used to guide the conversation (see Table 2.10).

Table 2.10

Principal Interview Questions

Number	Question	Follow up (if needed)
1	What is your specific role in the discipline process as a principal?	Who defines your role? (If someone else) How was it defined to you?
2	On a 1–5 scale with 1 being no control and 5 being absolute control, what number best represents the amount of control you have over your discipline process?	Tell me why you chose that number? Do you see this as an advantage or disadvantage? Would you prefer to have more control or less? Why?
3	What are the most important factors guiding your decisions related to consequences? For example, what are you thinking about when you must decide what consequences to assign a student?	How much control do you feel you have over what consequences you assign students? What do you see as the key factors that lead to discipline outcomes like suspension?
4	How would you describe your ideal discipline system? What would it look like?	On a 1–5 scale, with five being your ideal discipline system, how far away would your current system be? What would be the first 1–2 things you would do to move toward this ideal system? What resources would you need to achieve this?
5	How do you think your students would perceive the fairness of your discipline system for all students?	What feedback or comments have you received from students about the discipline system? Is this the perspective of students who get in trouble or all students? (If none) What do you think they would say if you asked?
6	That concludes my questions; is there anything else you would like to say, or you wished I would have asked?	

Procedure

This study employed a convenience nonprobability sample (see Pettus-Davis et al., 2011) to gather the input of principals across the state. A contact list provided by the state was used to email participants to complete the Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004). Initially, the survey was sent to principals after notifying superintendents in the southeastern part of the state in August 2021. A low response rate led to an expansion of the sample; in September 2021, the survey was sent to the remaining regions. Districts were eliminated from the list for three reasons: (a) nontraditional public-school districts identified as those not ending in “county” (e.g., juvenile justice), although some traditional public-school names end in “county”’ (b) one district

where the researcher was formerly employed' and (c) districts requiring prior approval or completion of a local Institutional Review Board (IRB) process before a survey could be conducted. At the end of the survey, participants were invited to volunteer for a follow-up interview. Nine principals and one superintendent signed up to be interviewed. Of those nine principals, four responded to a follow-up invitation to participate in the interview.

Data Collection Methods

Extant disciplinary data from K–12 grade schools from 2018–2019 in one southeastern state were requested from the state department of education. At the end of each year, schools must submit their final discipline data to the state department of education. The data include state-mandated discipline infractions and exclusionary discipline consequences, including in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension. The state-level data were provided to the researcher by the department of education after Johns Hopkins University IRB approval was granted. Since the data were requested in the aggregate, no student identity was included in the data provided to the researcher. Data were organized and sorted by gender, race/ethnicity, and grade level. In this study, through-the-door-enrollment captured how many students were enrolled at some point in 2018–2019 statewide in each grade level.

Primary Data

The IRB language was included in the Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) in Qualtrics and the emailed to prospective participants. After completing the anonymous survey, the principals had the option to sign up for a follow-up interview. IRB language was also included in the interview script (see Appendix A), and participants were informed that they could leave the study at any time. The researcher obtained permission before recording the interview. The transcript after the interview was provided to participants for member checking; only

principal D provided tracked changes, which were accepted before coding. Pseudonyms (i.e., Principals A, B, C, and D) were used for participant identities, and all identifying information (e.g., name, district name) was removed from each transcript.

Data Analysis

1. To what extent are K–12 Black students disproportionately disciplined when compared with all other students in one southeastern state?

The purpose of using extant discipline data to respond to the first research question was to measure the extent of hyper-disciplining in one southeastern state. The hyper-disciplining of Black students was measured using suspension (i.e., ISS, OSS) as the type of exclusionary discipline. Black students were compared to all other students to isolate the effects of discipline for Black students as compared to the rest of the student population; Black students analyzed in contrast to all other students has been used in prior research (e.g., Gregory et al., 2016; Hashim et al., 2018)

Suspension is a consequence that temporarily removes a student from the class environment and assigns them to in-school or out-of-school suspension. Exclusionary consequences have been identified as damaging to student academic and social success (Tobin & Vincent, 2011). Suspension is often used to measure disproportionality as it is commonly used as a behavior consequence in schools (Skiba et al., 2011). The extant data analysis included the risk ratio and raw differential representation as recommended by Girvan and colleagues (2019). Although Girvan and colleagues also recommend using the exclusionary discipline rate, this study instead included the percentage of students who had received ISS or OSS at least once by race/ethnicity and the percentage of suspension incidents by race/ethnicity. These four measures

served to guide the analysis of the 2018–2019 extant data and describe the extent of disproportionality in one southeastern state.

Risk Ratio

Risk ratio (RR) is often used as a primary measure of disproportionality (Girvan et al., 2019). The calculation of RR is the quotient of the risk of the target group for receiving exclusionary discipline divided by the reference group (Girvan et al., 2019). In this needs assessment, the target group was Black students, with the reference group as all other students.

$$\text{Risk Ratio} = \left(\frac{\text{\# of Target Students Receiving Discipline}}{\text{Total \# of Target Students}}\right) \Big/ \left(\frac{\text{\# of Reference Students Receiving Discipline}}{\text{Total \# of Reference Students}}\right)$$

$$\text{Risk Ratio} = \left(\frac{\text{\# of Black Students Receiving Discipline}}{\text{Total \# of Black Students}}\right) \Big/ \left(\frac{\text{\# of All other Students Receiving Discipline}}{\text{Total \# of All other Students}}\right)$$

Raw Differential Representation

The raw differential representation (RDR) is a seldom used but useful metric that provides the estimated number of Black students who would not have experienced ISS or OSS if Black students were disciplined at the same rate as all other students (Girvan et al., 2019). If the RDR for Black students receiving OSS is 21, then it is estimated that 21 Black students would not have received OSS if the RR were equal between Black and all other students.

$$\text{RDR} = \text{\# of Target Students Receiving Discipline} - \left(\frac{\text{\# of Target Students Receiving Disciplined}}{\text{(Target – Reference Discipline Risk Ratio)}}\right)$$

$$\text{RDR} = \text{\# of Black Students Receiving Discipline} - \left(\frac{\text{\# of Black Students Receiving Disciplined}}{\text{(Black – All others Discipline Risk Ratio)}}\right)$$

Disciplined Students by Race/Ethnicity

This metric was used to determine the percentage of Black and all other students who received ISS or OSS. This percentage was calculated using the number of unique students who received suspension; in other words, students receiving ISS/OSS would be counted only once even if they received ISS/OSS multiple times. This percentage provided a comparison of how Black and all other students experience suspension.

$$\text{Percentage of Target Students Impacted} = \frac{\text{\# of Target Students Received ISS/OSS for} \geq \text{1 Day}}{\text{Total \# of Target Students Enrolled}}$$

$$\text{Percentage of Black/All other Students Impacted} = \frac{\text{\# Black/All other Students Received ISS/OSS for} \geq \text{1 Day}}{\text{Total \# of Black/All other Students Enrolled}}$$

Discipline Incidents by Race/Ethnicity

The final metric, discipline incidents by race/ethnicity, is similar to the disciplined students by race/ethnicity, but the percentage is calculated by the number of incidents involving a Black student compared to all other students. For example, if a Black student received ISS multiple times, each incident was counted, and the percentage for incidents of suspension involving a Black student increased.

$$\text{Percentage of Incidents by Race/Ethnicity Impacted} = \frac{\text{\# Target Students Received ISS/OSS}}{\text{Total \# of Target Students Enrolled}}$$

$$\text{Percentage of Incidents by Race/Ethnicity Impacted} = \frac{\text{\# Black/All other Students Received ISS/OSS}}{\text{Total \# of Black/All other Students Enrolled}}$$

A Scorecard

Each of the four metrics illustrates a different aspect of disproportionate discipline outcomes to provide a more complete picture of what students may be experiencing in schools across the state, similar to the scorecard recommended by Girvan et al. (2019). RR is typically

the most widely used metric since it is easy to conceptualize that one group of students may be disciplined twice as much as another group of students. Although RRs tend to be used commonly in research measuring disproportionality (Girvan et al., 2019), the RDR adds another facet of understanding by considering an estimate of many Black students had been disciplined who would not be if the RR were equal for Black and all other students. The combining of the four metrics provides a deeper analysis of the extent of disproportionality in one southeastern state.

Quantitative Analysis

The Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) is analyzed using descriptive statistics to determine the percentage of participants who responded at each level of the Likert scale. The questions are separated into two groups according to participant responses. One group includes those questions where most participants agree, which is defined by the principals' selection of *strongly/somewhat agree* or *disagree* not equaling 20%. A second group is included for participants who have a wider spread of responses as defined by the principals' selection of *strongly/somewhat agree* and *strongly/somewhat disagree* both resulting in 20% or greater. I created this decision rule as a process to identify questions where most of the participants agreed. Additionally, I wanted to determine which questions had the largest differences in perspectives.

Qualitative Analysis

The four interview transcripts were coded to reduce the data (Elliott, 2018). Saldaña (2021) defined a *code* as a word or phrase that captures the essence or summarizes a piece of data. This process is not a precise science but rather an interpretation of the data by the researcher (Saldaña, 2021). The codes were developed by looking for repetition and patterns in the principals' words (Elliott, 2018; Saldaña, 2021). Although, as Saldaña (2021) also pointed out, frequency does not necessarily correlate with significance. Since coding is a cyclic process,

each document had to be coded several times before themes began to emerge. I used a mix of a priori and emergent codes (Elliott, 2018). Select quotes were used to illustrate the findings and provide the reader with examples to support a better understanding of the themes.

Findings

1. To what extent are K–12 Black students disproportionately disciplined when compared with all other students?

Risk Ratio

The RR findings indicate Black students, on average, were 2.1 times as likely to receive ISS and 3.3 times as likely to receive OSS when compared to all other students in 2018–2019, which aligned with other previous research on disproportionality (GAO, 2018; Mizel et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2002, 2011; Slate et al., 2016). In addition, Black students in primary and elementary school experience the highest risk of exclusionary disproportionate discipline, peaking in Grade 3 (see Table 2.11). Some states have made policy changes to address these exclusionary outcomes for younger children, preventing younger students from being sent home for misbehavior (Gregory & Fergus, 2017). The hope was that educators would shift away from a punishment mindset to one that fits students' developmental level and fosters their social and behavioral competencies.

Table 2.11

ISS/OSS Risk Ratio Statewide of Black Students Compared With all Other Students

Grade level	Black ISS RR	Black OSS RR
PK	.9	2.2
K	2.4	3.1
1	2.7	4.1
2	2.8	4.4
3	2.9	4.6
4	2.7	4.4
5	2.2	3.6
6	2.1	3.4
7	1.8	2.8
8	1.7	2.5
9	1.7	2.7
10	1.7	2.9
11	1.7	3.0
12	1.7	3.0
Mean	2.1	3.3

Raw Differential Representation

The results indicate that if the RR were 1:1 between Black and all other students, then an estimated 17,782 Black students would not have received ISS, and an estimated 45,734 Black students would not have received OSS (see Table 2.12). Furthermore, it is important to remember that the data used for this calculation included only unique individuals who had been suspended one or more times. In other words, this calculation provides the estimated number of Black students in a state who have been impacted by disproportionality without considering students who have been disciplined multiple times. In this measurement, the students who have been Impacted most significantly are sixth graders. This may be valuable information as it is a transition year from elementary school to middle school. Slate et al. (2016) conducted a statewide study of Black girls in Texas, and disciplinary consequences increased during transition years (e.g., sixth grade, ninth grade). Mendez and Knoff (2003) found a similar increase in suspension for Black students during middle school in Florida. Black middle school males' suspension rate per 100 students was the highest of all the grade levels. Clearly, the

middle school years are an important time for students (Andrews & Gutwein, 2020); it may be crucial to reflect on why the increase in disproportionality is happening at this point in students' educational journey.

Table 2.12

Raw Differential Representation

Grade level	Black ISS RDR	Black OSS RDR
PK	4	21
KK	372	928
1	700	1437
2	1020	1847
3	1409	2461
4	1827	3368
5	1412	3417
6	4297	6225
7	2685	5346
8	682	4177
9	1057	6183
10	797	4682
11	558	2990
12	961	2652
Total	17,782	45,734

Disciplined Students by Race/Ethnicity

To analyze the percentage of students who have experienced exclusionary discipline disaggregated by Black and all other students, it is helpful to contextualize. In 2018–2019, the total student population was made up of 37% Black students and 63% all other students (i.e., Hispanic or Latino, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, White, Two or more races). Table 2.13 breaks down the enrollment numbers by race/ethnicity and separates them by grade level.

Table 2.13

Enrollment by Race/Ethnicity

Grade level	Black students	Black student percentage	All other students	All other student percentage
PK	20,995	37%	36,140	63%
K	46,812	36%	84,658	64%
1	47,744	36%	85,151	64%
2	48,821	37%	84,170	63%
3	50,180	37%	85,583	63%
4	52,580	37%	87,760	63%
5	53,538	37%	89,567	63%
6	53,915	38%	89,797	62%
7	51,804	37%	88,753	63%
8	50,176	36%	88,079	64%
9	56,815	37%	95,498	63%
10	50,793	37%	88,190	63%
11	44,139	36%	79,309	64%
12	47,070	37%	80,303	63%
Total	675,382	37%	1,162,958	63%

Note. All other includes Hispanic or Latino, American Indian, Asian, Pacific Islander, White, and two or more races.

Although Black students make up about a third of the overall population as compared with all other students, in every grade level, a higher percentage of Black students experienced ISS and OSS (see Table 2.14). For example, 12% of Black students in grades PK–12 statewide were assigned ISS at least once compared to 7% of all other students. Additionally, 11% of Black students in grades PK–12 were assigned OSS compared with 3% of all other students. The highest percentage of Black students receiving ISS was 23% in ninth grade compared with 14% of all other ninth graders. Black students receiving OSS was 19% in ninth grade compared with 7% of all other ninth graders. In addition to being a transition year (Slate et al., 2016), ninth grade is a critical year for students (McCallumore & Sparapani, 2010), and missing school has negative implications on academic success.

Table 2.14

Percentage of Students by Race/Ethnicity in 2018-2019 Experiencing ISS and OSS ≥ 1

Grade level	Black ISS	All others ISS	Black OSS	All others OSS
PK	0%	0%	0%	0%
K	2%	1%	3%	1%
1	3%	1%	4%	1%
2	3%	1%	5%	1%
3	5%	2%	6%	1%
4	6%	2%	8%	2%
5	6%	3%	9%	3%
6	22%	11%	17%	5%
7	22%	12%	17%	6%
8	20%	12%	16%	7%
9	23%	14%	19%	7%
10	20%	12%	15%	5%
11	16%	9%	11%	4%
12	14%	8%	9%	3%
Total	12%	7%	11%	3%

Incidents by Race/Ethnicity

Incidents by race/ethnicity measures how many times a Black student received a consequence of ISS or OSS compared with all other students. The percentage that makes up this analysis focuses on incidents instead of unique students; therefore, it describes how many total times Black students faced ISS or OSS consequences compared with all other students. In this case, the highest amount of disproportionality shows up in third grade, where 66% of the incidents resulted in ISS and 75% in OSS for Black students (see Table 2.15). Overall, 43% of incidents resulted in ISS assigned to Black students compared with 46% to all other students. Additionally, 68% of OSS incidents resulted in OSS assigned to Black students compared with only 32% of all other students receiving OSS. Since this calculation includes students who were disciplined multiple times, it also reveals the extent of disproportional discipline in the state, particularly with OSS.

Table 2.15

Percentage of Incidents by Race/Ethnicity in 2018-2019

Grade level	Incidents of ISS assigned to Black students	Incidents of ISS assigned to all other students	Incidents of OSS assigned to Black students	Incidents of OSS assigned to all other students
PK	33%	67%	53%	47%
K	57%	43%	63%	37%
1	62%	38%	73%	28%
2	64%	36%	74%	26%
3	66%	34%	75%	25%
4	65%	35%	75%	25%
5	59%	41%	71%	29%
6	58%	42%	72%	28%
7	54%	46%	66%	34%
8	51%	49%	62%	38%
9	52%	48%	66%	34%
10	52%	48%	66%	34%
11	52%	48%	65%	35%
12	54%	46%	67%	33%
Total	54%	46%	68%	32%

2. What are principals' perspectives on discipline practices in K–12?

The Principal's Perspectives Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) revealed divergent and convergent views among principals (see Tables 2.16 and 2.17) in one southeastern state. Like Skiba and Edl's (2004) original findings with principals in Indiana, this survey revealed a similar theme of *diverse principal beliefs and attitudes*. Principals with similar beliefs were identified by the researcher when principals' selection of *strongly/somewhat agree* or *strongly/somewhat disagree* did not equal 20%. In other words, the researcher considered the principals' beliefs as convergent when less than 20% disagreed with the majority (see Table 2.16). For example, most principals agreed that it is important to consider the student individually and involve the family in the discipline process (see Table 2.16, Items 1, 6, and 13). Interestingly, most principals agreed that suspension was hurting students and causing them to get in more trouble (see Table 2.16, Items 16 and 21), although they also believed suspension is necessary for order (see Table

2.16, Item 30). Principals expressed that they favored ISS to OSS (see Table 16, Items 8 and 11) and that the disciplinary consequences should increase with the frequency and severity of the behavior (see Table 2.16, Items 4 and 20). Most importantly, principals felt their objective was to keep students in school and that the purpose of discipline is to teach appropriate skills (see Table 2.16, Items 17 and 30). Most principals did not believe zero tolerance helped maintain order and felt it increased the number of students who were suspended or expelled (see Table 2.16, Items 18 and 26). Regarding the survey questions related to students with different needs, most principals felt students with disabilities, disadvantaged students, and students with different ethnic backgrounds may require a different approach (see Table 2.16, Items 15, 25, and 27). Furthermore, most principals felt that time spent developing and implementing prevention programs paid off with improved disciplinary outcomes (see Table 2.16, Item 22).

Table 2.16

*Principals (*N = *57) Have Similar Beliefs*

Question	Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)	*M*	*SD*
1. I feel that getting to know students individually is an important part of discipline.	94.7%	5.3%	0%	0%	0%	4.95	.225
2. My school keeps detailed records regarding student suspension and expulsion.	89.5%	10.5%	0%	0%	0%	4.89	.310
3. I believe that teachers at my school are aware of school disciplinary policies.	71.9%	28.1%	0%	0%	0%	4.72	.453
4. Disciplinary consequences should be scaled in proportion to the severity of the problem behavior.	70.2%	29.8%	0%	0%	0%	4.70	.462
5. Teachers ought to be able to manage the majority	66.7%	33.3%	0%	0%	0%	4.67	.476

Question	Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)	*M*	*SD*
of students' misbehavior in their classroom.							
6. Conversations with students referred to the office are important and should be factored into most decisions about disciplinary consequences.	70.2%	26.3%	3.5%	0%	0%	4.67	.546
7. Schools must take some responsibility for teaching students how to get along and behave appropriately in school.	64.9%	29.8%	5.3%	0%	0%	4.60	.593
8. In-school suspension is a viable alternative disciplinary practice to suspension and expulsion.	56.1%	42.1%	0%	1.8%	0%	4.53	.601
9. I believe that putting in place prevention programs can reduce the need for suspension and expulsion.	45.6%	43.9%	10.5%	0%	0%	4.35	.668
10. Disciplinary policies are strictly enforced in my school.	38.6%	52.6%	5.3%	3.5%	0%	4.26	.720
11. Out-of-school suspension is used at this school only as a last resort.	78.9%	14%	5.3%	0%	1.8%	4.68	.736
12. Students should receive recognition or reward for appropriate behavior.	57.9%	31.6%	5.3%	5.3%	0%	4.42	.823
13. I feel it is critical to work with parents before suspending a student from school.	47.4%	42.1%	7.0%	1.8%	1.8%	4.32	.827
14. I believe students at my school are aware of school disciplinary policies.	56.1%	38.6%	0%	1.8%	3.5%	4.42	.885
15. Students with disabilities who engage in disruptive behavior need a different	31.6%	47.4%	12.3%	8.8%	0%	4.02	.896

Question	Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)	*M*	*SD*
approach to discipline than students in general education.							
16. Suspensions and expulsions hurt students by removing them from academic learning time.	64.9%	22.8%	5.3%	5.3%	1.8%	4.44	.945
17. The primary purpose of discipline is to teach appropriate skills to the disciplined student.	40.4%	42.1%	8.8%	7.0%	1.8%	4.12	.965
18. Zero tolerance makes a significant contribution to maintaining order at my school.	0%	14%	31.6%	28.1%	26.3%	2.33	1.024
19. Violence is getting worse in my school.	1.8%	5.3%	14.0%	15.8%	63.2%	1.67	1.024
20. Repeat offenders should receive more severe disciplinary consequences than first-time offenders.	47.4%	38.6%	7%	1.8%	5.3%	4.21	1.031
21. Students who are suspended or expelled are only getting more time on the streets that will enable them to get in more trouble.	17.5%	38.6%	24.6%	17.5%	1.8%	3.53	1.037
22. I have noticed that time spent in developing and implementing prevention programs pays off in terms of decreased disruption and disciplinary incidents.	40.4%	35.1%	15.8%	5.3%	3.5%	4.04	1.052
23. There is really nothing a school can do if students are not willing to take responsibility for their behavior.	0%	15.8%	12.3%	36.8%	35.1%	2.09	1.057
24. Disciplining disruptive students is time consuming and interferes with other important functions in the school.	17.5%	52.6%	10.5%	15.8%	3.5%	3.65	1.061

Question	Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)	*M*	*SD*
25. Disadvantaged students require a different approach to discipline than other students.	19.3%	50.9%	12.3%	12.3%	5.3%	3.67	1.091
26. Zero tolerance increases the number of students being suspended or expelled.	42.1%	26.3%	17.5%	10.5%	3.5%	3.93	1.163
27. Students from different ethnic backgrounds have different emotional and behavioral needs.	26.3%	35.1%	21.1%	10.5%	7.0%	3.63	1.190
28. Regardless of the severity of a student's behavior, my objective as a principal is to keep all students in school.	59.6%	24.6%	1.8%	7.0%	7.0%	4.23	1.225
29. Students with disabilities account for a disproportionate amount of the time spent on discipline at this school.	7.0%	12.3%	17.5%	24.6%	38.6%	2.25	1.286
30. Out-of-school suspension is a necessary tool for maintaining school order.	28.1%	42.1%	10.5%	7.0%	12.3%	3.67	1.300

Note. *Strongly/somewhat agree* or *somewhat/strongly disagree* ≠20%

Principals demonstrated differing opinions on several questions within the survey. Differing opinions are defined as a group of at least 20% of principals responding *strongly/somewhat agree* and 20% of principals responding *strongly/somewhat disagree* for each of the questions below. Principals were divided about whether suspension and expulsion gave students time to think about their behavior, making it less likely for them to misbehave in the future (see Table 2.17, Items 1, 2, and 5); they also disagreed about whether suspension is one of their only options (see Table 2.17, Item 10). Some principals even reported believing suspension may not be necessary if adults provided a positive school climate and challenging instruction,

while others did not agree (see Table 2.17, Item 13). Principals were also divided about whether zero tolerance sends a clear message to disruptive students about appropriate behaviors in school (see Table 2.17, Item 6). There were also different opinions between principals about whether schools can afford to tolerate students who disrupt the learning environment (see Table 2.17, Item 9). Some principals reported thinking persistent troublemakers are not gaining anything from school and therefore should be removed through suspension or expulsion to preserve the environment; other justifications for removal included the need to meet academic accountability (see Table 2.17, Items 8, 12, and 17). Principals did not agree on whether suspension and expulsion were unfair to minority students (see Table 2.17, Item 14). Finally, some principals thought a student's academic record should be considered in the discipline process (see Table 2.17, Item 11).

Table 2.17

*Principals (*N = *57) Have Differing Opinions*

Question	Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)	*M*	*SD*
1. Suspension and expulsion do not really solve discipline problems.	22.8%	42.1%	12.3%	21.1%	1.8%	3.63	1.112
2. I believe suspension and expulsion allow students time away from school that encourages them to think about their behavior.	1.8%	19.3%	26.3%	28.1%	24.6%	2.46	1.119
3. Teachers at this school were for the most part adequately trained by their teacher-training program to handle problems of misbehavior and discipline.	3.5%	26.3%	8.8%	43.9%	17.5%	2.54	1.166

Question	Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)	*M*	*SD*
4. Most, if not all, discipline problems come from inadequacies in the student's home situation.	5.3%	49.1%	15.8%	17.5%	12.3%	3.18	1.167
5. Suspension makes students less likely to misbehave in the future.	1.8%	33.3%	19.3%	26.3%	19.3%	2.72	1.176
6. Zero tolerance sends a clear message to disruptive students about appropriate behaviors in school.	1.8%	33.3%	22.8%	21.1%	21.1%	2.74	1.188
7. Prevention programs would be a useful addition at our school, but there is simply not enough time in the day.	7.0%	31.6%	22.8%	21.1%	17.5%	2.89	1.235
8. Certain students are not gaining anything from school and disrupt the learning environment for others. In such a case, the use of suspension and expulsion is justified to preserve the learning environment for students who wish to learn.	12.3%	40.4%	17.5%	17.5%	12.3%	3.23	1.239
9. Schools cannot afford to tolerate students who disrupt the learning environment.	22.8%	49.1%	7%	10.5%	10.5%	3.63	1.248
10. Regardless of whether it is effective, suspension is virtually our only option in disciplining disruptive students.	3.5%	17.5%	8.8%	26.3%	43.9%	2.11	1.249
11. A student's academic record should be taken into account in assigning disciplinary consequences.	5.3%	28.1%	15.8%	24.6%	26.3%	2.61	1.292

Question	Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)	*M*	*SD*
12. The majority of this school's discipline problems could be solved if we could only remove the most persistent troublemakers.	12.3%	35.1%	14.0%	24.6%	14.%	3.07	1.294
13. I believe suspension is unnecessary if we provide a positive school climate and challenging instruction.	10.5%	21.1%	8.8%	40.4%	19.3%	2.63	1.304
14. Suspension and expulsion are unfair to minority students.	10.5%	14%	26.3%	22.8%	26.3%	2.60	1.307
15. Although it would be nice to get to know students on an individual basis, especially those who need help, my duties as an administrator simply don't allow me the time.	5.3%	17.5%	1.8%	26.3%	49.1%	2.04	1.309
16. I need additional resources to increase my school's capacity to reduce and prevent troublesome behaviors.	26.3%	24.6%	22.8%	15.8%	10.5%	3.40	1.321
17. It is sad but true that, in order to meet increasingly high standards of academic accountability, some students will probably have to be removed from school.	12.3%	26.3%	10.5%	31.6%	19.3%	2.81	1.355
18. The primary responsibility for teaching students how to behave appropriately in school belongs to the parents.	26.3%	26.3%	8.8%	26.3%	12.3%	3.28	1.424
19. Disciplinary regulations for	14%	17.5%	22.8%	15.8%	29.8%	2.70	1.426

Question	Strongly agree (5)	Somewhat agree (4)	Neither agree nor disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)	*M*	*SD*
students with disabilities create a separate system of discipline that makes it more difficult to enforce discipline at this school.							

Note. At least 20% *Strongly/somewhat agree* and *somewhat/strongly disagree*.

The Principal's Perspectives Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) confirmed the varying beliefs of principals (Mukuria, 2002), which research suggests impacts disproportionate discipline outcomes (Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014). DeMatthews et al.'s (2017) research on principals suggested that the way the principals perceive their role appeared to influence their judgment about what was fair and consistent. Earlier research connected similar beliefs and practices with principals who could be classified as high-suspending or low-suspending (Mukuria, 2002). In schools with high suspension rates, principals did not have strong vision or value teacher input, they used discipline policy rigidly, and they did not emphasize alternatives to suspension. In contrast, principals with low suspension rates placed a high value on teachers, had a flexible interpretation of the code of conduct and suspension policy, implemented alternative consequences, and developed a strong vision for their schools. Additionally, they developed a schoolwide prevention system collaboratively with stakeholders, including students. Findlay (2015) suggested that the discretion some principals use in discipline comes from their value systems, along with internal and external influences. This was especially true considering the impact of these decisions may have on students, including their perceptions of fairness, as well as academic engagement and achievement. Overall, this survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) demonstrated that in one southeastern state there are diverse principal beliefs and attitudes in several areas pertaining to discipline.

Qualitative Principal Interviews

The four principals who agreed to the semistructured interviews brought forth different descriptions of their discipline systems, which may speak to their values. From the coding and categorizing process (Saldaña, 2021) emerged a theme of *principal values influencing actions* (see Appendix C). Based on participants' descriptions of the discipline process, two main categories emerged that were in keeping with prior research (e.g., DeMatthews et al., 2017; Mukuria, 2002). These categories were "a flexible, student-centered approach" and "an objective, consistent approach" (see Appendix C).

Based on the interview experience, it was clear that all four principals cared about their students and wanted to do what was best for them, but there were distinctions in how they described their approach to discipline. Principals A, C, and D all served Grade 8 or younger and were White males, while Principal B was the only high school principal and the only Black or African American male (see Table 2.9). It should be noted that some of the differences described in this section may be due to the different grade level expectations. Of all four principals, Principal B was the one who brought the most emphasis to the objective, consistent approach to discipline. When a musician plays the piano, they produce music by choosing certain notes and playing them with emphasis. It was not necessarily that principals subscribed to one approach or the other; instead, principals emphasized different values.

Flexible, Student-Centered

The "flexible, student-centered" approach is defined as considering the antecedent and circumstance for each discipline situation, as well as the potential harm (DeMatthews et al., 2017). In addition to this definition adapted from DeMatthews et al. (2017), I also added that the student-centered approach focuses on the importance of building relationships with parents and

students (Anyon et al., 2018) and listening to stakeholder voice (Friend & Caruthers, 2015). The codes used in this category included "adjust when needed," "behavior has a reason," "parent involvement," "fluid discipline," "avoid learning disruptions," "understand what is going on," "student feedback/voice," "relationships are key," and "cultural responsiveness."

Principal A reported that their "process is very much flexible and fluid. We don't have a set-in-stone 'okay the kids chewing gum, they automatically get a detention.'" This implies that principals may use their own judgment to interpret what needs to be done for each individual student. Principal C illustrated this same philosophy with an example:

> A kid stole $1 out of a bookbag, another kid in the class put the boy up to it. It was a prank. They were trying to prank the kid, the other child's money never even left the classroom. So instead of just going in and digging into the handbook … this is a level one, theft/larceny. This is what we're going to do. We uncovered a little mischievous prank, you know, money was returned. Parents were called. They're going to do better next time, and we won't see those kids for that again.

In this case, the principal interpreted the behavior as a prank and determined what was best, instead of making the situation a code of conduct violation and following the prescribed consequence for larceny. This was in contrast with Principal B, who expressed "what the discipline principal is supposed to do is follow the handbook with every discipline infraction that he deals with." Again, this likely has something to due to a difference in grade levels, as Principal B was the only high school principal (see Table 2.9). However, it demonstrates there is a distinct difference in the way principals emphasize what they believe is important in their discipline approaches.

Principal C described his flexible, student-centered approach as "therapeutic." Interestingly, he reported some of his teachers "want a male principal to be a disciplinarian. We want to have a list of consequences … 'here is what we're going to do when this comes up.'" In contrast, he was "more concerned with spending a little more time and treating the problem now,

as opposed to just hammering a child every time he shuts down and doesn't talk in class because he didn't do his homework and no one was home to help him do his homework." This example brings out the challenges a principal may face if their disciplinary perspective does not match their staff's expectations, which may be construed as being unsupportive to teachers (Welsh, 2023).

The flexible, student-centered approach emphasizes building relationships (Anyon et al., 2018) and listening to stakeholders (Friend & Caruthers, 2015). Principal C said,

> I cannot imagine how few discipline instances that I have dealt with over the years that could not have been handled without a little bit of knowledge and the kid going in beforehand, or a little bit of a patience … not having a discipline plan that is an immediate consequence for an immediate action—there's got to be, particularly with little kids. There's almost always something that led to that incidence.

The flexible, student-centered approach as described by principals emphasized the need to listen to the students. Principal C went on to say, "The world is very busy … and very quick to punish people. School system does not have to be … we can listen." Every principal demonstrated a caring attitude toward students, but there were differences in the way they approached discipline and what each of them emphasized as most important. This flexible, student-centered approach was used to some extent by all principals, but Principals A and C seemed to be the strongest proponents of this perspective.

Objective and Consistent

The "objective and consistent" category is defined as approaching discipline based on facts and guided by policy; principals emphasizing this approach are less likely to change consequences based on contextual circumstances (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Mukuria, 2002). The codes used in this category included: "follow the handbook," "removing subjectivity,"

"alignment," and "expectations apply to everyone." In reference to following the handbook, Principal B expressed,

> It's very important to do that because it helps you, helps you be less subjective. You know so many times your emotions will get into play ... and following the handbook, it helps to keep your emotions from swaying from one side to the other.

He went on to say,

> Whenever you were dealing with a situation, I used to just go to the Student Code of Conduct within the past 5 years or so. I started also looking at the state discipline code. So, both of those documents are used before I make a decision about, about a child's punishment … you do that, so the punishment is not subjective … take all the subjectivity out of it, try to.

None of the other principals who led schools Grade 8 and below mentioned using a handbook as their guide to discipline in this explicit manner. Principal B expressed that "it protects the student, and it also protects me." The idea of protection implies that principals may be subject to error if they do not follow a rulebook that removes this possibility.

Objectivity also suggests the idea of applying the rules fairly and consistently (Gregory et al., 2016). Principal B expressed hope that students understood that "the expectations are uniform, regardless of who you are." An added challenge or layer to fairness may be considered in Principals B's statement that "some kids communicate differently." Furthermore, Principal B said, "Sometimes the lines blur between disrespect and just communication." Principal B was the only principal who brought up bias by saying, "I know you're not asking about bias. But, you know, I think that's one of our bigger issues, you know … bias and helping ourselves not to be biased." It is interesting to reflect that the principal who expressed the most concern with bias was also the principal who emphasized an objective and consistent approach to discipline.

Although principals may apply the handbook in every situation the same way, it is more difficult to determine whether the situation that brought a student to the office was handled

fairly. In the end, "Some kids are treated differently than others within the classroom," according to Principal B, who went on to say, "That's why we lose … so many kids, that we've lost them before they even get to high school." Moreover, "By the time they get to the high school, they're out of school or they're in jail." Principal B was the only principal who brought up the idea of students ending up in jail, which researchers may refer to as the school-to-prison pipeline (Skiba, Arredondo, et al., 2014). Principal B suggested both training teachers early on implicit bias and adding intervention programs to teach social skills at an early age as possible solutions.

In addition to objectivity and the implication of fairness, Principal C described an annual process where the principals work to align their discipline processes and update their handbooks by considering new practices or relevant court cases to make their responses consistent. During the interview, he said, "Principals are all aligned. We all kind of have the same expectations." To achieve this alignment, they include a recommended list of consequences and interventions in their discipline manual. Although alignment and consistency were highlighted by Principal C, he also went on to say his

> biggest thing is to make sure that whatever consequence we have, does not take away from the student's educational opportunities and things like that … I'm very reluctant to assign any kind of consequence that will wind up or result in a child being out of the classroom, or out of the instructional environment.

This suggests that, although there is an objective discipline manual, the Principal C still exercises discretion (Findlay, 2015) if he feels the consequence may cause academic harm.

The theme of *principal values which may influence actions* emerged from the coding process and revealed different aspects that this sample of principals considered important to their discipline system. The analogy of the piano notes remains a good way to describe the similarities and differences. There were overlapping values based on their words and thoughts expressed during the interviews, but for each principal, some values were emphasized or *played* more than

others. Based on the narratives shared in the semistructured interviews, the examples led me to the conclusion that principals' discipline decisions were influenced at least in part by the values they emphasized.

Convergent Design

The Principal's Perspectives Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) revealed *diverse principal beliefs and attitudes*, and the principal's interviews revealed *principal values which may influence actions.* The convergent mixed methods design described by Creswell and Plano-Clark (2018) is based on the philosophical underpinning of pragmatism. This method includes the researcher collecting and analyzing the data separately, then converging the findings for interpretation (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). The convergent theme to this empirical study is *principals' beliefs, attitudes, and values may influence their response to behavior*. This theme is supported by prior literature (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Skiba & Edl, 2004). Additionally, extant statewide data (2018–2019) demonstrated the disproportionate discipline experienced by Black students in one southeastern state as measured by suspension. The attitudes and beliefs principals have about discipline may impact the response schools take to address disruption and misbehavior (DeMatthews et al., 2017). Principals may have the power to alter the trajectory of students' lives as they decide about suspensions and student placement. Finally, the negative social and academic outcomes related to exclusionary discipline emphasize the importance of this trajectory (Morris & Perry, 2016; Wolf & Kupchik, 2017).

Antecedents to Discipline

Results from the Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) demonstrated that principals do not agree about whether most discipline problems come from inadequacies in the student's home situation (see Table 2.17, Item 4). DeMatthews et al. (2017) noted that

principals' perspectives were often influenced by how they understood the antecedents to student behavior. For example, Principal B said, "You might have the kid who comes from the rough household, and, you know, they might have behavior issues." A difficult home life may be one example of an antecedent considered by principals when assigning discipline consequences. Another example may be an academic challenge, such as when Principal C said he

> had a boy last week in tears because he was having trouble counting money back. It was their standard he was working on and he felt like he should be able to count the money because he gets an allowance and he buys thinks from the story. But you know the child was in ... second grade. His last full year was really his kindergarten year.

The teacher sent the student to the office for being insubordinate, or defiant, but the student simply shut down due to frustration. It was fortunate that Principal C found out why the student was upset. On the other hand, if principals do not feel it is important to explore the antecedent of the behavior, or even consider that behavior is linked to an antecedent, it may be difficult to find a productive solution that helps the student. Another example of considering the source or cause of the misbehavior is considering implicit bias. Principal B explored the issue of implicit bias of teachers by giving an example:

> How do you say to a teacher, "Okay, well, you know, this kid is this Black kid, this is how he or she talks at home, you know" … I think it's kind of coloring you against them, you know, that's the equivalent of calling somebody a racist in some people's minds.

Principal B expressed an example of how a cultural issue may be misinterpreted, leading to a student getting in trouble; however, it is difficult to say this to teachers without making it sound like an accusation of racism. Implicit bias does not always lead to discriminatory behaviors, although it can support them (Carter et al., 2014). This may explain why principals responded differently to the question asking whether suspension was unfair to minority students. Perhaps some principals saw examples of unfair consequences when the cause was implicit bias or simply misinterpretation of behavior, such as Principal B's example of communication at home

being misinterpreted at school. Furthermore, DeMatthews et al. (2017) also found that principals observed teachers who were misreading student intent, targeting students, or overreacting to their behaviors. Results from the Principal's Perspectives Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) indicated that principals had differing opinions about whether suspension was fair to students who have been minoritized (See Table 2.14, Item 14). Although using deficit language is not a preferred way of framing this point, this survey response may allude to whether principals think the student receiving consequences for their behavior deserved this consequence.

Building Relationships

Principals responding to the Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) disagreed on whether there was time to build relationships with students. Principals A and C spent the most time talking about the importance of building relationships. Principal A elaborated on their school's flexible discipline system by saying, "You've got to know the child, you got to know what their needs are, you got to know their strengths and weaknesses social, emotionally, behaviorally, academically." For some principals, this seems to be an essential part of their beliefs, and for others, there may not be time. Mansfield (2015) described transformative social justice leadership as an iterative process of exploring the situated context of the students' lived experiences both inside and outside of the school and adapting practices based on this understanding. Gregory et al. (2017) identified supportive relationships with a culturally responsive lens as the first preventative principle to increase equity, which they defined as teachers and students creating authentic connections. Principal A referred to knowing his students as the "business of education." Although this was emphasized by Principal A, the survey data revealed that all principals may not see building relationships with students as an essential component of their discipline system (see Table 2.17, Item 15).

Prevention Versus Suspension

Findings from the Principal's Perspectives Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) demonstrated that principals disagreed about whether suspension was virtually their only option for disciplining disruptive students (see Table 2.14, Item 10). Principals interviewed mentioned using restorative justice practices, counseling, social worker involvement, behavior intervention plans, hallway supervision, being in the classroom, coping skills, teaching social-emotional skills, and working with behavior specialists. Participant C described the challenges, especially with reducing the amount of time student miss school saying, "We have to be very creative" and that many of the alternative responses also included ways to prevent behavior (e.g., supervise hallways, get in the classroom, teach social-emotional skills). Gregory et al. (2017) identified opportunities for learning and correcting behavior as another principle to increase equity in school discipline. This means that principals' responses to discipline do not have to come from a punitive mindset but instead can teach and build students' social skills.

The extant data confirmed there is disproportional discipline of Black students happening in one southeastern state, and if principals are not aware of alternative consequences or do not prioritize prevention, these may be possible avenues for intervention. In addition to whether suspension was the only option, principals also disagreed about whether suspension was effective (see Table 2.14, Items 1, 2, and 5). Participant A shared "Is this a situation where a child just continues to get in trouble over and over and over and suspension is just not working? We're not going to continue to want to suspend that kid without putting some things in place." Unfortunately, we have evidence that the exclusionary practices in schools have serious negative outcomes. Academically, students experience reduced engagement in learning (United States Commission on Civil Rights, 2019) and higher rates of dropout (Noltemeyer et al., 2015). When

it is considered that each day of ISS or OSS typically indicates a day-long removal from the learning environment, this can also result in a disadvantage for student achievement. Research indicates school suspension may account for about one-fifth of Black and White differences in academic performance, suggesting that exclusionary discipline is not just a behavior consequence but also an academic one (Morris & Perry, 2016). Socially, exclusionary discipline is linked to an increased likelihood of criminal justice involvement (Wolf & Kupchik, 2017). Additionally, when discipline is disproportionate, research suggests Black students' perceptions of equity and belonging decrease significantly compared with White students, according to a qualitative study of 58 high schools in Maryland (Bottiani et al., 2017). Furthermore, Black students in the study reported a higher rate of adjustment problems, with higher rates of disproportionate suspension risk (Bottiani et al., 2017). Considering the data and the research, principals with adequate support (Welsh, 2023) have potential to change the discipline outcomes within their own building and prevent the negative effects associated with exclusionary discipline that are impacting Black students at a high rate nationwide (GAO, 2018).

Limitations

The small sample of participants in both the quantitative survey ($N = 57$) and the qualitative interviews ($N = 4$) make it difficult to generalize the findings. The four principals who volunteered were all male and had been at their schools for 5 or fewer years (see Table 2.9). It would have been helpful to have a larger sample size ($N = 8$) and include female voices. Additionally, the extant statewide data from 2018–2019 was from 1 school year only.

Conclusion

The extant data demonstrated the pervasive disproportional discipline of Black students in one southeastern state (2018–2019). Prior research suggests school-level factors should be the

focus of efforts to stop the hyper-disciplining of Black students, as opposed to factors related to individual students (Skiba, Chung et al., 2014). This project was designed to explore how principals' perspectives may impact the discipline process and outcomes within a school. As Principal D described,

> I ultimately take full responsibility for the discipline process here at the school as the principal, as the leader of the school. I'm also responsible for casting the overall vision and how we want to proceed with discipline at this school.

Principals are a strategic point of intervention, considering their perspective or philosophy of school discipline may be associated with disciplinary outcomes (Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014; Mukuria, 2002).

Principal leadership is especially important when creating change related to culture, race, or equity (Skiba, Chung et al., 2014). Principals are in a position where they need to use their discretion in discipline decisions (Findlay, 2015), which are naturally influenced by their own value systems. There is nothing inherently wrong with approaching discipline with a high value on being objective and consistent, so long as the discipline policies are designed in the best interest of students. In addition to these challenges, administrators need to contend with the balance of being supportive to teachers (Welsh, 2023) while exercising discretion based on an understanding of the many ways implicit bias and cultural misunderstanding can lead to student discipline (Girvan et al., 2016). Finally, to adequately support teachers and recognize bias or cultural misunderstanding, administrators need to be able to reflectively examine their own beliefs and values in connection with their practices (Furman, 2012; Wink, 2011). To improve equitable discipline outcomes, principals need targeted training and support (Welsh, 2023) to use their influence to advocate for justice (DeMatthews et al., 2017) and have the knowledge and skills to support their staff.

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Appendix A

Interview Script

Thank you for signing up for this follow-up interview; it will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. My name is Amber Phillips, and I am a doctoral student at Johns Hopkins University. The purpose of this interview is to examine principal perspectives on disciplinary practices. Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may change your mind at any point in the process. I want to request permission to audio record this interview to accurately document your responses and not take the time to write everything down while we have our conversation. Please know that you can request the audio recording to stop at any time. I will only use the audio recording for this research, and no personal identifying details will be included in my dissertation. If at any time you decide to withdraw from the study, I can destroy the recording. All the information will remain confidential. May I begin the recording?

Recording Begins:

I would like to remind you of your written consent to participate in this study. Would you like to proceed with the interview?

I will start with questions and end with a few background information questions (Ask interview & demographic questions).

After Interview is Completed:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview; I genuinely appreciate your time. If another thought or idea comes to mind after I leave, and you would like to talk again, please call or email anytime. Thank you!

Appendix B

Initial Emails to Participants

Good Morning,

My name is Amber Phillips, and I am a doctoral student at Johns Hopkins University. I would like to request your participation by asking you to complete the anonymous survey linked here. There are 50 questions, and they should take 15 minutes to complete. Your input is greatly appreciated, and your thoughts will add value to this research.

Kindest Regards,

Amber Phillips

Aphill75@jh.edu

714-206-2806

Appendix C

Theme: Principal Values Influencing Actions

Category	Code	Definition	Principal	Quote
Flexible & Student-Centered: principals who considered the antecedent and circumstance of each discipline situation, as well as the potential harm; places importance on building relationships with parents and students and listening to stakeholder voice (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Anyon et al., 2018; Friend & Caruthers, 2015)	Adjust when needed	Sometimes systems and processes need to be changed based on context	A-3	"I have had to modify and adjust based on the needs of the school" (Principal A)
	Behavior has a reason	Behavior often has an antecedent	C-3	"I like to be able to dig around and see cuz kids are not, most kids are not looking to break a rule. Most kids are just reactive, and I just like to know what they are reacting to. It maybe something that we're doing wrong. Maybe something that we're saying wrong. We can fix it If we, if we, analyze a little bit." (Principal C)
	Parent Involvement	Flexibility to ask parents to be involved in decisions	D-1	"Hey, I need your help with something. And here's something that happened, and I think I need your help talking through this to figure out what exactly makes sense and is the best consequence based on your child and you being the expert of your child." (Participant D)
	Fluid Discipline	Decisions are made based on individual situations	A-2 C-4 D-1	"I think it varies because, our process is very much flexible and fluid. We don't have a set-in stone, okay the kids chewing gum, they automatically get a detention." (Principal A)
	Avoid learning disruptions	Principals should try to keep student in the learning environment	A-3 C-1	"That is my biggest thing is to, is to make sure that students are still receiving instruction, you know, if we suspend the child from the bus, that may very well keep that child and going to school that day. So we have to be creative." (Principal C)
	Understand what is going on	Principals should try to find out why behavior happens	C-1	"And ideally, having, having the time to know what's going on." (Principal C)
	Student Feedback/ Voice	Principals should listen and get student input	A-2 C-1	"So we try to always keep the conversations going. These are children, we're working with here so we never hold it against them, and we're always trying to find a way into those conversations so they can give us feedback." (Participant A)
	Relationships are key	Principals should build relationships with students	A-1 C-2	"We very much want to work and build relationships with our students, I think first and foremost, you got to know your children, you've got to know the child, you got to know their needs, you got to know their strengths and weaknesses social, emotionally, behaviorally, academically." (Participant A)

	Cultural responsiveness	Adults should ensure we are correctly interpreting students' behaviors by understanding student cultures	B-5 C-1	"I think something the lines blur between disrespect and just communication with teachers." (Participant B)
Objective and Consistent: principals who approached discipline based on facts and guided by policy; consequences were not changed based on contextual circumstances (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Mukuria, 2002)	Follow the Handbook	The handbook, code of conduct, and other guidance guides discipline decisions	B-7 C-2	"And following the handbook, it helps to keep your emotions from swaying from one side to the other." (Principal B)
	Removing subjectivity	Removes subjectivity of decision-making	B-3	"So that the punishment is not subjective, was you know, you try to make it you know, take, take all subjectivity out of it. Try to" (Principal B)
	Alignment	Principals should be assigning similar consequences	C-2	"Principals are all aligned. We all kind of have the same expectations" (Principal C)
	Expectations apply to everyone	Adults should ensure they hold every student to the same expectations	B-2	"The expectations are uniform, regardless of who you are" (Principal B)

Project 3: An Intervention to Support Principals' Capacity as Social Justice Leaders

The hyper-disciplining, or disproportionate disciplining, of Black students has been studied for many years and continues to be a pervasive problem in K–12 schools (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Mizel et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba, Arredondo, et al., 2014; United States Government Accountability Office [GAO], 2018), causing negative social and academic consequences (Morris & Perry, 2016; Tobin & Vincent, 2011; Wolf & Kupchik, 2017). Hyper-disciplining often manifests in exclusionary discipline practices, removing students from the learning envionment through in-school suspension (ISS) or out-of-school suspension (OSS; Skiba et al., 2011). Ecological systems theory (EST) frames a model of nested layers (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), used in Project 1 to organize a narrowed list of factors related to disproportionate discipline. The literature review directed the focus to school-level factors, such as principal leadership, as a promising area of analysis (Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014). Although administrators are not solely responsible for disproportionate disciplining, they are in a vital position to disrupt its outcomes by advocating for justice (DeMatthews et al., 2017); therefore, they are a strong point of intervention (Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014).

In addition to using descriptive measures to analyze extant 2018–2019 data in Project 2, the researcher explored K–12 administrators perspectives' using a convergent mixed methods study design (see Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). The Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) was administered to gather the perspectives of principals ($N = 57$) across the state regarding discipline, and four volunteer administrators were interviewed using a semistructured interview process (see Lochmiller & Lester, 2017). Findings indicated hyper-disciplining of Black students measured by risk ratio (RR) when compared with all other students in 2018–2019 peaked in third grade for both ISS (2.9) and OSS (4.6). The convergent results (see Creswell &

Plano-Cark, 2018) of the Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) and the coded interviews (see Saldaña, 2021) yielded the theme: *administrators belief, attitudes, and values may influence their response to behavior*. The results have informed the creation of a professional development (PD) curriculum providing administrators with an opportunity to reflect on their beliefs, attitudes, and values related to social justice and behavior.

Theoretical Framework

Ajzen's (1991, 2012) theory of planned behavior (TPB) states that the main driver of behavior is intention (Steinmetz et al., 2016). Intention is a function of perceived behavioral control, attitude toward behavior, and subjective norms (Ajzen, 2012), which are grounded a person's beliefs about the behavior (Ajzen, 1991). Three kinds of beliefs are identified in TPB: control beliefs for perceived behavior control, behavioral beliefs to influence attitudes, and normative beliefs providing the basis for subjective norms (Ajzen, 1991).

Perceived behavioral control is comparable to Bandura's (1986) concept of self-efficacy as they both focus on the impact of a person's perception of their ability to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 2002). Attitude toward a behavior is based on beliefs of potential negative or positive consequences that will result from a behavior (Steinmetz et al., 2016). Finally, the subjective norm is related to the social expectation associated with conduct (Ajzen, 1991) that either discourages or encourages a person to perform a behavior (Ajzen, 2012). Interventions supported with TPB are focused on control, behavioral, and normative beliefs leading to the behavior (Steinmetz et al., 2016). TPB denotes changing beliefs is the pathway to changing motivation.

The application of TPB to this PD intervention is to give administrators an opportunity to explore their beliefs and intentions related to social justice. Based on the beliefs and intentions they identify through reflection (see Wink, 2011) and collaboration (see Gee, 2008), they could

decide what steps they need to take to live their values. There is no curriculum telling administrators what to think or believe; instead, the purpose is to facilitate the opportunity for administrators to explore their own humanness (see Fuhr, 2017). A conceptual framework outlines the PD plan and answers some basic questions in the form of a one-page information sheet (see Appendix A).

Research Design

A mixed methods approach was used for this intervention, beginning with the initial planning and design (see Bamberger et al., 2016). The aim of program evaluation is to provide constructive information and timely feedback to support effective decision-making (Cellante & Donne, 2013). Mixed methods approaches respond to research questions and hypotheses by collecting and rigorously analyzing quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). Additionally, mixed methods integrate both forms of data (i.e., quantitative and qualitative) into the results and organize procedures into logical research designs framed by theory. Mixed methods provide the researcher with the opportunity to include participant voice describing their experiences, which can help prevent unintended consequences (Bamberger et al., 2016). This is especially important for social programs as they occur in environments where natural events may influence outcomes (Rossi et al., 2019).

In addition to mixed methods, this study focused on theory-driven evaluation, which explicitly connects to social science theory (Cooksy et al., 2001). Designing a treatment theory model helps the researcher carefully consider the process by which the intervention affects the intended population (Leviton & Lipsey, 2007), which is another way to prevent unintended consequences (Bamberger et al., 2016). Furthermore, the incorporation of both quantitative and qualitative measures may prevent the black box research approach (Leviton & Lipsey, 2007),

where the researcher would likely miss important implementation processes (Bamberger et al., 2016). For these reasons, a mixed methods approach, a theory of treatment, and a logic model were used to develop the process evaluation for this intervention. Developing a treatment theory (see Appendix B) provides a framework for the researcher to address the difficult questions and create designs that increase the likelihood of identifying treatment effects (Leviton & Lipsey, 2007). Additionally, logic models (see Appendix C) can help the researcher unpack the program elements connected to the different types of data to be triangulated (Cooksy et al., 2001). Additionally, a logic model is used as a tool to guide development of the evaluation hypothesis and determine strategies for testing, as well as assumptions (McLaughlin & Jordan, 2010).

This convergent evaluation design uses a one-group pretest-posttest design (see Shadish et al., 2002). In order to maximize the likelihood of benefit to participants, there is no comparison group, and all administrators participate in the treatment. To begin the intervention, a pretest measuring administrator social justice behaviors using the Social Justice Behavior Scale (SJBS) is conducted (Flood, 2019), along with the Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004); both the pretest and posttest questions are the same and are embedded as a SurveyMonkey link in the first and last Nearpod (see Appendix D). Qualitative and quantitative data are also collected through a survey (see Appendix E) at the end of each Nearpod module and at the end of each collaborative Zoom session. Participants create a unique four- to six-digit, non-consecutive, non-repeating, non-identifying number to enter for each survey to keep results anonymous while enabling measurement of change.

Research Questions

Research questions are an important component of effective evaluations (Rossi et al., 2019). An effective evaluation design yields both useful and credible answers to those evaluation

questions. Formative evaluation is designed to help the researcher improve performance by shaping the program. Outcome or summative evaluation provides the summary judgment of how well the program accomplishes its purpose. The design question explores how the intervention is aligned to research and the rationale for each component. The following process, outcome, and design questions guide the evaluation plan.

Process Questions

1. To what extent did the participants participate in the asynchronous Nearpod modules?
2. To what extent did the participants participate in the synchronous sessions?
3. To what extent are the participants satisfied with the asynchronous Nearpod modules?
4. To what extent are the participants satisfied with the synchronous sessions?

Outcome Questions

1. How does participation in a social justice oriented professional development for administrators influence their future intentions related to school discipline issues?
    a. Related to their interactions with the Nearpod content?
    b. Related to their interactions with the synchronous sessions content?
2. To what extent did participation in a social justice oriented professional development for administrators change their social justice behaviors?
3. To what extent did participation in a social justice oriented professional development for administrators change their perspective or beliefs about discipline?
4. To what extent did participation in a social justice oriented professional development for administrators result in changing their discipline decisions and how they lead?

The following are hypotheses related to the outcome evaluation questions:

1. Participants will increase their intention for social justice actions measured with qualitative question three of the post Nearpod module and synchronous session survey.
2. Participants will demonstrate an increase in their scores on the Social Justice Behavior Scale (Flood, 2019) following completion of eight modules and three live synchronous sessions.
3. Participants will demonstrate a change in their responses on the Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004), indicating a change in perspectives or beliefs following the completion of eight modules and three live synchronous sessions.
4. Participants will demonstrate a self-reported change in their discipline decisions and how they lead.

Project Design Evaluation Question

1. In what ways is the intervention design informed by research and/or best practices?

My purpose in developing this intervention is to support administrators by providing them with an opportunity to explore their understanding and commitment to social justice using a flexible PD model. The four process evaluation questions and the four outcome evaluation questions will be used when the intervention is implemented. There is a possibility that the process and outcome evaluation will need to be adjusted to respond to any changes in the number of participants or the context in which it is implemented (Rossi et al., 2019). The project design evaluation question is used before implementation to articulate the ways each part of the intervention can be supported by research and best practices (see Appendix F).

Positionality

Mertens (2018) highlighted how an evaluator's philosophical position can affect their chosen research methodology. As Creswell and Plano-Clark (2018) pointed out, it is crucial to make those perspectives transparent. As a former administrator, I consider myself an external insider (see Banks, 2015); I have some knowledge of the role and responsibility of an administrator, but I do not have first-hand knowledge of potential participants' context or specific job responsibilities. Although I work at the state level, I have no direct influence or authority over participants who may enroll.

I also approach this intervention evaluation with the transformative axiological assumption, recognizing that the primary purpose of evaluation is to promote social justice and human rights (Mertens, 2013). To accomplish this goal, I need to remain cognizant of the cultural and power differences between the administrators who might participate in this study (see Mertens, 2013). My role in facilitating this intervention is to help participants reflect on their beliefs and to help them examine their school data to inform decisions that achieve equitable outcomes. This will look different depending on the prior knowledge, personal identity, and experiences of the participants. My objective is that this intervention will allow flexibility to meet a variety of needs. To serve as an effective facilitator, my role is to continue to examine my own power and positionality, a process I began through reflexive journaling as I built and prepared to implement this intervention (see Meyer & Willis, 2019; Wink, 2001).

Process Evaluation

Process indicators help researchers determine which intervention components are related to outcomes (Baranowski & Stables, 2000). In other words, process evaluation tells us what

works. The process evaluation components (see Table 1) for this intervention are participant responsiveness and quality of program delivery (Dusenbury et al., 2003).

Table 3.1

Data Collection Matrix

Process evaluation questions	Process evaluation indicator	Data source(s)	Data collection tool	Frequency
To what extent did the administrators participate in the asynchronous Nearpod module? Participant Responsiveness (Dusenbury et al., 2003)	Nearpod Participation	Admin	QUANT: Nearpod Participation Session Report ≥70% score indicates high participation	QUANT: Every month, each module will be reviewed for completion. Eight modules total in 8 months.
To what extent did the administrators participate in the synchronous sessions? Participant Responsiveness (Dusenbury et al., 2003)	Zoom Participation	Admin	QUANT: Zoom Attendance Report ≥3 Zoom sessions indicates high participation	QUANT: Every 2 months, each zoom attendance report will be reviewed. 12 sessions total in 8 months (three every 2 months).
To what extent are administrators satisfied with the asynchronous Nearpod modules? Fidelity of Implementation-Quality of Program Delivery (Dusenbury et al., 2003)	Nearpod Satisfaction	Admin	QUAL: Two open-ended questions after the Nearpod Module (Appendix B).	QUAL: Every month, the two open-ended questions will be coded (Saldaña, 2021)
To what extent are the administrators satisfied with the synchronous sessions? Fidelity of Implementation-Quality of Program Delivery (Dusenbury et al., 2003)	Zoom Satisfaction	Admin	QUAL: Two open-ended questions after the Zoom session (Appendix B).	QUAL: Every other month, the two open ended questions will be coded (Saldaña, 2021)
Project design question	Design evaluation indicator	Data source(s)	Data collection tool	Frequency
In what ways is the intervention design informed by research and/or best practices?	Matrix	Content	QUAL: Matrix including literature support, rationale, and expected outcomes for identifying each part of the Nearpod and Zoom Session Plan.	QUAL: After the curriculum has been developed and before it is tested.

Outcome evaluation questions	Construct	Data source(s)	Data collection tool	Frequency
1. How does participation in a social justice oriented professional development for administrators influence their future intentions? a. Related to their interactions with the Nearpod content? b. Related to their interactions with the Synchronous sessions content?	Action Steps	Admin	QUAL: One open-ended questions after the Nearpod module (Appendix B).	QUAL: Every other month, the open-ended question will be coded (Saldaña, 2021)
2. To what extent did participation in a social justice oriented professional development for administrators change their social justice behaviors?	Social Justice Behaviors	Admin	QUAN: Social Justice Behavior Scale (Flood, 2019) administered using SurveyMonkey	QUAN: Once before and once at the end of the 8-month intervention.
3. To what extent did participation in a social justice oriented professional development for administrators change their perspectives or beliefs about discipline?	Disciplinary Practices	Admin	QUAN: Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) administered using SurveyMonkey	QUAN: Once before and once at the end of the 8-month intervention.
4. To what extent did participation in a social justice oriented professional development for administrators result in changing their discipline decisions and how they lead?	Social Justice Leadership Behaviors	Admin	QUAL: One open-ended question within the first and last Nearpod module.	QUAL: Once before and once at the end of the 8-month intervention.

Participant Responsiveness

Participant responsiveness (Dusenbury et al., 2003) of the asynchronous Nearpod modules refers to the level of participation for each administrator. Participant responsiveness is operationalized by determining to what extent administrators completed the activities in each of the eight Nearpod modules. Each of the eight self-guided Nearpod modules provides administrators with a computer-generated participation score measuring what percentage of the activities the principal completed. If a principal participates with a 70% or greater average score, it is considered high responsiveness. If a principal participates with a 40–69% score, it is considered medium responsiveness. Finally, anything below 40% is considered low

responsiveness. Participant responsiveness aligns with the key short-term mechanism in the theory of treatment (see Appendix B) to increase administrators' knowledge of the 10 principles outlined in the framework for increasing equity in school discipline (Gregory et al., 2017). As these modules were developed using Brown and colleagues' (2014) effective learning strategies (e.g., reflection), administrators are unlikely to learn the 10 principles for increasing equity in school discipline without engaging in the activities. Learning the 10 principles is important for participants to create research-based action steps in school improvement plans with a priority on schoolwide improvement. Without participant responsiveness in the asychronous activities embeddded in the Nearpod modules, administrators would be less likely to change their beliefs and attitudes. Participation is also important for administrators to consider their role and potential to disrupt disproportionate discipline outcomes (see DeMatthews et al., 2017; Mukuria, 2002; Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014), along with overall increased intention for social justice behaviors (see Flood, 2019).

Participant responsiveness (Dusenbury et al., 2003) in the synchronous Zoom sessions refers to the level of participation for each administrator. Participant responsiveness is operationalized by determining to what extent administrators participate in the Zoom sessions. The Zoom session attendance is designed to be taken at the end of each of the 12 sessions. If a principal participates in three or more sessions in 8 months, it is considered high responsiveness. If a principal participates in two sessions in 8 months, it is considered medium responsiveness. Finally, anything below two sessions is considered low responsiveness. Participant responsiveness aligns with the key short-term mechanism in the theory of treatment to increase awareness of their opportunity to disrupt disproportionate discipline outcomes (see Mukuria, 2002). They could do this by hearing how other principals have used their role to disrupt

disproportional discipline outcomes; engaging in dialogue may help principals decide what it means to be a social justice leader (see Flood, 2019). Ideally, dialogue within the Zoom sessions may lead to ongoing collaboration and learning (see Gee, 2008) with other administrators to share ideas and action steps. Without participant responsiveness in the sychronous Zoom sessions, administrators are less likely to change their beliefs and attitudes.

Fidelity of Implementation: Quality of Delivery

The quality of program delivery refers to the extent to which the researcher attains a theoretical ideal when delivering program content (Dusenbury et al., 2003). Although many platforms exist, Nearpod was chosen for the delivery of the asynchronous modules due to the opportunities to meet criteria of andragogy (see Mezirow, 1981). Andragogy is the effort to help adult learners in a way that supports their ability to be self-directed learning. The use of Nearpod allows the learner to make decisions related to their learning by responding to the reflective question of their choice. Nearpod also decreases a learner's need to take time off for PD; the asynchronous model provides flexibility and choice related to *when* and *where* learning takes place. Nearpod provides the opportunity for reciprocal learning relationships using collaborative activities, where learners can see other participants' answers, reflections, and responses. Finally, Nearpod is easily accessible with a link, is easy to use, and requires no registration.

The quality of program delivery is operationalized by determining the extent to which administrators are satisfied with the eight Nearpod asynchronous modules. The component of quality of delivery is designed to be measured using two qualitative participant satisfaction questions (see Appendix E) embedded at the end of each of the eight modules and at the end of each Zoom session. Completing the eight modules is a key component of the theory of treatment, and without participant satisfaction, it is unlikely that all administrators would complete the

modules. Additionally, as per the logic model, participants need to complete the eight modules to learn about the 10 promising principles (Gregory et al., 2017). Administrator satisfaction is essential to both getting the desired outcomes and to scale up the intervention. Responses are coded and analyzed for themes (see Saldaña, 2021) that converge or diverge with the qualitative results.

Outcome Evaluation Components

In addition to the two qualitative questions administrators responded to after each Nearpod and synchronous Zoom session to measure quality of program delivery (see Dusenbury et al., 2003), participants answer a survey question related to their intended action steps (see Appendix E). Ajzen's (2012) theory is based on the notion that intention immediately proceeds action; therefore, this question explores whether administrators have any ideas or action steps they intend to implement in their context after completing a Nearpod module or Zoom session. Additionally, participants answer a quantitative survey question using a Likert scale to measure how confident they are that they will implement the chosen idea or action step within the next year (see Appendix E). Furthermore, the pretest and posttest use the qualitative Social Justice Behavior Scale (Flood, 2019) to measure the intervention's effect on administrators' social justice behaviors and the Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) to measure a change in district and school leaders' perspectives and beliefs related to discipline (see Appendix D). Finally, the participants answer one open-ended question embedded in the Nearpod activities to determine whether participants report a change in their discipline decisions or how they lead at the end of the course.

Research Methods

The one-group pretest-posttest design (Shadish et al., 2002) is feasible and appropriate for this evaluation. My plan is to recruit participant through a national organization that supports equity work. Administrators can be challenging to recruit for studies (Flood, 2019), so a large pool for recruitment is necessary to reach the desired sample size. In order to reach a meaningful power of .95, the sample size needs to be 122, according to an a priori power analysis conducted in G*Power. Attrition of participants due to failure to complete the eight Nearpod self-guided modules, participate in the activities, or complete the posttest would likely be due to principals' busy schedules. Furthermore, there may also be challenges in evaluating the intervention outcomes since participants will be from different districts and states. For this reason, there may be variations in setting that make it difficult to determine if the treatment is effective in specific settings compared to others (see Shadish et al., 2002).

Social Justice Behavior Scale

The Social Justice Behavior Scale (Flood, 2019) is utilized to measure the pretest and posttest measures of social justice behavior. This instrumentation tool was created in alignment with Ajzen's (2012) theory of planned behavior. The theory frames the driving force of our intentions, consisting of perceived behavioral control, attitude, and subjective norms; our intentions are key driver of our behaviors. The scale was built with a principal components analysis used to determine the number of interpretable and reliable factors (Flood, 2019). The final Social Justice Behavior Scale included 23 items (see Appendix D). The reliability was measured using Cronbach's alpha, with results of the three subscales ranging from .872 to .916 (Flood, 2019). Both three- and four-component solutions were derived, resulting in removal of the equity perspective component, which did not have the same conceptual fit as the other three.

The three-component solution was retested and demonstrated excellent internal consistency with a Cronbach's alpha of .933. Regarding convergent validity, the components of school-specific, community-minded, and self-focused components were averaged for a composite score. The resulting correlation with the Social Justice Behavior Scale subscales were statistically significant at the $p < .01$ level. The Social Justice Behavior Scale demonstrated strong internal consistency with four subscales: intentions, $a = .88$; perceived behavioral control, $a = .84$; subjective norms, $a = .82$; and attitudes, $a = .95$ (Torres-Harding et al., 2012, as cited in Flood, 2019). The final three components include school-specific (behaviors addressing social justice issues in schools), community-minded (behaviors outside of school and reaching to the community), and self-focused (behaviors within the principal) behaviors.

Disciplinary Practices Survey

The Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) was developed to explore the extent to which a principal's perspectives and attitudes relate to disciplinary outcomes. The reliability of this scale is $\alpha = 0.67$ (Skiba & Edl, 2004). Forty-nine questions were published in Skiba and Edl's (2004) article; these are the same questions used in Project 2 to assess principals' perspectives in one southeastern state. The Likert scale used in this project (*strongly agree*, *agree, somewhat agree*, *neutral*, *somewhat disagree*, *disagree, strongly disagree*) is the same as the Social Justice Behavior Scale (Flood, 2019) to make it easier for participants to respond.

Demographic Questions

Questions were added to determine participant age, ethnoracial and gender identity, previous education, and years of teaching experience. Additional questions include the grade levels that participants supervise, years in current role, type of school (i.e., rural, suburban,

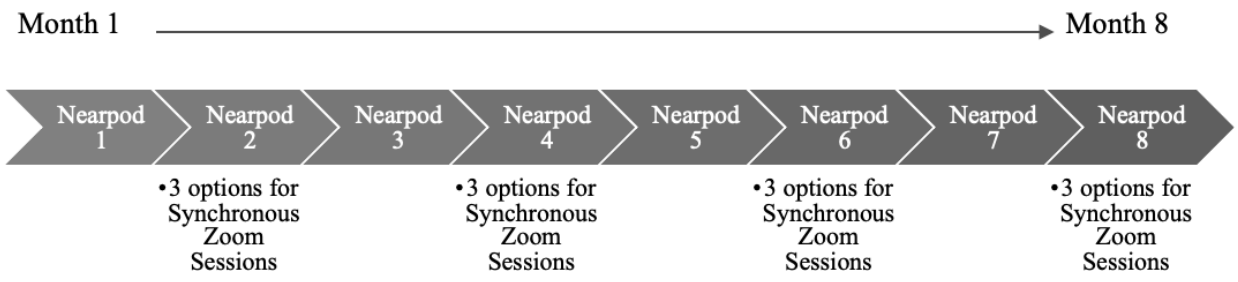
urban), school enrollment, and state where they work. Finally, questions were also added to understand how participants define social justice leadership and whether they consider themselves social justice leaders and intend to develop their skills. Each participant will enter a code consisting of four to six non-repeating, non-consecutive digits. This will ensure the responses remain anonymous while allowing the researcher to track individual change or growth.

Procedure

The structure of this intervention is designed to consider both administrators' busy schedules and research support for best practices considering adult learning (see Mezirow, 1981). Administrators are offered an 8-month plan with short synchronous Nearpod provided at the first of each month (see Figure 3.1). After registering, participants receive a welcome email with the first Nearpod link to Module 1 (see Appendix G). The Nearpod modules are designed to take 15–30 minutes to complete, with activities. Additionally, principals have three different options to sign up for a synchronous session every other month (see Table 2). Before the synchronous Zoom session, they receive a reminder email with the Zoom link and questions to provide them time to reflect (see Appendix H). The sessions are designed to facilitate dialogue using Wink's (2011) reflection cycle as a process to describe, analyze, interpret, and action plan around a prompt related to the Nearpod content. The participants have the opportunity to reflect alone and in collaboration (see Gee, 2008) with other administrators during each Zoom synchronous session (see Appendix I).

Figure 3.1

Intervention Timeline



Intervention Components

Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior supports my intention to intervene with administrators to produce the long-term outcomes to increase their capacity to be social justice leaders (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Furman, 2012) and reduce discipline disproportionality (McIntosh et al., 2021) by facilitating professional learning. Social justice change is about actively working against institutional racism and working toward a world where difference is valued (Grant & Gibson, 2013). It is unlikely that the long-term outcome of reducing discipline disproportionality can be achieved in the span of 8 months, but the short- and medium-term outcomes are the target (see Appendix C). Administrators are given the opportunity to collaborate (see Gee, 2008), dialogue, and reflect with other administrators about social justice issues in their schools such as disproportionality. They can also increase their knowledge about the 10 promising principles in the research that are associated with producing equitable outcomes by race and gender (Gregory et al., 2017). The 10 principles can be used in any combination and include (a) supportive relationships, (b) bias-aware classrooms and respectful school environments, (c) academic rigor, (d) culturally relevant and responsive teaching, (e) opportunities for learning and correcting behavior, (f) data-based inquiry for equity, (g) problem-solving approaches to discipline, (h) inclusion of student and family voice on conflicts' causes

and solutions, (i) reintegration of students after conflict or absence, and (j) multitiered system of supports. The Nearpod modules embed reflective questions to help administrators explore their own positionality and power in their schools (Milner, 2007) and their potential to disrupt disproportionate discipline outcomes (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Mukuria, 2002; Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014). Additionally, administrators can increase their intention for social justice behaviors (see Ajzen, 2012), which may lead to five bold action steps potentially inspired by the 10 promising practices (Gregory et al., 2017) and administrator prioritization to reduce disproportionality if it exists in their school. Administrators may also begin to reflect on why inequity is happening and collaborate to find creative solutions through dialogue with other administrators. By doing so, they can increase their self-efficacy (see Bandura, 1986) and capacity for social justice leadership.

This professional development opportunity is influenced by transformational learning theory or critical pedagogy (see Taylor, 2017). Transformative learning theory is about how adults change their point of view (Taylor, 2017), which is a process grounded in social justice (Wink, 2011). Changing beliefs to change motivation (Steinmetz et al., 2016) in this intervention is facilitated through embedded time for deep reflection (see Brown et al., 2014; Wink, 2011), flexibility and choice (see Mezirow, 1981; Wink, 2011), and collaboration (see Gee, 2008). Additionally, learning science guided the development to include generation and elaboration (see Brown et al., 2014).

Reflection

Although Banks et al. (2001) focused on teachers, administrators also need to be knowledgeable about the cultural and social contexts of teaching and learning to increase learning opportunities for teachers, which can in turn increase learning opportunities for students.

Moreover, administrators need the opportunity to recognize the cultural patterns they were born into, as well as those they have not experienced (Pedersen, 2000). With awareness of cultural patterns, we are less likely to use our own culture as criteria by which to judge others. Based on the literature, administrators need to explore their own understanding before they can help others increase theirs. Furthermore, Banks et al. (2001) suggested PD should support the understanding of how social class, ethnicity, language, and race interact and influence student behavior. Before this can be provided to teachers, administrators need to understand how context and point-of-view might influence their own actions (Spencer, 2008). For administrators to have the time to reflect and think deeply, administrators need time to explore questions that help them increase their own cultural awareness, or beliefs about culture, before changing actions (Wink, 2011). For this purpose, reflective experiences are embedded in Nearpod activities within the eight modules focused on (a) identity, (b) beliefs, (c) data, (d) policies, and (e) student voice. Additionally, the reflective cycle is used in the four synchronous Zoom sessions where administrators meet to reflect and listen to the perspectives of other administrators (Mezirow, 1981; see Appendix I).

Flexibility and Choice

Critical pedagogy highlights the value of flexibility and choice in learning, which reflects authentic democratic principles illuminated by the way we teach and learn (Wink, 2011). Fostering learners' decision-making and creating experiences where adult learners can choose from options is also highlighted by Mezirow's (1981) principles of andragogy. Additionally, since administrators are often busy (DeMatthews et al., 2017), this plan includes flexibility or options to meet the demands of their busy schedules. Choice and flexibility are used throughout the intervention by allowing administrators to choose when they complete the Nearpod session during each month. Additionally, the planned intervention creates many opportunities to choose

between two reflective questions, as well as the option to respond with an audio or typed response during the Nearpod activities. The options allow for greater differentiation between administrators who may already consider themselves social justice leaders to reflect on more advanced questions and those who are beginning this journey to start with more basic, entry-level questions and grow from there. Nearpod is a natural fit as a platform for flexibility and choice since it allows the builder to create a multitude of options for the participants. Furthermore, each asynchronous Zoom session is offered during 3 different days throughout the year (see Appendix J). This gives administrators three different opportunities each session to join the conversation when it fits in their schedule. Choice is also offered through embedded opportunities to explore the framework for increasing equity in school discipline (Gregory et al., 2017). Administrators are able to choose an approach or combination of approaches and build action steps to move themselves or their schools forward toward more equitable outcomes.

Collaboration

Collaboration (Gee, 2008) and dialogue in critical pedagogy is talking in a way that produces change (Wink, 2011). Wink (2011) summarized Vygotsky, writing that when we talk to others, we get smarter. Dialogue provides the opportunity to explore stimulating questions and consider other perspectives (Cabrera & Cabrera, 2015). The projection is that facilitating dialogue around good questions will spark more questions (Wink, 2011). This approach is described through the lens of sociotransformative constructivism, which connects social justice and social constructivism (A. J. Rodriguez, 1998). Social constructivism is the building of knowledge within a community of learners (Resnick, 1987) and is based on Vygotsky's (1978) zone of proximal development. The emphasis in this model is putting knowledge to work; knowledge is a tool that can help us better understand ourselves and the world around us.

Knowledge is also something we can use to resist the social structure as it exists when we grapple with the ways it undermines humanity. Considering knowledge for social justice together can help us in creating meaningful learning (authentic activity), listening to diverse voices (dialogic conversation), asking real questions to explore the context (metacognition), and recognizing and resisting social injustice (reflexivity; A. J. Rodriguez, 1998).

Learning Science

Learning is more effective when the learning matters to the individual (Brown et al., 2014). The Nearpod modules were designed to allow both the introduction of new material as well as the practiced retrieval of previous material; this occurs naturally as many of the topics overlap in ideas (e.g., reflect on beliefs, reflect on policies). Generation of ideas through writing or speaking can be another way to engage in material, especially prior to receiving new information. Open-ended questions are included in the Nearpod modules to allow administrators to consider what they already know. In the same way, questions are used to give administrators the chance to elaborate on ideas and make connections. Finally, reflection is the core strategy of the Nearpod modules and the synchronous dialogues. Participants have opportunities throughout the 8 months to consider their own social justice leadership capacity and ensure alignment between their values and actions (Furman, 2012).

Data Collection: Process of Implementation & Proximal Outcomes

Quantitative data are designed to be collected every month using the automatically generated Nearpod participation report and every other month using the Zoom attendance report. These data sources are utilized to measure participant responsiveness (see Dusenbury et al., 2003). Qualitative questions are used to measure quality of program delivery with two questions (see Appendix E) at the end of each Nearpod module and Zoom synchronous session.

Additionally, the data collection consists of a qualitative question at the end of each of each Nearpod module and Zoom synchronous session to identify principal action steps and a quantitative question to measure principal intention to implement action steps as outcome evaluation. Optional data to assess the extent of disproportionality are requested with the first and last Nearpod surveys to determine if there is a change is disproportionate discipline outcomes. Since this is an optional question, it may illustrate change with a smaller sample size than the total number of participants. The final pieces of the data collection include the Social Justice Behavior Scale (Flood, 2019) and the Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004), which were designed to be administered as a pretest and a posttest. Lastly, participants will respond to a question embedded within the last Nearpod module that will allow them to describe how they have changed their discipline decisions and how they lead.

Data Analysis

The convergent design is used to analyze this mixed methods evaluation because it is the best fit according to the research questions (see Mertens, 2018). The convergent design process includes collecting and analyzing different but complementary data separately and then merging based on how the data sets converge and diverge (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018). The underlying philosophical assumption for the convergent design is pragmatism, which draws on many ideas of *what works* by using different approaches while upholding a value for both subjective and objective knowledge (Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018; Johnson et al., 2007) without making one approach dominant.

Responses to the three-question qualitative survey (see Appendix E) and the embedded qualitative Nearpod question are designed to be coded to reduce (Elliott, 2018) and organize the data into something meaningful for interpretation (Saldaña, 2013). The imprecise science of

coding is developed by looking for patterns in the administrators' responses (Saldaña, 2021). I intend to use a mix of a priori coding from the Social Justice Behavior Scale (Flood, 2019) and emergent coding in a cyclical process (Saldaña, 2021). After initial cycles, I can gradually identify categories and themes to build an interpretation. The interpretation is then supported with select quotes to support themes.

The paired samples *t*-test is used to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between individuals' pretest results of the Social Science Behavior Scale (Flood, 2019) and Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) along with their posttest results once the data are tested for normality (see Knapp, 2017). Once both data sets are analyzed separately using convergent design, the data sets are merged and interpreted (see Creswell & Plano-Clark, 2018).

Recommendations

The 8-month professional development intervention outlined for this project has not yet been implemented. The next steps are to pilot the intervention with a small group of administrators (e.g., 5–10). The process evaluation survey questions embedded into each Nearpod module and synchronous Zoom session will likely provide feedback on what parts of the intervention are helpful and which parts are not helpful. Based on the summative pilot results, I would likely revise certain aspects to better meet the needs of participating administrators. Additionally, if there are many changes based on the first pilot study feedback, I plan to conduct another pilot with a larger group of administrators (e.g., 20–25) and repeat the cycle of improvement.

Once the intervention has been tested, I plan to seek a national partner with an organization that already has access to a large group of school administrators (e.g., school

climate, equity networks). In this way, it would give me an opportunity to provide this Social Justice Leadership course to district and school administrators throughout the United States. Expanding the course offering nationwide would provide the best chance to reach a large sample size of 122 and reach a meaningful statistical power of .95 to measure the effect size. Furthermore, including a diverse pool of administrators would provide participants with opportunities to hear different perspectives throughout the modules and the synchronous Zoom sessions. Finally, if I can evaluate the 8-month PD intervention and demonstrate promising results, I would like to offer this course to administrators annually and analyze long-term change after the intervention is complete. My hope is to continue to support administrators as they work to remove disproportionate discipline and create more equitable opportunities for the students in their K–12 districts and schools.

Closing Reflection

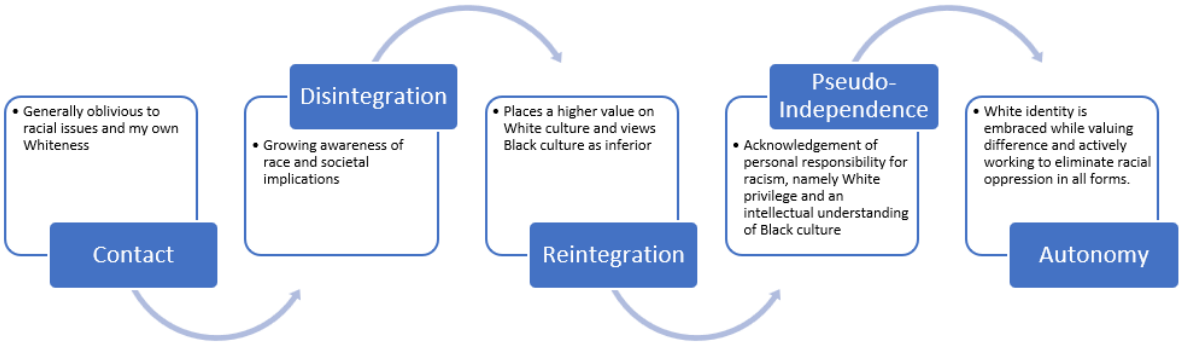
My choice to focus on the hyper-disciplining of Black students in one southeastern state stems from my desire to contribute to solving this problem that I believe should be a priority for schools. Excluding and othering young people is endemic in education (Slee, 2001). Our punitive, exclusionary punishments more frequently assigned to Black students can send the message at a key point in a student's life that they cannot be successful or that they do not belong (Bottiani et al., 2017; Parson & Major, 2020). In order to change educational outcomes, we need to change our normative exclusionary practices disproportionately assigned to Black students. Although the hyper-disciplining of Black students is an outcome related to a larger societal problem of structural racism that the United States of America has yet to confront (Noguera & Alicea, 2020), I have hope that schools can create positive, safe experiences for Black students while educating all students how to resist racism and create a more inclusive, equitable society

(Grant & Gibson, 2013). To contribute, I must begin by reflecting on my own White identity, how it has evolved, and the ways I can continue to learn and develop as a social justice leader by aligning my values to practice (Furman, 2012).

White racial identity theory (Helms & Carter, 1990) will be used as a framework to reflect on my own journey as a White female. Although I started out unaware of the implications of race or my own privilege, I now embrace my responsibility to work toward the elimination of racial oppression. My daily choice is to apply my value of equity to my thoughts, words, and actions. The five stages in Helm's model are depicted and summarized below (see Figure 1): (a) contact, (b) disintegration, (c) reintegration, (d) pseudo-independence, and (e) autonomy.

Figure 3.2

White Racial Identity Theory (Helms & Carter, 1990)



Contact

I grew up learning evangelical Christian values which included belief in a single "truth" represented in the fundamentalist interpretation of the Bible. I remember thinking about issues of racism as a young adult but only at the individual level, without context or proximity to any Black individuals. I have a clear memory of watching the Los Angeles riots, only about an hour drive from our house, and I recall a feeling of fear as my father explained how police officers beat Rodney King. This is my first memory of learning about racial injustice. The only sentiment

I could claim was that I did not want to be racist but without any understanding of how racism manifests (Howard, 2016). It is further evidence of White privilege that I was never faced with a need to reflect on my racial identity as a young person.

My educational experience was also at an evangelical Christian school from pre-K through Grade 12. Later, I attended a local private Christian college majoring in Religion (i.e., Biblical studies). As my identity was largely disconnected from any recognition of the social construct or meaning of the color of my skin, I would have likely claimed colorblindness at that time without understanding the implications. While reflecting on this part of my life, I combed through my old photos to see if I could find a Black friend or acquaintance from my past. I am disturbed to report I could not find one Black person represented in my photo history. The school I attended was majority White with a small population of Asian and Hispanic students. At the time, I was aware of prejudice, but I do not remember learning about the social construct of race or how to resist White supremacy. When looking back at the contact stage of my White identity development, I understand why it is important to address racial issues in school and not wait until our students grow up to explore this part of their identity and its implication in society.

Disintegration

After finishing my bachelor's degree in religion and teaching for 2 years, I had the opportunity to move to Hungary and teach missionary children in a manor purchased by the church as a Bible college extension campus. I was surrounded by many ethnoracial identities, and I enjoyed friendships with individuals from different backgrounds (e.g., Hungarian, Romanian). Even in this foreign country, the cultural norms of the White Americans who lived at the manor were dominant. I was also aware of the discrimination experienced by students who self-identified as Gypsies, although it was never explicit with my acquaintances. I met my

husband during this year in Hungary, and the following summer we returned to the United States to begin our lives together. I once again began teaching in the same private K–12 school and enrolled in a master's program at yet another private Christian college. I was teaching eighth-grade social studies at the time and decided to build my thesis around the curriculum used in the United States history course. As I began to study, I realized the textbook was presenting information from only one perspective, especially when we reached the mid-1800s and we began studying the Civil War. Examples of this were found in the description of the Civil War as a war about states' rights. Additionally, one of the textbook pictures is emblazoned in my mind depicting a happy Black man playing the fiddle in a barn in the South. My rationale for choosing this thesis topic was that we needed to remove this curriculum and replace it with a textbook that accurately portrayed our history. For my thesis, I analyzed the textbook for alignment with the California state standards as an objective measure. Although lacking in rigorous research methods, I was able to use the paper to advocate replacing the curriculum. When I reflect on this experience, I believe the study of history was moving me forward in my interest to learn more about race in the United States. This interest was deepened as I began teaching Advanced Placement U.S. History and 11th grade, which gave me an opportunity to read widely considering history from different perspectives. Howard Zinn's (2005) book *A People's History of the United States* became a foundation for my teaching approach by focusing on the perspectives of those who were oppressed by the dominant White culture. After teaching, I spent the next 3 years as the vice principal of the high school while my husband finished his undergraduate degree and enrolled in dental school in Philadelphia. In 2010, we packed our small car with everything we owned and drove across the country to start a new chapter in our lives.

Reintegration

Bryan Stevenson (2014) wrote about the importance of proximity. We really cannot know or understand other people's experiences until we get close to people. When we moved to Pennsylvania, I started a job at a department store and for the first time built relationships with individuals from a variety of ethnoracial backgrounds and sexual identities. My monolithic prior racial and sexual orientation identity experiences throughout my upbringing and young adult life in a predominantly evangelical Christian White context were blown wide open with the beauty of proximity. My fundamentalist singular truth perspective of the Bible was also exposed. Through my 20s, I had begun to question aspects of my beliefs, but during this period, I started to adopt a different perspective based on life experience. Who was I to judge another person's identity, beliefs, or way of being? In this environment, I also encountered a new view of poverty and the effects of systemic racism in an urban environment. At this point, I likely conflated race, poverty, and cultural norms. I also did not yet recognize my own privilege and likely mistook it for superiority when faced with interactions that I could not explain or caused discomfort. Additionally, I easily made friends with diverse people who had somewhat similar demeanors, communication styles, and ways of interacting that were comfortable to me. Overall, after 4 years in Philadelphia, I grew due to my proximity to many diverse people, but I also had not yet confronted my own White privilege. Despite increasing proximity, I knew little about Black experiences that was not from personal interaction as I had not read books from the perspectives of Black individuals, and I had not yet learned how structural racism worked.

Pseudo-Independence

Although these stages are not meant to be linear (Helms, 2020), I see the most blurring between reintegration and pseudo-independence. It is almost as if I was going back and forth

between the two stages. After Philadelphia, our next stop was a southern state where I returned to teaching, first in a middle school for 1 year then a large, diverse suburban high school. After a couple months as a 10th grade English Language Arts (ELA) and debate teacher, I filled a position as the assistant principal in the same school. It was during these 2 years at the high school that I began to form a more intellectual and asset-based understanding of Black culture (Helms & Carter, 1990) through reading about Black experiences and listening. I met a retired Black gentleman and his German wife at a park where we each walked our dog. We engaged in many conversations about race, and he shared his perspectives and gave me reading homework. I also lived in a diverse neighborhood with many of my students, which led to more connections both inside and outside of school. One student was a favorite—besides her physical appearance as a petite, Black young women, I would describe her as expressive, joyful, and a natural leader. I could hear her coming down the hallway when I was on supervision duty as her voice would carry over the echoing linoleum. I remember at first wondering why she had to be so loud, as I grew up with the belief that quiet and reserved was more appropriate in public. This is a poignant example of that blurring between reintegration and pseudo-independent stages. However, I could not help smiling when I would see her laughing and joking with her friends. She was not shy about asking for what she needed; she knew how to advocate for herself, a trait I admire. At one point in the year, she requested I start an anger management group, which several other students had also requested from me. As we began to pilot this lunchtime meeting, she was a strong voice in the discussions. I remember her saying to her peers, "We have to get it together, we don't want to be adults with anger problems!" She spoke her truth with confidence and spread happiness with her presence. I probably loved her because she seemed to like me; she always greeted me with a big hug, and her acceptance made me feel like I was making a difference.

Another Black student stands out in my memory; he was a young man that seemed to be at a crossroads in his life when I met him. He was an excellent communicator and often led the debates with his intelligent, quick rebuttals in my afternoon ELA course. He knew what to say and how to say it; I saw enormous potential in his gifts of communication. He was eventually removed from the school after engaging in a fight, which was one of many on his record. I remember his dad coming to school pleading with his son to not turn out like him. He had a job picking up trash and expressed a desire for his son to do something different and make something of himself. It was hard to witness the pain his father expressed and the emotion of his son. These are two examples of many students that I was able to know personally and connect with during their time in high school. There are many others that come to mind, but these stories ground me in my truth and become my connection to why this work is important to me personally.

Spending time in my school interacting with students and families as a teacher and administrator made me recognize my own inadequacy. I was not afraid to bring race up in the classroom and in my office, but I also knew I knew I had much more to learn. That year, I read books from Black authors, including *Between the World and Me* by Ta-Nahisi Coates (2015) and *For White Folks who Teach in the Hood and the Rest of Y'all Too* by Christopher Emdin (2016). These books were life-changing for me. I thought about Black experiences and reflected on my actions and what I could do to change social realities. Although this is not an exhaustive list, I know there were three areas where I need to grow: (a) a better understanding of structural and cultural racism, (b) an understanding of my own White identity, and (c) an asset-based perspective when it comes to my Black students and families. I do not know if I realized that I still harbored deficit perspectives, but I saw more need than I saw strengths when I interacted

with my culturally and linguistically diverse families. I also believe this was an indication I was only beginning to examine my White privilege. I talked about it, but I did not yet realize how my White identity might affect interactions and responses from my parents and students. One father asked me, “Why can’t you just let the Black kids be Black?” I sat with that question for a long time, and I still think about it. At the time, I asked him what he meant, and I told him that I wanted to understand. With what I have learned in my classes these last 3 years, I now believe he was expressing that he did not feel his child or other Black students could be themselves at school without getting in trouble. He likely did not think we made his child feel like he belonged. I was learning more about Black experiences in the pseudo-independent stage, and I had an initial understanding of my White privilege, but I had yet to fully reflect on and embrace my White identity and how it might impact the Black students and families with whom I interacted.

Autonomy

My enrollment at Johns Hopkins University and starting to explore my problem of practice likely marked the beginning of my movement toward autonomy. I still embrace the nonlinear aspects of White identity theory (Helms, 2020) and recognize that none of these stages are fixed. During my time as an administrator, I spent most of my day engaged in the activity of discipline. Like DeMatthews et al. (2016), I found discipline anything but straightforward. I have empathy for administrators and understand why some lean more toward the policies, which remove as much individual discretion as possible. I also can understand how administrators can trust their discretion in situations when going by the policy may cause harm or be counterproductive to learning. As I built the intervention as the culminating project of my dossier, I struggled with many thoughts of self-doubt in my ability to make a difference in the discipline systems as they exist. I believe we need a new mental model for discipline in our

schools, and it begins with an understanding of the harm we are causing Black students. Although unproven with empirical research, at this point in my understanding, I agree with Dr. Bettina Love, who believes that by making school systems work for our most historically marginalized students, we will make it work for everyone (Education Week, 2016). Perhaps it feels like common sense to me, but I lay that down for the reader to decide.

I will never understand the unique experiences that belong to Black individuals. What I can do is listen, learn, and try not to view the world through my own White cultural lens (Pedersen, 2000). I can acknowledge and actively resist White racism in all forms (i.e., individual, cultural, institutional), and I can develop a nonracist, positive, White cultural and racial identity (Howard, 2016). I can be a coconspirator to effect change within my spheres of influence (Love, 2019). This research and intervention is one way I would like to take action (Wink, 2011), by implementing this professional development intervention designed to support K–12 administrators and by helping them develop their social justice leadership capacity.

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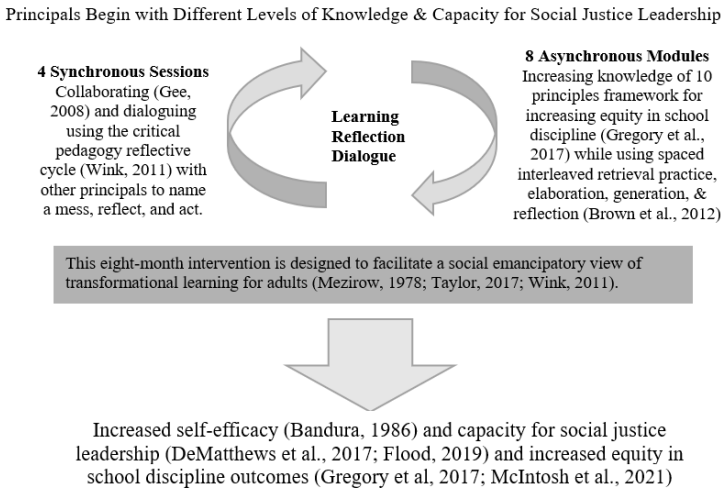
Appendix A

Conceptual Framework and One-Page Synopsis



Who was this course designed for?
Administrators have demanding schedules. This 8-month course was developed for administrators who want to increase their capacity for social justice leadership gradually throughout the school year. Administrators can enter this course at different levels of knowledge and capacities for social justice. Additionally, administrators may have varying levels of disproportionality in their school discipline outcomes.

What is the commitment?
Administrators will commit to completing one Nearpod asynchronous module, which will take approximately 30 minutes each month from August through April. Additionally, administrators will have the opportunity to join a synchronous session in September, November, January, and March. Three dates and times will be offered for each of the months, so administrators have the option to join the session that works best with their schedule.

What are the projected outcomes of this course?
The projected outcomes are to provide administrators with an opportunity to develop their capacity for social justice leadership (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Flood, 2019) by increasing their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) to improve equity in school discipline outcomes (Gregory et al., 2017; McIntosh et al., 2021).

What is the philosophical and theoretical foundation of the course?
The design is based on the social-emancipatory view of transformational adult learning (Mezirow, 1981), which is grounded in Freire's (1984) critical consciousness. Critical consciousness is individuals both reflecting and acting to transform the world into a more equitable place for everyone (Taylor, 2017).

What will administrators do in this course?
The course gives administrators the opportunity for asynchronous, flexible learning, reflection, collaboration, and dialogue. Administrators will collaborate and plan action steps designed to increase positive discipline outcomes in their schools using Gregory and colleagues' (2017) framework for increasing equity in school discipline.

What facilitates learning in this course?
The structure of the Nearpod modules uses Brown and colleagues' (2014) strategies for learning including spaced interleaved retrieval practice, elaboration, generation, and reflection. The synchronous sessions provide administrators with the chance to collaborate (Gee, 2008) and dialogue with other administrators using the reflective cycle described in Wink's (2011) critical pedagogy model.

Appendix B

Treatment Theory

Problem: The hyper-disciplining of Black students has been a long-standing problem. Administrators' beliefs impact discipline outcomes and are in a prime position to disrupt the hyper-disciplining of Black students. Administrators generally lack time and may need access to knowledge about best practices to improve equitable outcomes and connect to a community of other administrators to explore social justice issues in K–12 schools.

Key Components	• K–12 Administrators across the country will be provided with eight different 30 minutes asynchronous Nearpod modules that integrate the 10 principles from the framework for increasing equity in school discipline by race and gender (Gregory et al., 2017). These Nearpod modules will include opportunities for reflection, generation, elaboration, and spaced & interleaved retrieval (Brown et al., 2014). • Four sychronous sessions will facillitate collaboration with other administrators (Gee, 2008) using Wink's (2011) critical pedagogy (name, critically reflect, act).
Key Mechanisms: Short Term	• Increase principal knowledge of 10 principles from research included in FIESD (Gregory et al., 2017). • Increase principal's awareness of the opportunity their role affords them of disrupting disproportional discipline outcomes and increase equitable outcomes.
Key Mechanisms: Intermediate	• Increase principal application of the 10 principles from FIESD by choosing which ones to prioritize and developing action steps. • Increase principal understanding of what it means to be a social justice leader (Flood, 2019). • Increase principal actions related to social justice outcomes in their schools (Ajzen, 2012).
Long-term Outcomes	• Decrease discipline disproportionality in schools. • Increase leaders capacity for social justice leadership (Flood, 2019).

Appendix C

Logic Model

Situation: The hyper-disciplining of Black students has been a long-standing problem in K–12 schools (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Mizel et al., 2016; Skiba et al., 2011; Skiba, Arredondo, et al., 2014). Administrators' beliefs are related to discipline outcomes (DeMatthews et al., 2017) and administrators are in an advantageous position to disrupt the hyper-disciplining of Black students as they are often the decision-making authority for discipline (Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014). School leaders may need access to knowledge about promising research-based solutions to improve equitable discipline outcomes (McIntosh et al., 2021). Administrators may need to increase their self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) to improve equitable outcomes and increase their intention for social justice leadership (Flood, 2019).

Inputs	Activities	Participation	Outputs
Incentives for principal participation social justice course, such as a completion certificate.	Eight 30-minute asynchronous Nearpod professional development modules over the course of 8 months based on the 10 promising principles in the research for reducing disproportionality (Gregory et al., 2017) designed using Brown et al.'s (2014) effective learning strategies (e.g., interleaving, reflection). Four 90-minute synchronous opportunities to engage in the dialogue and the reflective cycle (Wink, 2011) with other administrators.	Administrators across the country who have disproportionate discipline according to risk ratio data and any volunteers.	Researcher: - Eight asynchronous Nearpod Modules - Sample schoolwide action plan including the 10 principles - Plan for 12 synchronous 90-minute sessions based on Wink's (2011) critical pedagogy reflective cycle.

Short-Term Outcomes	Medium-Term Outcomes	Long-Term Outcomes
-Increased opportunity to collaborate (Gee, 2008), dialogue, and reflect (Wink, 2011) with other administrators in the country about disproportionality and social justice issues. -Administrators increased knowledge about 10 promising principles in research to increase equity in school discipline (Gregory et al., 2017). -Administrators can explore their own positionality and power in their schools (Milner, 2007) reflect on their role and potential to disrupt disproportionate discipline outcomes (Mukuria, 2002; Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014; DeMatthews et al., 2017). -Administrators increase intention for social justice behaviors (Ajzen, 2012)	-Principal prioritization of reducing disproportionality in their schoolwide improvement plans. -Increased research-based action steps included in school improvement plans to increase equity (Ajzen, 2012; Gregory et al., 2017). -Administrators collaborating to reduce disproportionality in their schools (Gee, 2008). -Administrators increase self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) for social justice leadership. -Opportunity to investigate why inequity is happening through reflective cycle (Wink, 2011).	-Reduction in statewide discipline disproportionality (McIntosh et al., 2021). -Increase in administrators whose actions and beliefs (Skiba & Edl, 2004) align with social justice leadership (Flood, 2019).

Assumptions:	External Factors:
Administrators may need more knowledge about research-based ways to reduce disproportionality in discipline (McIntosh et al., 2021). Administrators are not aware what other administrators in the country are doing to effectively reduce disproportionate discipline. They may need opportunities to collaborate (Gee, 2008). Administrators	Political pressure to remove all discussion of race from school contexts. Administrators may not have time to complete asynchronous Nearpod modules or attend synchronous sessions. Administrators may not believe learning about disproportionality is a priority.

may not believe they can change outcomes (Bandura, 1986).	

Appendix D

Survey

Social Justice Behavior Scale (Flood, 2019)

Directions: Respond to the following to questions 1-23 using a seven-point Likert scale: Strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, neutral, somewhat disagree, disagree, and strongly disagree.

1. I pose solutions to structural injustices in education.
2. I provide students with greater access to their culture
3. I dismantle barriers that hinder the practice of social justice in my school.
4. I empower marginalized student groups through collaborative strategies.
5. I nurture socially conscientious teacher-leaders.
6. I enact a vision for my school focused on equity.
7. I prepare students to confront the challenges that face historically marginalized communities.
8. I contextualize professional development in a way that tries to make sense of race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, and disability.
9. I embed professional development in collaborative structures.
10. I engage in community advocacy work.
11. I act as a catalyst for advocacy work within my community.
12. I engage in community organizing work.
13. I utilize parent networks to strategically recruit teachers, parents, and other community leaders with social justice agendas.
14. I access community cultural wealth to benefit my school.
15. I participate in political and policy-related advocacy work on behalf of marginalized student groups.
16. I raise awareness to advance the school communities' levels of understanding about social inequities.
17. I continuously reflect to avoid making unjust decisions.
18. I engage in self-reflective, critical, and collaborative work relationships.

19. I actively work to understand my own bias so I can better counteract inequity within my school.

20. I am transparent about my practice as a school leader.

21. I consciously account for and resist my personal biases.

22. I work to develop reflective consciousness.

23. I extend cultural respect to individuals from diverse backgrounds.

Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004)

24. I feel that getting to know students individually is an important part of discipline.

25. I believe that teachers at my school are aware of school disciplinary policies.

26. Disciplinary consequences should be scaled in proportion to the severity of the problem behavior.

27. I believe students at my school are aware of school disciplinary policies.

28. Teachers ought to be able to manage the majority of students' misbehavior in their classroom.

29. My school keeps detailed records regarding student suspension and expulsion.

30. Conversations with students referred to the office are important and should be factored into most decisions about disciplinary consequences.

31. Repeat offenders should receive more severe disciplinary consequences than first-time offenders

32. Out-of-school suspension is used at this school only as a last resort.

33. Disciplinary policies are strictly enforced in my school.

34. I believe that putting in place prevention programs can reduce the need for suspension and expulsion.

35. Schools cannot afford to tolerate students who disrupt the learning environment.

36. Schools must take some responsibility for teaching students how to get along and behave appropriately in school.

37. In-school suspension is a viable alternative disciplinary practice to suspension and expulsion.

38. I feel it is critical to work with parents before suspending a student from school.

39. The primary purpose of discipline is to teach appropriate skills to the disciplined student.

40. Disciplining disruptive students is time consuming and interferes with other important functions in the school.

41. Out-of-school suspension is a necessary tool for maintaining school order.

42. Students should receive recognition or reward for appropriate behavior.

43. Suspensions and expulsions hurt students by removing them from academic learning time.

44. The primary responsibility for teaching students how to behave appropriately in school belongs to the parents.

45. Certain students are not gaining anything from school and disrupt the learning environment for others. In such a case, the use of suspension and expulsion is justified to preserve the learning environment for students who wish to learn.

46. I have noticed that time spent in developing and implementing prevention programs pays off in terms of decreased disruption and disciplinary incidents.

47. I need additional resources to increase my school's capacity to reduce and prevent troublesome behaviors.

48. Students with disabilities who engage in disruptive behavior need a different approach to discipline than students in general education.

49. There is really nothing a school can do if students are not willing to take responsibility for their behavior.

50. Disadvantaged students require a different approach to discipline than other students.

51. Most, if not all, discipline problems come from inadequacies in the student's home situation.

52. Suspension and expulsion do not really solve discipline problems.

53. Suspension makes students less likely to misbehave in the future.

54. Zero tolerance increases the number of students being suspended or expelled.

55. Regardless of the severity of a student's behavior, my objective as a principal is to keep all students in school.

56. Students who are suspended or expelled are only getting more time on the streets that will enable them to get in more trouble.

57. The majority of this school's discipline problems could be solved if we could only remove the most persistent troublemakers.

58. It is sad but true that, in order to meet increasingly high standards of academic accountability, some students will probably have to be removed from school.

59. Students from different ethnic backgrounds have different emotional and behavioral needs.

60. Zero tolerance sends a clear message to disruptive students about appropriate behaviors in school.

61. Prevention programs would be a useful addition at our school, but there is simply not enough time in the day.

62. I believe suspension and expulsion allow students time away from school that encourages them to think about their behavior.

63. Disciplinary regulations for students with disabilities create a separate system of discipline that makes it more difficult to enforce discipline at this school.

64. Teachers at this school were for the most part adequately trained by their teacher-training program to handle problems of misbehavior and discipline.

65. Students with disabilities account for a disproportionate amount of the time spent on discipline at this school.

66. Although it would be nice to get to know students on an individual basis, especially those who need help, my duties as an administrator simply don't allow me the time.

67. Zero tolerance makes a significant contribution to maintaining order at my school.

68. I believe suspension is unnecessary if we provide a positive school climate and challenging instruction.

69. Regardless of whether it is effective, suspension is virtually our only option in disciplining disruptive students.

70. A student's academic record should be taken into account in assigning disciplinary consequences.

71. Violence is getting worse in my school.

72. Suspension and expulsion are unfair to minority students.

Demographic Questions

73. Which best describes your current role? (Principal, Assistant Principal or Vice Principal, Dean, District Leader, Other).

74. Please select the grade levels you currently supervise. (Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, First Grade, Second Grade, Third Grade, Fourth Grade, Fifth Grade, Sixth Grade, Seventh Grade, Eighth Grade, Nineth Grade, Tenth Grade, Eleventh Grade, Twelfth Grade, None of the Above).

75. What is your age? (18-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+).

76. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin? (Yes, No, I prefer not to comment).

77. What would best describe you? (Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Asian or Asian American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, Multiracial, White, Other, I prefer not to comment).

78. What would best describe you? (Non-binary, Male, Female, I prefer not to comment).

79. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? (If you are currently enrolled in school, please indicate the highest degree you have received). (Bachelor's degree (e.g., B.A. or B.S.), Master's degree (e.g., M.A., M.S., M.Ed.), Professional or Specialist's Degree (e.g., Ed.S.), Doctorate (e.g., Ph.D., Ed.D.), I prefer not to comment.

80. In what state or U.S. territory do you currently work? (All U.S. states, territories, and District of Columbia listed as options).

81. How many years have you been in your current role? (0-5 Years, 6-10 Years, 11-15 Years, 16-20 Years, 21-25 Years, 25+ Years, I prefer not to comment).

82. Which one best describes your school? (Urban or Major City, Rural, Suburban).

83. Which one best represents your school enrollment? (Less than 500, 501-1000, 1001-1500, 1501-2000, 2001-2500, 2501-3000, 3001-3500, 3501-4000, 4001-4500, 4501-5000, 5001+, Not Applicable).

84. How many years of teaching experience do you have? (None, 0-5 Years, 6-10 Years, 11-15 Years, 16-20 Years, 21-25 Years, 25-30 Years, 31+ Years, I prefer Not to comment).

85. Which one best describes your prior experience learning about social justice? (Almost no experience, Some experience or training, Extensive experience or training, I prefer not to comment).

86. How would you define social justice leadership? (Open-Ended).

87. Would you consider yourself a social justice leader. (Yes, No, I prefer not to comment).

88. I intend to develop my social justice leadership skills. (Strongly agree, Agree, Somewhat agree, Neutral, Somewhat disagree, Disagree, Strongly disagree).

89. Please provide a four- to six-digit non-consecutive (e.g., 1,2,3,4) and non-repeating (e.g., 4444) number unique to you. You will enter the same number when you complete surveys throughout the course. This number will serve to keep your responses anonymous but allow the researcher to track changes in pre- and post-survey measures.

Appendix E

Participant Satisfaction Questionnaire

1. What is the date?
2. What is your unique four- to six-digit number?
3. What did you like about this Nearpod module/Zoom session?
4. What parts of the Nearpod module/Zoom session could be improved? In what ways?
5. What are some ideas or action steps you thought of during this Nearpod module/Zoom session that you intend to implement in your context?
6. How confident are you that you will be able to implement the ideas or action steps within the next year?
    a. Not confident
    b. Somewhat confident
    c. Mostly confident
    d. Completely confident

Nearpod 1 and Nearpod 8 will ask this additional optional question to determine if there is a decrease in disproportionate discipline at the end of the 8-month Social Justice Leadership course.

7. (Optional) Does your school's discipline data indicate disproportionate discipline for any group of students?

If so, what current data can you share as an example of disproportionality (e.g., Latino/Hispanic students are twice as likely to receive in-school suspension compared with White students, Black male students are 30% of the student population, but make up 60% of the discipline referrals)?

Appendix F

Project Design Evaluation

Question: In what ways is the intervention design informed by research and/or best practices?

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
Nearpod 1: Reflect on Identity			
The purpose of the introductory slide is to share my personal journey to give participants some insight into the person who created this course.	Social justice leadership as praxis, which includes both reflection and action (Furman, 2012) Four themes in adult learning theories include prior experience, reflection, dialogue, and supportive context (Rohlwing & Spelman, 2014).	By sharing my personal journey with social justice leadership, I want to send the message that however much we know, we can still benefit from ongoing reflection and dialogue. Social justice leaders should be continually examining their beliefs and actions to ensure they are living their values.	Leaders who already consider themselves social justice leaders and those who do not should be able to find new understanding by these reflection activities and dialogue with other district and school leaders.
Social Justice Behavior Scale (SJBS), Disciplinary Practices Survey, and Demographic Questions in Survey Monkey.	Based on one exploratory study, the SJBS is a reliable measure of three components of social justice leadership: school specific, community-minded, and self-focused (Flood, 2019). This instrument may also serve as an equity audit tool to inform professional learning needs. The Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) was designed to measure principals' perspectives, which research suggests influences discipline outcomes (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Mukuria, 2002).	The SJBS and Disciplinary Practices Survey will be used as a pre-test, post-test to evaluate the effects of the intervention.	The Initial SJBS and Disciplinary Practices Survey will be used as a pretest before participants complete the intervention. My hypothesis is the results of the SJBS pretest will likely demonstrate participants engage in a higher number of social justice behaviors after completing the intervention. Furthermore, my hypothesis is that principal perspectives about discipline may change after the intervention.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
Diversity Wheel and Circle of Privilege Reflection & Introduction	Researchers should understand race, culture & positionality (Milner, 2007).	To begin to understand and appreciate differences and different experiences, participants should explore their own identity and how it may impact their experiences.	Participants will reflect on how they would describe their identity and how their identity and others' identity might impact experiences, such as opportunity and privilege.
Why Identity Matters Website Exploration	The K–12 school principal has a role fostering social justice behaviors for teachers (Kose, 2009). This may include asking teachers to reflect on multiculturalism and examine their own racial identity. Therefore, principal leadership for social justice should include their own ongoing self-examination prior to supporting teachers.	To help their teachers understand and appreciate different identities, principals must begin by reflecting on their own identity and experiences. This will likely lead to a better understanding and value for other perspectives and experiences. This activity will also support the principal's ability to facilitate the same process with their teachers and staff.	Participants will explore a website that includes videos and text related to why identity matters. Their exploration and reflection will prepare them to share an important idea they gathered from this reflection with other participants on the collaborative board.
Participants will consider why identity matters to them in a collaborate board activity.	Collaboration helps people learn (Gee, 2008).	Nearpod Collaborative Board is a tool to help facilitate the sharing of ideas between district and school leaders.	By sharing why identity matters to them and reading or listening to what other leaders say, they will likely develop or connect to new ideas.
In an open-ended question, participants will consider how having a deeper understanding of factors related to their identity may help them create more equitable discipline outcomes.	Principals have different beliefs, values, perspectives on their roles that impact discipline outcomes (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Mukuria, 2002; Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014; Welsh, 2023).	Principals' identity is likely tied to their beliefs, values, and perspectives formed from prior experiences in life. By connecting identity to discipline, participants may begin to explore their values.	By learning more about themselves and about others, principals may increase their awareness of inequities and what they can do change outcomes,

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
			specifically discipline outcomes.
Google Survey for Process and Outcome Evaluation	The process evaluation will help me determine which components of the intervention are related to outcomes (Baranowski & Stables, 2000). The process evaluation components used in this evaluation are participant responsiveness and quality of program delivery (Dusenbury et al., 2003). The outcome evaluation question is based on Ajzen's (2012) Theory of Planned Behavior, which is grounded in the notion that intention proceeds action. Therefore, these questions explore what ideas or actions the participant intends to implement and their level of confidence that they will do it within the year.	The purpose is to use this google survey at the end of each Nearpod and Zoom synchronous session to measure the process evaluation questions.	My goal is gathering process and outcome evaluation feedback throughout the 8 months using the participants' four-to-six-digit number.
Nearpod 2: Reflect on Beliefs			
Participants will read Larry Adelman's (2003) Article in the San Francisco Chronicle on Generational Wealth.	Education for social justice includes redressing & repairing historical and embedded injustices (Ayers, 2009). Transformative learning theory includes learners becoming more aware of societal injustices (Parson & Major, 2020). The power of story (Wink, 2011) or counter-storytelling (G. M. Rodriguez, 2013) can help individuals see through a different lens.	This activity gives participants the opportunity to consider how historical events impacted the author and his friends' wealth. This true story will give participants a way to reflect on one example of a systemic social injustice that has long-term effects.	Participants may open their minds to the idea that historical events, although in the past, still influence the outcomes we see today. By reflecting on how this connects with what it means to be successful in the United States of America, participants may question the common untrue narrative that everyone has an equal chance at success through hard work.
Watch a Jennifer Eberhardt video (TED, 2020) about	Results of a study on disproportionality examining 1,154,686 students' office	Jennifer Eberhardt sets out a logical and accessible argument	Participants will see the connection between unconscious

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
checking unconscious bias and consider how unconscious bias may impact discipline decisions or societal outcomes on a collaborative board.	discipline referrals pointed to subtle implicit bias contributing to discipline decision-making, instead of explicit-bias or differences in student behavior (Girvan et al., 2016).	why everyone has unconscious or implicit bias. If district or school leaders recognize that this may be a contributing factor of disproportionality, they may be more open to implementing strategies to counteract implicit bias.	or implicit bias and a myriad of outcomes including discipline decisions. With the collaborative activity (Gee, 2008) and sharing ideas with each other, they may identify more ways implicit bias affects us beyond discipline outcomes.
After watching a video which includes many descriptions of social justice, participants will reflect on how social justice relates to their beliefs and actions as a district or school leader.	Social justice leadership involves praxis, which unites both reflection and action (Furman, 2012). School leaders commit to ongoing self-development and transformation by engaging in critical reflection. Critical reflection gives school leaders the opportunity to examine their bias, values, and assumptions to determine the impact on their practice.	This activity provides district and school leaders with an opportunity to reflect on their beliefs about social justice and how they impact their actions. This connects with the idea of praxis, as described by Furman (2012). Additionally, by sharing their responses on a collaborate board, they will be able to learn from other participants (Gee, 2008).	Participants will be able to share their thoughts on how their beliefs influence their actions. By recording their verbal or written response, they may gain greater clarity on what they believe and how their beliefs connect to their actions.
While considering their response on the collaborate board, participants will have a linked video of Simon Sinek describing a leader's vision. Participants will have an opportunity to describe their vision for social justice in their community.	One question in the Social Justice Behavior Scale (Flood, 2019) asks whether the participant enacts a vision for their school focused on equity (Flood, 2019). Leaders need to communicate a clear vision (Cogliser & Brigham, 2004).	Vision is needed to set the course for intentions and action steps. Therefore, social justice leaders should articulate a vision for social justice within their own communities before identifying the steps needed to fulfill the vision.	Participants will write down or record their thoughts about their social justice vision. This will help them articulate what they want to see happen in their communities. The more they can solidify their vision, the more likely they will be to share it with others and develop steps to fulfill it.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
Google Survey for Process and Outcome Evaluation	The process evaluation will help me determine which components of the intervention are related to outcomes (Baranowski & Stables, 2000). The process evaluation components used in this evaluation are participant responsiveness and quality of program delivery (Dusenbury et al., 2003). The outcome evaluation question is based on Ajzen's (2012) Theory of Planned Behavior, which is grounded in the notion that intention proceeds action. Therefore, these questions explore what ideas or actions the participant intends to implement and their level of confidence that they will do it within the year.	The purpose is to use this google survey at the end of each Nearpod and Zoom synchronous session to measure the process evaluation questions.	My goal is gathering process and outcome evaluation feedback throughout the 8 months using the participants' four-to-six-digit number.
Zoom Synchronous Session 1			
Introduce Wink's (2011) Reflective Cycle to think about our experiences and what we are learning. **Reflection #1** Identity Reflection: Take a few minutes to think about an experience or new insight related to your identity. (Participants will be given 10 minutes to write and reflect individually). Breakout Rooms (3 per room). Let each person go through the reflective cycle sharing their experiences. Ask each other open-ended questions. (e.g., What	Wink's (2011) Critical Pedagogy is to name, reflect, and to act. First, focus on something specific, then describe it, analyze the experience, interpret, or judge it's meaning, and finally create a plan of action.	Using Wink's (2011) reflective cycle for each Zoom synchronous session allows us to have meaningful conversations and learn the skills of engaging in Critical Pedagogy.	By learning and practicing this process throughout the 8 months, participants will likely be able to lead their staff through the same process.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
does this experience mean to you? What did it reveal about you? How did it affect you?) Return to the main room to share out and discuss for the purpose of building knowledge, perspective, understanding, and empathy about ourselves and others.			
Reflection #2 Bias Reflection: Take a few minutes to think about a new insight about bias or an experience with bias either with yourself or someone you know. (Participants will be given 10 minutes to write and reflect individually). Breakout Rooms (3 per room). Let each person go through the reflective cycle sharing their experiences. Ask each other open-ended questions. (e.g., What does this experience mean to you? What did it reveal about you? How did it affect you?) Return to the main room to share out and discuss for the purpose of building knowledge, perspective,	Wink's (2011) Critical Pedagogy is to name, reflect, and to act. First, focus on something specific, then describe it, analyze the experience, interpret, or judge it's meaning, and finally create a plan of action.	Using Wink's (2011) reflective cycle for each Zoom synchronous session allows us to have meaningful conversations and learn the skills of engaging in Critical Pedagogy.	By learning and practicing this process throughout the 8 months, participants will likely be able to lead their staff through the same process.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
understanding, and empathy about ourselves and others. Closing- introduce next two Nearpods focused on data and policies.			
Google Survey for Process and Outcome Evaluation	The process evaluation will help me determine which components of the intervention are related to outcomes (Baranowski & Stables, 2000). The process evaluation components used in this evaluation are participant responsiveness and quality of program delivery (Dusenbury et al., 2003). The outcome evaluation question is based on Ajzen's (2012) Theory of Planned Behavior, which is grounded in the notion that intention proceeds action. Therefore, these questions explore what ideas or actions the participant intends to implement and their level of confidence that they will do it within the year.	The purpose is to use this google survey at the end of each Nearpod and Zoom synchronous session to measure the process evaluation questions.	My goal is gathering process and outcome evaluation feedback throughout the 8 months using the participants' four-to-six-digit number.
Nearpod 3: Reflect on Data			
The Wisconsin Risk-Ratio-Calculator (Poulos, 2013) is one tool to help district and school leaders disaggregate their data using risk ratio. Participants can use this or another tool of their choice to complete the data analysis.	Risk ratio is a primary measure of disproportionality (Girvan et al., 2019). Exclusionary consequences have been identified as damaging to students' academic and social outcomes (Tobin & Vincent, 2011). This tool was chosen as an example because it includes both discipline and academic outcomes.	This activity using the Wisconsin Risk-Ratio-Calculator, or any tool of their choice, will allow district and school leaders to examine their own data to determine the extent of disproportionality in discipline and academic outcomes.	District and school leaders will likely see in their data outcomes that disproportional negative outcomes are evident for groups who are culturally and linguistically diverse. Whatever the outcomes are, there is power in seeing the data for themselves.
Participants will be asked to consider	McIntosh et al. (2018) suggested using a data	This activity gives participants an	The participants will consider whether

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
their current data analysis processes, while paying particular attention to exploring disaggregated data. They will be provided with a resource example using the Wisconsin Risk-Ratio-Calculator. Participants will share what is working and any new process they plan to implement on a collaborate board.	analysis problem-solving process to reduce discipline disparities. Gregory et al., (2017) include Data-Based Inquiry for Equity as a promising practice in their Framework for Increasing Equity in School Discipline. People learn through collaboration (Gee, 2008).	opportunity to reflect on their own data analysis process and share what is working and any ideas that could enhance what they currently have in place.	they are already analyzing disaggregated data and problem solving. They may have current processes in place that should be acknowledged, or they may want to develop new processes. Sharing ideas on the collaborate board will allow them to get some new perspectives and creative ideas from other participants.
Google Survey for Process and Outcome Evaluation	The process evaluation will help me determine which components of the intervention are related to outcomes (Baranowski & Stables, 2000). The process evaluation components used in this evaluation are participant responsiveness and quality of program delivery (Dusenbury et al., 2003). The outcome evaluation question is based on Ajzen's (2012) Theory of Planned Behavior, which is grounded in the notion that intention proceeds action. Therefore, these questions explore what ideas or actions the participant intends to implement and their level of confidence that they will do it within the year.	The purpose is to use this google survey at the end of each Nearpod and Zoom synchronous session to measure the process evaluation questions.	My goal is gathering process and outcome evaluation feedback throughout the 8 months using the participants' four-to-six-digit number.
Nearpod 4: Reflect on Policies			
Reflect on a Ted Talk video in which a former teacher shares a story about a student.	Wink (2011) refers to the power of storytelling and reminds us that we need empathy to better understand the experiences of culturally and linguistically diverse individuals.	The purpose of this activity to help participants connect policy implications with actual students and consider some of the ways policy can	After watching the video, participants will have an opportunity to share their own story of a student they may have encountered

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
		have negative consequences that run counter to our goals of educating students.	throughout their career. The process of reflecting on this student's experience may help build empathy and help leaders see policy through a new lens.
Participants will read and reflect on an article summarizing discipline policy changes in Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). They will consider their own district or school discipline policies and share one policy they would like to change to produce more equitable outcomes. They will also share how they would influence this change.	Policies, such as zero-tolerance, have increased the use of exclusionary discipline (Skiba, 2014). However, policies can also be used to affect positive change, such as the example of LAUSD removing the option of suspending for willful defiance without district permission (Hashim, et al., 2018).	This activity will allow participants to reflect on a case study of one district and how they have attempted to set policy to reduce suspension and disproportionate discipline outcomes.	After reflecting on the case study, participants will have the opportunity to reflect on their own policies and ways they may influence change to produce more equitable outcomes.
Participants will reflect on a Code of Conduct example from Syracuse City Schools that offers many options for restorative and instructive responses to behavior, instead of punitive, exclusionary.	Black students are disproportionately disciplined using exclusionary practices (Marcucci, 2020). These consequences are detrimental to student's academic and social success (Tobin & Vincent, 2011). Other policies, often outline in Codes of Conduct, are zero tolerance, which have led to increased racial disproportionality (Skiba, 2014).	By comparing their own district or school Code of Conduct to this example, participants will likely see options that include keeping students in the learning environment instead of punitive, exclusionary discipline.	Participants may be inspired to revise their own Code of Conduct or discipline policies after reviewing the example from Syracuse City Schools.
Google Survey for Process and Outcome Evaluation	The process evaluation will help me determine which components of the intervention are related to outcomes (Baranowski & Stables, 2000). The process evaluation components used in this evaluation are	The purpose is to use this google survey at the end of each Nearpod and Zoom synchronous session to measure the process evaluation questions.	My goal is gathering process and outcome evaluation feedback throughout the 8 months using the participants' four-to-six-digit number.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
	participant responsiveness and quality of program delivery (Dusenbury et al., 2003). The outcome evaluation question is based on Ajzen's (2012) Theory of Planned Behavior, which is grounded in the notion that intention proceeds action. Therefore, these questions explore what ideas or actions the participant intends to implement and their level of confidence that they will do it within the year.		
Zoom Synchronous Session 2			
Review Wink's (2011) Reflective Cycle to think about our experiences and what we are learning. **Reflection #1** Data Reflection: Take a few minutes to consider what you had discovered by analyzing your data. (Participants will be given 10 minutes to write and reflect individually). Breakout Rooms (3 per room). Let each person go through the reflective cycle sharing their experiences. Ask each other open-ended questions. (e.g., What does this experience mean to you? What did it reveal about you? How did it affect you?) Return to the main room to share out and	Wink's (2011) Critical Pedagogy is to name, reflect, and to act. First, focus on something specific, then describe it, analyze the experience, interpret, or judge it's meaning, and finally create a plan of action.	Using Wink's (2011) reflective cycle for each Zoom synchronous session allows us to have meaningful conversations and learn the skills of engaging in Critical Pedagogy.	By learning and practicing this process throughout the 8 months, participants will likely be able to lead their staff through the same process.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
discuss for the purpose of building knowledge, perspective, understanding, and empathy about ourselves and others.			
Reflection #2 Policy Reflection: Take a few minutes to think about a new insight or experience about policies. (Participants will be given 10 minutes to write and reflect individually). Breakout Rooms (3 per room). Let each person go through the reflective cycle sharing their experiences. Ask each other open-ended questions. (e.g., What does this experience mean to you? What did it reveal about you? How did it affect you?) Return to the main room to share out and discuss for the purpose of building knowledge, perspective, understanding, and empathy about ourselves and others. Closing- introduce next two Nearpods focused on Student Voice and introducing five prevention policies identified in	Wink's (2011) Critical Pedagogy is to name, reflect, and to act. First, focus on something specific, then describe it, analyze the experience, interpret, or judge it's meaning, and finally create a plan of action.	Using Wink's (2011) reflective cycle for each Zoom synchronous session allows us to have meaningful conversations and learn the skills of engaging in Critical Pedagogy.	By learning and practicing this process throughout the 8 months, participants will likely be able to lead their staff through the same process.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
the framework for increasing equity in school discipline (Gregory et al., 2017).			
Google Survey for Process and Outcome Evaluation	The process evaluation will help me determine which components of the intervention are related to outcomes (Baranowski & Stables, 2000). The process evaluation components used in this evaluation are participant responsiveness and quality of program delivery (Dusenbury et al., 2003). The outcome evaluation question is based on Ajzen's (2012) Theory of Planned Behavior, which is grounded in the notion that intention proceeds action. Therefore, these questions explore what ideas or actions the participant intends to implement and their level of confidence that they will do it within the year.	The purpose is to use this google survey at the end of each Nearpod and Zoom synchronous session to measure the process evaluation questions.	My goal is gathering process and outcome evaluation feedback throughout the 8 months using the participants' four-to-six-digit number.
Nearpod 5: Reflect on Student Voice			
Watch two videos featuring students sharing their perspectives on talking about race and experiencing racism in school. Participants will be able to reflect on what stood out to them in the videos, self-evaluate how often they seek student voice, generate questions they would like to ask their students, and consider a process for listening to student perspectives weekly.	Mansfield (2014) demonstrated the value of student voice in her 2 years of ethnographic research. She argues for seeking student voice to strengthen learning spaces and to guide leadership decisions.	District or school social justice leaders need to be actively listening to student voice to inform their policies and practices. This module will allow district and school leaders to listen and reflect on developing processes to regularly listen to student voice.	After listening to student voice and completing the supporting activities, they will likely increase their intention to seek out diverse student perspectives. Establishing these processes can help guide their decision making.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
Google Survey for Process and Outcome Evaluation	The process evaluation will help me determine which components of the intervention are related to outcomes (Baranowski & Stables, 2000). The process evaluation components used in this evaluation are participant responsiveness and quality of program delivery (Dusenbury et al., 2003). The outcome evaluation question is based on Ajzen's (2012) Theory of Planned Behavior, which is grounded in the notion that intention proceeds action. Therefore, these questions explore what ideas or actions the participant intends to implement and their level of confidence that they will do it within the year.	The purpose is to use this google survey at the end of each Nearpod and Zoom synchronous session to measure the process evaluation questions.	My goal is gathering process and outcome evaluation feedback throughout the 8 months using the participants' four-to-six-digit number.
Nearpod 6: Reflect on Evidence-based Practices (Part A)			
Introduce the first five prevention practices within the framework for increasing equity in school discipline (FIESD).	The FIESD was created to share promising, research-based practices. It is not yet known what combination of these promising practices needs to be implemented, but they are intentionally broad and cover multiple levels of the school ecosystem. (Gregory et al., 2017).	After guiding district and school leaders through the first five prevention practices, now they will have another opportunity to consider solutions to equity problems identified in their data (Nearpod 3). This FIESD framework can provide succinct ideas for busy administrators to help them begin considering their next steps.	After learning about the 10 practices in FIESD, district and school leaders will identify their next steps in Nearpod eight.
Matching activity with first five prevention practices	Brown et al. (2014) applied learning science with strategies for learning; one example is to practice retrieval.	This activity gives participants an opportunity to practice matching the words to the prevention strategy using an interactive tool.	This tool indicates whether the participants matched the evidence-based strategy to the correlating definition.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
Culturally Conscious Approach	Gregory et al. (2017) indicates that all 10 of the promising practices in the framework for increasing equity in school discipline must be implemented with a culturally conscious approach.	This slide outlines what Gregory et al. (2017) means when they use the term culturally conscious approach.	Participants will learn that it's not enough to implement these 10 evidence-based practices, they need to also attend to culturally conscious implementation to have a positive effect on equity.
1. Supportive Relationships Participants will consider and respond to **one** of the following prompts using a verbal or written response. • What is one way you have created an environment where supportive relationships are prioritized in your district or school? • How can you build on your existing work to ensure all your district/school students experience supportive relationships?	Students who feel supported through positive relationships tend to have less disciplinary incidents and are more academically engaged (Gregory et al., 2017; Anyon et al., 2018) Studies have shown culturally, and linguistically diverse students are less likely to feel a sense of school belonging compared to White students (Mello et al., 2012; Bottiani et al., 2017)	Participants will be able to select one of the prompts to reflect on how they have created an environment characterized by supportive relationships, or how they can build on their existing work.	Participants will have the option of watching a short Rita Pearson video for inspiration. The reflection may lead them to determine whether supportive relationships need to be nurtured in their context.
2. Bias-Aware Classrooms & Respectful School Environments Participants will have an opportunity to share on a collaborative board how they view their role as a district or school leader in	• Race is a social construct; its meaning varies by context (Jackson, 2014) • Implicit racial bias refers to unconscious negative associations connected with racial stereotypes (Gregory et al., 2017) • Acknowledge and examine bias (Carter et al., 2017) as individuals	Participants will have an opportunity to reflect on their role as a leader in creating a bias-aware and respectful classroom environment.	Participants may see a need to ensure their staff have ongoing support to create bias-aware classrooms. District and school leader may realize an opportunity to improve their students' experience.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
creating bias-aware classrooms.	and together as a school community. • Recognize, confront, and counteract the ways our societal narratives about different races can influence adult and student behaviors, interactions, and decisions.		
3. Academic Rigor Using a resource, Examples of Engaging Instruction to Increase Equity in Education (Chaparro et al., 2015), participants will respond to **one** of the following prompts using a verbal or written response. • What is one way you have ensured all students engage in interactive and rigorous high-level learning opportunities for all students? • How can you build on your existing work by ensuring staff has the time to reflect critically and develop responses to identified academic barriers?	• Student potential is promoted through interactive and rigorous high level learning opportunities and expectations (Gregory et al., 2016). • Implemented by culturally conscious adults.	Participants will be able to select one of the prompts to reflect on how they have ensured students experience academic rigor or how they can expand on existing work.	Participants may see a need to ensure their staff are supported in creating academic rigor and removing barriers to improve their students' experience.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome

4. Culturally Relevant & Responsive Teaching
 	
Participants will consider if they have reflected on their own culture, class, and social membership. They will also consider how these identities may interact with their students and affect their response to student behaviors.
	• Culture is not one thing; it is all that we take for granted and all that matters most to u’"' (Gutiérrez, 2002).
	• 5 Domains of Culturally Responsive Practices (Bradshaw et al., 2018)
	  o Connection to the curriculum
	  o Authentic relationships
	  o Reflective thinking
	  o Effective communication
	  o Sensitivity to student’' culture
	• A culture-centered perspective will protect us from imposing our own views of cultural “rightness” on others (Pedersen, 2000).
		Participants will have the opportunity to consider what a school might look like if they have implemented culturally relevant and responsive teaching.
		
		Participants will also have a chance to reflect on their own identity and how it may affect how they respond to student behaviors.
			Participants may find potential action steps they want to do to move their district or school toward more equitable outcomes for students.

5. Opportunities for Learning and Correcting Behavior o Participants will complete a poll asking them to reflect on whether their discipline policies offer opportunities for learning and correcting behavior or whether they typically focus on punitive, exclusionary consequences.	Exclusionary and punitive discipline removes students from the learning environment (Bradshaw et al., 2018) Some examples of alternatives: o Restorative Practices (Winn, 2016; Gregory et al., 2016) o Inclusive Skill-building Learning Approach (Nese et al., 2020) o Collaborative and Proactive Solutions (Dr. Ross Greene) o Conscious Discipline (Dr. Becky Bailey)	Participants will consider whether their current policies and practices allow opportunities for learning and correcting behavior.	Participants may find potential action steps they want to implement in order to move their district or school toward more equitable outcomes for students.
Overlapping practices collaborative board. Considering these first five prevention	Elaboration can help us make new meaning by connecting material to what we already know and	Participants can think about how these practices can overlap, which can lead to a deeper understanding.	Participants may realize these five-prevention evidence-based practices are not stand-alone

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
practices, do you see any places of overlap or connection between these practices? Please elaborate on the connections you observe.	expressing ideas in our own words (Brown et al., 2014).		practices, but have places of intersection, which together may create conditions for equity.
Google Survey for Process and Outcome Evaluation	The process evaluation will help me determine which components of the intervention are related to outcomes (Baranowski & Stables, 2000). The process evaluation components used in this evaluation are participant responsiveness and quality of program delivery (Dusenbury et al., 2003). The outcome evaluation question is based on Ajzen's (2012) Theory of Planned Behavior, which is grounded in the notion that intention proceeds action. Therefore, these questions explore what ideas or actions the participant intends to implement and their level of confidence that they will do it within the year.	The purpose is to use this google survey at the end of each Nearpod and Zoom synchronous session to measure the process evaluation questions.	My goal is gathering process and outcome evaluation feedback throughout the 8 months using the participants' four-to-six-digit number.
Zoom Synchronous Session 3			
Review Wink's (2011) Reflective Cycle to think about our experiences and what we are learning. **Reflection #1** Student Voice Reflection: Take a few minutes to consider how listening to student voice may change your perspective. (Participants will be given 10 minutes to	Wink's (2011) Critical Pedagogy is to name, reflect, and to act. First, focus on something specific, then describe it, analyze the experience, interpret, or judge it's meaning, and finally create a plan of action.	Using Wink's (2011) reflective cycle for each Zoom synchronous session allows us to have meaningful conversations and learn the skills of engaging in Critical Pedagogy.	By learning and practicing this process throughout the 8 months, participants will likely be able to lead their staff through the same process.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
write and reflect individually). Breakout Rooms (3 per room). Let each person go through the reflective cycle sharing their experiences. Ask each other open-ended questions. (e.g., What does this experience mean to you? What did it reveal about you? How did it affect you?) Return to the main room to share out and discuss for the purpose of building knowledge, perspective, understanding, and empathy about ourselves and others.			
Reflection #2 Prevention Practices Reflection: Take a few minutes to think about how the five prevention practices overlap based on your own experiences. (Participants will be given 10 minutes to write and reflect individually). Breakout Rooms (3 per room). Let each person go through the reflective cycle sharing their experiences. Ask each other open-ended questions. (e.g., What does this experience	Wink's (2011) Critical Pedagogy is to name, reflect, and to act. First, focus on something specific, then describe it, analyze the experience, interpret, or judge it's meaning, and finally create a plan of action.	Using Wink's (2011) reflective cycle for each Zoom synchronous session allows us to have meaningful conversations and learn the skills of engaging in Critical Pedagogy.	By learning and practicing this process throughout the 8 months, participants will likely be able to lead their staff through the same process.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
mean to you? What did it reveal about you? How did it affect you?) Return to the main room to share out and discuss for the purpose of building knowledge, perspective, understanding, and empathy about ourselves and others. Closing- introduce next two Nearpods focused on Student Voice and introducing five prevention policies identified in the framework for increasing equity in school discipline (Gregory et al., 2017).			
Google Survey for Process and Outcome Evaluation	The process evaluation will help me determine which components of the intervention are related to outcomes (Baranowski & Stables, 2000). The process evaluation components used in this evaluation are participant responsiveness and quality of program delivery (Dusenbury et al., 2003). The outcome evaluation question is based on Ajzen's (2012) Theory of Planned Behavior, which is grounded in the notion that intention proceeds action. Therefore, these questions explore what ideas or actions the participant intends to implement and their level of confidence that they will do it within the year.	The purpose is to use this google survey at the end of each Nearpod and Zoom synchronous session to measure the process evaluation questions.	My goal is gathering process and outcome evaluation feedback throughout the 8 months using the participants' four-to-six-digit number.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
Nearpod 7: Reflect on Evidence-based Practices (Part B)			
Introduce the five intervention practices within the framework for increasing equity in school discipline (FIESD).	The FIESD was created to share promising, research-based practices. It is not yet known what combination of these promising practices needs to be implemented, but they are intentionally broad and cover multiple levels of the school ecosystem (Gregory et al., 2017).	After guiding district and school leaders through the first five prevention practices, now they will have another opportunity to consider solutions to equity problems identified in their data (Nearpod 3). This FIESD framework can provide succinct ideas for busy administrators to help them begin considering their next steps.	After learning about the 10 practices in FIESD, district and school leaders will identify their next steps in Nearpod eight.
Matching activity with five intervention practices	Brown et al. (2014) applied learning science with strategies for learning; one example is to practice retrieval.	This activity gives participants an opportunity to practice matching the words to the intervention strategy using an interactive tool.	This tool indicates whether the participants matched the evidence-based strategy to the correlating definition.
Review Culturally Conscious Approach	Gregory et al. (2017) indicates that all 10 of the promising practices in the framework for increasing equity in school discipline must be implemented with a culturally conscious approach.	This slide outlines what Gregory et al. (2017) means when they use the term culturally conscious approach.	Participants will learn that it's not enough to implement these 10 evidence-based practices, they need to also attend to culturally conscious implementation to have a positive effect on equity.
6. Data-based Inquiry for Equity Consider current district/school data analysis processes including collecting, analyzing, and sharing disaggregated data to inform action steps for continual improvement.	• Gregory et al., (2017) Processes to collect, analyze, and share disaggregated discipline data for continual improvement. a. Recognize the reality. b. Increase transparency & accountability.	In Nearpod 3, participants had the opportunity to conduct data analysis using disaggregated data. Now they will reflect on whether they have sufficient data analysis processes in place to continue the work.	Participants may realize that data-based inquiry for equity may need to be implemented in their context as one component to increase equitable outcomes.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
	c. Change current systems.		
7. Problem Solving Approaches to Discipline Participants will learn about the Team-Initiated Problem-Solving (TIPS) process as one example. They will reflect on whether this process is similar or different than what they have in place currently.	○ School community members collaborate to determine who contributed to an incident and develop a plan together (Gregory et al., 2017). ○ Collaborative problem-solving processes should include: ○ objective data to guide decision-making ○ the voices of historically marginalized students and their family or caretakers. ○ a focus on repairing harm and addressing needs, not punishment.	Participants will learn about problem solving processes, like the example of TIPS.	Participants may realize if they don't currently use a problem-solving process for discipline, this may need to be implemented in their context as one component to increase equitable outcomes.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome

8. Inclusion of Student and Family Voice on Conflicts', Causes, and Solutions
 	
Participants will reflect on meaningful ways they can include students and families in their discipline processes.
	○ Bridge the gap between school and home with positive feedback (Payno-Simmons, 2021)
	  ○ Create structures to center parent and student voice
	  ○ Build relationships
	○ Change power structures (Friend & Caruthers, 2015)
	○ Build trust (Gregory et al., 2017)
	○ Move schools to become more inclusive environments through participatory decision-making (Friend & Caruthers, 2015).
		Participant will have the opportunity to reflect on whether student and family voice can be part of their discipline processes.	Participants may realize they need to build meaningful ways to include student and family voice in their discipline processes as one component to increase equitable outcomes.

9. Reintegration of Students after Conflict or Absence. Participants will reflect on whether they currently have a process to reintegrate students after conflict or absence.	○ Students need a feeling of connection with their schools (Allen et al., 2016). ○ Create a process to re-establish this connection when students have been away for a period of time (Gregory et al., 2016). • Example- Oakland Unified District provides a restorative justice circle to welcome students back and offer support (Jain et al., 2014).	Participants will have the opportunity to reflect on whether there is a current process to reintegrate students after conflict or absence.	Participants may realize they need processes for reintegration of students after conflict or absence as one component to increase equitable outcomes.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
10. Multitiered System of Supports (MTSS)_ Participants will be able to review a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) Culturally Responsive Field Guide which provides strategies for embedding cultural consciousness in PBIS or MTSS. Participants will consider if their district or school currently supports MTSS or PBIS?	o MTSS is a systematic way to provide prevention and intervention services organized within a tiered framework (Gregory et al., 2017). o Although MTSS alone does not reduce discipline disparities, recent research indicates promising results by embedding a culturally responsive focus (McIntosh et al., 2018).	Participants will consider if they have a multitiered system of support in place.	Participants may realize they want to implement MTSS as one foundational component to increase equitable outcomes.
Google Survey for Process and Outcome Evaluation	The process evaluation will help me determine which components of the intervention are related to outcomes (Baranowski & Stables, 2000). The process evaluation components used in this evaluation are participant responsiveness and quality of program delivery (Dusenbury et al., 2003). The outcome evaluation question is based on Ajzen's (2012) Theory of Planned Behavior, which is grounded in the notion that intention proceeds action. Therefore, these questions explore what ideas or actions the participant intends to implement and their level of confidence that they will do it within the year.	The purpose is to use this google survey at the end of each Nearpod and Zoom synchronous session to measure the process evaluation questions.	My goal is gathering process and outcome evaluation feedback throughout the 8 months using the participants' four-to-six-digit number.
Nearpod 8: Action Planning			
Participants will identify one to three priorities and five	Wink's (2011) Critical Pedagogy includes action planning.	This section gives participants an opportunity to	Participants will create a plan to bring to Zoom Session four

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
bold action steps. They will also identify strengths or resources, and possible barriers.		consider what they want to cultivate in their districts and schools.	where they will reflect and dialogue with other leaders.
Participants will reflect on their response from the first module about their identity. They will consider what they have learned about themselves and their identity. They will also share how this has impacted their discipline decisions and how they lead.	Principals have different beliefs, values, perspectives on their roles that impact discipline outcomes (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Mukuria, 2002; Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014; Welsh, 2023).	This will be used as a qualitative outcome measure to determine if participants self-report a change in their discipline decisions and how they lead.	Participants will self-report on the change they have experienced.
Social Justice Behavior Scale (SJBS), Disciplinary Practices Survey, and Demographic Questions in Survey Monkey.	Based on one exploratory study, the SJBS is a reliable measure of three components of social justice leadership: school specific, community-minded, and self-focused (Flood, 2019). This instrument may also serve as an equity audit tool to inform professional learning needs. The Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004) was designed to measure principals' perspectives, which research suggests influences discipline outcomes (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Mukuria, 2002).	The SJBS and Disciplinary Practices Survey will be used as a pre-test, post-test to evaluate the effects of the intervention.	The initial SJBS and Disciplinary Practices Survey will be used as a posttest before participants complete the intervention. My hypothesis is the results of the SJBS posttest will likely demonstrate participants engage in a higher number of social justice behaviors after completing the intervention. Furthermore, my hypothesis is that principal perspectives about discipline may change after the intervention.
Google Survey for Process and Outcome Evaluation	The process evaluation will help me determine which components of the intervention are related to outcomes (Baranowski & Stables, 2000). The process evaluation components used	The purpose is to use this google survey at the end of each Nearpod and Zoom synchronous session to measure the process evaluation questions.	My goal is gathering process and outcome evaluation feedback throughout the 8 months using the participants' four-to-six-digit number.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
	in this evaluation are participant responsiveness and quality of program delivery (Dusenbury et al., 2003). The outcome evaluation question is based on Ajzen's (2012) Theory of Planned Behavior, which is grounded in the notion that intention proceeds action. Therefore, these questions explore what ideas or actions the participant intends to implement and their level of confidence that they will do it within the year.		
Zoom Synchronous Session 4			
Review Wink's (2011) Reflective Cycle to think about our experiences and what we are learning. **Reflection #1** Intervention Practices Reflection: Reflect on the five intervention practices and consider a prior experience you have had with one of the practices. (Participants will be given 10 minutes to write and reflect individually). Breakout Rooms (3 per room). Let each person go through the reflective cycle sharing their experiences. Ask each other open-ended questions. (e.g., What does this experience mean to you? What did it reveal about you? How did it affect you?)	Wink's (2011) Critical Pedagogy is to name, reflect, and to act. First, focus on something specific, then describe it, analyze the experience, interpret, or judge it's meaning, and finally create a plan of action.	Using Wink's (2011) reflective cycle for each Zoom synchronous session allows us to have meaningful conversations and learn the skills of engaging in Critical Pedagogy.	By learning and practicing this process throughout the 8 months, participants will likely be able to lead their staff through the same process.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
Return to the main room to share out and discuss for the purpose of building knowledge, perspective, understanding, and empathy about ourselves and others.			
Reflection #2 Action Plan Reflection: Take a few minutes to reflect on the five bold action steps you chose in the last Nearpod. (Participants will be given 10 minutes to write and reflect individually). Breakout Rooms (3 per room). Let each person go through the reflective cycle sharing their experiences. Ask each other open-ended questions. (e.g., What does this experience mean to you? What did it reveal about you? How did it affect you?) Return to the main room to share out and discuss for the purpose of building knowledge, perspective, understanding, and empathy about ourselves and others.	Wink's (2011) Critical Pedagogy is to name, reflect, and to act. First, focus on something specific, then describe it, analyze the experience, interpret, or judge it's meaning, and finally create a plan of action.	Using Wink's (2011) reflective cycle for each Zoom synchronous session allows us to have meaningful conversations and learn the skills of engaging in Critical Pedagogy.	By learning and practicing this process throughout the 8 months, participants will likely be able to lead their staff through the same process.

Component	Literature support	Rationale	Expected outcome
Closing- introduce next two Nearpods focused on Student Voice and introducing five prevention policies identified in the framework for increasing equity in school discipline (Gregory et al., 2017).			
Google Survey for Process and Outcome Evaluation	The process evaluation will help me determine which components of the intervention are related to outcomes (Baranowski & Stables, 2000). The process evaluation components used in this evaluation are participant responsiveness and quality of program delivery (Dusenbury et al., 2003). The outcome evaluation question is based on Ajzen's (2012) Theory of Planned Behavior, which is grounded in the notion that intention proceeds action. Therefore, these questions explore what ideas or actions the participant intends to implement and their level of confidence that they will do it within the year.	The purpose is to use this google survey at the end of each Nearpod and Zoom synchronous session to measure the process evaluation questions.	My goal is gathering process and outcome evaluation feedback throughout the 8 months using the participants' four-to-six-digit number.

Appendix G

Introductory Email for Social Justice Leadership Course

Welcome!

Thank you for joining this course. The purpose is to continue to develop our social justice leadership capacity. The course begins on September 20, 2023, and will end on June 26, 2024. I have attached a guidance document with important dates and links to provide an overview of the course. Please reach out if you have any questions. I look forward to this journey together. I believe we will gain new insights from reading, reflecting on our prior experiences, listening, and engaging in meaningful dialogue with other district and school leaders.

Kindest Regards,

Amber Phillips

Appendix H

Reminder Email for Social Justice Leadership: Zoom Synchronous Session 1

Greetings,

Thank you for signing up for the Zoom Session on November 28, 2023. Please click on this Zoom link to join the meeting from a computer with camera and microphone access. Please log in at 2:55pm EST to make sure everything is working; we will begin promptly at 3:00pm EST.

We will be using Wink's (2011) Reflective Cycle depicted below to reflect and dialogue around the following topics.

1. Identity: reflect on an experience or new insight related to your identity.
2. Bias: reflect on an experience (either yours or someone you know) or a new insight about bias.

We will start each session by reviewing the following group commitments to maintain a safe and trusting environment:

- Confidentiality- all information shared between participants should remain confidential.
- Respect- all participants should listen to each other's perspectives with empathy and respect.
- Communication- all language should be professional and respectful.

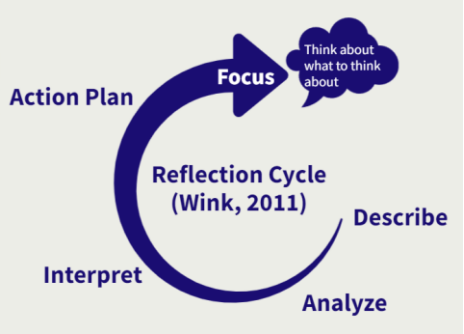
Kindest Regards,

Amber Phillips

Appendix I

Zoom Session 1 Plan

Time	Script and slides	Literature support
3:00-3:15 p.m. EST	Introduction Welcome to our first Zoom Session! As you saw in your email, we will be reflecting and dialoguing using the reflective cycle designed by Joan Wink (2011). You will need some paper and something to write with for this session. Also, please make sure you are on a computer with camera and microphone access. During this session you will have time to reflect and dialogue in small groups. We have a group of district and school leaders from all over the nation here today. To make communication easy, please rename yourself now in Zoom by clicking on the three dots in the top right corner of your box, with your preferred name and pronouns. For example, my name is Amber (she/her).	Learning experiences for adults should include choice, reflection, and dialogue. (Wink, 2011; Mezirow, 1981)
	Before we start, let's go over our group commitments to ensure we have a safe space to dialogue. First, we want to be sure everyone knows that this space is confidential. Please share in the chat box what it means to ensure that our space is confidential (wait time). I see several excellent comments- yes, this includes no mention of specific students or staff by name. We will not repeat any personal information shared with people during these zoom sessions, and we will respect each other's privacy. Second, our commitment is to listen with empathy. Please share in the chat box how you define listening with empathy (wait time). I see several great comments coming through including consideration of what an experience or feeling was like for someone else, recognizing we all don't have the same experiences so we should listen and learn from each other, and finally, we should not make assumptions based on our own lens. These are great points, to make this a safe space, we don't want our own opinions, experiences, or truths to keep us from connecting with someone else's. Listening with empathy can also include non-verbal cues like keeping the camera on and your attention focused on the person speaking. One helpful strategy is reflective listening, which sounds like "I hear you saying…" and then repeat back what the person said. Additionally, you might say you were interested in learning more about a specific phrase or thought they shared. Our last commitment is to communicate with respect. For this last one, please add your thoughts to the chat box (wait time). I see some great comments. One person said, it's not about being right, it's about respecting someone else's words and thoughts. Another person said, it's about treating individuals with dignity by acknowledging their point of view. These are great points; we have to all work together to keep this space safe. As the facilitator, I will remove anyone who does not abide by these commitments. I want everyone to feel you can share your thoughts and where you are on	The professional learning facilitator should create safe spaces for dialogue to foster transformative learning (Parson & Major, 2020; Taylor, 2017). We need to listen to the perspectives and voices of people with different experiences (Milner, 2007).

Time	Script and slides	Literature support
	this social justice leadership journey, without fear. Are there any other thoughts, questions, or additions to our commitments that you would like to add (wait time)? Great! Let's get started.	
3:15-3:20 p.m. EST	Modeling For this first session we are going to take topics from Nearpod 1 and 2. The purpose of this session is to take time out of our busy day to reflect on an experience, then we will share our thoughts with a small group of fellow leaders and spend some time dialoguing within that small group. When the time is up, we will return to this main room to share out any key takeaways from your discussions. By engaging in this process together, we will deepen and expand our understanding of these topics. While you reflect and dialogue, keep our overall goals in mind. First, our goal is to expand our social justice leadership capacity. Secondly, we want to use our leadership capacity to decrease disproportionate discipline or other inequitable outcomes in our districts or schools. To get started, Wink's (2011) reflective cycle guides us through a process to consider an idea or experience and then describe, analyze, interpret, and action plan. I will model using an example from my own life. Our first topic is to reflect on an experience or new insight related to identity. Here is one example:  (Point to *describe* on the cycle above) When I was a high school assistant principal, there were several students who reported that other students were cutting in the lunch line. After gathering statements, I began my response by increasing supervision in the area and looking on the cameras to see what was happening. It turned out there were several Black or African American students who were pushing though the line to get to the front. I gave these students a consequence, I believe it was after-school detention, and one of the parents came to speak with me. He was the father of one of the young men. He appeared frustrated with the situation and at one point asked me "why don't I let the Black kids be Black." (Point to *analyze* on the cycle above). I have thought about that statement many times in the last few years. At first, I was only concerned about whether this meant I had mishandled the situation. What I have recently realized is that it may be important to consider this statement from the point of view of the Black father. This thought led me to consider what my Whiteness may have	It is important to create safe spaces by modeling vulnerability and incorporating more questions about privilege, power, and identity within professional development (Payno-Simmons, 2021) Black male youths know they are dissed and dismissed in society (Spencer, 2008). If we don't acknowledge social stratification by race, it increases risk within the (school) environment (Spencer, 2008). Jennifer Eberhardt indicates we need to

Time	Script and slides	Literature support
	represented for him, especially knowing that Black students were disproportionality disciplined in my school compared with White students. It would be surprising if a Black parent did not recognize that our system and the individuals who implement the policies in that system were clearly biased and discriminated against Black students (Point to *interpret* on the cycle above), even though it was not our intention. Now, I wonder if this statement was less about the one circumstance of cutting in line, and instead it was another example in a long line of times when he felt his son, and maybe himself prior, were caught making a mistake because White people were actively looking or expecting failure. Although this incident wasn't about me directly, my racial identity represented a system where White people, like me, have advantages that often lead to positive experiences in the school discipline system. (Point to *action plan* on the cycle above). My response to this is to recognize that as a White person, I may be more likely to discover Black students engaging in a "school inappropriate behavior" because I have implicit bias toward Black students doing the wrong thing. I need to interrupt this natural inclination by prompting myself to actively look for Black students who are engaging in positive behaviors and point those out. I know I will forget so I am going to put a sticker on the radio I carry to be my reminder signal. This is a concrete way I can begin to counteract the implicit bias that likely leads to different discipline outcomes. This is just one example from my own experience as an administrator. Your mind may take you in all different directions. Notice how the stages of the cycle helped me consider what happened before I started to analyze and interpret. In thinking about our goals of expanding our social justice capacity and disrupting inequitable outcomes in school discipline or anywhere else, consider how our individual identities, prior experiences, and perspectives may lead to different interpretations and action steps.	interrupt unconscious bias and make ourselves aware, otherwise bias will continue to blind us (TED, 2020). Social justice leadership is about both reflection and action (Furman, 2012); furthermore, leaders who can both recognize and act in response to racial inequities may be called social justice leaders (DeMatthews et al., 2017). Principals have different beliefs, values, perspectives on their roles that impact discipline outcomes (DeMatthews et al., 2017; Mukuria, 2002; Skiba, Chung, et al., 2014; Welsh, 2023).
3:20-3:30 p.m. EST	Individual Reflection Our first step is to think of an experience or new insight related to your identity. I am going to play some instrumental music. Please feel free to mute if it does not help you think. I will set the countdown timer for 10 minutes. Take the time to write your thoughts or draw pictures about an idea or experience using the reflective cycle. You will have an opportunity to share your thoughts in breakout rooms. Any questions? (Wait time; if not questions, start the countdown timer and play music)	Principals have limited time (DeMatthews et al., 2017).
3:30-3:45 p.m. EST	Breakout Rooms (After the 10 minutes) Great job! Next, I will put you in breakout rooms of 2-3 people. Please introduce yourselves and choose one person as the facilitator and timekeeper to make sure everyone has a chance to share. Please take turns sharing your reflections. While one person is sharing, please listen and keep your cameras on. When they are done, you can practice reflective listening, repeat things that stood out to you and ask open ended questions to learn	We learn through collaboration (Gee, 2008) and dialogue (Rohlwing & Spelman, 2014; Mezirow, 1981; Wink, 2011). Furthermore, we need to focus on the generation

Time	Script and slides	Literature support
	more. Each person should have a chance to share. You will have 15 minutes in your breakout rooms.	of ideas agency, instead of the transmission of content (Jensen et al., 2016).
3:45-3:55 p.m. EST	Key Takeaways (After 15 minutes, bring everyone back to the main room). Welcome back! Let's take a moment to process our experience. Please share any takeaways in the chat box or come off mute to share verbally. What stood out to you, what did you reflect on, what were some action steps that could be applied in your context? Do we have any brave souls to start our conversation? (Wait time; encourage sharing and affirming new ideas learned from each other).	
3:55-4:05 p.m. EST	Individual Reflection Let's do one more round of reflection. This time, we will reflect on an experience (either yours or someone you know) or a new insight into bias or beliefs about race. Remember our goals include expanding our social justice capacity and disrupting inequitable outcomes in school discipline. We might consider how bias plays a part in social justice leadership or disproportionate discipline. Let's start with 10 minutes of reflection and music. I will start the timer.	Principals have limited time (DeMatthews et al., 2017).
4:05-4:20 p.m. EST	Breakout Rooms (After 10 minutes) Great job! Let's go back to our breakout rooms to reflect and dialogue together.	We learn through collaboration (Gee, 2008) and dialogue (Rohlwing & Spelman, 2014). Furthermore, we need to focus on the generation of ideas agency, instead of the transmission of content (Jensen et al., 2016).
4:20-4:30 p.m. EST	Key Takeaways (After 15 minutes) Welcome back! Let's take a moment to process our experience. Please share any takeaways in the chat box or come off mute to share verbally. What stood out to you, what did you reflect one, what were some action steps that could be applied in your context? Do we have any brave souls to start our conversation? (Wait time, encourage sharing and affirming new ideas learned from each other).	
4:30 p.m. EST	Closing Please start on the next Nearpod, remember you will need your enrollment and discipline data by race. I will stay online if you have any questions or would like to discuss the topics from today further. Have a great evening!	

Appendix J

Social Justice Leadership Course Overview

Start date	Topics
9.20.23	Nearpod Video Overview (Link)
10.1.23	Nearpod Module 1: Reflect on Identity (Link) • Select a four- to six-digit non-consecutive, non-repeating numbers, non-identifying (e.g., 850381) to use through the course, store somewhere safe. • Complete Social Justice Behavior Scale (Flood, 2019) and Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004)
11.1.23	Nearpod Module 2: Reflect on Beliefs (Link) • Sign up for Zoom Session 1 (Link)

Choose one Session:
 	
11.28.23
11.30.23
12.6.23
	Join Zoom Session 1 (Link)
	
	• Please ensure you have access to the following data by race in preparation for the Nearpod module 3:
	  • District or school enrollment
	  • Number of students who received office discipline referrals
	  • Number of students suspended
	  • Number of students expelled
	  • Number of students at reading benchmark
	  • Number of students at math benchmark
	  • Number of students at reading screening benchmark (opt)
	  • Number of students at math screening benchmark (opt)

12.1.23	Nearpod Module 3: Reflect on Data (Link) • Please ensure you have access to your district or school Code of Conduct or other discipline policies for Nearpod Module 4.
1.1.24	Nearpod Module 4: Reflect on Policies (Link) • Sign up for Zoom Session 2 (Link)
Choose one Session: 1.31.24 2.6.24 2.8.24	Join Zoom Session 2 (Link)
2.1.24	Nearpod Module 5: Reflect on Student Voice • Consider asking two or more students the questions you developed for the Collaborate Board activity. You will have an opportunity to reflect on their responses during Zoom Session 3.

Start date	Topics
3.1.24	Nearpod Module 6: Evidence-Based Prevention Practices (Link)
Choose one Session: 3.26.24 3.28.24 4.3.24	Join Zoom Session 3 (Link)
4.1.24	Nearpod Module 7: Evidence-Based Intervention Practices (Link)
5.1.24	Nearpod Module 8: Action Steps (Link) • Complete Social Justice Behavior Scale (Flood, 2019) and Disciplinary Practices Survey (Skiba & Edl, 2004)
Choose one Session: 5.28.24 5.29.24 5.30.24	Join Zoom Session 4 (Link)