EDUCATOR POLICY
INNOVATION CENTER

From Exclusionary to Restorative: An Intentional, Trauma-Sensitive Approach to Interrupting Racial Disparities, Reducing Violence, Strengthening Communities, and Accelerating Student Learning

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I. What is EPIC?

The Educator Policy Innovation Center, or EPIC, was founded by Education Minnesota to bring together teams of experienced educators to provide research-proven solutions to the challenges facing Minnesota schools. Each EPIC team performs a comprehensive review of academic literature on a given issue and adds to our understanding by sharing classroom experiences. After discussing the academic literature and its real-world implications for students, the educators recommend policies to meet the challenge. The coupling of sound academic research with actual classroom experience means EPIC's policy recommendations are uniquely valuable because they combine the best from academia and real-world practical experience.

The EPIC research teams are open to all members of Education Minnesota because although practicing educators are the experts when it comes to education policy, the voice of the educator has often been absent in education policy discussions. Academics, politicians, and CEOs proclaim what is best for education, often with no grounding or experience in how their proposals affect real classrooms with actual students. As a result, our schools are hampered by disjointed, inefficient, and at times harmful state and federal policies.

Educators see every day how these policies affect Minnesota's children. EPIC ensures policymakers will now have access simultaneously to the best academic research as well as to the thinking of front-line educators on the most pressing issues in education.

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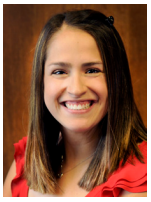
II. The EPIC Recruitment and Retention Team

Kim Davidson is a second-grade teacher in the Crookston Public Schools. Before teaching in Crookston, Davidson taught in the Anoka-Hennepin School District. She earned her undergraduate degree in elementary education at St. Cloud State and her M.A. in curriculum and instruction from the University of St. Thomas. She has spent her professional life being involved in leadership roles and advocating for students and teachers. Currently Davidson serves on many district committees and is also a member of the Education Minnesota Political Action Committee Board and Western North Intermediate Organization Board. She is also president of her local union. In her free time Davidson enjoys spending time with her family.

Nick Faber is a National Board Certified elementary science teacher on release serving as vice president for the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers. Faber received both his B.A. and M.A. in liberal studies from Hamline University. He has taught for 29 years in Saint Paul Public Schools, including 12 years at John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary, one of Saint Paul's full-service community schools. Faber is also the president of the National Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project which has trained teachers in cities such as Saint Paul, Washington, D.C., Denver, and Boston in how to build partnerships between home and the classroom where families are viewed as an asset.

Becky Hespen is the full-time release president of the Education Minnesota Osseo Education Support Professionals. Before that she was a special education support professional at Park Center High School in Brooklyn Park. Hespen has worked in Osseo Schools for 25 years. She attended Montana State University and has an A.A. from North Hennepin Community College. In addition to her position as president of her local, she is also a trustee for the Education Minnesota Foundation, a member of the Education Minnesota Council of Local Presidents, a member of the American Federation of Teachers Policy Council for Paraprofessionals and School-Related Personnel, and the 2016 Education Minnesota ESP of the Year. She is a strong advocate for professional development for education support professionals. When she has free time she enjoys gardening, knitting, playing with her four dogs, and spending time with her grandchildren.

April Jackson is a third-grade teacher in the Roseville Area Schools. She holds a B.A. from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse in elementary education. She recently received her M.A. from Saint Mary's University in education with a specialization in culturally responsive teaching. Jackson is a leader in training her colleagues on culturally responsive and competent teaching practices. She has a passion for working with students who come from diverse cultural backgrounds and finding ways to create a culturally responsive learning environment. In her free time, she enjoys cooking, spending time with family, and running outside.



Gwendolyn Johnson is an occupational therapist in the Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District. She graduated from St. Catherine University in 1990 with a B.A. in occupational therapy and Saint Mary's University of Minnesota in 2013 with an M.A. in organizational leadership. Johnson is licensed occupational therapist and has National Board Certification in occupational therapy. She has demonstrated her commitment to creating safer school environments through testifying for the Senate Education Committee, urging policy makers to attend listening sessions with educators experiencing challenging unsafe school environments, advocacy, mentoring, and empowering educators and students. Outside of work she enjoys volunteering for diverse nonprofits, mentoring youth, and spending time with family.

Avis Kennel is a 7-12 special education teacher in the Warroad Public Schools. She graduated from Bemidji State University with a B.A. degree in elementary education in 1987. Kennel is licensed to teach elementary education 1-6, early childhood, early childhood special education, learning disabilities K-12, and emotional behavior disorders K-12. Prior to teaching in Warroad, she taught special education for the Red Lake County Central School, the Grygla School, and Thief River Falls Public Schools. Kennel is an active member of her local union, serving as an officer and member of her local intermediate organization governing board. Kennel enjoys spending her free time traveling with her husband, spending time with her grandchildren, and relaxing at the lake.

Del Nasri is a behavioral intervention assistant from the Freshwater Education District. He works at White Pine/Leaf River Academy. He earned his undergraduate degree in paralegal studies. Nasri has worked with educators through Education Minnesota's NextGen. Nasri is licensed as a mental health practitioner. He is passionately involved with students with behavior challenges and mental health diagnoses. Prior to his work at Leaf River/White Pine Academy, Nasri worked as a youth counselor in a residential treatment center. He also works part-time at an adult mental health stabilization unit.

Rebecca Wade is a special education teacher currently on release working as the coordinator of professional development for the Saint Paul Federation of Teachers. Wade earned her B.A. in language arts, 7-12 secondary teaching license, K-12 EBD license and M.A. in special education from the University of St. Thomas. She is an executive board member of SPFT, a trainer with the Parent/Teacher Home Visit Project, and a local and national facilitator of the American Federation of Teachers Professional Development. Wade lives in St. Paul and enjoys spending time with her four daughters.

David Wicklund is the student services assistant at Pinewood Elementary School in the Mounds View Public Schools. He graduated with a B.A. in elementary education from Eastern University (St. Davids, PA) and a M.A. in education in special education from the University of Minnesota. Prior to serving as a student services assistant, he was a special education teacher, building and teaching interventions both academically and behaviorally. Wicklund focuses much of his work on interventions for students in classrooms, building a school culture and climate for all students and staff, and leading teams in positive behavior intervention systems (PBIS) and restorative practices that support all students. He currently lives in Minneapolis with his wife and two children.

III. Executive Summary

Many of Minnesota's public schools rely heavily on exclusionary disciplinary policies, and what we now know about the effects of such practices makes continued use of these policies irresponsible. Exclusionary discipline policies that rely foremost on suspensions and expulsions did not produce the benefits proponents hoped for, and, instead, they have done more damage than almost anyone could have envisioned. The good news is that there are far more appropriate, research-backed approaches to student behavior that Minnesota can adopt in place of exclusionary policies. In order to interrupt racial disparities, reduce violence, and accelerate student learning, the state must help schools make the massive shift away from exclusionary, punitive interventions and toward trauma-informed, restorative practices.

The legacy of zero-tolerance and exclusionary discipline policies is troubling. These failed policies have caused great harm. Policymakers should give particular attention to these realities:

- Zero-tolerance and exclusionary practices have not led to safer schools or higher levels of academic achievement.
- Zero-tolerance and exclusionary practices have helped to create and sustain the school-to-prison pipeline.
- Zero-tolerance and exclusionary policies have led to grossly inequitable outcomes, with students of color and other minority groups becoming far more likely to face suspension and expulsion for behaviors that, when demonstrated by white students, are met with less severe responses.

But exclusionary policies cannot simply be abandoned without equipping educators with better approaches to student behavior. Students benefit when given "access to disciplinary approaches that can help address the underlying social and psychological causes of misbehavior," and at the same time, "schools must balance the need to ensure school safety, maintain classroom control for quality instruction, instill personal accountability, and provide strong responses in the face of grave misbehavior" (McMorris et al., 2013, p. 4). Minnesota schools can meet both of these needs by adopting a trauma-informed, restorative approach to students and student behavior.

WHY DO WE NEED RESTORATIVE PRACTICES?

Restorative practices offer schools and districts the opportunity to reimagine their thinking around discipline and justice. In a restorative setting, far greater attention is paid to community building and engaging all students and staff in the school community. This is a paradigm shift from thinking about justice or discipline as a means of social control or a reaction to misbehavior to thinking about justice and discipline as mechanisms of building communities and teaching accountability (Morrison, 2016). Restorative practitioners seek to use non-exclusionary methods as much as possible for holding students accountable for their behavior.

In schools that have adopted restorative practices, time is spent early and often on a variety of practices that connect students and staff to one another in community, wherein all have shared obligations. Circles are often at the center of such efforts. Once students and staff establish their practice for circles and become comfortable using them, they can be and often are used as conflicts arise.

Schools that embrace restorative practices with fidelity adopt processes that help to build communities and prevent disruptive behavior in the first place as well as processes that help repair harm when it occurs. Restorative practice looks dramatically different than traditional approaches when student misbehavior occurs. At the center of the practice is the relationship between the wrongdoer and those impacted by the behavior. In this model, "those affected by an infraction or crime come together to identify how people were affected by the incident," and this coming together serves as a catalyst for repair (Gregory et al., 2014, p. 2). Instead of putting the focus on the act itself, the restorative process puts focus primarily on the harm done.

Affected stakeholders may include student offenders, student and/or staff victims and their supporters, the offending students, parents or guardians, administrators, and can include bystanders and classmates, responding police officers or other security personnel, guidance counselors, school social workers, paraprofessionals, and teachers. An important aspect of this approach is that it "empowers victims, families, school staff, and offenders by putting them in active roles: all are given the opportunity to express needs and problem-solve, and offenders are given the responsibility of repairing the harm and thus earning redemption rather than passively receiving punishment" (McMorris et al., 2013, p. 7).

Schools scattered across the state are already finding success with restorative practices, mirroring trends nationwide. Schools that have adopted restorative practices have demonstrated remarkable results that include:

- A reduction in punitive disciplinary actions and problematic behavior over time.
- Greater respect for teachers and education support professionals across racial and ethnic groups.
- Fewer differences in the number of misconduct/defiance referrals issued to Asian/White and Latino/African American student groups.
- Increased student connectedness.
- Improved student academic achievement (credit accrual and progression toward graduation).
- Improved school climate.

(Armour, 2013; Baker, 2009; Fronius et al., 2016; Gonzalez, 2012; Gregory et al., 2015; McMorris et al., 2013; Mirsky, 2003; Suvall, 2009)

Minnesota has a wealth of resources already available to help schools and districts move in this direction. A full transition to a trauma-informed, restorative model takes several years, and there are a number of models schools and districts can follow as they set course. The Minnesota Department of Education houses a rich body of resources and tools and hosts discussions by restorative practitioners on a regular basis.

WHY DO WE NEED TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOLS?

Kim Davidson, a second-grade teacher in northern Minnesota, recently had a conversation with her class about the things going on in their lives that make it hard to focus in school. She asked what makes it hard for them, and they responded. Five had parents in jail. One lost his eighth-grade sister suddenly to a heart condition earlier this year. Two have a parent who lives in another state. One said that she didn't know when her mom was getting out of jail or whether or not she would be able to see her. Several were in tears. Davidson asked, "what would you want to tell adults about what you go through?" One girl said, "that I worry." Davidson asked, "what if the adult tells you just not to worry?" The girl responded, "I would say it's a really big worry."

Due to some groundbreaking studies conducted in the last 20 years, we know far more now about what is happening in the brains of many of our students who are mostly likely to exhibit problematic behaviors in school. Educators and administrators need training, now widely available, on the prevalence of adverse childhood experiences among our student population, the effects of that toxic stress on the brain, and what that toxic stress looks like in terms of student behavior. The Minnesota Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study, though conducted on the adult population, provides us with a clear picture of how many of our students have experienced adverse childhood experiences and which groups of our students are most likely to have high numbers of adverse childhood experiences.

Students experiencing high levels of toxic stress have different responses to a wide variety of interactions than students who have not experienced adverse childhood experiences. The very brain structure in kids with high levels of toxic stress is altered. The Minnesota Department of Health (2013) has argued that "toxic stress strengthens connections in the parts of the brain that are associated with fear, arousal, and emotional regulation. Additionally, toxic stress negatively impacts parts of the brain associated with learning and memory" (p. 9).

When a student with high levels of toxic stress has his or her fears triggered, he or she may display behaviors that seem to an outsider to be far more dramatic than what the situation calls for. The student's brain is wired to respond to potential threats as if they are as severe as the original adverse experiences have been. Once the brain releases cortisol, a person is in what is commonly known as "fight, flight, or freeze" mode. And when this is happening, the brain cannot physiologically take in new knowledge or problem solve" (Medina, 2014). The students "with unprocessed traumatic memories cannot deal with threats, real or perceived, which cause them to automatically drop out of their neo-cortex into their limbic area for the survival reactions of fight/flight " (Oehlberg, 2012, p. 5).

For many adults, educators among them, who are not well versed in the way trauma affects brain development and behavior, the reactions of students living with high levels of toxic stress can seem baffling. The behaviors seem irrational, and that's precisely because they are irrational. They come from parts of the brain that are triggered without the student's conscious choice. Such survival behaviors are automatic (Oehlberg, 2012). Once we understand what is happening in the brain when the fight, flight, or freeze response is triggered, we must move away from our traditional assumptions that the child is making a deliberate choice and can learn despite what is happening in the brain.

Although schools cannot directly change the economic and social conditions that lead to high levels of toxic stress in children, "the manner in which educators respond to the needs of these students is within their grasp when there is adequate preparation and training" (Oehlberg, 2012, p. 8). Schools have an opportunity to provide a range of supports to students with high levels of toxic stress. Resources designed to help districts and schools develop trauma-informed practices are plentiful. Trauma-informed schools are staffed by educators and administrators who are trained in ACEs, who understand the fight, flight, or freeze response, and who understand and develop programming to help students living with chronic levels of stress begin to develop resiliency. This skill will allow them, over time, to know the difference between the real threats to their safety that have manifested themselves in the students' traumatic experiences and the triggers in everyday life that feel like those real threats but are not. Trauma-informed "approaches are woven into the school's daily activities: the classroom, the cafeteria, the halls, buses, the playground" (Stevens, 2012, p. 3). This is the approach we need in Minnesota.

We know that trauma-informed practices can help address the root causes of disruptive behaviors, and Minnesota's schools should be empowered to address those student needs.

In the past six years, hundreds of schools across the nation have made the shift to be trauma-informed. The results are remarkable. They include:

- Dramatic reductions in suspensions and expulsions.
- Reductions in disruptive behavior, outbursts, and violent behavior.
- Reductions in office referrals.
- Significantly improved academic performance (grades, test scores, and graduation rates).
- Decreased absenteeism.
- Improved school climate.
- Reduced need for special education referrals and services.
- Reduced risk for compassion fatigue among educators.
- Increased levels of teacher satisfaction.
- Increased teacher retention rates.

(Children's Defense, 2015; Children's Law Center, 2015; Oehlberg, 2012; Stevens, 2015)

Minnesota needs to train all educators in the science about childhood trauma, so they can build inclusive schools that serve all students.

HOW CAN WE WORK TOGETHER TO HELP MINNESOTA'S EDUCATORS AND STUDENTS?

Moving away from our over-reliance on exclusionary practices and adopting a trauma-informed, restorative practice in no way means that we do not hold students accountable for their behavior. On the contrary, by paying overt attention to the root causes of the behavior and the harm done community wide, whether another person was hurt or 16 other people were hurt, a trauma-informed, restorative approach includes identifying ways for the student to repair that harm and be returned to the community.

When we look at costs, we must foremost acknowledge that we have spent billions of dollars nationally on the mechanisms of zero-tolerance and exclusion. Enforcing and administering exclusionary policies costs taxpayers in Minnesota too much. We spend millions of dollars on law enforcement personnel in our schools and on locks, metal detectors, and surveillance cameras. The Dignity in Schools Campaign, the Justice Policy Institute (2014), and the National Center for Education Statistics (2011-12) estimate that "states spend up to $148,767 to incarcerate a youth, and only $10,667 to educate a student." This means money that could potentially help address the root causes of student behavior is instead being funneled to systems that simply remove them from schools. Cities also spend an enormous amount on the costs associated with "questioning, processing, charging and detaining the thousands of students who are arrested in school every year" (High Hopes, 2012, p. 5). We are spending our money on the wrong things. The Voices of Youth (2011) campaign has argued that

> smarter investments can reverse this lose-lose situation, in which students lose valuable learning time and schools lose funding that could have otherwise been used to genuinely support student safety and achievement. The research has shown that the most [efficient] discipline policies focus on preventing student misconduct before it can escalate and using effective interventions when it does occur. By investing in policies that truly support academic achievement and school safety, [schools] can not only raise the graduation rates of [their] students but save taxpayers huge amounts of money in the long-term. (p. 5)

The dollars we have spent building, growing, and maintaining our exclusionary discipline policies have not led to their intended effect. And we know now that other approaches to student behavior are far more successful. It is time to redirect our resources to the services our students need.

In Minnesota, we can choose to stop fueling the school-to-prison pipeline. In fact, we can dismantle it. Teaching all of our students in a radically inclusive manner means shifting away from failed ways of responding to student behavior. It means shifting our focus. It means learning from what social science can now tell us with certainty. It means admitting that some of the policies that were adopted with good intentions ended up causing more harm

than was ever imagined at their inception. It means empowering educators, education support professionals, teachers, and administrators to meet students where they are and enabling them to equip students with the tools they need to be successful, thriving members of communities. Our students deserve the very best education we can provide, and we know now that this includes trauma-sensitive, restorative practices.

IV. From Exclusionary to Restorative: An Intentional, Trauma-Sensitive Approach to Interrupting Racial Disparities, Reducing Violence, Strengthening Communities, and Accelerating Student Learning

U.S. educators tirelessly labor to ensure all children receive a fair and comprehensive education, and Minnesota should be especially proud of the many successes of its students. However, our public education system is plagued by one of the most daunting policy problems of the last one hundred years. Educators are being hampered in their ability to teach students because they work in schools that are haunted by failed and unjust discipline policies. These mandated codes of behavior are pushing students out of classrooms and into the criminal justice system at alarming rates. In this paper, we offer both a warning call for policymakers as well as a recommendation for reform. It is time for Minnesota to ensure all educators work in safe schools and all students have access to public education that meets their needs.

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We know that many of Minnesota's educators do not feel safe at work. This concerns Education Minnesota, and it should be a priority issue for Minnesota's leaders and district administrators. We will not make a dent in the educator shortage crisis if we do not build safe workplaces for all of our educators. Researchers at both the American Federation of Teachers and the Minnesota Department of Education have provided numbers to verify the voiced concerns of educators.

First, staff at the American Federation of Teachers conducted a Quality of Worklife Study in 2015 and asked 30,000 educators to respond to a series of questions about work climate and workload. The respondents reported discipline issues as the second highest "every day stressor" they faced in the workplace, as shown by Figure 1, and the fourth most common classroom stressor, as shown by Figure 2. School staff cannot provide high quality education for students if they do not feel safe and respected in their workplaces. It is time to improve the working conditions for the educators of Minnesota.

FIGURE 1: EVERYDAY STRESSORS IN THE WORKPLACE

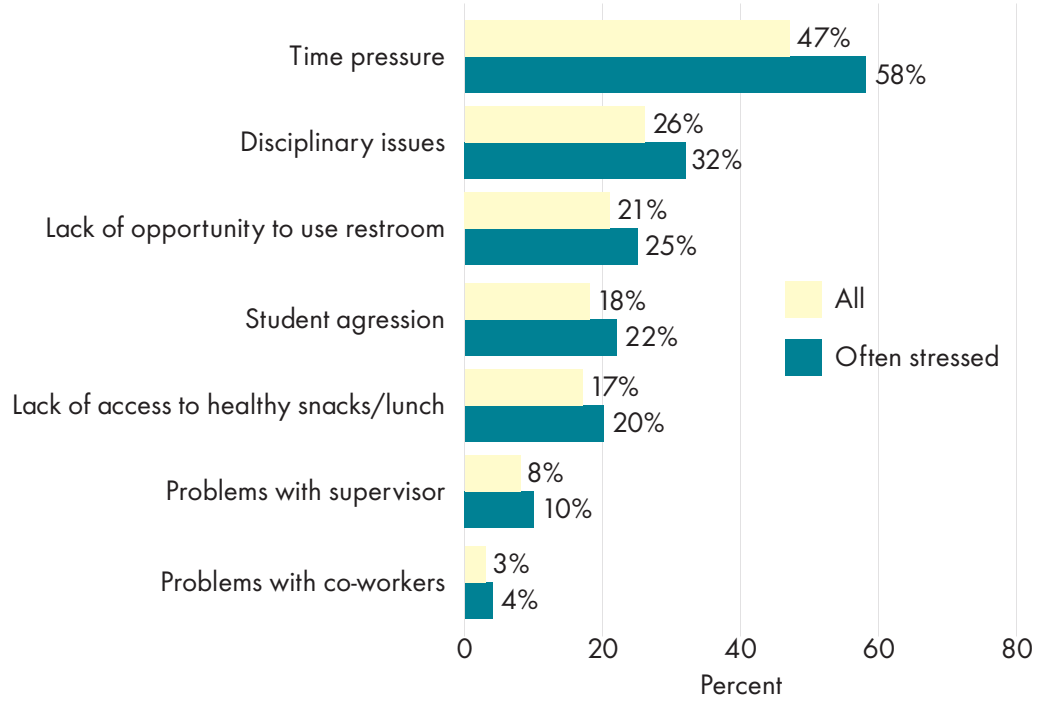

FIGURE 2: EVERYDAY STRESSORS IN THE CLASSROOM

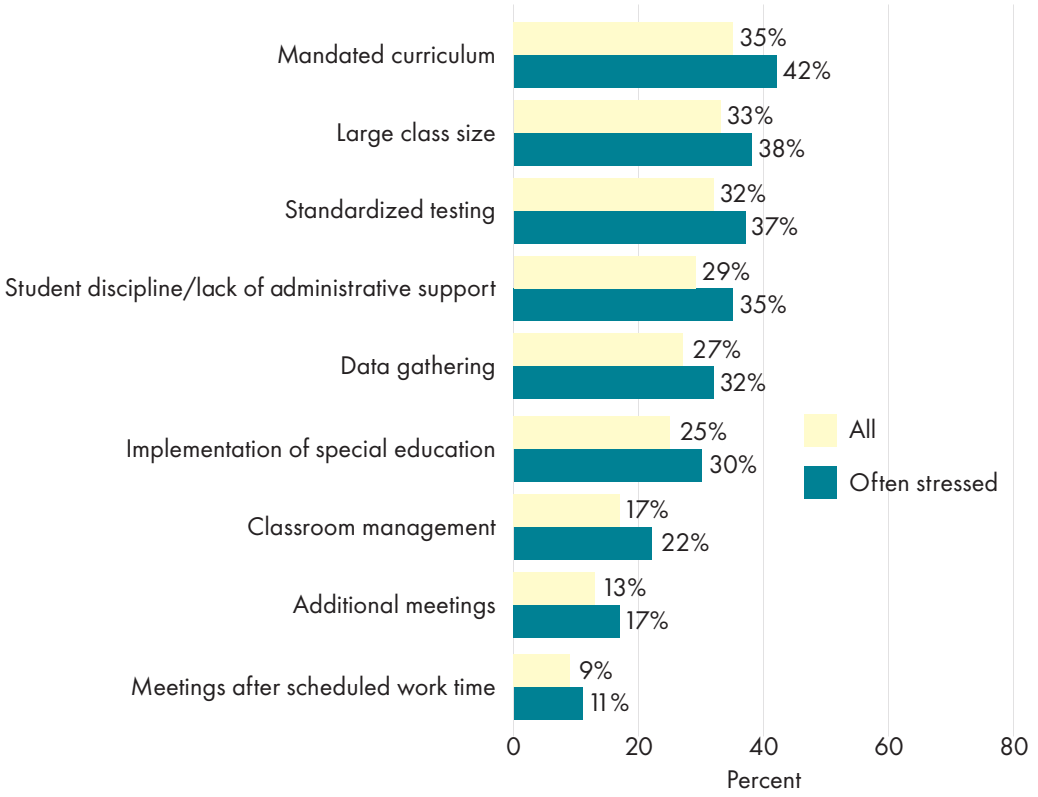

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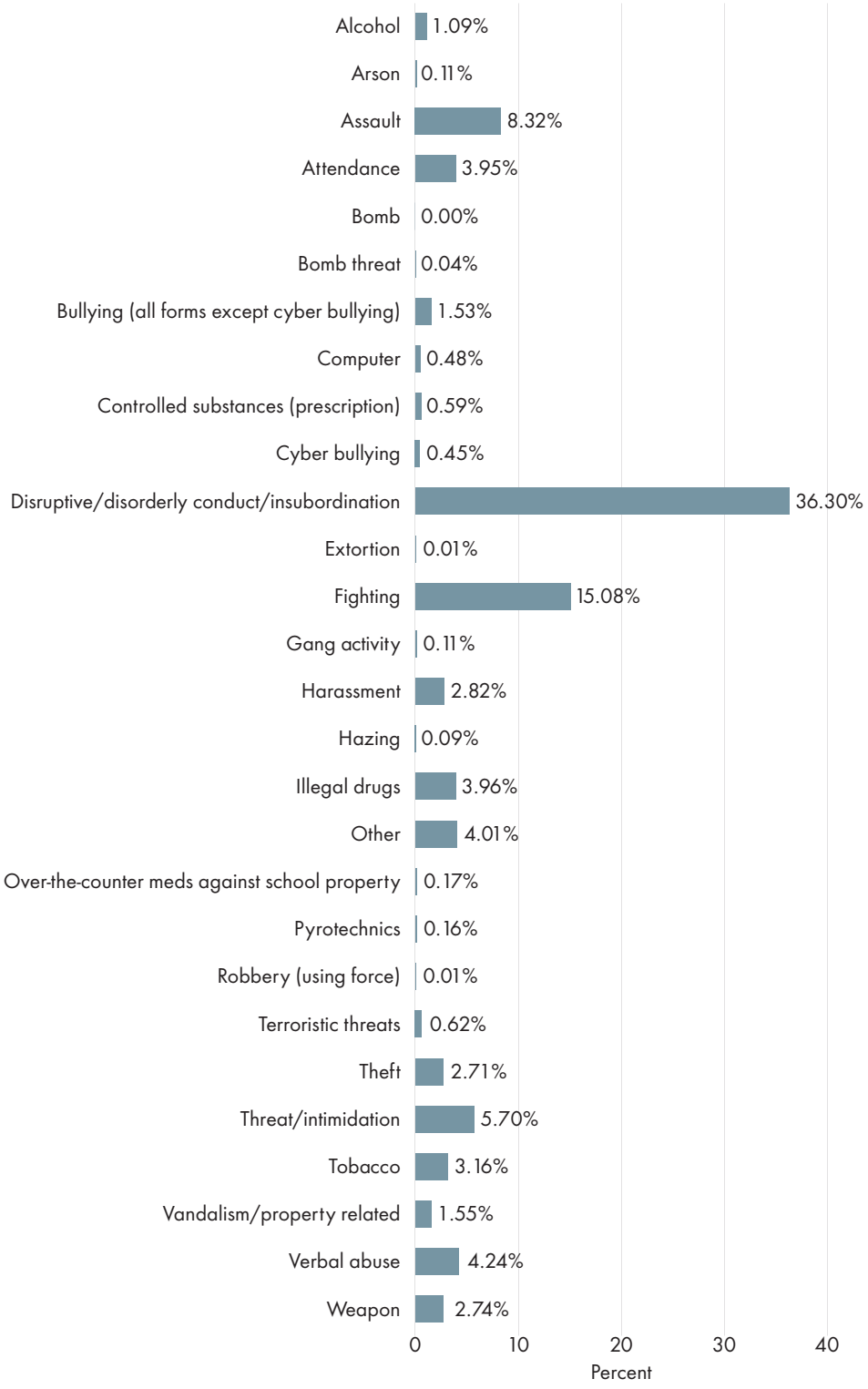
FIGURE 3: TYPE OF DISCIPLINARY INCIDENTS: SCHOOL YEAR 2014-15



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Topic specialists at the Minnesota Department of Education have provided additional numbers that help illustrate the difficult situation many students and educators experience on a daily basis. The MDE staff release an annual report to the Legislature, the Dangerous Weapons and Disciplinary Incidents report, in which they track the rates of 28 different types of disciplinary incidents reported by Minnesota schools. The most recent version of the report includes numbers about the 2014-15 school year. During that academic year, Minnesota schools reported 46,452 disciplinary incidents. Disruptive and disorderly conduct, a subjective category, accounted for 36.3% of these incidents, and fighting accounted for 15.08%. Figure 3 provides a visual of these numbers. Also, most of these incidents are happening in the classrooms and hallways of schools, as shown by Figure 4. Finally, Figure 5 shows that suspension and expulsions, which are both exclusionary practices, are the most common form of intervention used.

FIGURE 4: LOCATION OF INCIDENT (PERCENT) 2014-15

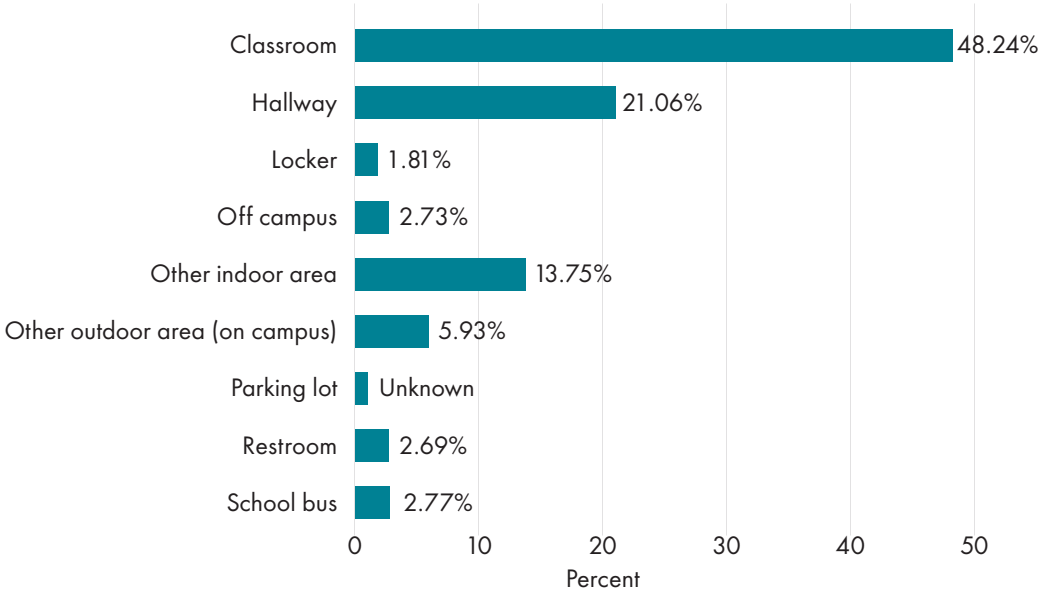

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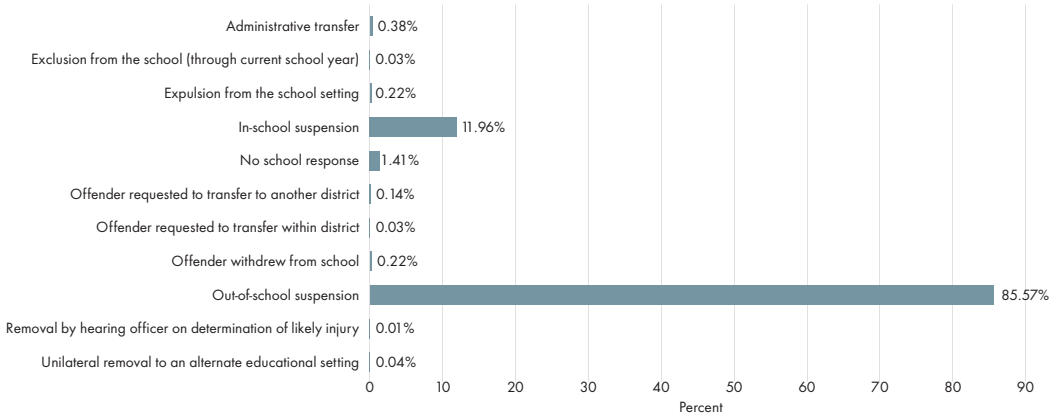
FIGURE 5: DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS TAKEN (PERCENT) 2014-15



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Minnesota's educators are not entering inviting spaces when they go to work, and students cannot thrive in unsafe settings. At the same time, Minnesota schools are relying on old tactics that have failed to curb disruptions and make schools safer. Lawmakers, educators, parents, and community members must push for change. In the remainder of this paper, we encourage Minnesota to change the practices that have led to the over-reliance on exclusionary discipline. This is a necessary step to improve school safety, close achievement gaps, end structural racism, and build stronger schools.

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V. The Problem: Exclusionary Discipline and the Rise of the School-to-Prison Pipeline

The behavioral intervention problems occurring in Minnesota schools are the direct result of several decades of mandatory policies from the state and federal governments that were supported by well-meaning stakeholders. The over-reliance on exclusion originated from several structural problems. The current crisis is not the fault of a single group, person, or political party. Exclusionary practices were originally endorsed by unions, administrators, parents, and educators. Now, most of these groups have now acknowledged missteps in implementation. Educators, administrators, and politicians want to help students, but they are stifled by a failed system. The solution will require all stakeholders working to remove bad policies and change engrained practices.

The laws and interventions were attempts at quick fixes to help educators work in a system that is overburdened, understaffed, and underfunded.

School safety laws and the student behavior codes that have led to over-reliance on suspension and expulsions were created to make schools safer. They were never intended to exclude certain students or demographics of students. The laws and interventions were attempts at quick fixes to help educators work in a system that is overburdened, understaffed, and underfunded. Structural problems put Minnesota's educators in this current situation. Educators and districts have often relied on exclusionary interventions because they lack the resources, primarily staff and funds, to address behavioral infractions in better ways.

There is not a simple solution to this problem. The crisis is fed by numerous systemic tensions, and stakeholders will have to address all of them. First, large class sizes stretch the instructional time of teachers and prevent them from being able to productively intervene when students misbehave. Second, educators and districts have been stressed by an over-reliance on high stakes testing as the primary mechanism used to evaluate school quality. This pressure spikes behavioral infractions and feeds policies that remove any student who might potentially bring down test scores. Minnesota needs to take a serious look at policies to lower class sizes, so educators can give adequate attention to students, stop problematic behaviors before they escalate, and create nurturing learning environments. Minnesota also needs to give educators more agency over curriculum decisions and stop judging schools by standardized test scores. This will free them to create engaging classrooms that proactively respond to student needs and prevent the behaviors that require disciplinary interventions. These two steps would help correct this problem.

Minnesota has to make serious changes for students. Stakeholders must engage in robust, creative, and courageous dialogue about the original decisions and policies that led to the over-reliance on exclusionary discipline. We particularly draw attention to the following realities facing Minnesota schools:

- Minnesota does not fund enough meaningful professional development for teachers and education support professionals, and this must change. Exclusionary discipline is often used because many educators are unaware of new alternatives.
- Many schools use school resource officers (SROs) and school liaison officers (SLOs) for all misconduct, and many minor infractions are criminalized. This leads some educators to believe student behavior is not their responsibility, and it directs too many students into the criminal justice system. Policymakers need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of SROs.
- Minnesota's schools lack adequate student support staff. Schools have witnessed a reduction in the numbers of counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and nurses. Many support staff are often assigned duties related to testing rather than meeting the social and emotional needs of students. Minnesota needs to fund the hiring of school support staff and stop using these educators as proctors for high stakes testing.
- Minnesota needs more full-service community schools.

In what follows, we discuss each of these structural barriers.

DISTRICTS LACK ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL STAFF

Because staff training and development funding is quite scarce, many districts do not have the resources to train their entire staff in research-proven best practices in behavior intervention. In Minnesota, 2% of the basic revenue from the state for each school is set aside for staff development. Minnesota statutes 122A.60 and 122A.61 define the types of development those funds can be used for, which include identifying teacher development and evaluation, principal development and evaluation, and in-service education programs related to violence prevention. The statute does allow for the set aside to be spent on other professional development under a staff development plan. It is important to note that when teacher development and evaluation (TDE) requirements were put into law in the 2011 legislative session, they were not funded, so the already small pockets of professional development dollars in each district were stretched even thinner to cover the costs of TDE. These funds are insufficient for the kind of robust, ongoing training that is needed so that all educators have the tools they need to implement trauma-informed and restorative practice.

If a school is going to adopt better, more equitable, more effective, and more inclusive approaches to student behavior, its staff will need support in the form of robust, ongoing training. While staff with different roles will need different levels of training, all staff, including education support professionals, need to be a part of the training, planning, and implementation strategy for the school. In addition, schools that employ SROs need to invest in training those officers in the implementation of new practices. In cases where the SROs are employed by police

departments, districts should coordinate with the local police department to support such trainings for its officers.

Minnesota school districts vary wildly in the degree to which they include education support professionals in critical training opportunities. In many districts, only licensed teachers are trained on how to implement school-wide initiatives of any kind, including approaches to student behavior. However, education support professionals (ESPs) spend as much time with students, if not more, and they also need training so that students receive consistent and productive behavioral interventions. Becky Hespen, president of Education Minnesota's Osseo Educational Support Professionals, explains the damage done and the opportunities missed when districts fail to include all staff in critical trainings:

> We just want the same respect that the teachers have, because we feel like we are part of that education team, and we want to be part of that team. We are there because we want to be a part of the success of students. In our district, every principal gets to decide what kind of approach they are going to use in their school. Some use PBIS, some use ENVoY, some use Love and Logic, some use a hybrid. And when the principals go, then another approach comes in. And the ESPs are never trained, sometimes are never even told what the approach is. We are not trained in the very approach we are supposed to be taking with the students. Of course that doesn't work. It's something that I don't understand. If we are all on the same page, then I think you are going to see those behavior incidents going down, because we would all be working as a team. (Hespen, 2016, personal communication)

While staff with different roles will need different levels of training, all staff, including education support professionals, need to be a part of the training, planning, and implementation strategy for the school.

Education support professionals are often the staff working most closely with students who demonstrate disruptive or otherwise problematic behavior. It is critical that they be trained in trauma-informed and restorative practices along with other school staff. Minnesota's districts have to be much more intentional about staff development in order to develop the kind of collaboration required for school-wide approaches to students and student behavior.

The research on what works is clear, but the resources given to schools to train and implement trauma-informed, restorative justice are such that schools are forced to continue the flawed status quo. Minnesota needs to provide resources, so districts can train all educators in productive behavior interventions.

SCHOOLS TOO DEPENDENT ON SROS AND SLOS AND CRIMINALIZE MINOR BEHAVIORS

Our increasing criminalization of student behavior and our reliance on SROs and SLOs to deal with student misbehavior has led to the perception among some educators that students who are disruptive are the responsibility of someone else. But in a trauma-informed, restorative school, everyone belongs within the community, everyone shares in the responsibility of both building community and repairing harm, and educators will need the appropriate tools and structures to implement these new practices as they make room in their practice for all students.

The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Justice Programs recently released a comprehensive study on the role of SROs and SLOs in Minnesota schools. We know that 28% of public schools in Minnesota utilize SROs or SLOs, and we know that these schools are located in both the metro area and Greater Minnesota (Swayze and Buskovich, 2014, pp.17, 21). Swayze and Buskovich found that of all SROs/SLOs in the state, "21 percent feel they are involved in the enforcement of school rules and code of conduct too much." They cited the response of one SRO/SLO who said:

> The teachers often attempt to use me as their classroom disciplinarian and I hate that...I also feel like the administration places me in a position where I am asked to enforce school rules too frequently. I don't believe that should be the role of an SRO. (as cited by Swayze and Buskovich, 2014, p. 45)

We know that many SROs/SLOs also feel frustrated by their lack of training and structural support. Swayze and Buskovich (2014) inform us that the two most common work tasks for Minnesota's SROs and SLOs are counseling students and conflict intervention (p. 47).

Swayze and Buskovich (2014) have shown that 65% of SROs and SLOs in this state have provided "school based diversion in lieu of formal citations or petitions" (p. 72). The very report on SROs and SLOS in Minnesota speaks to the ways trauma-informed practice and restorative justice programs "address root causes of behavior and keep students connected to school" (Swayze and Buskovich, 2014, p. 76). Minnesota can benefit all students by helping to make alternative interventions a real option for 100% of all SLOs and SROs. Restorative justice and trauma-informed practices work. One respondent to the SRO and SLO survey in Minnesota said, "if an SRO is not using some form of Restorative Justice, [sic] shame on them, their department and schools" (as cited by Swayze and Buskovich, 2014, p. 73). These programs can help Minnesota educators and students, and SROs and SLOs have to be part of the intervention strategies if they are already part of the school community.

DISTRICTS AND SCHOOLS NEED MORE STUDENT SUPPORT STAFF

Committing to effective reforms will mean preparing to address the root causes of student behavior, and schools will need counselors, social workers, nurses, and school psychologists who are available to meet students' social and emotional needs. Figure 6 shows data from

the most recent Teacher Supply and Demand report released by the Minnesota Department of Education. An alarming number of districts reported that it is either "very difficult" or "somewhat difficult" to hire school psychologists and social workers (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017, p. 29). Districts reported dollars that were once spent on the resources necessary to remove students from the community could instead be spent on staff who can provide the services necessary to keep students in school and to build safer communities inclusive of all. Districts should be encouraged to "create policies that examine the causes of inappropriate behavior and ensure that those policies provide appropriate emotional support to remedy those causes when holding students accountable for meeting fair standards of behavior" (National Education Association, 2016).

FIGURE 6: LICENSED RELATED SERVICES

Answer options	Easy	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Could not fill all vacancies	N/A, no positions in this district or charter school	N/A, no vacancies for this position
School counselor	33	52	23	2	76	205
School nurse	15	46	69	8	59	194
School psychologist*	8	33	63	15	72	200
School social worker	21	53	34	7	71	205

**Denotes licensure area included on the Federal Shortage Report.*
Reproduced with permission from: Minnesota Department of Education. (2017). 2017 Report of Teacher Supply and Demand in Minnesota's Public Schools: Fiscal Year 2017 Report to the Legislature. Retrieved from education.state.mn.us.

MINNESOTA NEEDS MORE FULL-SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

In addition, Minnesota has funded far too few full-service community schools, which provide a much more seamless mechanism to meet student needs. Education Minnesota's members released a previous EPIC report on the value of full-service community schools, and we refer all policymakers to that work for more information about the value of these schools. Full-service community schools are defined by a common education equity strategy that places the needs of students and the community at the center of analysis and decision making in school improvement.

At the heart of the development of a full-service community school is a needs assessment. The needs assessment is an inquiry process into a variety of areas affecting students, families, and the school community. The assessment is typically done by a team at a community school, ideally led by a site coordinator. School administrators, family liaisons, community partners, educators, or other leaders can lead the process. The needs assessment can be done through interviews, surveys, home visits, community meetings, door-to-door canvassing, and data analysis. The needs assessment includes questions about what members of the community most need in a school, including resources involved in employment, health, child care, language, technology, and adult education. They also determine student needs, whether those have to do with health, academics, mental health, food, or social services.

Once student and community needs are identified, schools reach out to partners that can

help them meet those needs. They develop partnerships with surrounding community resources to support students and community members with a focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and family and community engagement. Full-service community schools put social, medical, and supplemental academic services and enrichment activities where they are most accessible—at the school. Instead of treating a range of educational "problems" as separate issues, community schools work to find ways to unite them and solve them together.

These schools are well equipped and already ahead of the curve in terms of adopting better approaches to student behavior because they are already designed around student needs. There are currently only 14 full service community schools in Minnesota, and state policymakers need to provide funding for more.

David Wicklund, of the Mounds View Public Schools, works with students on building the strong community necessary for restorative practice.

VI. How Did This Happen? Policy Decisions That Escalated Reliance on Exclusionary Interventions

Exclusionary interventions originated from a collection of federal and state laws. The National Clearinghouse on Supportive School Discipline defines exclusionary discipline as "any type of school disciplinary action that removes or excludes a student from his or her usual education setting" (2017). The National Clearinghouse further argues that suspension and expulsion are the most common form of these punishments. Our over-reliance on exclusionary interventions is the most toxic of the many outcomes of the zero-tolerance era. It is important for policymakers to realize this connection. Many districts may claim they are no longer using zero-tolerance behavior codes, and this may be true on paper. However, those very districts are likely also still relying heavily on exclusionary interventions. These practices are engrained in school cultures, and it is important to reflect on the history of the policies and decisions that led to this current crisis.

Zero-tolerance approaches to student misconduct emerged from a long history of judicial, federal, and state mandates. Before the rise of these interventions, U.S. public schools operated under a philosophy of in loco parentis. This changed with a series of court cases in the 1960s and 1970s and major congressional acts in the 1980s. The in loco parentis doctrine held that schools and educators were to stand in for parents during the school day and create learning environments that taught students to move through the world as law-abiding and productive citizens. Local educators were trusted to govern school communities and meet the needs of their specific student bodies. This means that the public respected educators to make the best decisions for students and schools.

Unfortunately, the doctrine of in loco parentis changed with the introduction of zero-tolerance policies. The term "zero tolerance" was taken from a U.S. Customs Service antidrug program, and it came to represent a system of predetermined, mandatory responses that educators were required to administer to a student found in violation of a school rule. Zero-tolerance behavior policies are similar to the concept of mandatory sentencing in the criminal justice system. Wilson (2014) has defined a zero-tolerance approach to student misconduct as a "strict, uncompromising, automatic punishment to eliminate undesirable behavior" (p. 50). In their purest form, zero-tolerance codes require schools to create an explicit and defined reaction for every type of misbehavior. For example, if a student skips class, he or she is given a defined and predetermined consequence. These mandatory consequences are intended to be enforced equally.

Zero-tolerance, exclusionary interventions were sold as a method to administer tough penalties and deter crime in schools. The proponents of these policies hoped that the direct and predetermined system would give educators more freedoms. Educators would no longer have to "think" about discipline because the system had already selected what punishment or intervention a student would face. It was meant to make schools safer and free up the

work time of educators. Proponents of the policies asserted that they would lead to higher academic achievement, safer schools, and a reduction in disruptive behaviors. In practice, not one of these outcomes has been realized. The primary result of zero-tolerance policies has been an increase in the use of exclusionary interventions, and these reactions to misconduct have made things worse, not better.

Zero-tolerance policies changed the expectations of students and educators. They issued new ground rules and brought the criminal justice system into public schools. Administrators and policymakers, not educators, were designing behavior interventions. Educators were denied agency. Educators throughout Minnesota commonly express frustration over the ways in which current approaches to student behavior strip them of their ability to meet student needs or reintegrate students back into the classroom. Nick Faber, a teacher in St. Paul Public Schools, tells a story about managing a class while one student was exhibiting escalating and dangerous behavior. Faber tried to explain to the student that a particular behavior was dangerous, and he tried to redirect the student to more productive behavior. Faber called the office, knowing the student needed some assistance. The student needed an adult to sit with him individually and help him for a time. Unfortunately, Faber got a voice recording, and the student's behavior escalated. Faber continued working with students and called the office again, but he still received no answer. Faber tried simultaneously to teach the entire class and de-escalate the triggered student while calling the office a third time. On that third try, someone took the call. Faber (2016) explains:

> And then all of a sudden, I was working with a number of students, and I turn around, and [the escalating student] was gone.
>
> Five minutes later, the student was back. There was no conversation with me or with the student about what happened. They didn't come to help the student. They came to remove the student, and then to put the student back. I didn't have a chance to explain to the student what happened. I didn't have a chance to talk to the student without twenty some other students listening about what was going on. The student hadn't learned anything, and I hadn't learned about what was happening with the student. The student left that situation with no idea why I was upset. The student was not given a reason for being pulled from the classroom. And I hadn't built any capacity to help the student.
>
> As teachers, we are told we need to 'just kick these kids out.' Or, we're told to our face that we want to kick students out in these situations. But we are people who have dedicated our lives to helping all students. That's what we are here to do. We want all students and all teachers to get the help and support they need. This is at the core of why I teach every day. Student and teacher voices are lost in this process. (Faber, 2016, personal communication)

Avis Kennel, a teacher in the Warroad Public Schools, echoes Faber's story. She talks of a 7th grader who would repeatedly shred his papers rather than participate in class. She says

"there was no social worker, and the counselor was not available. The office would come and drag him away. No one was there to find out what was happening with him. They just removed him, and then put him back. This process isn't helping him, and it isn't helping me to help him. We are not addressing the root causes of the behavior at all" (Kennel, 2016, personal communication).

Zero-tolerance approaches to student discipline are a direct reaction to the "perceived problem of school safety" that swirled after two government commissioned reports: (1) *Violent Schools-Safe Schools: The Safe School Study Report to the Congress,* Volume I, released in 1978 and (2) *A Nation at Risk,* released in 1983. It should be stated that schools were starting to house law enforcement officers as early as the late 1960s due to the Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, which introduced school resource officers. However, it was these two publications which offered comprehensive looks at the "state of public education in the United States," and they both issued something of a "call to arms" for educators, parents, and policymakers. These reports started a public conversation about the need for strict interventions to preserve the quality of the U.S. education system.

The first report, *Violent Schools-Safe Schools: The Safe School Study Report to the Congress (Violent Schools)* was conducted by the National Institute of Education in the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare (National Institute of Education, 1978). It included a mail survey of 4,000 U.S. schools, an onsite survey of a representative sample of 642 schools, and 10 individual case studies. It was one of the most comprehensive reports of the safety of public schools in the United States, and it planted many of the ideas that eventually led to the punitive, zero-tolerance policies created during the 1980s and 1990s.

In the opening pages of *Violent Schools,* the authors discussed the "means of prevention" to keep public schools safe. The authors informed the public and Congress that "security devices, such as specially designed locks, safes, and window and door alarms" and "security personnel," as long as they received proper training, could help promote school safety. The authors declared that "the single most important difference between safe schools and violent schools was found to be a strong, dedicated principal who served as a role model for both students and teachers, and who instituted a firm, fair, and consistent system of discipline" (p. iv). The authors recommend more surveillance, more interactions with law enforcement, and authoritative and strict principals.

The authors of *Violent Schools* do not stop with simple recommendations for more police and cameras. They also propose that schools coordinate with courts and juvenile justice systems and consider removing "troubled youth" from traditional classrooms. The authors of the report write:

> Schools and school systems in which crime is a problem should coordinate their efforts with those of local courts. While local courts are central to the administration of juvenile justice, the schools express very little confidence in them (Chapter 6). The schools and courts should work together to plan and coordinate their activities with regard to juvenile (and school-age adult) offenders. (National Institute of Education, 1978, p. 14)

This recommendation led policymakers to promote the presence of courts and juvenile justice officials in public schools. These partnerships were justified as an attempt to promote school safety and increase student learning. In addition, the authors of Violent Schools also recommended that schools still experiencing problems from certain students should consider placing "troublesome youngsters in special classes or schools" (National Institute of Education, 1978, p. 146). The promotion of exclusionary interventions with only a minimal mention of coordinating with mental health agencies was a driving theme in the report. The authors of *Violent Schools* told Congress and the public that U.S. schools were unsafe and in need of direct interventions from police, courts, and stricter educators.

A Nation at Risk (1983), a report that was politically motivated and has now been largely discredited, was the second government report to set the stage for the failed zero-tolerance and exclusionary policies of today. The report was the work of the National Commission on Excellence in Education which was chaired by U.S. Secretary of Education, Terrel Howard Bell. The group was asked to "define the problems afflicting American education and to provide solutions, not search for scapegoats" (National Commission). Unlike *Violent Schools,* this report contains information about multiple aspects of U.S. public education. The authors presented findings on academic performance and school climate, and Bell and his colleagues raised many alarm bells. In the opening of the document, the authors wrote:

> We report to the American people that while we can take justifiable pride in what our schools and colleges have historically accomplished and contributed to the United States and the well-being of its people, the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a Nation and a people. What was unimaginable a generation ago has begun to occur–others are matching and surpassing our educational attainments. (National Commission)

The authors tapped into fears of global inferiority and U.S. exceptionalism to encourage action on the part of policymakers and voters. At the time, this seemed more proof for a faulty but prevalent belief that only sweeping academic and disciplinary changes could prevent U.S. students from being outperformed by students in other nations. Thompson and Allen (2012) have hypothesized that this study was an ego blow for U.S. policymakers that challenged the truism that the United States alone produced the "best and the brightest."

A Nation at Risk represents one of the first explicit calls for standardized testing and strict behavior codes. It is likely one of the early documents that eventually led to the linking of these two practices. Standardized testing was promoted by these authors as a means for holding students and schools to "standards and expectations." The authors wrote, "standardized tests of achievement (not to be confused with aptitude tests) should be administered at major transition points from one level of schooling to another and particularly from high school to college" (National Commission). In the same document they also argue that "maintaining discipline should be accomplished through the development of firm and fair codes of student conduct that are enforced consistently, and by considering alternative classrooms, programs, and schools to meet the needs of continually disruptive students"

(National Commission). *A Nation at Risk* is one of the first, direct calls for school reform through testing, firm punishments, and the removal of disruptive students.

Violent Schools and *A Nation at Risk* set the stage for zero-tolerance and exclusionary discipline practices. The authors of both documents offered narratives that challenged U.S. superiority in education and tasked adults with reclaiming control of public schools. These reports contain direct support for a new system of conduct and punishments to promote socially acceptable behavior in students and preserve the quality of public education in the United States. They set the stage for drastic federal interventions like the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994 (GFSA) and No Child Left Behind (NCLB). The earlier government studies suggested the use of zero-tolerance, but these federal laws mandated the use of punitive and exclusionary responses to student behavior.

The GFSA was the first major federal intervention that led to exclusionary policies. It was a direct response to school shootings and the presence of firearms in public schools. The law required schools to create mandatory punishments for firearm use or possession by students, or they would lose federal funding. This bipartisan effort was seen as a means to prevent future school shootings. Morgan and Walker (2012) have argued "the passing of the GFSA, and subsequent zero-tolerance policies created because of it, was a sweeping attempt to take back control of schools and provide districts with the power to increase social control in order to prevent violence" (p. 233). Supporters of the law hoped it would help create safe schools. In reality, it led to policies that escalated student misbehavior.

What started as zero-tolerance for weapons possession in schools eventually morphed into exclusionary approaches to all sorts of student misbehavior. The law was the gateway drug of behavioral interventions for districts. Administrators began using mandatory punishments for all sorts of behavior beyond the use and possession of weapons. Wilson (2014) noted that "schools escalated the range of reasons for suspending and expelling students to include violating policies about alcohol, tobacco, drugs, fighting, insubordination, dress code, and 'disruptive behavior'" (p. 50). Lorenz (2010) argued that the results of the zero-tolerance policies from the GFSA changed the culture of schools and began a long flirtation with widespread exclusionary discipline practices. Districts and schools started using exclusionary discipline for truancies, tardiness, fighting, or verbal assault. Soon, exclusionary interventions were the most common form of punishment used by districts.

Unfortunately, these policies were only exacerbated by the explicit requirements that came with the 2001 re-authorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), known as No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This law placed more emphasis on standardized testing and called for specific codes of conduct from schools and local education agencies. The Advancement Project issued a report in 2010 that links the rise of zero-tolerance discipline codes to federal "War on Drugs" programs and NCLB. They gave some credit to the mandatory minimums and "tough on crime" legislation of the Reagan years, but the organization specifically identified NCLB as the anchor that landed these policies in most districts. Policymakers used NCLB to require the use of zero-tolerance approaches in order to receive some forms of federal funding.

NCLB put schools on a singular quest for high test scores, and this resulted in the creation of systems and structures to support the achievement of this goal. The Advancement Project (2011) showed that NCLB created such punitive interventions and penalties for low test scores that to this day "at many schools, what is not tested is not taught" (p. 11). NCLB created toxic school cultures that virtually demanded that anything that did not directly improve student test scores be cut.

Zero-tolerance policies have enormous costs for the individuals they punish, while carrying no discernible benefits to the larger community.

The rise of high stakes testing has increased the reliance on exclusionary policies to control schools and classrooms, and this has led to increased suspensions and expulsions for many students. The Advancement Project (2010) noted, "school districts around the country have adopted extraordinarily severe discipline policies and practices in recent years . . . [even for] relatively minor misbehavior or trivial student actions" (p. 4). Schools have increased the use of suspensions and expulsions, witnessed a rise in surveillance and police presence, and introduced students to the criminal justice system. Also, as we explore in depth later, students of color receive a disproportionate amount of these interventions which are administered on a subjective basis. Thompson and Allen (2012) noted that NCLB, resulted in an image-based narcissistic school system that has actually been harmful to teachers and countless African American students, as indicated by high-school dropout rates, NAEP reading and mathematics scores, student apathy, under representation in gifted classes, and school suspension and expulsion rates (p. 224).

NCLB brought forth new stakes that turned schools and classrooms into exclusionary environments for many students.

The combination of zero-tolerance and high stakes testing has been suffocating for schools and students. The Advancement Project (2010) asserted that "the driving ideology behind both high-stakes testing and zero tolerance comes right out of the corporate playbook, as it is based on the notion that problems are solved and productivity is improved through rigorous competition, uncompromising discipline, constant assessment, performance-inducing incentives, and the elimination of low performers." School staff are all under tremendous pressure to raise standardized test scores on tests that measure only a few subjects, and often that pressure leads to the educator having to choose between his or her own interests and the interests of any particular student.

Despite the best intentions of many of their proponents, high-stakes testing and exclusionary interventions have not lead to higher academic performance or safer schools, and, while failing to achieve either goal, have done inexcusable damage. The American Psychological Association's Taskforce on Zero Tolerance Policies (2008) also explained, "despite the

removal of large numbers of purported troublemakers, zero-tolerance policies have not provided evidence that such approaches can guarantee safe and productive school climates for other members of the student population" (p. 857). The APA taskforce, and many others, have called for alternatives to the status-quo, but these practices continue.

Second graders support one another during a journaling exercise after a class discussion about difficult life experiences that can make school challenging.

Decades of evidence show us conclusively that exclusionary interventions fail to make schools safer. Judith Kafka (2011) traced the history of these programs in the United States in her work The History of "Zero Tolerance" in American Public Schooling. She noted, "while rhetoric in support of zero tolerance policies may seem convincing, studies examining the policies' efforts...find that zero tolerance policies have enormous costs for the individuals they punish, while carrying no discernible benefits to the larger community" (Kafka, 2011, p. 2-3). Black (2015) explained that zero-tolerance policies create more disciplinary problems for public schools because they expand the categories used to label student conduct. He has also argued that

> Zero-tolerance policies have expanded the categories of behavior for which a student can and must be suspended and expelled. Whether a students' misbehavior is serious, trivial, intentional, or accidental, the response in many districts is the same: exclusion from school. In fact, schools themselves report that minor misbehaviors, like disruptions and disrespect, account for ninety-five percent of suspensions and expulsions. As a result, some schools suspend one out of every two students over the course of each school year (Black, 2014, p. 825).

Rather than reducing disruptive behaviors, "suspension [...] appears to predict higher future rates of misbehavior and suspension among those students who are suspended" (American Psychological Association, 2008). High rates of expulsions and suspensions, not safe schools, are the result of most zero-tolerance policies. These programs force districts to remove students from classrooms, making it difficult if not impossible to address the behavior, repair the harm, and restore the community.

VII. Cultural Awareness by the Numbers: Implicit Bias, Complicit Bias, and the Exclusionary Intervention Policies Used in Schools

Critical to this discussion is an honest assessment of the role that implicit bias plays in our implementation of any approach to student behavior. Social science has proven conclusively that we all have implicit biases—nobody is immune to them. Those biases color the way we interpret people, behavior, and situations on a level that is below conscious thought.

Cheryl Staats (2015) has explained it this way:

> The unwavering desire to ensure the best for children is precisely why educators should become aware of the concept of implicit bias: the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. Operating outside of our conscious awareness, implicit biases are pervasive, and they can challenge even the most well-intentioned and egalitarian-minded individuals, resulting in actions and outcomes that do not necessarily align with explicit intentions. (p. 2)

Because they exist outside of our conscious thought, this means that "even individuals who profess egalitarian intentions and try to treat all individuals fairly can still unknowingly act in ways that reflect their implicit—rather than their explicit—biases" (Staats, 2015, p. 3). While we can commit ourselves to treat all people fairly, regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, religion, or any other characteristic, our unconscious biases, which are fed every day by cultural stereotypes, nevertheless continue to influence our interpretations of people, behaviors, and situations.

Our awareness of the inescapable reality of implicit bias is important here, because those biases have been shown in many studies to affect the way educators assess student behavior and therefore how educators apply student behavior policies. Educators, who are mostly white, are stuck at a complex intersection between policy and cultural constructs that underlie behavior interventions. The policies that educators are asked to enforce are systemically racist, and educators' own backgrounds, experiences, and social upbringings may influence them to respond to students of color differently than they do white students without even knowing it. It is this intersection that calls for us to engage educators in better training and give them better behavior policies as well.

Implicit bias has tremendous influence on school climate. It influences the way discipline codes are enforced, and it often leads to more exclusionary interventions being administered to students of color. One study found that "students of color were more likely to be sent to the office and face other disciplinary measures for offenses such as disrespect or excessive noise, which are subjective" (Staats, 2015, pp. 4-5). Another study, not limited to educators

but inclusive of them, that showed Black boys are viewed as older and less innocent than their White counterparts (Goff et al. 2014). And in yet another study, researchers from Stanford University found unconscious biases can lead to racial disparities in schools. The authors of the study set up an experiment in which researchers showed a racially diverse group of female K-12 teachers the school records of a fictitious middle school student who had misbehaved twice; both infractions were minor and unrelated. While the student discipline scenarios were identical, researchers manipulated the fictitious student's name; some teachers viewed the record of a student given a stereotypically Black name (e.g., Deshawn or Darnell) while others reviewed the record of a student with a stereotypically White name (e.g., Jake or Greg).

The authors were able to collect data to show how implicit bias changed the way people think about misbehavior. They wrote:

> Results indicated that from the first infraction to the second, teachers were more likely to escalate the disciplinary response to the second infraction when the student was perceived to be black as opposed to white. Moreover, a second part of the study, with a larger, more diverse sample that included both male and female teachers, found that infractions by a black student were more likely to be viewed as connected, meaning that the black student's misbehavior was seen as more indicative of a pattern, than when the same two infractions were committed by a white student. (Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015, p. 621)

It is important to keep in mind that such disparate interpretations of situations stem from implicit biases, the biases that reside beyond conscious thought. This is not something that an educator can simply decide not to do, because implicit bias functions in a far more nuanced manner.

Another way that implicit bias colors our interpretations has been termed "confirmation bias" by social scientists. Confirmation bias is "the unconscious tendency to seek information that confirms our pre-existing beliefs, even when evidence exists to the contrary" (Staats, 2015, p. 6). In one study, a group of law firm partners was asked to edit and evaluate a memo. The memo contained 22 different, deliberately planted errors. Half of the partners read memos that listed the author as Black, while the other half read memos that listed the author as White. When the author was listed as Black, the evaluators found more of the embedded errors and rated the memo as lower quality than those who believed the author was White. Reeves (2014) concluded, "we see more errors when we expect to see errors, and we see fewer errors when we expect to see fewer errors" (as cited in Staats, 2015, p. 6).

Educators and policymakers should take note that the intersection of exclusionary discipline policies and implicit bias have granted African-American male students a greater likelihood of arrest and a lower chance of academic success. This is one of the most prevalent implicit biases in contemporary U.S. culture. Black people, particularly males, are quicker to be labeled as aggressive or dangerous by other people. These false labels driven by implicit biases often exist even in people who overtly believe in equality, and these faulty mental

constructs can change the way an adult intervenes when children misbehave. Implicit bias is contributing to the growing racial-discipline gap in Minnesota.

A young Black girl is more likely than a young White girl to be punished for talking or hanging around a hallway. A young Black man is likely to be punished for truancy at a greater rate than his White peer.

The threat implicit bias creates for students of color is most apparent when looking at the number of exclusionary interventions used to discipline Black students as comparted to their White peers. Black students are referred more frequently for subjective violations than their White counterparts. Losen (2012) cited the work of Dr. Russ Skiba (2002) who found a difference in objective vs. subjective office referrals. Skiba (2002) and his colleagues argued:

> white students were referred to the office significantly more frequently for offenses that are relatively easy to document objectively (e.g., smoking, vandalism, leaving without permission, and using obscene language). African American students, however, were referred more often for behaviors that seem to require more subjective judgment on the part of the person making the referral (e.g., disrespect, excessive noise, threatening behavior, and loitering)." (as cited by Losen, 2012, p. 7)

Scholars can show that administrators and educators disproportionately impose punishments on Black students for subjective behavioral infractions. A young Black girl is more likely than a young White girl to be punished for talking or hanging around a hallway. A young Black man is likely to be punished for truancy at a greater rate than his White peer.

Second, policymakers must consider the reality facing young African-American males in U.S. public schools. Howard, Flennaugh, Terry, Sr. (2012) have cited the work of several scholars to show that:

1. A majority of African-American males in the 4th, 8th, and 12th grades do not reach grade-level proficiency in reading, mathematics, history, and science (NCES, 2007, 2009 as cited by Howard, Flennaugh, Terry, Sr, 2012).
2. Fewer than 10% of African-American males were at or above grade level in these same subject matter areas. Equally as disturbing is the fact that fewer than 3% performed at advanced levels in these areas (NCES, 2007, 2009, as cited by Howard, Flennaugh, Terry, Sr, 2012).
3. Young Black males are more likely to be suspended or expelled from schools than any other group (Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Skiba et al., 2007, as cited by Howard, Flennaugh, Terry, Sr, 2012).

4. African-American males currently make up approximately 8.1% of the nation's student population, yet they make up a disproportionate number of students receiving special education and remedial services. African-American males comprise approximately 26% of students, nationwide, identified as "educable mentally-retarded," 34% of students diagnosed with serious emotional disorders, and 33% of students identified as "trainable mentally-retarded," or developmentally-delayed (Harry & Klingner, 2006, as cited by Howard, Flennaugh, Terry, Sr, 2012).

These numbers are just a few examples that illustrate how racial biases and our current approach to student behavior are affecting alarming numbers of Black students. Minnesota must work to reverse these trends if it hopes to close the achievement gap and improve school climates.

In addition, scholars and advocacy groups show that African-American females are rapidly catching up to African-American males in total numbers of suspensions and expulsions. The NAACP Legal Defense Fund (NLDF) and the National Women's Law Center (NWLC) (2014) recently reported that

> African American girls in urban middle schools had the fastest growing rates of suspension of any group of girls or boys. Furthermore, according to the latest Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), during the 2011-12 school year, 12 percent of all African American female pre K-12 students received an out-of-school suspension, which is six times the rate of white girls and more than any other group of girls and several groups of boys. (p. 15)

African-American females are more likely than other demographics to experience traumatic experiences at young ages. Data from Minnesota's Adverse Childhood Experiences survey show us that girls of color report very high incidents of early trauma. However, exclusionary discipline policies work to remove them from classrooms, rather than helping to address the root causes of the behavior and allowing them to repair the damage. NLDF and NWLC (2014) have argued that, "responses to African American girls' allegedly 'defiant' or 'bad' attitudes typically do not consider the lived experiences of African American girls and the underlying causes of the conduct at issue, including for some girls' exposure to trauma, violence, abuse, or other toxic stress" (p. 18). Minnesota's lawmakers need to offer resources, so educators can respond to the trauma that exists within this demographic of students.

Finally, policymakers should know there is no evidence that Black students are more disruptive or cause more discipline problems than other demographic groups. Losen (2012) argued "research on student behavior, race, and discipline has found no evidence that African American over-representation in school suspension is due to higher rates of misbehavior" (p. 6). The ABA (2016) also confirmed that

> Disproportionate treatment of students and their overrepresentation in the negatives of our education and juvenile justice systems cannot be explained away because certain

groups are more likely to be engaged in bad or delinquent behavior. According to the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, discipline and other disparities are based on race and cannot be explained by more frequent or serious misbehavior by minority students. As the Department recently stated, quite emphatically and unambiguously, 'in our investigations we have found cases where African-American students were disciplined more harshly and more frequently because of their race than similarly situated white students. In short, racial discrimination in school discipline is a real problem.' (p. 20)

We do not have evidence that Black children are more disruptive to learning environments, but we have plenty of data to show that they receive more than their fair share of punitive, disciplinary interventions.

We do not have evidence that Black children are more disruptive to learning environments, but we have plenty of data to show that they receive more than their fair share of punitive, disciplinary interventions.

This problem is not an easy one to fix because it is the result of hundreds of years of racial bias in the United States. It will require significant thinking, resources, and time. Howard, Flennaugh and Terry Sr. (2012) have discussed how public narratives have created false-stereotypes and a poor "social imagery" of Black males. They are treated as threats and monitored like criminals for simply moving through the world. They are incorrectly diagnosed as disabled more than any other group, and they are met with more suspicion and disbelief by authority. This same "social imagery" can be applied to young Black women as well. This social imagery has pushed alarming numbers of these students out of classrooms and into courts and prisons. We join Howard, Flennaugh, and Terry Sr. (2012) and call for everyone "to place appropriate scrutiny on institutional practices, structural arrangements, cultural practices, and ideologies which create the conditions that may stifle the intellectual, academic, and social growth and development of Black males" and Black females (p. 88). Zero-tolerance behaviors are enforced in racist ways, and they support racist systems of oppression. It is time to seek an alternative.

While educators should do all that they can, and there is much they can do, to mitigate the power of their implicit biases, our awareness of the inequitable results of such biases should move us even more urgently away from exclusionary practices that harm so many children. Zero-tolerance policies have led to dramatically different trajectories for our students of color than they have for our White students. They have also harmed students from different cultures and lower socio-economic brackets. These policies are misguided, and they are too often enforced in disproportionate ways. It is time to acknowledge this problem and start the process of changing practices.

VIII. The Harm Caused by Exclusionary Interventions

Exclusionary interventions have turned schools into gateways to the criminal justice system, and they contribute to inequity. The reports from the Minnesota Department of Education show that exclusionary interventions are the most common form of punishment. Figure 3, referenced earlier in this report, gives a visual to show that the subjective category of "disruptive conduct" is the most commonly cited behavior. This means Minnesota is funneling huge numbers of students out of classrooms for behaviors that could be addressed with more productive means. The numbers are startling, but committed educators and policymakers can make a change. Exclusionary interventions have resulted in more misconduct and have pushed more students into a school-to-prison pipeline and away from academic success. In the remainder of this section, we will outline the ways exclusionary interventions have failed Minnesota's students. We want to stress the following important findings:

1. Exclusionary interventions have created and sustained the school-to-prison pipeline. This has resulted in the negative labeling of many students, which directly harms their lifetime trajectories.
2. Exclusionary interventions have created racist structures that have failed all non-white student groups. Black students have been especially harmed.
3. Exclusionary interventions have failed special education students, especially in Level IV special education settings.
4. Exclusionary interventions have disproportionately harmed LGBTQ students.
5. Exclusionary interventions are often linked to decreases in academic achievement and test scores.

EXCLUSIONARY APPROACHES TO STUDENT BEHAVIOR HAVE CREATED AND SUSTAINED THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE. THIS HAS RESULTED IN THE NEGATIVE LABELING OF MANY STUDENTS, WHICH DIRECTLY HARMS THEIR LIFETIME TRAJECTORIES.

The school-to-prison pipeline refers to the punitive pathways that move many Minnesota students out of classrooms and into the criminal justice system. Heitzig (2009) has defined it as a system of "tracking students out of educational institutions, primarily via zero tolerance policies, and tracking them directly and/or indirectly into the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems" (p. 1). The American Bar Association (ABA) (2016) found that during the 2011-12 school year, 260,000 students were referred to law enforcement and 92,000 were arrested on school property. They also found that the majority of these referrals were because of minor offenses (Redfield and Nance, 2016). The school-to-prison pipeline affects students across all demographics, but it has been particularly bad for students of color and students with disabilities.

Gonzales (2012) has made the observation that "schools have imposed harsher sanctions on students for minor disruptive behavior, such as tardiness, absences, noncompliance, and disrespect, resulting in a systematic and pervasive pushing out of students from schools and into the school-to-prison pipeline" (p. 287). The "pushing out" identified by Gonzales speaks primarily to the use of suspensions and expulsions as the primary means of intervention. A suspension removes a student from classrooms and the supervision of educators. This lost instruction time is also a lost opportunity to help students who are most in need. Suspensions and expulsions, whether they involve SROs or not, remove students from the safety and structure of a school environment. Students who are "excluded from school are less likely to complete their high school education and more likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system" (Kafka, 2011, p. 126). And when schools turn to the criminal justice system to respond to student behavior, that sets in motion a series of consequences for the student that dramatically change his or her life trajectory.

Sarah Davis (2011), Director of the Youth: Education, Advocacy & Restorative Services program at the Legal Rights Center, explains the ramifications for using legal processes to respond to school behaviors:

> Most educators are unaware of the harm we do to kids when we use exclusionary discipline, when we refer them to the criminal justice system, when we send them to court. When they are subjected to exclusionary practices, they are much more likely to end up in the juvenile justice system. And people have a general sense that that's a bad thing, but most people don't know the particulars. And people need to know. A juvenile record affects an individual's access to future employment, housing, education, and so much more. Juvenile records don't go away or remain private the way people think they do. A 16 or a 17-year-old who is charged with a felony—even if it is later reduced or dismissed, has a public record for the rest of his or her life. If a 13-year-old gets cited for assault or theft, they won't be able to pass a DHS background check for 7 years after they finish

> their sentence, and that's if the citation is a misdemeanor. So if it takes a year to resolve the case in court and the child is on probation for another two years, that child won't be able to pass a DHS background study until they are 23 years old. (Davis, 2016, personal communication)

Kirk and Sampson (2011) have contended that students with criminal records face diminished prospects of enrolling in college because of unstated admission criteria as well as an inability to secure financial aid" (p. 37). They also argued that "arrest may also reduce chances for high school graduation and college enrollment because time spent in court, in juvenile detention, or reporting to a probation officer leads to absences, a blemished transcript, and an unstable educational trajectory" (Kirk and Sampson, 2011, p. 37).

Rebecca Wade is a teacher with the St. Paul Public Schools who sees the damage caused by a system that labels too many students as expendable or as criminals. She explained it this way:

> I've witnessed situations where student behavior and educator responses escalated so much from such a minor thing, like not taking earbuds out, or not taking a hoodie off to them being removed from a building in handcuffs and being put in a police car after being threatened with being tased. That should absolutely not happen to kids. They are still absolutely kids and have the right to make a mistake. I understand there are different levels of mistakes. But I would hate to be defined by the worst behavior choice of my high school years. And we do that to kids. We don't allow them to be kids. (Wade, 2016, personal communication)

As Wade notes, exclusionary interventions often result in "labeling" students. This process can refer to the creation of a criminal record that follows the individual for the remainder of his or her life, and it can also refer to the "social stigma" that is associated with being identified as a bad student. Kirk and Sampson (2013) have argued "that being officially designated a 'criminal' changes the way educational institutions treat students" (p. 37). Unfortunately, students who fall victim to exclusionary interventions often have trouble recovering the legal and social standing needed to pursue their passions and goals.

The United States spends more money to house prisoners than it does to educate students. This is problematic for the well-being of society, and it creates a bleak future for the state and the nation. Mitchell and Leachman (2014) have provided data to show that "at least 30 states are providing less general funding per student [in 2014] for K-12 schools than before the recession, after adjusting for inflation; in 14 states the reduction exceeds 10 percent" (p. 1). The Dignity in Schools Campaign has intensified that finding by citing the work of the Justice Policy Institute (2014) and the National Center for Education Statistics (2011-12). These groups have estimated that "states spend up to $148,767 to incarcerate a youth, and only $10,667 to educate a student" (Dignity in Schools, 2016). This means money that could potentially help rehabilitate a student is being funneled to systems that simply remove them from society.

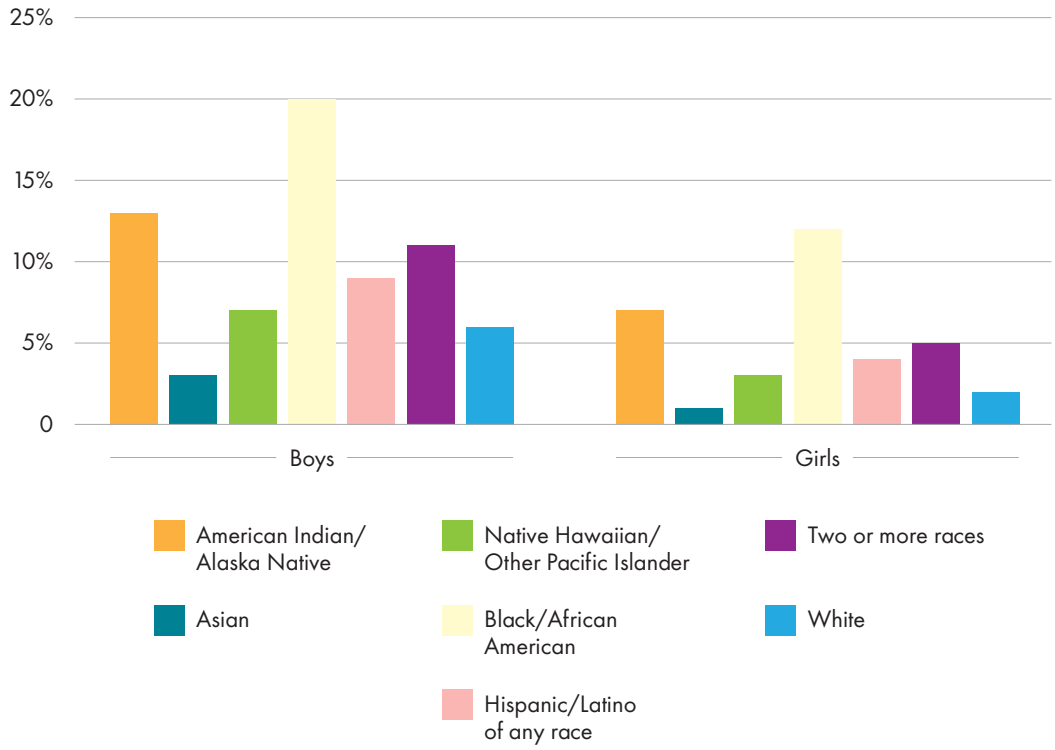
EXCLUSIONARY INTERVENTIONS HAVE CREATED RACIST STRUCTURES THAT HAVE FAILED ALL NON-WHITE ETHNIC GROUPS. BLACK STUDENTS HAVE BEEN ESPECIALLY HARMED.

There is a clear "discipline gap" in the way students of color and white students experience the effects of exclusionary interventions. The Center for Civil Rights Remedies at the University of California Los Angeles (CCRR) (2015) conducted research on this difference and confirmed the fact that a disproportionate number of disciplinary charges are being made against non-white ethnic students. Even more alarming, the CCRR at UCLA found that the use of suspensions and expulsions is the primary disciplinary intervention for these non-white demographics. To be clear, too many students are facing suspension and expulsion. Losen, Hodson, Keith, Morrison, and Belway (2015) have shown that "nearly 3.5 million public school students were suspended out of school at least once in 2011-12." However, non-white ethnic groups are receiving these punishments at higher rates than white students. As a result, they are being denied the opportunity to academic and socio-emotional education while being saddled with criminal records and future barriers to housing, employment, and educational opportunities. Policymakers must work to close this disproportionate use of punitive practices on non-white ethnic students, or educators will "be unable to close the achievement gap" (Loson, Hodson, Keith, Morrison, & Belway, 2015, p. 4).

K-12 suspension rates have more than doubled since the early 1970s for all non-whites.

Daniel Losen (2011) with the National Education Policy Center has examined the existing data and argued that there is a clear inequity in the use of suspensions when data is analyzed by racial groups. Losen showed that there have been increases in the use of suspensions for all students, but the data show a "growing racial discipline gap" for students of color. In particular, he highlighted that "K-12 suspension rates have more than doubled since the early 1970s for all non-whites" (Losen, 2011, p. 5). Also, Figure 7 reports the most recent data from the U.S. Department of Education's report on the racial gap on students receiving out-of-of school suspensions. The graph shows that students of color are being expelled at greater rates than their White peers. This increased use of suspension and exclusion problematically denies non-white students fair access to public education.

FIGURE 7: OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS, BY RACE/ETHNICITY AND GENDER



Reproduced from the United States Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2014). Civil Rights Data Collection Data Snap Shot: School Discipline. Retrieved from www.ocrdata.ed.gov.

Losen and Gillepsie (2012) also studied the racial discipline gap by analyzing "suspensions of students in K-12 in 2009-2010...based on data released March 2012 by the U.S. Department of Education" (p. 6). They confirm the findings of Losen (2011), and they offer more statistics to confirm a direct racial bias in the use of suspensions and expulsions. First, they report that "suspension rates show that 17%, or 1 out of every 6 Black school-children enrolled in K-12, were suspended at least once. That is much higher than the 1 in 13 (8%) risk for Native Americans; 1 in 14 (7%) for Latinos; 1 in 20 (5%) for Whites; or the 1 in 50 (2%) for Asian Americans" (p. 6). Also, Minnesota ranked as the state with the sixth highest racial divide when compared to the other states on the "risk of suspension between Blacks and Whites" (Losen and Gillepsie, 2012, p. 18). We should be appalled that "one out of every five or six Black students is suspended, but only about one out of every forty White students" is suspended (Losen and Gillepsie, 2012, p. 20). The racial discipline gap is real, and it is particularly problematic for Black students in Minnesota.

The disproportionate use of exclusionary practices to "discipline" students of color is now a civil rights issue (Sharkey and Fenning, 2012). Sharkey and Fenning (2012) reported that "the application of exclusionary discipline strategies violates children's educational rights, especially those strategies applied disproportionately to particular groups of children." (p. 100). Exclusionary interventions have different results for different student groups. Unfortunately, students of color face mass suspensions and, too often, an introduction to the criminal justice system as a result of these failed codes of conduct.

EXCLUSIONARY INTERVENTIONS HAVE FAILED SPECIAL EDUCATION STUDENTS, ESPECIALLY IN LEVEL IV SPECIAL EDUCATION SETTINGS.

Exclusionary discipline policies have also been extremely detrimental to special education programs in Minnesota. In 2015, the National Council on Disability (NCD) released a report on how failed policies have funneled too many students with disabilities into the school-to-prison pipeline. The NCD (2015) wrote:

> Studies show that up to 85 percent of youth in juvenile detention facilities have disabilities that make them eligible for special education services, yet only 37 percent receive these services while in school. A disproportionate percentage of these detained youth are youth of color. These statistics should lead to the conclusion that many disabled youth in the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems are deprived of an appropriate education that could have changed their School-to-Prison Pipeline trajectory. (p. 5)

Special education programs are both under-utilized for the populations who need them and over-utilized as environments to "send bad students." Minnesota must realize that exclusionary practices are specifically harmful to special education students and embrace the NCD's (2015) cry that "we cannot address the School-to-Prison Pipeline without a disability lens" (p. 6).

It is important to offer one clarification of terms in this section. The use of the term exclusionary discipline refers to the same interventions discussed in all previous sections of this paper. Special educators use terms like seclusion and exclusion in field-specific ways. We are not referencing those practices when we speak of "exclusionary interventions" in this section.

A disability lens requires all stakeholders to revisit the history of how students gained access to special education services. For a long period in the United States, students with disabilities were not protected from discrimination by states and public school districts. Aron and Loprest (2012) pointed out that this changed with the passing of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which "banned recipients of federal funds from 'discriminating against people with disabilities'" (p. 99). Scholars and advocates especially praise Section 504 of this act because of the specific rights it guaranteed to all public school students, regardless of ability status. Although the Rehabilitation Act and Section 504 were major victories, it was the 1975 Individuals with

Disabilities Act (IDEA) that formally guaranteed the students with disabilities to what is now called a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE). Aron and Loprest (2012) explained:

> IDEA established the right of children with disabilities to attend public schools, to receive services designed to meet their needs free of charge, and, to the greatest extent possible, to receive instruction in regular education classrooms alongside nondisabled children. (p. 99)

IDEA established the principle of FAPE for all students, and it created a new standard of accountability for public schools. The law made it illegal for public schools to push-out students simply because of disability status.

Unfortunately, exclusionary discipline has chipped away at the important protections IDEA and other federal laws guarantee students qualifying for special education services. Studies continue to show that students identified for special education receive a disproportionately higher number of exclusionary interventions than other students. The NCD (2015) reported that "students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension (13%) than students without disabilities (6%)" (p. 11). Also, the NCD (2015) highlighted the alarming statistic that students who qualify for services under IDEA account for 25% of "school-related arrest" even though they represent only 12% of the public school population (p. 11). The numbers also grow more stark when race is also a factor. Losen and Gillespie (2012) confirmed that "in 2009–2010, one out of every four (25%) African American children with disabilities in grades K–12 received at least one suspension" (p. 16). Exclusionary policies are now interfering with the civil rights of students with disabilities, and they are sending many of these children into the criminal justice system instead of offering them necessary support and interventions.

Excluding a student in special education from school is extremely harmful to his or her development. A suspended student will lose access to social workers, educators, and socio-emotional learning while away from school. Then the student will often return to school with new levels of trauma and missed instruction time. This often means that educators have to restart an intervention strategy, or they have to re-introduce classroom norms. The student also will have higher levels of distrust for authorities.

Our exclusionary approaches to intervening with special education students have led to higher referral rates across the board—higher rates and inequitable rates of office referrals within schools, higher rates and inequitable rates of referrals to the criminal justice system, and higher rates and inequitable rates of referrals to special education. Much of this stems from state and federal policies and inconsistent rulemaking by government agencies that has escalated the use of poor interventions with this population of students. The U.S. federal government has tried to address this issue with two reauthorizations of IDEA, but these moves have also happened against the backdrop of federally-mandated, zero-tolerance policies from other laws like NCLB.

Finally, the state should give attention to the special problems facing level IV special

education settings. These are the schools that serve students in a self-contained building outside of the general education environment. They are unfortunately becoming the final stop before incarceration on the school-to-prison pipeline for too many students. Del Nasri, of the Freshwater Education District, works in a level IV setting and speaks of his frustration over having too few resources to meet students' social and emotional needs. He also feels the burden of having the police as the only option when calling for help from external agencies (Nasri, 2016, personal communication). He says, "if our response to disruptive behavior is to suspend, expel, and refer, that pipeline has to end somewhere. And we know precisely where that pattern stops. The great shame is that this is not the best we can do."

Gwen Johnson, an occupational therapist for Northeast Metro 916 Intermediate School District, a level IV district, also speaks about her students and her district's inability to adequately address their needs. She says, "these kids have gotten a raw deal. Policymakers have developed a system that reflects the fact that they don't want to see our students' behavior, don't want to see their pain, don't want to see their mental health issues" (Johnson, 2016, personal communication). Johnson tells the story of one student who inspires her to advocate for change:

> This girl had several siblings. Her mother was a severe alcoholic. At only 10 years old, as the oldest, she was a caretaker for her siblings. The children were often removed from the home. When she was taken from the home and put in foster care, she could no longer care for her siblings, and she started acting out—punching, kicking staff in the head. She tried to commit suicide. I discovered that I can't tell a child that an adult will take care of you, that you can still be a child. I just can't say that anymore. This child was eventually sent back into the home, where, months later, one of her younger siblings was suffocated by an adult who was passed out. (Johnson, 2016, personal communication)

Johnson and Nasri have complained for years that special education students are not served by exclusionary discipline policies that cut them off from the services they so desperately need. Special educators at federal level IV settings speak often and openly about feeling cut off from the resources they need to help meet student needs. Level IV settings educate students with a wide variety of disabilities, and they need help. Johnson says, "we'll call for help, but we get the run around. Mental health services will say we should be talking to legal advocates, legal advocates will tell us we should be talking to the police, family services agencies are so overwhelmed they are often unreachable altogether. It's really frustrating" (Johnson, 2016, personal communication). Minnesota must change this landscape and help these educators change the life trajectories of their students.

Most special education students come to school with extremely high levels of traumatic experiences. Special educators have unique talents and provide needed services for vulnerable students, but they are saddled with extraordinarily heavy workloads, a lack of student support staff, and limited, external support partners. The educators working in Level IV settings literally risk their lives every day they go to work in schools that are often deeply understaffed and cut off from sufficient outside help. If Minnesota is to improve outcomes

for these students, it needs to provide sufficient resources and partnerships so that level IV settings have access to mental health services and other resources to meet student needs and are not faced with the sole option of turning to police when students are in crisis.

EXCLUSIONARY INTERVENTIONS HAVE DISPROPORTIONATELY HARMED LGBTQ STUDENTS.

School districts and government agencies have only recently started to collect data on LGBTQ students, but scholars have already found evidence that exclusionary interventions disproportionately harm this demographic of students. They experience what some have labeled a "double burden of disparate impact" (Himmelstein and Bruckner, 2010; Hunt and Moddie Mills, 2012, p. 3). This means these students simultaneously face discrimination from both peers and school officials. Many LGBTQ students still fall victim to high levels of bullying and harassment from other youth, and many schools are not yet equipped with the resources to help students navigate their place as members of a sexual or gender minority group. At the same time, like other demographic categories already discussed, LGBTQ youth receive more punishments and experience higher rates of suspension and expulsions than their heterosexual counterparts.

LGBTQ youth receive more punishments and experience higher rates of suspension and expulsions than their heterosexual counterparts.

The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) in partnership with 10 other organizations has raised awareness of the problematic intersection of homophobic, heterosexist school climates and the overuse of exclusionary practices to funnel LGBTQ youth into the school-to-prison pipeline. GLSEN testified before the subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Human Rights of the U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary on December 12, 2012 and said "schools remain hostile climates for LGBT students, not only because of bullying and harassment from other students but because of mistreatment by school officials" (Ending the School-to-Prison Pipeline, 2012). Himmelstein and Brückner (2010) confirmed that "nonheterosexual adolescents suffer disproportionate punishments by schools and the criminal-justice system, which implicates not only schools, police, and courts but also other youth-serving health and welfare systems that often fail to meet the needs of nonheterosexual adolescents" (p. 55). Furthermore, Mitchum and Moodie-Mills (2014) with the Center for American Progress summarized the findings of many researchers and advocacy groups to show that:

1. LGB youth, particularly gender-nonconforming girls, are up to three times more likely to experience harsh disciplinary treatment by school administration than their non-LGB counterparts. (as cited by Mitchum and Moodie-Mills, 2014, p. 2)

2. As with racial disparities in school discipline, higher rates of punishment do not correlate with higher rates of misbehavior among LGBT youth. (as cited by Mitchum and Moodie-Mills, 2014, p. 2)

3. LGB youth are overrepresented in the criminal justice system; they make up just 5 percent to 7 percent of the overall youth population, but represent 15 percent of those in the juvenile justice system. (as cited by Mitchum and Moodie-Mills, 2014, p. 2)

4. LGBT youth report significant distrust of school administration and do not believe school officials do enough to foster safe and welcoming school climates. (as cited by Mitchum and Moodie-Mills, 2014, p. 2)

Most districts and agencies are not collecting substantial data on this group, and we support calls for more studies on LGBTQ students. Policymakers need to give attention to the exclusionary practices that trouble the educational and life-trajectories of these vulnerable students.

EXCLUSIONARY INTERVENTIONS ARE OFTEN LINKED TO DECREASES IN ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT AND TEST SCORES, EVEN FOR THOSE STUDENTS WHO DO NOT FACE DISCIPLINE THEMSELVES

It is also time for policymakers and educators to realize that exclusionary interventions do not simply harm the children who are directly punished by the system, but they also have spill-over effects for the other students attending schools with these policies. Perry and Morris (2014) warned that the overuse of suspensions or expulsions can have negative consequences for all students in a school and specifically argue "that high levels of out-of-school suspension in a school over time are associated with declining academic achievement among non-suspended students, even after adjusting for a school's overall level of violence and disorganization" (Perry and Morris, 2014, p. 1082-3). These scholars acknowledge that some punitive measures are needed to maintain order in a school, but they show that the overuse of suspensions and expulsions can create "toxic environments" that are not supportive for the students being suspended or the classmates who are still in school. In short, a student who simply witnesses his or her peers fall victim to exclusionary policies will likely achieve lower than expected academic outcomes.

FINAL THOUGHTS ON HARMS

Exclusionary interventions have harmed too many students in Minnesota. As we have argued, students who simply witness their peers receiving punitive punishments are influenced in negative ways. These practices have disproportionately harmed students of color, LGBTQ students, and students in special education. It is time to end these practices and use new interventions grounded in research. In the following sections, we will offer solutions for educators, districts, and policymakers who want to help bring change.

IX. Minnesota's Chance for Change: Moving to Trauma-Informed, Restorative Schools

Minnesota has the chance to make drastic changes for students by ending the use of punitive behavioral interventions in schools. This will be hard to change. Wilson (2014) wrote "a generation of teachers and parents have been told these punitive methods are necessary to keep control and maintain safety" (p. 51). In fact, the National Education Association (NEA) recently published a Policy Statement on Discipline and the School-to-Prison Pipeline in which the organization acknowledged that the "NEA, and other educator groups, supported zero-tolerance and harsh discipline policies," but they changed once they "learned of the damage that these policies were inflicting on our students" (p. 8). Minnesota should also change course and provide schools and educators with the necessary funds and resources to move from punitive to restorative practices. At this moment, both federal and state law have provided unique opportunities to explore methods to help schools.

First, federal law has given Minnesota policymakers an opportunity to correct the problems created by NCLB and previous federal programs. In December 2015, President Barack Obama signed a new reauthorization of the ESEA known as the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This law limits the powers of the federal department of education, and it gives more authority to state and local education agencies. ESSA also starts the process of reducing the high-stakes testing culture created under NCLB. Minnesota should take advantage of the requirement in the law to collect and report on student behavior data and potentially use this data as one of the school climate measures in the state-designed accountability system. Janel George (2016) with the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund wrote:

> Under the law, discipline data will be collected—in state and local reports cards—including information on school climate measures, like rates of suspensions, expulsions, referrals to law enforcement, and efforts to reduce the overuse of exclusionary discipline. This information will help to identify discipline disparities and develop and target interventions.

ESSA emphasizes the fact that behavior and school climate are important measures of student success. George (2016) also praised the fact that "funding for a wide range of alternatives to overly punitive practices is also included in the law, such as school-based mental health services, restorative practices, school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports, programming to prevent bullying and harassment, ongoing professional development training on classroom management, and trauma-informed services." These are important first steps to dismantling the federal programs that have called for exclusionary interventions. Minnesota should use the opportunities presented by ESSA to change the punitive practices of the past.

Minnesota also has an opportunity presented by state law. The 2016 state Legislature directed the commissioner of education to convene a "Student Discipline Working Group" to study Minnesota's Pupil Fair Dismissal Act. This group submitted their findings to the state Legislature on February 1, 2017, and they made recommendations for the state Legislature, The department of education, and districts and schools. The taskforce asked the Legislature to "increase funding to school districts to provide student support services that meet professional standards" and to "fund pilot project [sic] to reduce racial disproportionality" (Student Discipline, 2017). Both of these recommendations would help districts and schools move toward trauma-informed, restorative practices. The group also asked the Minnesota Department of Education to "offer training for all school staff on educational model [sic] of mental health and trauma-informed scbools" (Student Discipline, 2017). We support all of these recommendations, and we hope that policymakers will use these calls to start the process of building trauma-informed, restorative schools across Minnesota.

Given the ineffective and highly destructive nature of traditional, exclusionary discipline practices, it is no surprise that districts and educators across the country are seeking new ways of thinking about the climate in our schools. But it is not just the fact that our traditional practice has failed that should compel us in a new direction. We also have knowledge that we did not have before, knowledge that compels us to shift the way we think about student behavior in our schools. In order to interrupt racial disparities, reduce violence, and accelerate student learning, a massive shift away from exclusionary, punitive practices and toward a trauma-informed, restorative practice is urgently needed.

We know that students "benefit when given access to disciplinary approaches that can help address the underlying social and psychological causes of misbehavior" (McMorris, Beckman, Shea, Baumgartner, & Eggert, 2013, p. 4). We also know that "schools must balance the need to ensure school safety, maintain classroom control for quality instruction, instill personal accountability, and provide strong responses in the face of grave misbehavior" (McMorris, Beckman, Shea, Baumgartner, & Eggert, 2013, p. 4). It is possible to do both. In order to meet both sets of needs, school districts must adopt creative and innovative approaches to student behavior "as they work to educate the whole child, even when responding to serious behavioral incidents" (McMorris et al., 2013, p. 4).

A move toward trauma-informed, restorative practice is not an add on. It is not something that can happen with a year devoted to professional development, or with a teacher or administrator assigned full time or part time to see that it happens. And simply announcing that a school is trauma-informed and restorative does not make it so (Restorative Justice, 2014). One of the biggest barriers to reaping the benefits that trauma-informed, restorative practices promise is the tendency for schools who show interest to fail to invest fully enough in the practice to make it meaningful. Trauma-informed, restorative practice requires everyone in the school to rethink and rework their schools and their classrooms, and implementation therefore is a multi-year endeavor. There is a profound shift at the heart of this movement away from pushing a student who misbehaves out of the community and toward addressing the root causes of misbehavior. This process requires repairing the harm done and giving

students the tools they need to succeed within the school community (Restorative Justice, 2014).

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

Minnesota schools and the students they serve stand to benefit from a statewide commitment to restorative practices. Districts, schools, and educators are looking for ways to reduce their reliance on traditional sanctions like suspensions and police referrals, but they still need ways to hold students accountable for their actions. Trauma-informed, restorative schools are viewed by many as a powerful way to keep children in school, address the root causes of misbehavior, repair relationships between students, and build safer, healthier, and vastly more inclusive school communities. By coupling trauma-informed practices with restorative justice practices, we have our best opportunity for repairing racial inequities, creating safer schools for students and staff alike, and interrupting the school-to-prison pipeline.

Before we discuss restorative practice in a school setting, it is helpful to look to a larger context. Restorative practice is a social science "that studies how to build social capital and achieve social discipline through participatory learning and decision making" (Wachtel, 2013, p. 1). Before substantial efforts were made to adopt restorative practices in schools, we saw their effectiveness in the criminal and juvenile justice systems, where their success has led to a call for broader implementation (Fronius et al, 2016; Sherman & Strang, 2007). This is important to note because the traditional model of school-based discipline that is based on punishment and exclusion also comes directly from traditional practices in the criminal justice system, where the past several decades have seen the same increasingly myopic focus on harsh exclusionary penalties. But the failure of harsh punishments to deter crime and the grossly inequitable results of exclusionary practices have led to many calls to re-envision our approach to criminal justice. And this shift to restorative practice comes from efforts to do just that. Brenda Morrison of the British Centre for Restorative Justice explains the way in which restorative justice represents a shift in traditional thinking about justice itself:

> Restorative justice represents a paradigm change from thinking about justice as a mechanism for social control to thinking about justice as a mechanism for social engagement. We know that when people are better engaged in healthy ways social and emotionally, they make better decisions. And so restorative justice seeks to be socially and emotionally intelligent justice. (Morrison, 2016)

Several international studies of restorative justice programs used in place of traditional criminal justice practices show tremendous results. Restorative justice has "substantially reduced repeat offending for some offenders, reduced crime victims' post-traumatic stress symptoms and related costs, and provided both victims and offenders with more satisfaction than criminal justice" (Sherman & Strang, 2007).

The bedrock of restorative justice involves "three big ideas: 1) repair: crime causes harm and justice requires repairing that harm; 2) encounter: the best way to determine how to do that is to have the parties decide together; and 3) transformation: this can cause fundamental

changes in people, relationships, and communities" (Centre for Justice and Reconciliation, 2017). Instead of focusing on a punishment for the offender, restorative justice focuses on repairing the harm done and reintegrating the offender back into the community. People harmed by the crime and the person who has committed the crime work to identify the harm done and to decide on how it can be repaired. The offender then makes amends, whether that be in the form of apology, changed behavior, restitution, or other types of service or repair. Restorative justice practices place a high value on reintegrating both the offender and the victim or victims back into the community. This means working to reduce the stigmatization of victims and offering them the support they need, and it means allowing offenders to rejoin communities with an honest opportunity to carry on as active, productive members of the community (Centre for Justice and Reconciliation, 2017).

Similarly, restorative practices in schools seek to use non-exclusionary methods as much as possible for holding students accountable for their behavior and for preventing the behavior in the first place. The concept of restorative practice in schools is a broad one, and there are a great many different approaches to it. The National Centre for Restorative Approaches in Youth Settings defines restorative justice as:

> An innovative approach to offending and inappropriate behavior which puts repairing harm done to relationships and people over and above the need for assigning blame and dispensing punishment. A restorative approach in a school shifts the emphasis from managing behavior to focusing on the building, nurturing and repairing of relationships. (Hopkins, 2003, p. 3)

Schools that embrace restorative practices with fidelity adopt processes that help to build communities and prevent disruptive behavior in the first place as well as processes that help repair harm when it occurs and reintegrate both those harmed and the students who have caused harm back into the school community.

The movement toward restorative practice in schools is happening at local, state, and national levels. Umbreit & Armour (2010) argued that "as a school-based initiative, it serves as an alternative to retributive zero tolerance policies. It views violence, community decline, and fear-based responses as indicators of broken relationships" (p. 2). Armour (2015) explains further: Its practices are "grounded in the values of showing respect, taking responsibility, and strengthening relationships. The movement marks a shift in school values such that "developing relationships and connectedness take precedence over exclusion and separation from the school community" (2015, p. 13).

Schools have adopted a wide range of programs under the umbrella of restorative practice. They include informal restorative dialogue techniques between teachers, education support professionals, and students, formal restorative conferencing that involves students, staff, and, often, community members, and family, as well as restorative circles, and proactive circles.

The overriding principle behind restorative practice is its emphasis on building an inclusive community. Time is spent early and often on a variety of practices that connect students and

staff to one another in community, wherein all have shared obligations. Circles are often at the center of such efforts. The circle "is an intentional communication process guided by a community's values. It can be used to help people get to know one another, direct a meeting, teach, support someone in need, or hold someone accountable for harm or rule violations" (Riestenberg, 2012, p. 74).

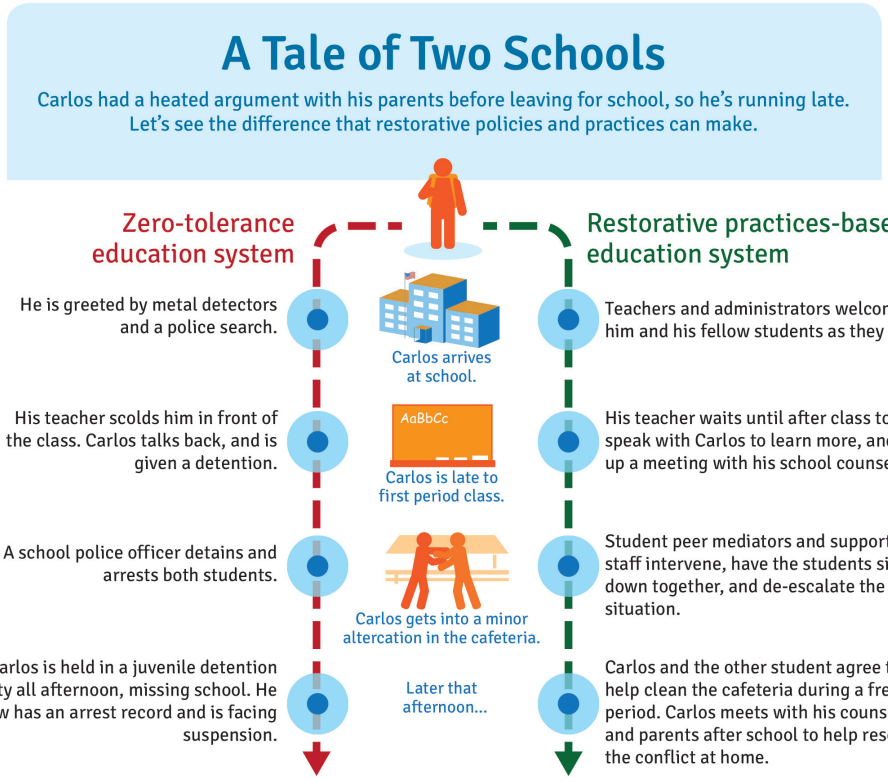
Students participating in a circle discussion in a 6th grade classroom at Murray Middle School in St. Paul.

Amos Clifford of the Center for Restorative Process has explained the significance of circles as a foundational element of restorative practices in schools:

> Sitting in a circle is a fundamentally different experience than sitting in rows, or meeting across a desk. When we are in rows there is generally someone standing in front, commanding attention. Clearly this is the person who is in charge, who has the answers, and to whom the group is accountable. When we are meeting with someone who faces us from behind a desk, we also know instinctively that the authority and power belongs with that person. These arrangements have their appropriate functions and restorative practices are intended to complement rather than replace them completely. [These traditional practices] can be effective. However, their effectiveness may have unintended consequences. One of these is the implied lesson that the responsibility for the functioning of the community is on the shoulders of the person who holds authority.

When we sit in a circle we experience a stronger sense of community. Every person in the circle shares responsibility for its functioning. Circle culture is more "yes-and" than "either-or." Yes, there is a leader, and each person takes the lead in turn, each time it is their turn to speak. [...]. Decisions are made, but by consensus of the whole group, and sometimes this means decisions come slowly or take unexpected forms.

Thus, one of the main purposes of circle dialogue is building community. Another purpose is supporting the kind of honest, authentic dialogue that is necessary to effectively respond to challenging behavior and circumstances. (Clifford, 2013, p. 9)



Reproduced with permission from AFT. Original image from: Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships for Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools (2014). A report from the Advancement Project, the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, and the National Opportunity to Learn Campaign. Retrieved from http://schottfoundation.org.

The shape of the circle "illustrates equality–there is no head of the line or back of the room. It also suggests joint ownership of the process" (Riestenberg, 2012 p. 74).

Circles draw upon the ancient Native American tradition of using a talking piece, "an object passed from person to person in a group and which grants the holder sole permission to speak. They combine this ancient tradition with contemporary concepts of democracy and inclusivity in a complex, multicultural society" (Pranis, 2005, p. 3). One need know "only that the talking piece moves in order around the circle of participants. Any question

about 'when can I talk?' and 'when can I listen?' is answered by the talking piece. I do not have to think, 'Did I as the teacher call on that student? Is there someone I missed?' The talking piece guides the eye and the attention to each participant" (p. 75). The circle is not necessarily guided by the teacher but is guided instead by the Circle Keeper, whose job it is to allow for and encourage all participants to work together. Riestenberg (2012) explains "circle decisions are made by consensus. Using the values articulated by the members, the participants develop agreements or guidelines that everyone in the Circle agrees to follow. In this way, Circles are fundamentally democratic" (p. 75). The role of Circle Keeper can rotate in a classroom so that students learn that role and share in a sense of joint ownership and responsibility. Gregory et al. (2015) explained:

> Facing one another, they have frank and open discussions about academic topics (e.g., their academic goals for the day or the semester), emotional topics (e.g., their experiences being the targets of teasing), and classroom-specific topics (e.g., what norms of respect they would like to establish in the classroom). The types of topics and specific content are limitless, yet the goal is similar: provide an opportunity for students and teachers to learn about one another (and thus respond more appropriately to one another). (p. 4)

Students participating in a restorative circle.

Circles should be used on a regular basis, and in schools using restorative practice, circles are formally structured into the classroom's daily or weekly schedule so that students learn how they work early and can rely on them as places where students and educators can feel heard and bring problems or issues. While piloting a restorative practice program, educators at Palisades High School in Kintnersville County, Pennsylvania, introduced "check-in" and "check-out" circles at the beginning and end of every 90-minute class period, which served

as "an opportunity for students to set goals and expectations together" (Mirsky, 2003, p. 3). The circles helped create "a more positive relationship between staff and students" and "helped students see that they need to buy into the community" (Mirsky, 2003, p. 3).

Riestenberg (2012) has offered helpful glimpses into how a weekly circle has worked in some Minnesota classrooms. She explained a circle project with a group of boys this way:

> The boys gather once a week for their Circle in Mr. Reed's room. [...] The co-captain, who is the Circle keeper for the session asks for a check-in. Many boys are particularly concerned about a rumor of a fight that may take place later in the day. Others are worried about the upcoming MCA tests. When the [talking piece] comes back to him, the keeper asks for suggestions about how to deal with the fight. Several ideas are offered. A few boys know one of the possible fighters, and they are going to sit with him at lunch. Maybe they can find out what the deal is and help him avoid trouble.
>
> In the midst of these suggestions, one boy asks for after-school tutoring for math. Three speakers later, Mr. Reed, who is the restorative justice guide in the school, takes the [talking piece] and offers to talk with him and the math teacher. The boys end the session with one more go-round: 'in one word, how was the Circle for you?' As the [talking piece] comes back to the keeper, the bell rings and, like students everywhere, they all get up and leave. Next week, during a different hour on a different day, they will do the same thing. (Riestenberg, 2012, pp. 76-77)

Once students and staff establish their practice for circles and become comfortable using them, they can be and often are used as conflicts arise. In some cases, students themselves can call for the circle. One student from Palisades High School said, "we're a big family. We're all different, but we all work together. If two people are arguing, a group of us will get together and talk to the people and try to work it through. As a group, we've managed to make ourselves more mature" (Mirsky, 2003, p. 3). Pranis (2005) offers another example of an impromptu circle, this one instigated by a first-grader:

> A breathless first-grader runs up to the school administrator supervising the playground. 'Mrs. Ticiu! Mrs. Ticiu!' he exclaims. 'I need a talking piece!' Mrs. Ticiu reaches into her pocket, extracts a small plastic dinosaur, and offers it to the child. He grasps the dinosaur tightly in his fist and dashes off to join several other students who, moments earlier, were arguing. With the help of the talking piece, they discuss their disagreement and find a solution they all like. (Pranis, 2005, p. 4)

These methods can profoundly change the way students interact and mediate their own conflicts. One fifth-grade teacher reports, "before we started with class circles and restorative questions I felt that it was my sole responsibility to solve problems and take care of issues. Now I can see how it makes sense to share this responsibility with students. Students shifted in the same way, from expecting me to take care of everything, to understanding that they had a responsibility to help" (qtd. In Clifford, 2013, p. 8).

Circles are also used to repair harm, and at this level, circle keeping "requires training, practice, and mentorship for the teacher," especially if the circle is in lieu of a suspension or expulsion (Riestenberg, 2012, pp. 76, 167). Restorative practice looks dramatically different than traditional approaches when student misbehavior occurs. At the center of the practice is the relationship between the wrongdoer and those impacted by the behavior. In restorative practice schools, "those affected by an infraction or crime come together to identify how people were affected by the incident (Gregory et al., 2015, p. 3). This coming together serves as the catalyst for repair.

Affected stakeholders may include student offenders, student and/or staff victims and their supporters, the offending students' parents or guardians, administrators, and can include bystanders and classmates, responding police officers or other security personnel, guidance counselors, school social workers, education support professionals, and teachers. An important aspect of this approach is that "it empowers victims, families, school staff and offenders by putting them in active roles: all are given the opportunity to express needs and problem-solve, and offenders are given the responsibility of repairing the harm and thus earning redemption rather than passively receiving punishment" (McMorris et al, 2013, p. 7). Riestenberg (2012) offered the story of four junior boys who got into a fight to explain how this works. She wrote:

> They were sent to the office and, in lieu of suspension, agreed to sit in Circle to try to repair the harm. Three boys admitted to jumping the fourth boy because he had made disparaging remarks about a friend of theirs who had been killed in a car crash earlier in the month. Through discussion, all four boys agreed that the person they had harmed most was the boy who had died. He did not deserve the disparaging remarks, and he would not have wanted his friends to start a fight. So, they all agreed to go to the cemetery, and, one by one, to apologize to the dead boy at his grave. (pp. 167-168)

Instead of a suspension that expelled them from the community, they were brought more powerfully into it, allowed the opportunity to reflect on the ways in which their behavior harmed others, and allowed to make amends and repair relationships.

The most important principle behind the intervention stage of a restorative programs is that focus is to be placed on the harm done rather than the act itself. This focus on harm done allows for reintegration, for the wrongdoer to be reconciled and reaccepted by the community rather than expelled from it (Fronius et al., 2016). The basic tenets of restorative practice "emphasize a fair and collective process, featuring nurturing, growth, and communal empathy and resilience over exploitation and imposed control" (Fronius et al., 2016, p. 6).

One of the most dramatic shifts involved in moving from an exclusionary approach to student behavior to a restorative approach has to do with the questions we ask when a student exhibits problematic behavior. Instead of focusing on the rule broken and asking "What's wrong with you?" the question is an immediate and curious, "What happened to you?" Instead of focusing on the rule broken and the wrongness of the wrongdoer, restorative

practitioners focus on the harm done and seek to help the wrongdoer learn and grow. This shift in no way means that we do not hold the student accountable for his or her behavior. On the contrary, by paying overt attention to the harm done community-wide, whether another person was hurt or 16 other people were hurt, a restorative approach to the misbehavior includes identifying ways for the student to take responsibility for and repair that harm.

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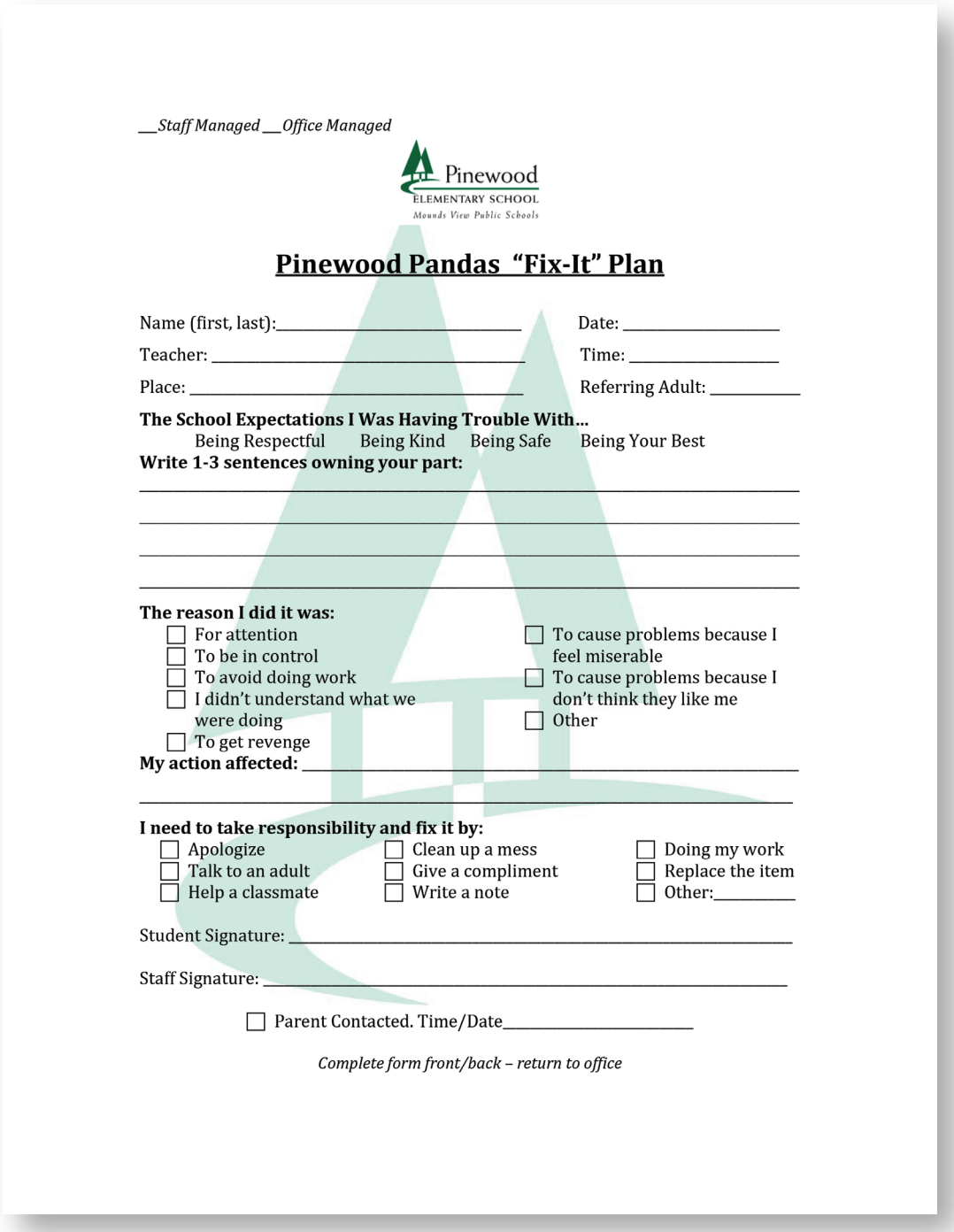
Office referrals in a restorative model might look similar to an outsider, but they are vastly different than the typical office referral under a strict, exclusionary policy. Office referrals under zero-tolerance policies often involve one thing: the removal, either for a short time or a long time, of the student. In a restorative model, office referrals would involve fix-it plans, reconciliation plans, opportunities to repair harm, opportunities to get support and help for the root causes of behavior, and opportunities to remain a valued part of the community.

David Wicklund is a teacher in the Mounds View Public Schools, and he leads teams in restorative practices that support all students (Wicklund, 2016, personal communication). He points out that relationships and reconciliation are the critical pieces of the restorative puzzle, and they are pieces, not coincidentally, that are entirely disregarded by zero-tolerance policies.

Sometimes, student behavior is so serious and relationships between students and their families and staff at schools so badly damaged that expulsion is the only option that schools can envision. And even at this stage there are restorative practices that have shown dramatic success and that have been applauded by previously cynical stakeholders on all sides of the table. One outstanding example of this comes from The Family and Youth Restorative Conference Program operating in Minneapolis and to a lesser extent in St. Paul, which "utilizes Family Group Conferences as a restorative intervention strategy for responding to disciplinary incident leading to a possible recommendation for expulsion" (McMorris, et al., 2013).



__*Staff Managed* __*Office Managed*

Pinewood
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
Mounds View Public Schools

Pinewood Pandas "Fix-It" Plan

Name (first, last):_____ Date: _____

Teacher: _____ Time: _____

Place: _____ Referring Adult: _____

The School Expectations I Was Having Trouble With...

Being Respectful Being Kind Being Safe Being Your Best

Write 1-3 sentences owning your part:

_____

_____

_____

_____

The reason I did it was:

- ☐ For attention
- ☐ To be in control
- ☐ To avoid doing work
- ☐ I didn't understand what we were doing
- ☐ To get revenge
- ☐ To cause problems because I feel miserable
- ☐ To cause problems because I don't think they like me
- ☐ Other

My action affected: _____

_____

I need to take responsibility and fix it by:

- ☐ Apologize
- ☐ Talk to an adult
- ☐ Help a classmate
- ☐ Clean up a mess
- ☐ Give a compliment
- ☐ Write a note
- ☐ Doing my work
- ☐ Replace the item
- ☐ Other:_____

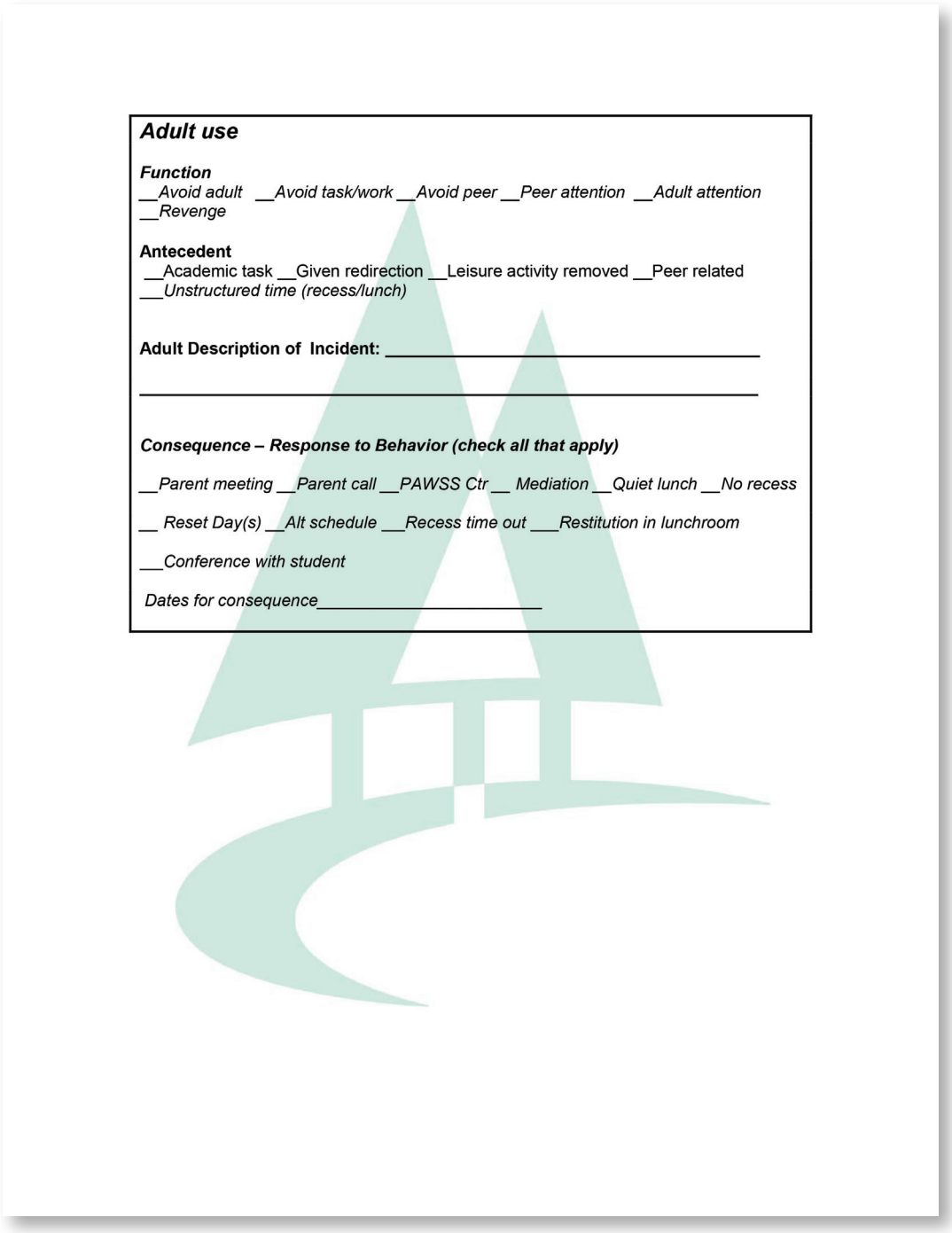
Student Signature: _____

Staff Signature: _____

☐ Parent Contacted. Time/Date_____

Complete form front/back – return to office

Pinewood Elementary School's "Fix-it Plan" reflects a restorative alternative to simply removing a disruptive student for a time and then returning that student to the classroom without any intervention.



Adult use

Function
__*Avoid adult* __*Avoid task/work* __*Avoid peer* __*Peer attention* __*Adult attention*
__*Revenge*

Antecedent
__Academic task __Given redirection __Leisure activity removed __Peer related
___*Unstructured time (recess/lunch)*

Adult Description of Incident: _____

_____

Consequence – Response to Behavior (check all that apply)

__*Parent meeting* __*Parent call* __*PAWSS Ctr* __ *Mediation* __*Quiet lunch* __*No recess*

__ *Reset Day(s)* __*Alt schedule* ___*Recess time out* ___*Restitution in lunchroom*

___*Conference with student*

*Dates for consequence*_____

Pinewood Elementary School's "Fix-it Plan" reflects a restorative alternative to simply removing a disruptive student for a time and then returning that student to the classroom without any intervention.

Family group conferencing is one way to repair harm, hold the student accountable, maintain the school's needs, and send the message to the student that though the behavior is unacceptable, the student is not irredeemable. McMorris, et al (2013) explained:

> In a family group conference, stakeholders meet for a dialogue facilitated by a trained third party mediator. At this meeting the victim may share their story and feelings with the offender and the offender may share more about their circumstances leading up to the incident, accept responsibility for their actions, and make a formal apology. Along with input from teachers, family, and administration, a plan is created to address the needs of the victim and stakeholders and allow the offender to repair the harm they have caused and mend damaged relationships. (p. 8)

Family group conferencing is held as "perhaps the strongest model for educating offenders about the harm their behavior causes to others" (Bazemore & Umbreit, 1999, p. 9).

Minnesota is leading the way with implementing restorative practices in schools, though the state will need to make a much more dramatic commitment if we are to benefit from all that the practice can offer. There are many types of restorative practices, not one single practice. The Legal Rights Center based in Minneapolis conducts a different type of restorative practice called Family Group Conferencing. They primarily offer these services for the Minneapolis school district and in some cases for St. Paul Public Schools, and it is a very successful alternative to exclusionary interventions. The University of Minnesota has conducted an empirical study of the results of this program, and we have powerful evidence of its effectiveness.

The 2013 report, "Applying Restorative Practices to Minneapolis Public Schools Students Recommended for Possible Expulsion," presents the findings from the study that examined survey responses from 83 students and 90 parents or guardians who participated in the Family Group Conferencing process between March 2010 and June 2012. Most of the behavioral incidents that gave rise to the recommendations for expulsion of these students were assault (43 students) and possession of a weapon (26 students). Other infractions included drugs, threats or intimidation, vandalism, harassment, disorderly conduct, theft, indecent exposure, sexual harassment, and possession of explosives (McMorris et al., 2013, p. 21). The Legal Rights Center then facilitated a Family Group Conference that included representatives from the school, the students, and the students' parents or guardians. The results are powerful:

- High levels of program satisfaction were reported by both students and parents/guardians.
- Students reported positive, significant increases in their ability to make good choices about how to act, even when upset.
- Compared to pre-conference, students were more likely to agree that they know someone they can ask for help at school post-conference.
- Students reported significantly less fighting and skipping school post-conference.

- Students and family members reported increases in positive family communication post-conference.
- Parents and guardians reported significantly higher levels of connection to their child's school post-conference, as well as greater awareness of community resources to help them support their child to do better at school. (McMorris, 2013, p. 2)

In addition to the survey findings, the study also includes data garnered from school records, and they, too, speak volumes about the direction we should be heading. When researchers looked at the records of the students who had participated in Family Group Conferencing, they found results that are dramatically different than patterns we see after students have been suspended or expelled. In the year following Family Group Conferencing:

- Attendance increased sharply the year after the family group conference.
- Involvement in serious behavioral incidents decreased the year after the family group conference.
- The proportion of students who participated in the family group conference who were on track to graduate the following year increased. (McMorris, 2013, p. 2)

We have relied on suspensions and expulsions as a way to manage student behavior, but the fact is that these policies simply don't improve behavior. Sarah Davis points out that the restorative process known as Family Group Conferencing "works better than exclusionary practices in improving behaviors—period. The research shows this to be the case" (Davis, personal communication, 2016).

In addition to the high satisfaction rates from students and parents/guardians, school staff who have been involved in Family Group Conferencing are also very enthusiastic about the process and the benefits of having a third party facilitate the intervention meeting. Families who have participated in the Family Group Conferencing process in Minneapolis underscore the fact that while it is possible without a third party, using an outside facilitator can go a long way toward helping the parties rebuild trust. The Legal Rights Center relies on grant funding and some fees to the districts it serves to provide its services. Ideally, districts around the state would partner with community organizations or agencies that could be trained and could serve in this capacity. It is important to note that facilitators for high stakes Family Group Conferencing require intensive, high quality, and ongoing training in order to be successful.

Restorative practices, like Family Group Conferencing, have been shown to be effective in virtually all levels of education and in a variety of types of educational settings, including exclusively special education settings such as Minnesota's federal level IV settings, correctional settings, and day-treatment settings. The Minnesota Department of Education has trained special education mediators in restorative practices, and many special education educators are already using some elements of a restorative practice in their classrooms.

Paul McCold, a researcher from the International Institute for Restorative Practices, collaborated with researchers at Temple University to look for empirical evidence of the effectiveness of restorative practices in schools for delinquent and high-risk youth in southeastern Pennsylvania. They found the same dramatic results that we see when we

examine other schools that have made the shift from exclusionary to restorative practice. McCold surveyed students, parents, and staff in several regular public schools and in the schools that served delinquent and high-risk students about basic school culture and about their perceptions of school safety. The results are impressive. Mirksy and Wachtel (2007) reported McCold's findings that "students who attend the [restorative] schools are among the most conflict-prone and violent young people from each of their schools of origin, they felt dramatically safer and more comfortable at the [restorative] schools than did the students at the four public middle schools who participated in the survey" (p. 14). Mirsky and Wachtel (2007) conclude that "exposure to a restorative milieu positively improves both the attitudes and behavior of delinquent and at-risk youth, regardless of their age, gender, race, offense type, or criminal history, and can dramatically reduce offending among at risk and misbehaving young people" (p. 16).

Restorative practice is seen by many as a method for addressing the inequity that has been the result of exclusionary discipline policies, whereby some students are far more likely than others to be suspended for similar offenses (Fronius et al., 2016, p. 16). It is important to note that most school-based restorative justice programs in the United States are in their infancy, and so the research on the effectiveness of such programs is also relatively young. But common themes are emerging from the literature, and those themes are so consistent that we would be foolish to ignore them.

Research around restorative practices in schools shows a large number of very promising benefits. Many scholars have shown the effectiveness of restorative practice implementation in schools. The documented benefits by researchers include:

- Schools witnessed a reduction in punitive disciplinary actions (Armour, 2013; Mirsky, 2003; Tyler, 2006).
- Schools experienced a reduction in harmful and violent behavior over time (Armour, 2013; Mirsky, 2003; Tyler, 2006).
- The authors of the most recent literature review on restorative practices in schools reported that schools using these practices saw a reduction in the rates of exclusionary interventions and harmful behavior (Fronius et al., 2016, p. 20).
- Students held greater respect for teachers and paraprofessionals, across varying racial and ethnic groups, working in schools using restorative practices (Gregory et al., 2015, p. 18; Mirsky, 2003).
- Schools and districts lowered the racial-discipline gap by having fewer differences in the number of misconduct/defiance referrals issued to Asian/White and Latino/African American student groups (Armour, 2013; Baker, 2009; Fronius et al., 2016, p. 19; Gonzalez, 2012; Gregory et al., 2015, p. 18; Suvall, 2009).
- Schools reported increased student connectedness (Gonzalez, 2012).
- Schools reported improved student academic achievement (Gonzalez, 2012).
- Schools reported an increase in incidents of staff offering support to students (Gonzalez, 2012).
- Schools reported an improved school climate (Mirsky, 2003).

- Students in restorative schools showed gains in attendance rates, credit accrual, and progression toward graduation (McMorris et al, 2013).

One long-time teacher in a Pennsylvania school that shifted to restorative practice summed up her experience by saying: "I've gotten more out of my students with [restorative practice] than I did with a more rigid approach to discipline problems. When you solve problems with them rather than coming down from on high, they buy into it much better" (as cited by Mirsky, 2003, p. 5). Minnesota needs policies that promote restorative practices.

TRAUMA-INFORMED

Restorative practice in schools includes an awareness on the part of all educators of the impact that trauma has on the developing brain. We know much more now than we did 25 years ago about why some student behavior looks like it does, and we must equip our educators to recognize and respond appropriately to children exhibiting the signs of toxic stress.

It is imperative that Minnesota educators trained in trauma-sensitive practices, so all school staff can work together to create trauma-sensitive climates in every school building in the state.

It is irresponsible to ignore the research on trauma and brain development. Robert Anda (2010), one of the leading authors of arguably the most important piece of research in this field has asserted that, "The impact of [trauma] can now only be ignored as matter of conscious choice. With this information comes the responsibility to use it" (Anda et al, 2010). Anda's argument has been echoed by Steven Teske, chief judge of the Juvenile Court of Clayton County, Georgia. He has pointed to the failure of zero-tolerance policies to deter negative behaviors in school and the role of those policies in creating and feeding the school-to-prison pipeline to declare that failing to replace exclusionary practices with trauma-informed practices in our schools is worse than neglect. Teske (2016) wrote, "there comes a point in time when the unintended consequences of good-intentioned practices is no longer accepted as negligent. That's when the published evidence of its harmfulness is notice to all that the continued practice constitutes purposeful intent" (p. 1). We are at this moment in Minnesota, and we must start to pay attention to the research on the links between trauma and student behavior.

It is imperative that Minnesota educators be trained in trauma-sensitive practices, so all school staff can work together to create trauma-sensitive climates in every school building in the state. Instead of thinking about student behavior in terms of how schools respond when students behave badly, we can create environments in which kids with toxic stress can be successful in the first place (Craig, 2016). Policies designed to inform practice related to

student behavior can be proactive, "intended to anticipate and prevent as many problems as possible" via the implementation of universal supports designed through a trauma-informed lens (Craig, 2016, p. 12).

Kim Davidson works with a student in her second grade classroom in Crookston.

THE PREVALENCE OF TRAUMA IN PUBLIC SCHOOL STUDENTS

Some of the most important research on trauma and brain development is relatively new. We know much more than we did only two decades ago about how many of our students suffer the effects of trauma and about how that trauma influences their learning. In the 1990s, two scientists, Robert Anda, an epidemiologist with the Centers for Disease Control, and Vincent Felitti, a preventative disease specialist with Kaiser Permanente, conducted a study to better understand the association between adverse childhood experiences and lifelong health. Their 1998 study asked 17,337 mostly middle-class participants in San Diego about their health history and childhood trauma. Participants were asked whether or not they had adverse childhood experiences such as abuse, neglect, or having a family member abuse substances or be incarcerated.

Anda and Felitti discovered that traumatic childhood events are common–60% of the population they surveyed had experienced at least one adverse childhood experience. And they discovered that there is a direct correlation between a person's ACEs score (the number of events experienced) and a wide array of poor outcomes in physical and mental health as well as negative social consequences later in life.

Because of the prevalence of childhood adversity, researchers expected this ratio to be consistent across the states (Stevens, 2016), and since then, "ACE studies have been conducted in 29 states and Washington DC with similar results" (Stevens, 2015a, p. 5). Minnesota's ACEs study was conducted in 2011, and we now know with much greater certainty how much trauma is reflected in the lives of our students.

Kim Davidson, a second-grade teacher in northern Minnesota, recently had a conversation with her class about the things going on in their lives that make it hard to focus in school. She asked what makes it hard for them, and they responded. Five had parents in jail. One lost his eighth grade sister suddenly to a heart condition earlier this year. Two have a parent who lives in another state. One said that she didn't know when her mom was getting out of jail or whether or not she would be able to see her. Several were in tears. Davidson asked, "what would you want to tell adults about what you go through?" One girl said, "that I worry." Davidson asked, "what if the adult tells you just not to worry?" The girl responded, "I would say it's a really big worry."

During the Minnesota ACEs study, participants were asked how many of the following nine adverse childhood experiences they remembered having before the age of 18:

1. physical abuse
2. sexual abuse
3. emotional abuse
4. mental illness of a household member
5. problematic drinking or alcoholism of a household member
6. illegal street or prescription drug use by a household member
7. divorce or separation of a parent
8. domestic violence towards a parent
9. incarceration of a household member

In Minnesota, 55% of the adult population reports having one or more of the nine identified adverse childhood experiences. The most common are emotional abuse (28%), living with a problem drinker (24%), separation or divorce of a parent (21%), mental illness in the

household (17%), and physical abuse (16%) (Minnesota Department of Health). Of those who have one or more adverse childhood experiences, 60% have had two, and 15% have had five or more.

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While the Minnesota ACEs study's data on adults does not use a big enough sampling of racial groups to conduct a detailed analysis of how trauma affects racial groups differently, it does provide evidence that "African Americans and Native Americans had a significantly higher percent of individuals reporting five or more ACEs as compared to Whites" (Minnesota Department of Health, p. 18).

Another survey that is more acutely germane to our understanding of racial disparities in ACE scores is the Minnesota Student Survey, which provides data directly from Minnesota youth. From the 1990s to 2010, the Minnesota Student Survey of 6th, 9th, and 12th grade students included questions covering five categories of adverse childhood experiences:

1. physical abuse
2. sexual abuse
3. witnessing household violence
4. alcohol abuse by family member
5. drug abuse by family member

The answers to this survey, therefore, allow us to form an ACE-type score that ranges from 0-5, and this survey does provide adequate samples of students from different racial and ethnic groups (Minnesota Department of Health). When we look at the results of this study, we see that African American, Hispanic, and American Indian students are consistently more likely to suffer from higher ACE scores. In fact, since 1995, "African American, American Indian, and Hispanic 9th graders have been at least twice as likely as White students to report three or more kinds of adverse experiences. In every year, Asian students have been slightly more likely than White students to report three or more adverse experiences" (Minnesota Department of Health).

Consistent with other states, women and girls in Minnesota bear a higher burden of trauma than boys and men. Sexual abuse is one, but only one, important part of this disparity. Eight

percent of girls in the United States experience rape (6%) or attempted rape (2%) during childhood (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2012). Though rates of sexual abuse are much higher among girls and women than they are for boys and men, this is not the only area of trauma that disproportionally harms girls and women. In the Minnesota ACEs study, women held higher rates of experience with sexual abuse, domestic violence, physical abuse, living with a family member with mental illness, living with a family member with problem drinking, and emotional abuse (Minnesota Department of Health, 2013).

Girls of color are particularly more likely to have high ACE scores when they get to our schools, and they continue to accrue additional traumatic experiences as they make their way through school. Quinlan (2016) argues that, "girls of color who have experienced trauma are also particularly vulnerable to being pushed into the school-to-prison pipeline through harsh student discipline" (p. 2). Too often, "racially disparate and harsh student discipline pushes girls of color out of school—and sometimes into the criminal justice system—instead of getting them the help they need to cope with trauma" (Quinlan, 2016). This trend must be corrected.

Research also shows us that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered students experience much higher rates of trauma than the general population. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth Surveillance Report of 2015 found that lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are more than three times more likely than heterosexual youth to have been forced to have sex (18% vs. 5%), more than twice as likely as heterosexual youth to have experienced sexual dating violence (23% vs. 9%), and more than twice as likely as heterosexual youth to have experienced physical dating violence (18% vs. 8%) (Centers for Disease Control, 2016). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual people are more than twice as likely as heterosexual people to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (Roberts, Austin, Corliss, Vandermorris, & Koenen, 2010). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth are four times more likely than their heterosexual peers to attempt suicide (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011), and nearly half of young transgendered people have considered suicide, while 25% report having made an attempt (Brevelle, 2013; Grossman & D'Augelli, 2007).

We can also expect to see far higher ACE scores in high-poverty regions of the state, as poverty itself is so closely correlated with traumatic experiences that it is considered in itself a form of environmental trauma. As Craig (2016) has explained:

> Prolonged financial insecurity triggers a host of life-conditioning experiences that erode the protective capacity of the family in ways that traumatize both parents and their children. Poor people are overly stressed and often lack the resources they need to adequately meet daily demands. Inadequate housing, unpredictable food supply, transportation issues, crime, and lack of physical safety undermine parental effectiveness and limit siblings' ability to care for one another. (pp. 23-24)

When children's brains develop in environments so rich in stress and without the buffers from stress supplied by parents and communities that have greater resources, "they adapt in a manner that favors their survival but threatens their ability to succeed in school" (Craig, 2016.

p. 24). This is especially true when we see student behavior only through the traditional lens that expects all students come to school without toxic stress, and we respond to misbehavior with only exclusionary measures.

It has been documented again and again that students in special education settings are likely to have substantially higher ACE scores than other students (Children's Defense, 2015; Kahn & Vezzuto, 2016; Oehlberg, 2012). Results from an ACEs survey conducted in a level IV special education setting in Ramsey County in 2015 demonstrated findings that are remarkably different from the numbers reflecting larger pools of students statewide. Minnesota's Student Survey conducted in 2013 included seven traumatic experiences, which means that on this measure, students can have an ACE score of between zero and seven. In the 2013 Student Survey of the general student population, 65% of Minnesota's 5th, 8th, 9th, and 11th graders reported a score of zero, 18% reported a score of one, 9% reported a score of two, and 8% reported a score of four or higher (Minnesota Department of Health). In stark contrast, in a survey conducted by mental health specialist Kevin Host in a level IV special education school in Ramsey County, not one of the students reported a score of zero, 3% reported a score of one, 7% reported a score of two, and 90% reported a score of four or higher (Horst, 2016, personal communication). Horst's survey echoes the findings of other researchers who have looked at ACE scores in special education settings. This tells us that our special education students, as diverse as their special needs may be, are united by one common theme: high doses of toxic stress stemming from multiple highly traumatic experiences.

One of the lessons regarding students identified as needing special education services that we have learned from the ACEs work of the past two decades is that many students who are diagnosed with mental illness and disabilities are misdiagnosed. Scholars estimate that roughly one million children nationwide are diagnosed with a mental illness or disability each year that could be better explained by trauma (Children's Defense, 2015; Craig, 2016; Leahy, 2015; Oehlberg, 2012).

One example of this dynamic relates to many students diagnosed with ADHD. Many doctors have written of the ways in which trauma responses manifest in ways that look like and are often diagnosed as ADHD. Ruiz (2014) has argued that "hyper vigilance and dissociation . . . could be mistaken for inattention. Impulsivity might be brought on by a stress response in overdrive" (p. 2). And we know from ACEs studies that people with high ACE scores are far more likely than those with low ACE scores to use ADHD medication (Ruiz, 2014). And while we do not have enough information about how trauma influences ADHD diagnosis and management, we do know that "some misbehaving children might be experiencing harm that no stimulant can fix. These children may also legitimately have ADHD, but unless prior or ongoing emotional damage is treated, it may be difficult to see dramatic improvement in the child's behavior" (Ruiz, 2014, p. 2). Without using a trauma-informed lens, we are simply not addressing the root causes of the problem for far too many of our students. This is true in all of our classrooms, but it is especially true in special education settings.

Trauma-informed practice is critical for our special education students at all levels. Trauma-informed practice can address a student's needs before he or she receives a referral to special education or a referral to higher levels of special education. These practices can help educators better meet the needs of students in all settings.

In the realm of education policy, the most important aspect of the ACEs study has to do with how trauma and toxic stress affect the brain's ability to learn. We know that more than half of our students have had adverse childhood experiences, and that 15% of those who have had at least one have had five or more.

Early traumatic experiences are also more prevalent among youth in Minnesota's correctional facilities. Justice system youth are more likely than their counterparts to have experienced trauma and are more likely to have experienced multiple types of trauma. Hurley, Suayze, and Buskovick (2015) have reported:

> Youth in Minnesota correctional facilities are more likely than not to have experienced ACEs. Over 82% reported at least one ACE, compared to just 18% who reported experiencing no ACEs. (p. 2)

Also, nationwide, "80% of youth involved in the juvenile justice system, have been exposed to traumatic events associated with physical abuse, sexual assault, domestic violence, and community/school violence (Armour, 2015, p. 12; Wasserman & McReynolds, 2011).

The Minnesota ACEs study provides us with a startling picture of the prevalence of toxic stress within our student population. The data show that in an average class of 30 students, 16-17 have had one or more adverse childhood experiences, and two to three have had five or more. The data also show us that in many of our classrooms, specifically classrooms in high-poverty areas and those with high populations of American Indian, African American, Hispanic, LGBT, and special education-identified students, the prevalence of high ACE scores is much, much higher.

HOW DOES TRAUMA CHANGE THE BRAIN AND INFLUENCE STUDENT LEARNING?

The prevalence of adverse childhood experiences within our student population reflects only one reason to restructure our approach to student behavior in our schools. The other major advances in our understanding have to do with our growing knowledge of what this toxic stress means for brain development, lifelong health, and learning.

Adverse childhood experiences "are a common pathway to social, emotional, and cognitive impairments that lead to increased risk of unhealthy behaviors, risk of violence or re-victimization, disease, disability, and premature mortality" (Anda & Brown, 2010). An individual's ACE score correlates on a graded scale–that is, the higher the ACE score, the higher the probability–to his or her likelihood of developing cardiovascular disease, cancer, obesity, sleep disturbances, mental distress, anxiety, hopelessness, depression, and asthma. It also correlates on a graded scale to his or her likelihood of smoking, heavy drinking, binge drinking, and marijuana use.

The implications of the ACEs study are enormous and span many different fields of study and practice, from public health to medicine to education. In the realm of education policy, the most important aspect of the ACEs study has to do with how trauma and toxic stress affect the brain's ability to learn. We know that more than half of our students have had adverse childhood experiences, and that 15% of those who have had at least one have had five or more. So what does that mean for our approach to teaching and learning, and for our approach to student behavior?

The truth is, trauma changes the very architecture of the brain. The Minnesota Department of Health (2013) has reported that:

> Persistent and intense stress stemming from ACEs actually influences how the brain develops. Toxic stress strengthens connections in the parts of the brain that are associated with fear, arousal, and emotional regulation. Additionally, toxic stress negatively impacts parts of the brain associated with learning and memory. (p. 9)

Although schools cannot directly change the economic and social conditions that lead to high levels of toxic stress in children, "the manner in which educators respond to the needs of these students is within their grasp when there is adequate preparation and training" (Oehlberg, 2012, p. 8).

As Robert Anda, Nadine Burke Harris, and others involved in the documentary, *Resilience,* explain, there is, of course, such a thing as a healthy stress level. If you cross a street and suddenly see a car approaching quickly, your body will release adrenalin and cortisol. Adrenalin and cortisol will help you jump out of the way of the oncoming car, and that's a good thing. But when our brains are flushed with adrenalin and cortisol over and over again, day after day, that takes a physical toll on the brain. The brain awash with toxic stress develops differently than the brain that is free of it (*Resilience,* 2016). Scientists have been able to compare brain scans of children with traumatic experiences against those of children without such experiences, and we know now that those brains are structurally different. The brains of children who have experienced trauma, for example, have exaggerated fear

responses and decreased activation in the areas of the brain needed to control that emotion (*Resilience,* 2016).

Children can experience developmental delays from exposure to trauma. Craig (2016) has argued "there is no longer any doubt that violence and chronic exposure to toxic stress disrupt the process of normal child development" (p. 1). Our current education system was developed on the assumption that students' brains could be counted on to have developed without the influences of toxic stress. To continue with approaches to student learning based on this erroneous assumption is to ignore facts. The effects of early trauma on childhood development and learning force education policymakers to reckon with the fact that traditional behavior management techniques are an inappropriate response. Craig (2016) has stated that

> Early trauma limits children's ability to use higher-order thinking to regulate subcortical brain activity. Their thinking is 'held hostage' by relentless fear and hyper-arousal. These sensations cannot be contained or extinguished through traditional methods. Instead, interventions directed at regulating brain stem activity are required. (p. 59)

Trauma-informed schools are staffed by educators and administrators who are trained in ACEs, who understand the fight, flight, or freeze response, and who understand and develop programming to help students living with chronic levels of stress begin to develop resiliency.

When the brain releases cortisol, a person is in what is commonly known as "fight, flight, or freeze" mode. When this is happening, "the brain cannot physiologically take in new knowledge or problem solve" (Medina, 2014). The student "with unprocessed traumatic memories cannot deal with threats, real or perceived, which cause them to automatically drop out of their neo-cortex into their limbic area for the survival reactions of fight/flight" (Oehlberg, 2012, p. 5).

For many adults, educators among them, who are not well versed in the way trauma affects brain development and behavior, the reactions of students living with high levels of toxic stress can seem baffling. The behaviors seem irrational, and that's precisely because they are irrational. Oehlberg (2015) has explained these behaviors by stressing that, "they are not coming from the central nervous system. Instead, they originate from the mid-brain area of the limbic system, referred to as the grand central station for safety and security, a primal drive. Such survival behaviors are automatic, which means the student has not engaged in them by choice" (p. 5).

Once we understand what is happening in the brain when the fight, flight, or freeze response is triggered, we must move away from our traditional assumptions that the child is making a deliberate choice and can learn despite what is happening in the brain. Although schools cannot directly change the economic and social conditions that lead to high levels of toxic stress in children, "the manner in which educators respond to the needs of these students is within their grasp when there is adequate preparation and training" (Oehlberg, 2012, p. 8).

Craig (2016) has compiled the overwhelming amount of evidence we now have that shows us that early trauma affects every aspect of cognitive development. She has the evidence to make the case that early trauma affects "representational thought, language, memory, attention, and executive functioning" (Craig, 2016, p. 59). Craig also has said that "children with histories of adversity face significant disadvantages in meeting the academic and social demands of school" (p. 59). Other researchers have confirmed her research by showing that traumatized children exhibit:

- lower test scores (Cook et al., 2005)
- higher referrals to special education, (Jonson et al., 2004; Oehlberg, 2012)
- higher dropout rates and (Porche et al., 2011)
- a higher likelihood than peers to engage in delinquent behavior (Lansford et al., 2007)

Craig (2016) has said that trauma-sensitive schools are not only sensitive to this research, but they also provide training for all staff to "integrate foundational skill development into everyday activities and routines" (p. 59). The effects of early trauma on the brain's ability to learn are so pervasive, and the prevalence of students laden with high levels of toxic stress in Minnesota so high, that it is imperative that our schools view children's academic and social behavior through a trauma-sensitive lens.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR A SCHOOL TO BE TRAUMA-SENSITIVE?

Trauma-informed schools are staffed by educators and administrators who are trained in ACEs, who understand the fight, flight, or freeze response, and who understand and develop programming to help students living with chronic levels of stress begin to develop resiliency. These programs help students, over time, to know the difference between the real threats to their safety and the triggers in everyday life that feel like those real threats but are not. Craig (2016) has said the news is not all bad. Brain development turns out to be a very dynamic process that retains a certain plasticity or capacity to adapt throughout the human life span. This ability to change offers hope that the effects of early trauma can be reversed later in life. With the right type of instruction and emotional support, traumatized children can regain their ability to achieve academic and social mastery (p. 1).

It is upon this premise that the concept of a trauma-sensitive schools is based, and Minnesota needs more of them.

Trauma-sensitive schools have an opportunity to provide a range of supports to students with high levels of toxic stress. This will require "designing instruction in a manner that promotes neural development, consistent use of positive behavior supports, collaboration

with community mental health professionals, and creation of a school climate that ensures safety for all children" (Craig, 2016, p. 15). Craig (2016) also says that in trauma-sensitive schools, "staff are trained to understand trauma and its implications for student behavior and development. Staff members are then able to work with the brain's adaptive capacity or neuroplasticity to help children restore their capacity for self-regulation, social connection, and learning" (p. 15). This type of training can work and will help Minnesota's students. Gwendolyn Johnson, who works with students in level IV settings, explains, "when they are so internally out of control, they need that external support." Trauma-sensitive schools will offer these needed supports. By design, these schools "provide children with a nurturing, developmentally appropriate, and educationally rich environment that is responsive to their needs. Within this protective context, traumatized children learn to manage the effects of trauma and move on with their lives" (Craig, 2016, p. 14).

One of the most critical shifts in our thinking about student behaviors, a shift embedded in both trauma-informed and restorative practice, is the move from thinking or saying "what's wrong with you?" when a student exhibits poor behavior, to thinking or saying "what happened to you?"

The role of teachers and education support professionals in trauma-sensitive schools is to "integrate what we now know of children's neurodevelopment into classroom practice to help students overcome trauma-related challenges" (Craig, 2016, p. 60). Educators in these schools "do not have to mention trauma to be trauma-sensitive" (Craig, 2016, p. 60). However, as Craig (2016) has argued, the educators in trauma-sensitive schools "have to engage children in noncoercive ways." We know that what Craig (2016) has called "authoritarian approaches" to discipline "can trigger the fight-, flight, or freeze reaction in traumatized children" (p. 60). This interrupts the learning in the triggered child, and it can disrupt the learning opportunities for all the other students. Quinlan (2016) has noted that discipline practices need to "address the root of the problem and ask young people why they are angry and getting into fights at school, rather than simply addressing the behavior itself. By handcuffing or isolating students, which can re-traumatize them, or through suspending and expelling students, which pushes them out of school, staff are only making matters worse" (Quinlan, 2016, p. 2). Our old intervention models may only escalate a misbehaving student. It is time to try new approaches sensitive to the science of trauma.

A third-grade teacher in a suburban district offers a powerful example of the missed opportunity to help one kid in a trauma-informed manner. This teacher was stifled by zero-tolerance, exclusionary policies. The teacher describes it this way:

> I had a student whose parents were separating, and he was struggling to maintain control. He became super disruptive. But there was no plan for him, no intervention. The entire class was just waiting for him to explode constantly, or he would just walk in and out of the room. Other kids were afraid of him. The principal knew it. Teachers knew it. The kid knew it. But there was no plan. No intervention. He was sent to special events with everyone knowing he would be violent, but there was no attempt to find out what he was dealing with and help him with it. There was only a system waiting to punish him after he acted out. (anonymous, 2016, personal communication)

We know now that trauma-informed practices can help address the root causes of disruptive behaviors like the one described by this educator. Minnesota's educators deserve to be empowered to address these types of student needs.

We have to start addressing the causes of behaviors.

We cannot simply react to behaviors.

One of the most critical shifts in our thinking about student behaviors, a shift embedded in both trauma-informed and restorative practice, is the move from thinking or saying "what's wrong with you?" when a student exhibits poor behavior, to thinking or saying "what happened to you?" When we see the behaviors as expressions of toxic stress caused by trauma, our response to those behaviors can shift dramatically. Rebecca Wade tells a story of a student whose father is in prison. The student is the oldest of four siblings, and was 15 when the mother got up in the middle of the night, walked out of the house, and left the state. The student tried to care for his siblings for as long as he could, but of course that was not long. The kids were split up. The student and his three younger siblings were abandoned by their parent. He did not know where he would sleep each night, or how they would eat. This student came to school angry at the world every single day. Wade explains: "I think about how our kids get pushed out because of trauma or crisis or really complex post-traumatic stress-things that have happened in their lives. And they get to school and the adults assume they are behaving that way on purpose." We have to start addressing the causes of behaviors. We cannot simply react to behaviors.

Positive behavior intervention (PBIS) and social emotional learning (SEL) programs remain critical tools for our schools in a trauma-informed, restorative approach to student behavior. SEL programs involve incorporating the teaching of social and emotional skills into the curriculum and culture of the school. PBIS is a multi-tiered framework that guides the organization of behavior support within a school with the goal of improving both behavior

and academic outcomes for all students. Schools that are implementing PBIS with fidelity (accurately and fluently) clearly define, teach, and reinforce school-wide expectations; make data-based decisions to monitor intervention implementation and student response; differentiate levels of support in response to student need; and establish systems to sustain implementation" (Freeman et al., 2016, p. 41). Many schools and districts in Minnesota use SEL and PBIS programming already, and in many cases find the programming to be highly beneficial.

While PBIS and SEL programs can provide support for students' individual growth and development, a trauma-informed, restorative approach provides a larger safety net for some students with toxic stress. Proponents of trauma-sensitive schools have argued that "what is ignored [in a PBIS and SEL models] is the high prevalence of unresolved trauma among the student population" (Oehlberg, 2012).

Joyce Dorado, an associate clinical professor in the University of California San Francisco Department of Psychiatry, Child and Adolescent Services and the director of a trauma-sensitive school program, explains how trauma-sensitive schools can incorporate components of other approaches such as PBIS. She has asserted:

> It's important for trauma-informed practices to be paired with any program or framework, including PBIS. Without that trauma lens, we miss components about what makes these approaches work or not work. For example, knowing that toxic stress affects children in different ways helps kids who are often labeled as 'lazy,' 'slow learners,' or 'unmotivated.' These children slip through the PBIS nets because they sit quietly at their desks and aren't acting out. But they fall behind, just as those who are suspended and expelled do, and are just as likely to drop out of school. (qtd. in Stevens, 2014)

These approaches can work together to build comprehensive, trauma-informed schools.

This "Take-a-Break Spot" at Pinewood Elementary School in Mounds View is used proactively for students to self-calm and regulate themselves in the classroom. The tools available in these areas are all introduced and taught to the students ahead of time, so they know how to make use of them when they get there. Take-a-Break Spots offer a helpful alternative to removing students in need of self-regulation from the classroom.

The primary interventionists in a trauma-informed school are the teachers and education support professionals who are critical partners with the traumatized children. These educators teach students over time to learn the difference between the real trauma they have experienced and the events that are not real threats but still trigger the same fears. This is the central premise of the important documentary on trauma-sensitive schools, *Paper Tigers* (Pritzker & Redford, 2015). Children are incredibly resilient, and children who have experienced early trauma need to and can learn to differentiate between the real "tigers" they must guard against and the "paper tigers" that feel like threats but are not. Schools can create environments that help children to make this critical distinction.

Kim Davidson, a teacher in Crookston Public Schools, explains her own development in regard to learning to even recognize trauma in her students. She says:

> When I was a younger teacher, I was really, really isolated from the kinds of life experiences that were common among my students. I taught sixth grade, and I had a boy come in for reading, and he said, my PO is going to come talk to you. Ok, I was 25. And the first thing that came to me was post office. What's a PO? That's how limited my experiences were. (Davidson, 2016, personal communication)

Davidson describes another boy who said to her during reading class, "I wish my Dad was dead." When asked why, the student responded, "because then at least I could pretend that he wanted to see me. But now my Dad lives 15 miles away from me, promises me every week that he's going to pick me up, I wait on the steps, and no one is there to pick me up. And he calls me to tell me he's on his way, but I can hear in the background that he is in a bar." That kid, says Davidson, taught me a lesson: "from then on, I was going to learn about a kid before I threw him out of my class for misbehaving" (Davidson, 2016, personal communication).

Legislative initiatives to increase and nurture trauma-sensitive programming in schools include adding surveys for adverse childhood experiences into the screening programs already in place for vision and hearing. In addition, legislative actions include calls for on-site mental health services and other wrap-around services typically available in full-service community schools, as well as calls for educators to be trained in trauma-sensitive methods.

In the past six years, hundreds of schools across the nation have made the shift to be trauma-informed. The Children's Defense Fund (2015) and scholars have reported that these schools have witnessed:

- Dramatic reductions in suspensions and expulsions
- Reductions in harmful and violent behaviors
- Reductions in office discipline referrals
- Significantly improved grades
- Significantly improved test scores
- Significantly improved graduation rates
- Decreases in absences
- Improved school climate
- Reduced need for special education referrals and services
- Reduced risk for compassion fatigue among teachers and education support professionals
- Increased teacher satisfaction
- Increased teacher retention rates (as cited by: Children's Defense, 2015; Children's Law Center, 2015; Oehlberg, 2012; Stevens, 2015, May 31).

Trauma-informed schools work for students and educators. They are an important and necessary step to reversing the trends created by zero-tolerance policies and exclusionary interventions.

Our most commonly embraced paradigm for responding to student behavior doesn't recognize the root causes for that behavior. We now have better answers for our students, like the kids in Kim Davidson's class, who show up saying "can I stay with you?," "do I have to go home?," or "I feel like I'm spiraling out of control." Researchers have given us the knowledge to understand that the students who come to school angry or terrified are likely tightly wired with traumatic reflexes designed to help them survive. We know now that a

misbehavior is likely a symptom of trauma manifesting itself, and educators can develop far more helpful responses than the exclusionary interventions of the past. We must build trauma-informed schools to make a difference for all Minnesota students.

COMMON CONCERNS

Common concerns about costs and time related to making such a dramatic shift that are often voiced by administrators and educators. Also common among educators, administrators, community members, and families are concerns about staff and student safety—after all, the primary justification for the original adoption of zero-tolerance policies was the assertion that they helped keep the rest of the students and staff safe. There are many educators who fear that making such a shift will disempower them, take away one of the only tools they have to keep their classrooms and hallways under control. These concerns are understandable, and they deserve further discussion.

It is time to redirect our resources to the services our students need.

When we look at costs, we must foremost acknowledge that we have spent billions of dollars nationally on the mechanisms of zero-tolerance and exclusion. Enforcing and administering zero-tolerance policies costs taxpayers in Minnesota too much. We spend millions of dollars on law enforcement personnel in our schools and on locks, metal detectors and surveillance cameras. As mentioned earlier, the Dignity in Schools Campaign, the Justice Policy Institute (2014), and the National Center for Education Statistics (2011-12) estimate that "states spend up to $148,767 to incarcerate a youth, and only $10,667 to educate a student." This means money that could potentially help rehabilitate a student is being funneled to systems that simply remove them from society. Cities also spend an enormous amount on the costs associated with "questioning, processing, charging and detaining the thousands of students who are arrested in school every year" (High Hopes, 2012, p. 10). The Voices of Youth campaign reminds us that we are spending our money on the wrong things. They have argued:

> Smarter investments can reverse this lose-lose situation, in which students lose valuable learning time and schools lose funding that could have otherwise been used to genuinely support student safety and achievement. The research has shown that the most [efficient] discipline policies focus on preventing student misconduct before it can escalate and using effective interventions when it does occur. By investing in policies that truly support academic achievement and school safety, [schools] can not only raise the graduation rates of [their] students but save taxpayers huge amounts of money in the long term. (Voices of Youth, 2011, p. 5)

The dollars we have spent building, growing, and maintaining our exclusionary discipline policies have not had their intended effect. And we know now that other approaches to student behavior are far more successful. It is time to redirect our resources to the services our students need.

Educator concerns about finding time to implement trauma-informed and restorative practices are borne of a long history of increased demands on their time coupled with a decrease in their autonomy and flexibility. Class sizes are higher, student support staff fewer, requirements for specific and strict adherence to curricular plans regardless of student need more common, teacher retention rates have decreased, teacher mental health and stress levels are alarming, and demands for higher test scores at an all-time high. Educators have watched so many student needs go unmet in our push for higher test scores, that any proposal for anything new that might be experienced as an addition to workload is viewed, rightly so, with a high degree of skepticism.

This is not a proposal to do more. It is a proposal to fundamentally shift the way educators, schools, and communities think about and respond to student needs and behavior.

However, as mentioned earlier, the move toward trauma-informed and restorative practice is not going to be successful if it is viewed as an add-on. This is not a proposal to do more. It is a proposal to fundamentally shift the way educators, schools, and communities think about and respond to student needs and behavior. How different that will look in terms of a regular school day in any given classroom depends entirely on the models and practices adopted. In some settings, it might mean classes open and close with brief circles. In others, it might mean more extensive time spent establishing the practice of circles early in the year, so that later in the year, students have a trusted mechanism for solving problems and overcoming barriers and are able to move through academic material more quickly and successfully than they might have without having taken the time to establish a restorative environment. It will certainly mean that responses to disruptive behavior change. Instead of pushing students out of community, we will hold students accountable, repair harm, and rebuild an inclusive community far more often than we do now.

A lot of practitioners of both trauma-informed and restorative practices in schools speak of the value of devoting time early to establish community and thereby saving time in the long run. If schools can implement this approach to school climate and student behaviors, they will see a dramatic reduction in problems down the road, and that in itself creates more time to devote to student learning. A principal at a Pennsylvania school that shifted to restorative practices, Edward Baumgartner, remarks: "it's changed the way we think about discipline and behavior management. We get along here, and that's because the kids are respected and they know it. We've seen a statistically significant decrease in the amount of actual problems that occur

each and every day" (as cited by Mirsky, 2003, p. 4). In response to teachers who say they don't have time to implement the approach, Dave Gerber, a social studies teacher in another school that has shifted to a restorative model, says, "you don't have to spend 40 minutes doing a circle. You can spend five minutes and it's effective. You'll be able to go back next class and make up for that five minutes of content that you didn't get in. If you have people arguing in the classroom all the time, what kind of learning is taking place?" (as cited by Mirsky, 2003, p.7). Riestenberg echoes this concept: "In my view, an administrator can either invest the time with students up front by using a restorative process that involves all people affected by harm, or she can dole out her time over the course of the year dealing with increasingly harmful rule violations. Big fights brew on the low flame of misunderstandings and continuous slights. Office referrals take time as well, whether the students are disciplined or not. When it comes to children, the question is not if you give your time, but when" (Riestenberg, 2012, p. 214).

Instead of pushing students out of community, we will hold students accountable, repair harm, and rebuild an inclusive community far more often than we do now.

Perhaps the most potent objectives to moving away from our heavy reliance on exclusionary practices have to do with fears about safety and educator control over classrooms. After all, we have been told for decades by proponents of exclusionary policies that they were designed above all to increase school safety. But a closer examination of the premises behind those policies and the actual outcomes shows that a heavy reliance on exclusionary practices has not lead to any of the benefits promised, including the promise of safer schools. Trauma-informed, restorative schools, however, experience dramatic reductions in harmful and violent student behavior, at the same time that they report dramatic increases in the degree to which both students and educators perceive themselves to safe in school. Tia Schoeman, principal of a school that committed itself to the implementation of trauma-informed, restorative practice, explains: "After a year, the kids who were throwing chairs and running out of class at the start of school were staying in class, and the reduction in fights was dramatic" (as cited by Stevens, 2014, p. 7). Trauma-informed, restorative schools can expect improvements in school climate and reductions in violence, behavioral outbursts, bullying, and harassment (Armour, 2015; Children's Defense Fund, 2015; Fronius et al., 2016; Mirsky, 2003; Mirsky & Wachtel, 2007).

CONCLUSION

In Minnesota, we can choose to stop fueling the school-to-prison pipeline. In fact, we can dismantle it. Teaching all of our students in a radically inclusive manner means shifting away from failed ways of responding to student behavior. It means shifting our focus. It means learning from what social science can now tell us with certainty. It means admitting that some of the policies that were adopted with good intentions ended up causing more harm than was ever imagined at their inception. It means empowering education support professionals, teachers, and administrators to meet students where they are and enabling them to equip students with the tools they need to be successful, thriving members of communities. Our students deserve the very best education we can provide, and we know now that this includes trauma-sensitive, restorative practice.

It means empowering education support professionals, teachers, and administrators to meet students where they are and enabling them to equip students with the tools they need to be successful, thriving members of communities.

Erin Dooley's morning circle with sixth graders at Murray Middle School in St. Paul. The school is one of six pilot schools implementing restorative practices.

X. Toolkit and Resources

Schools should have the flexibility to take into account their own unique needs when developing their trauma-informed and restorative practices.

Implementing trauma-informed and restorative practice in Minnesota schools is not something that can be done overnight, and there is no single road map for us to follow. This is not a matter of adding a handful of trainings or assigning a staff member half time, though training and dedicated staff are certainly a necessary piece of the puzzle. And given the distinct needs of our many schools, there is not a one-size-fits-all model that all should follow. Schools should have the flexibility to take into account their own unique needs when developing their trauma-informed and restorative practices. Districts should provide an over-arching structure, but schools should be allowed to develop practices that are best for their students and families. Integrating trauma-sensitive and restorative practices into the framework of our education system will take time and commitment. In this section, we provide resources to help further the conversation statewide about how best to move forward in the interest of our students. Best practices include:

- Commitment and buy-in from school staff.
- Robust, ongoing training for all school staff, including education support professionals, substitute teachers, and school resource officers.
- A full-time position within the school to coordinate trauma-informed and restorative practices, as well as to help assist with the shift to this approach to student behavior.
- Collaboration between teachers, education support professionals, administration, parents, and community members in the planning, implementation, and maintenance of trauma-informed and restorative practices.
- Space and time dedicated to trauma-informed and restorative practices.
- Ongoing and transparent monitoring of the fidelity of the practices with the participation of all stakeholders.
- Clear and sustained funding, support, and accountability.

ORGANIZATIONS DEVOTED TO TRAUMA-INFORMED TRAINING AND PRACTICE

CHILD TRAUMA ACADEMY (CTA)
HTTP://CHILDTRAUMA.ORG/

CTA is an interdisciplinary online center of excellence devoted to improving the lives of high-risk children. The CTA has developed a set of training courses to help school counselors, administrators, teachers, and support staff utilize an education model, the Neurosequential Model in Education (NME). The (NME) draws upon the NMT (a neurodevelopmentally-informed, biologically respectful perspective on human development and functioning) to help educators understand student behavior and performance. The goals of NME are to educate faculty and students in basic concepts of neurosequential development and then teach them how to apply this knowledge to the teaching and learning process.

COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION FOR TRAUMA IN SCHOOLS (CBITS)
HTTPS://CBITSPROGRAM.ORG/

The Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) program is a school-based, group and individual intervention. It is designed to reduce symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and behavioral problems, and to improve functioning, grades and attendance, peer and parent support, and coping skills.

CBITS has been used with students from 5th grade through 12th grade who have witnessed or experienced traumatic life events such as community and school violence, accidents and injuries, physical abuse and domestic violence, and natural and man-made disasters. CBITS offers training courses, both online and in person.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR TRAUMA AND LOSS IN CHILDREN (TLC)
HTTPS://WWW.STARR.ORG/TRAINING/TLC

Every day more than 6,000 TLC Certified Trauma and Loss School Specialists and Clinical Specialists provide TLC interventions and resources to children, adolescents, families, schools and other organizations. TLC offers training for educators, both online and in person.

THE TRAUMA AND LEARNING POLICY INITIATIVE (TLPI)
HTTPS://TRAUMASENSITIVESCHOOLS.ORG/ABOUT-TLPI/

TLPI engages in a host of advocacy strategies including: providing support to schools to become trauma sensitive environments, research and report writing, legislative and administrative advocacy for laws, regulations and policies that support schools to develop trauma-sensitive environments, coalition building, outreach and education, and limited individual case representation in special education where a child's traumatic experiences are interfacing with his or her disabilities.

TREATMENT AND SERVICES ADAPTATION CENTER
HTTPS://TRAUMAAWARESCHOOLS.ORG/

The Treatment and Services Adaptation Center promotes trauma-informed school systems that provide prevention and early intervention strategies to create supportive and nurturing school environments. They offer toolkits for schools, as well as resources for students and educators.

MINNESOTA COMMUNITIES CARING FOR CHILDREN, HOME OF PREVENT CHILD ABUSE MINNESOTA (PCAMN)
HTTP://WWW.PCAMN.ORG/
PCAMN houses a rich body of research around ACEs and trauma-informed practice. They also offer training for schools and educators on trauma-informed practices.

ORGANIZATIONS DEVOTED TO RESTORATIVE PRACTICE IN SCHOOLS

CENTER FOR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE AND PEACEMAKING, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
HTTP://WWW.CEHD.UMN.EDU/SSW/RJP/
Based at the University of Minnesota, the Center for Restorative Justice and Peacemaking offers a rich body of resources for restorative practitioners. The provide research-based articles, instructional videos, presentations and lectures, trainings and workshops, consultations for program design, case coaching, and supports for local pilot programs.

DISCIPLINE THAT RESTORES, FRESNO PACIFIC UNIVERSITY
HTTP://DISCIPLINETHATRESTORES.ORG/
Discipline That Restores (DTR) is a step-by-step classroom discipline process designed to increase cooperation, mutual respect, and responsibility among students and teachers. Using the restorative justice skills and strategies, the DTR program trains educators and administrators in the DTR process, helping them to create a more positive learning environment while actively reducing suspensions and expulsions, including those due to "willful defiance."

INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTE ON RESTORATIVE PRACTICES, (IIRP).
HTTP://WWW.RESTORATIVEPRACTCIES.ORG.
The International Institute for Restorative Practices is dedicated to the advanced education of professionals at the graduate level and to the conduct of research that can develop the growing field of restorative practices, with the goal of positively influencing human behavior and strengthening civil society throughout the world. The IIRP offers comprehensive training in restorative practices.

MINNESOTA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, RESTORATIVE PRACTICE. HTTP://EDUCATION.STATE.MN.US/MDE/DSE/SAFE/CLIM/PRAC/

Minnesota's own Department of Education has already developed a rich collection of resources for districts and schools committed to restorative practices. Included are a directory of Minnesota schools already using restorative practices, restorative practice checklists, lists and descriptions of restorative activities, trainers' guides, and more.

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i The report does mention that sometimes security devices can fail.

ii The partner organization included: the Gay-Straight Alliance Network, the Family Equality Council, the Human Rights Campaign, the National Black Justice Coalition, the National Center for Lesbian Rights, the National Center for Transgender Equality, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund, PFLAG National (Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays), the Trevor Project, and SMYAL (Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League)

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