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Addressing Ethnic Disproportionality in School Discipline through Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)

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Introduction

Educators have long grappled with the issue of how to effectively manage student behavior and encourage student achievement. Currently 30% of all Illinois schools are implementing a model of academic and behavioral supports known as Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS). Schools using the PBIS model to address student needs and promote pro-social behavior school-wide have well-developed behavioral expectations for students and staff, use a team-based distributive leadership model, gather relevant discipline data on students on a regular basis, and rely on the use of sound behavioral techniques to remediate student behavior rather than relying on more reactive methods such as referral and suspension, discipline practices which may remove students from the learning environment.

The Illinois PBIS Network is the Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports component of the Illinois Statewide Technical Assistance Center (IS-TAC) an Illinois State Board of Education funded initiative. The Network coordinates technical assistance and evaluation related to school-wide PBIS in over 1,200 Illinois schools and includes implementation of wraparound and interagency initiatives for students with complex emotional and behavioral challenges.

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Recent articles in the state and national press documenting the outcomes of inequitable discipline practices, or disproportionality, in Illinois schools have raised concerns regarding how schools intervene with students whose culture differs from teachers and administrators. During the past twelve years, consistent outcomes documented by the Illinois PBIS Network have demonstrated that schools implementing school-wide PBIS with integrity experience reductions in the number of discipline problems, increases in academic test scores, higher measures of school safety, and improved school climate. In Illinois, schools implementing multi-tiered systems of support, such as PBIS, are beginning to reduce overreliance on punitive consequences for all students, and to reflect on school-wide discipline trends in ways that affect student behaviors pro-actively and preventatively. These practices, among others which make up the PBIS process, are currently being implemented in more than 1,200 Illinois schools and have been cited as a critical first step in addressing the over-representation of ethnic minority students in school exclusionary practices (Southern Poverty Law Center [SPLC], 2010).

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide information about the promising effect of PBIS on the disproportional use of punitive discipline practices. This includes a brief description of the PBIS framework, the problem of ethnic disproportionality in student discipline, a brief synopsis of research literature, and examples from Illinois schools employing a PBIS approach to reach more students by proactive, rather than reactive, means. Examples of the practices employed by staff and students to effectively reduce over-reliance on punitive discipline practices are provided and suggestions for the future are also presented.

The PBIS Framework

A Response to Intervention (RtI) model, PBIS applies a problem-solving process within a three-tiered system of support that enhances the capacity of schools to efficiently address all students by applying a prevention-based continuum of instructional practices. The application of this research-based model enables schools to create and maintain safe and effective learning environments by using early intervention and preventive teaching techniques, which encourage pro-social behavior among students. PBIS offers the opportunity to strengthen our education system by making certain that all students have the social/emotional skills needed to ensure their success at school and beyond. Key components of PBIS include: a) data-based decision making, b) ongoing instruction of prosocial behaviors, c) continuous opportunities to learn about the role of culture in the classroom.

PBIS provides the constructive behavioral supports and positive social culture needed for all students in a school to achieve social, emotional, and academic success. By applying data-based decision making to operate evidence-based practices, PBIS allows educators to establish clear and consistent expectations for behavior which are taught, modeled, and reinforced across all settings and by all staff. This practice deters over-reliance on punitive consequences and promotes focus on a proactive and preventative (rather than a reactive and consequential) discipline approach. PBIS also encourages and upholds family and community involvement at all levels of implementation. By incorporating valuable perspectives from families and communities, PBIS can align school-wide expectations with communal standards of behavior, helping teachers and administrators to be more aware of possible cultural differences between themselves and the students.

Data from the field show that in practice, Illinois schools implementing PBIS with fidelity have lower suspension rates, fewer referrals to special education, higher scores on standardized tests (e.g., ISAT), and better measures of school climate than schools only partially implementing (Illinois PBIS Network [IL-PBIS], 2009, p. 50-57).

Progress updates from the field which point to the possibility of success, however, can also provide vital information on the challenges schools face in implementing best practices, and how schools and districts can overcome those challenges. However, the central strategy which holds the most promise for our schools lies in the embedded PBIS practice of using student data to make decisions and change perceptions.

The use of data in making decisions regarding how to support children in schools is central to the principles of Response to Intervention (RtI) based models such as PBIS. Among schools implementing the PBIS model, many use the School-wide Information System (SWIS) to track disciplinary data on a school-wide basis. SWIS, or other data collection methods and analysis, is used to determine proactive responses to disciplinary issues. In the 2003-04 school year, schools using SWIS were able to take advantage of a new ethnicity tracking feature which allows building-level representation of student ethnic groups by proportion of population enrolled, as well as proportion of students in each ethnic group represented in discipline data.

A soon-to-be released report from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC, 2010) specifically lists PBIS as one of the top three strategies for reversing over use of punitive discipline approaches, along with restorative justice practices and school offense protocols. Spotlighted in the report is the need for schools to examine and reflect on school-wide discipline trends on a regular basis to first prevent over-referral of students of color, and then to implement practices which can correct such trends.

History and Background of the Problem

A recent Associated Press (AP) analysis of Illinois discipline patterns appearing in the *State Journal-Register* ("Racial disparity," 2009) brought to light patterns of ethnic bias with which researchers of school discipline have long been trying to capture the public's attention, highlighting state-wide increases in the use of exclusionary practices, such as out-of-school suspensions, since 1999. The AP article followed a national story by *The New York Times* ("Regional shift," 2009) which addressed the fact that in certain Midwestern states, gaps in academic achievement are greater between African American and White students than they are in Southern states.

Among the states with large gaps in academic achievement, Illinois figured prominently, with 2007 Math scores

for African American students falling far below those of White students at both elementary and middle school levels. These troubling news stories point to the need for serious reflection within our schools and districts about the practices that lead to inequities in both academic and discipline outcomes for African American students.

Researchers familiar with the problem of disproportional representation of ethnic minority students at the national level offer additional evidence of patterns of bias in discipline. At the research level, years of study have yielded results which point to disparities in discipline practices and the unfortunate consequences for African American and Hispanic/Latino students. Key findings are:

- African American Males, irrespective of household income level, were more likely than White males to be suspended, and to have higher rates of office discipline referrals (ODRs) than their peers (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2000).
- African American students were three times more likely to receive short-term suspensions than their White peers (Wald & Losen, 2003).
- African American students were typically referred for subjective behaviors like “disrespect” versus White students, who were more likely to be referred for observable behaviors such as “leaving without permission” (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2000).
- Higher rates of referrals, especially for subjective disciplinary offenses meted to African American male students, suggest that teacher evaluations of student behaviors may contribute to disproportionality (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002).
- Second only to African American students, Hispanic/Latino students in grades K-8 received more total ODRs than White and Asian American students, and were more at risk for delinquency than White and Asian American students (Kaufman et al., 2010).
- The suspension rate for the most vulnerable students, youth receiving special education services for learning disabilities or behavior disorders, was twice that of their peers (SPLC, 2010).

Initially, efforts addressing disparities focused upon the effects of disadvantage on learning and students’ lack of knowledge regarding the “hidden curriculum,” or standards for school behavior. Additional strategies included retention, individual counseling, and boot camps. During the 1990s, the zero tolerance disciplinary approach was adopted by school districts in response to the rise of the juvenile crime rate. Yet, none of these strategies were successful.

The zero tolerance approach has been proven to actually exacerbate the problem of disproportionality in discipline and academics. The relationship between zero tolerance and disproportionality are the basis for phenomenon called the “school to prison pipeline” (Wald & Losen, 2003). It has been well-documented that when students are excluded from the classroom due to suspensions and expulsions, their association with anti-social peers actually increases and leads to involvement with the juvenile justice system.

Overwhelming evidence of the differential treatment of African American and Hispanic/Latino students in the discipline systems of U.S. schools has recently come to light in both the state and national press (“Racial disparity,” 2009; “Regional shift,” 2009). Where popular media sources leave off, however, research on the issue of ethnic disproportionality in discipline has focused on evidence-based recommendations for practice in schools. The adoption of these critical best practices might enable schools and districts to see decreases in the proportions of African American and Hispanic/Latino students who experience punitive consequences such as office referrals or suspensions.

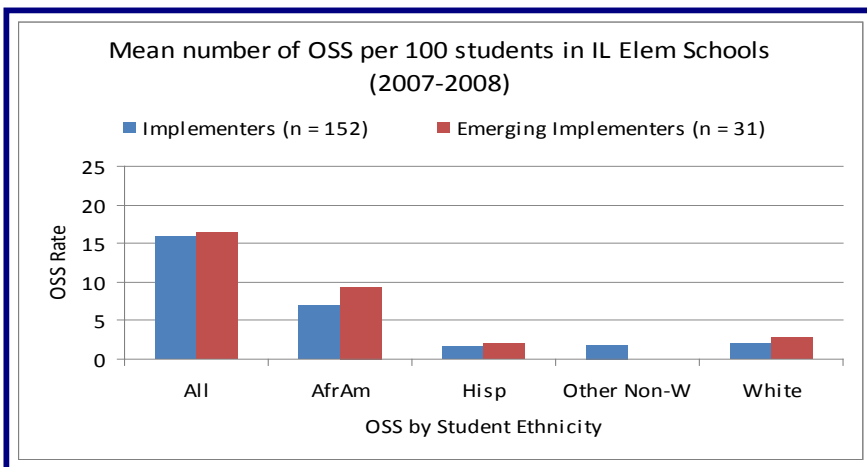
Given the persistence of disproportionality and the failure of past efforts to address the problem, attention has shifted toward approaches that eradicate disparities in discipline and foster positive school environments. Emphasis on development of systems to support students and staff is characteristic of the Positive Behavior Supports (PBIS) framework and matches the overarching goal of addressing the institutional roots of disproportionality.

In the PBIS model, behavioral expectations are explicitly taught to students who are positively reinforced by staff when they engage in appropriate behaviors. The development of a social culture with high rates of proactive adult-to-student interactions is central to PBIS.

The application of PBIS to a discussion of ethnic disproportionality is especially germane at this time and in the State of Illinois. To date, a record number of Illinois schools have now been trained in, and are implementing multi-tiered systems of support using the PBIS framework, making Illinois home to the largest statewide PBIS implementation project nationwide.

PBIS and Outcomes Related to Ethnic Minority Students

Illinois PBIS data show that the effectiveness of a school’s discipline system, as it impacts African American students and other ethnic minority students, is enhanced by full implementation of PBIS. As identified in an upcoming report from the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC, 2010), out of school suspensions (OSS) are among the commonly-used disciplinary methods responsible for the disciplinary gap between African-American and White students. Schools implementing PBIS, however, are primed to remediate such dependence on exclusionary practices, and receive training in the prevention of over-reliance on punitive consequences, including office referrals (ODRs), which in



turn lead to suspensions. Many PBIS schools use decreases in ODRs and OSS to gauge the effectiveness of their school-wide implementation. A recent analysis of OSS data by student ethnicity (to the left) and PBIS implementation revealed that schools in Illinois who tracked discipline data experienced different outcomes based on levels of implementation, with slightly lower overall rates of OSS on average for schools with higher levels of implementation. The reductions in rate of OSS for African American students were even more noticeable

for schools fully implementing PBIS as compared to schools with partial or emerging implementation. Outcome data from PBIS implementer schools are informed by the critical components of PBIS implementation, which include:

- Agreeing upon school-wide expectations which reflect local, community, and school standards for behavior;
- Teaching behavioral expectations in the same manner as any academic subject;
- Implementing a recognition system so that students are made aware when they are displaying expected behaviors;
- Introducing multiple tiers of support for students in need of assistance; and
- Developing and refining a data collection and dissemination system.

From the Field: Progress and Lessons Learned

Discipline data from Illinois schools reveal that both African American students and Hispanic/Latino students are vulnerable to over-representation in discipline data. Currently, 48% of Illinois schools which are fully using SWIS for discipline data tracking and decision-making are also using a feature which allows the addition of student ethnicity data, allowing school teams to disaggregate data using student ethnicity as a variable. In conversations with Illinois principals from PBIS schools currently remediating the problem of overrepresentation of students

of color in discipline, all indicated that being able to disaggregate student data by ethnicity was a critical first step in

“You can’t respect differences unless you look at the data.”
– Peggy Thurow, Principal, Algonquin Middle School

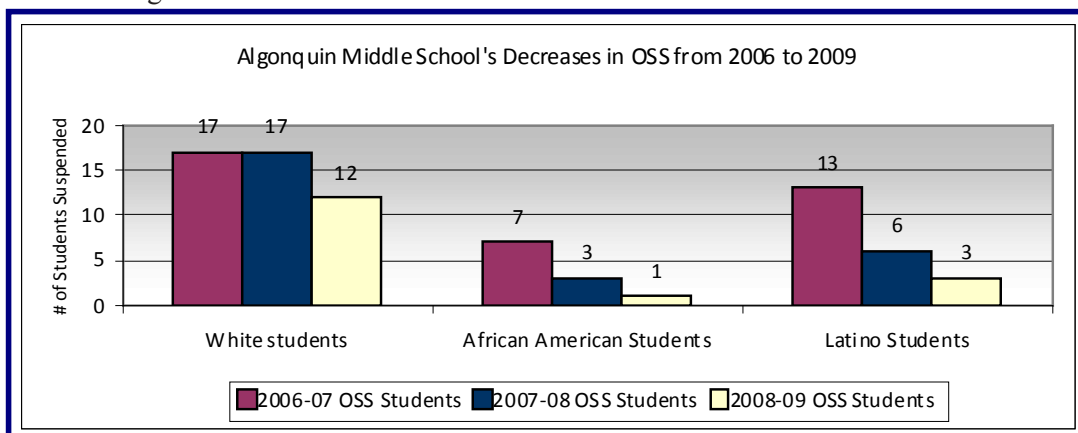
addressing the problem of disproportionality in discipline. With respect to improved outcomes for students of color, key lessons from the field indicate some common features in schools demonstrating progress as they address the challenges that can lead to disparity in discipline practices, including:

- Data collection and regular use of reliable and effective data systems;
- Implementing **effective multi-tiered systems** of school-wide recognition, response, and support for students struggling with behavioral and academic issues;
- Fostering **district-level support** for change;
- **Developing relationships** among students and staff;
- Including **family/community members** as active participants in school-level efforts;
- A willingness to engage in conversations that take us **beyond our comfort level** so that real learning can occur; and
- Letting **data guide our conversations**, so that we use common points of reference to address hard questions

A pivotal theme emphasized by Russ Skiba, educational research scientist and Director of The Equity Project at Indiana University, is the willingness to have uncomfortable conversations about race and ethnicity at the school level. On the part of the school leadership team, or the administrator, this willingness to face tough issues of ethnic inequality goes hand in hand with looking at a school’s discipline data (Skiba, Simmons, Ritter, Kohler, Henderson & Wu, 2006). Without it, addressing the systems which lead to change will be impossible, and without looking at school-wide discipline data trends by ethnicity, schools cannot hope to succeed; school teams cannot affect what they cannot see. The following stories spotlight schools in Illinois which are successfully applying key components of the PBIS framework to affect changes in discipline data for ethnic minority students.

Algonquin Middle School, CUSD 300: Data collection systems like SWIS are a prerequisite for addressing over-representation, and can allow school teams to look at referrals by ethnicity and by category of behavior, location, time of day, and disciplinary consequence. At Algonquin Middle School, Principal Peggy Thurow detailed the journey her school took to address the large proportion of Hispanic/Latino students who were receiving large numbers of ODRs in the 2006-07 school year: “We started to have deep conversations about the data and the types of referrals we were seeing, as well as the academic [both test scores and GPA] needs of the students involved.” Thurow’s school improvement team’s approach was to focus on the data, and be willing to have uncomfortable conversations about that data. “We realized conflict can be good; we don’t all have to have the same opinion as long as we’re headed toward the same goal.”

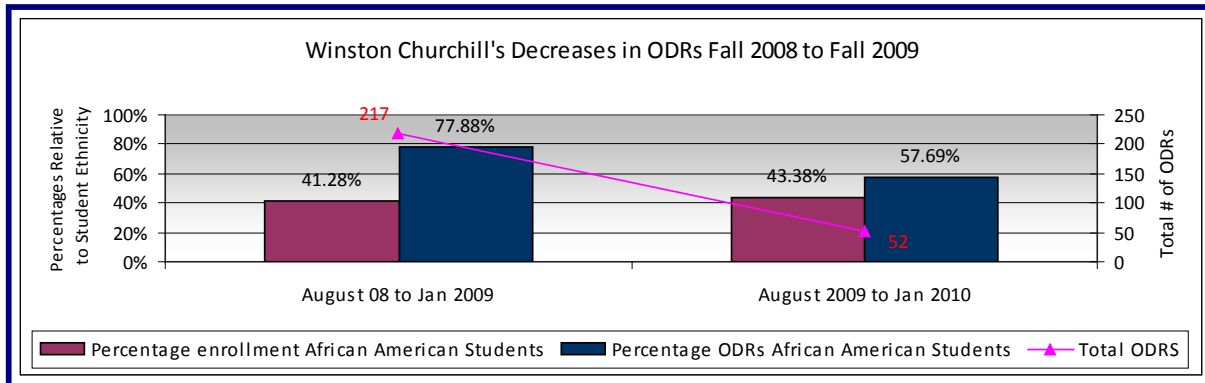
For their school, that meant realizing the promise of PBIS to respect **all** students. Algonquin’s efforts to strengthen Tier 2 interventions for students and increase attendance paid off. As a result of academic



interventions, attendance for Hispanic/Latino students, who made up 17% of the school’s population, was up to 97% in 2008-09 (4% higher than the prior year), and Honor Roll status went from 29% to 52% for Hispanic/Latino students. Although Algonquin’s successes were focused on improving academic and behavioral outcomes for a subset of ethnic minority students, all students benefitted from the reduction in focus on punitive consequences; overall out-of-school suspensions were reduced 46% from 54 in the 2006-07 school year to 24 in 2008-09.

Winston Churchill Elementary, Homewood School District 153, began tracking ethnicity outcomes for its students in 2008-09, but did not see outcomes related to decreasing disproportionality until the fall of 2009-10, the first year of implementing its secondary (Tier 2) systems of support, and second year of universal implementation. The students at Churchill came into the school from another PBIS school in the district, and by fall of the 2009-10 school year, the majority of students were familiar with the expectations; overall referrals to the office were down 76% from the past year for the same time period.

The addition of enhanced secondary systems gave staff and students options for interventions – only one student was suspended in the fall of 2009-10. Churchill school’s team members were expecting to see decreases in their discipline data due to their strong universal systems and emerging secondary systems of support in 2008-09.



Assistant Principal Tonya Morris shared that the 16 students enrolled in **Check-in Check-Out (CICO)** in the fall of 2009, and using SWIS to track student progress, benefitted greatly from the positive adult contact and recognition - attention they may have previously been getting only as a result of misbehavior. “We saw the connection some kids make with adults in their daily check-in and out. It makes them accountable and encourages them; the one-on-one connections and relationships with staff are critical,” says Morris of the school’s success in implementing CICO.

“[Non-contingent, positive adult attention] makes students accountable and encourages them; the one-on-one connections and relationships with staff are critical.”

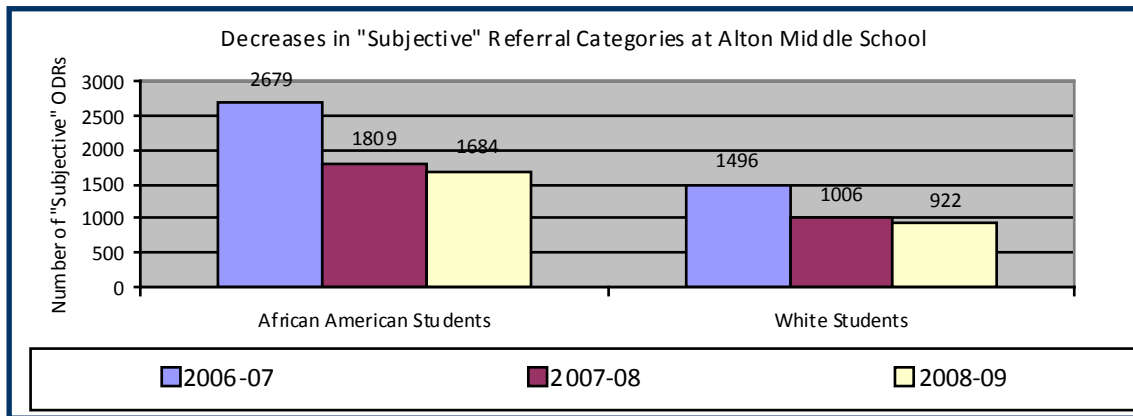
– Tonya Morris, Assistant Principal, Winston Churchill Elementary

Also noteworthy is that all the school staff serving as CICO contacts are volunteers. In addition to having support at the district level for coaching, Winston Churchill also has **parent involvement** on their universal team. MaryBeth Johnson is a parent volunteer at Churchill and an active member of the universal PBIS team. She credits PBIS for changing the culture within the district and providing a common language for students and staff that stays consistent as students move between grades and buildings in the district. “PBIS levels the playing field for all students; for the kids that need a little incentive, it helps so much. It’s so rewarding for those kids to receive recognition that someone knows they are doing well.” The importance of relationship-building in affecting outcomes for ethnic minority students is one that is echoed by many PBIS enthusiasts.

“PBIS levels the playing field for all students.”

– MaryBeth Johnson, Parent Volunteer, Winston Churchill Elementary

In **Alton USD**, a Southern Illinois district with a diverse population, subjective discipline got a second look when a 2005 effort to bring students back from out-of-home school restrictive placements also coincided with a district-level focus on PBIS. David Schwartz, principal of **Alton Middle School**, gave credit to district support for

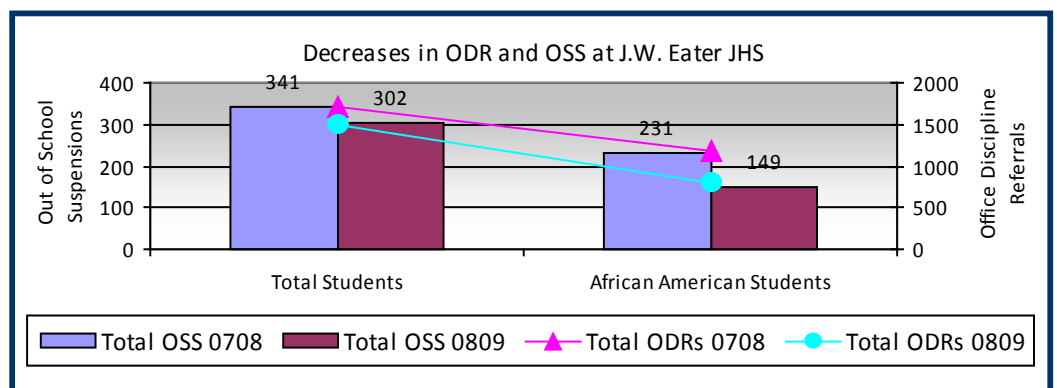


enhanced training and targeting disproportionality through relationship-building. Through sharing and examining discipline data by categories of behavior (i.e., “subjective” categories such as defiance and disrespect), staff were able to decrease subjective referrals by 37% for both African American and White students from 2006-07 to 2008-09.

Researchers examining trends in schools by looking at referrals by behavior categories have found that White students are more likely to be referred for “objective” offenses, such as “being off campus,” as compared to students of color, who are more likely to be referred for “subjective” offenses, such as “defiance,” or “disrespect,” which are harder to define, and may be the result of misunderstanding or miscommunication (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2000). By addressing these patterns in discipline data, educators can then work on fixing the relationship variables which contribute to miscommunication. In addition to the use of data to guide discussions about interventions, implementation of a social/emotional learning curriculum, restorative justice practices, and resiliency-building strategies are credited for the decrease in behavior problems for all students at Alton Middle School. The development of high quality relationships among staff and students while building proactive tiered systems of support has also resulted in zero expulsions for two and a half years.

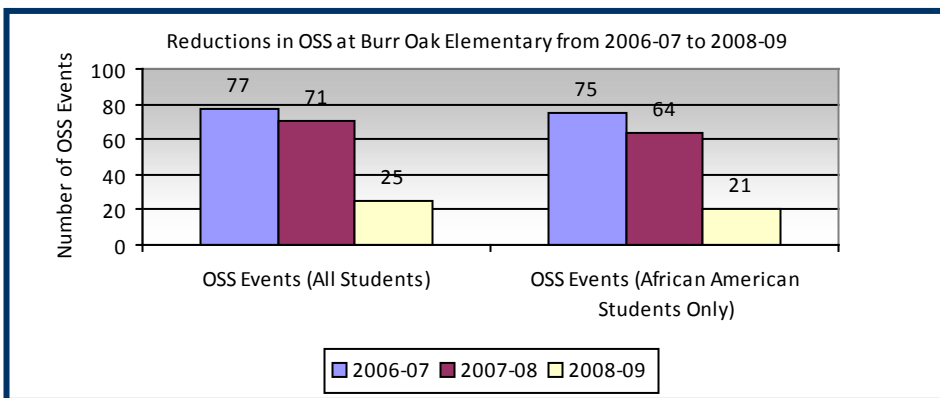
In **Rantoul City Schools, SD 137**, a focus on district-wide behavioral expectations, student recognition systems, and staff re-training led to reductions in the number of African American students who were suspended at **J.W. Eater Jr. High School**. African American students at Eater experienced declines in both office discipline referrals (ODRs) and

out-of-school suspensions (OSS) from the 2007-08 to the 2008-09 school year. After a summer training for staff on universal expectations, expanding systems of positive reinforcement, and aligning expectations with feeder elementary schools, overall ODRs



dropped 13% for all students and 32% for African American students. Additionally, OSS events among African American students, who represent close to 40% of the student population but accounted for 67% of OSS in 2007-08, decreased 35% compared to the 11% decrease in OSS for all students in 2008-09. Faithful implementation of universal systems of support is the first step in addressing over-referral of students of color for disciplinary consequences within the PBIS model.

Burr Oak Elementary School, Calumet PSD 132, has had a 67.5% decrease in out-of-school suspensions (OSS) from 2006-07 to 2008-09. In particular, the reduction was evident for the percentage of African American



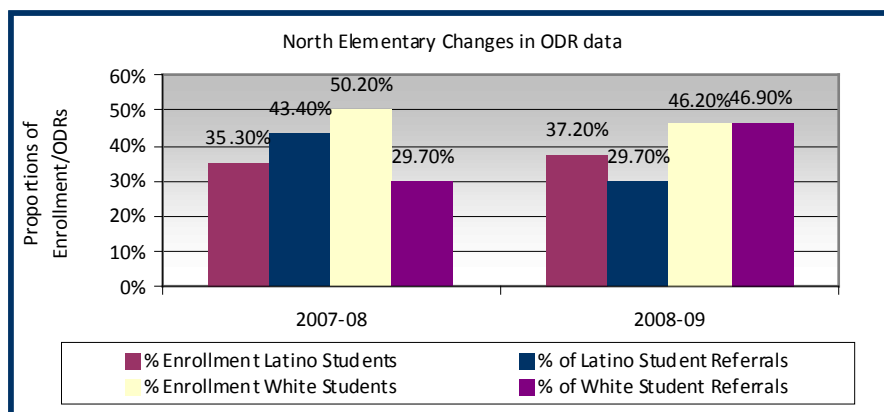
(AA) students receiving OSS, a percentage that fell from 16.8% of AA students in 2006-07, to 6% in 2008-09. The level of disproportionality also decreased as AA students, who make up 76-81% of the total enrollment, accounted for 97.4% of the OSS in 2006-07, 90.1% in 2007-08, and 84% in 2008-09. The school principal, Carole R. Collins Ayanlaja, credits a restorative justice

approach, along with high rates of student acknowledgment, and contact with parents to reiterate school-wide expectations and prevent OSS. Team members also attribute the reductions in OSS to enhanced Tier 2 systems and the active involvement of parent volunteers. This positive trend has continued, with zero OSS during the first quarter of the 2009-10 school year.

North Elementary School, DuPage Elementary District 45, is a school which has seen large changes in student demographics, with higher numbers of Hispanic/Latino in attendance than

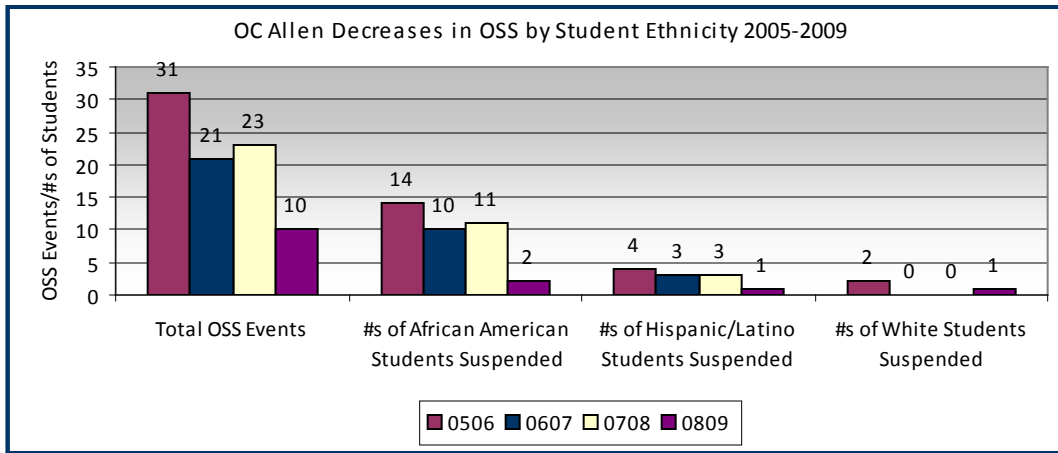
“The consistent implementation of PBIS practices has made a tremendous impact at North School.”
– Debbie Guzan, Principal, North Elementary School

years past and a history of high student mobility. “When we looked at our 2007-08 data with higher proportions of minority students getting a large proportion of ODRs, we knew our staff needs had changed,” said Principal Debbie Guzan. Training staff to deal with disruption and disrespect proactively was supported at the district level. “We changed the culture of the school; teachers had more ownership over their own process - the emphasis was on respect, and discipline referrals are now at an all-time low. The consistent implementation of PBIS practices has made a tremendous impact at North School,” said Guzan of her school’s process. Guzan also emphasized how her school team’s consistent monitoring of student behavioral outcomes with the use of SWIS data affected changes in the school’s discipline practices. Additionally, without district support for staff release time, training days, or PBIS-related initiatives, North Elementary’s progress in meeting student needs would have been



impeded; staff members who received training were able to implement the school’s PBIS policies with fidelity and experience ownership of their school’s process. Since analyzing discipline data from the fall of 2009, a new preventative universal intervention was put in place. “Welcome Buddies,” in which a new student is paired with a school “Buddy” on their first day and is given a peer-based introduction to the school’s behavioral expectations, has also helped reduce referrals from incoming students who start in the middle of the school year.

At **Olney C. Allen Elementary School, East Aurora District 131**, a comprehensive approach to discipline, paired with cyclical reviews of student data (both discipline and academic) has characterized a shift in practice. Despite increases in student enrollment over the past five years, overall disciplinary events have decreased. This PBIS Tertiary Demonstration school has active administrative support from both the Assistant Principal, Armando Rodriguez, and school Principal Mike Szopinski. “Relying on suspensions is not an effective learning strategy to address kid behavior,” said Principal Szopinski. “Students come back from suspensions academically behind,



and then we have lost the opportunity to process [the event] with them.” Rather than rely on punitive discipline, Allen’s teams have focused on the use of universal and secondary data to identify students who might otherwise receive only disciplinary consequences. Students identified using SWIS data and teacher nomination are eligible for participating in Social/Academic Instructional Groupings (S/AIG) such as an ongoing Lunch Bunch, or one-on-one mentoring with an unconditionally supportive adult, both low-intensity Tier 2 interventions. At the universal level, an active Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) plays an active role in supporting preventive efforts as well, and sponsors a weekly “Pop Quiz,” a popcorn giveaway for classrooms demonstrating school-wide expectations. “Involving the PTO in the PBIS matrix made a habit of getting parents involved and making sure they knew what is going on at our school. You can always do better by including parents in PBIS,” reiterated Szopinski. The disciplinary trends at Allen speak loudly about the success the school has met with in reducing over-reliance on punitive consequences, especially with regard to students of African American and Hispanic/Latino ethnicity.

“You can always do better by including parents in PBIS.”
– Mike Szopinski, Principal, OC Allen Elementary School.



Summary

The PBIS school stories presented here all share common elements, derived from effective PBIS implementation. 1) Reversing the trend in disciplinary over-representation of ethnic minority students began with **data-based systems of decision-making**. By consulting data patterns in SWIS, school teams were then able to make decisions about which were most effective for students involved, what groups were over-represented in the data, and what kinds of other supports might be applied. 2) Schools developed **Tier 1 systems** of prevention, and **effective Tier 2 and Tier 3 systems** of *behavioral and academic* support to help students exhibiting difficulty and prevent those students from getting lost in the system. 3) Schools that affected change in disproportionate use of discipline had teams that were **willing to have tough conversations** about students, ethnicity, and disability, and were often supported by administrators who spearheaded those efforts. As part of examining discipline data trends, administrators often have to take the lead in promoting a safe space within which staff can say what they see in the data patterns. 4) Schools that were effective had administrators who referred to **the importance of fostering relationships** among students and staff. This is critical to a strong Tier 1 system as well as an embedded Tier 2 and Tier 3 part of the PBIS model as evident in the Check-and-Connect Tier 2 mentoring intervention, which pairs a caring, unconditionally supportive adult with a student in need of such daily contact.

Schools which promoted healthy, supportive relationships among students and staff also included parents and community members in the base of support for students. Pairing students with mentors, including parent volunteers on school-based PBIS teams, and involving parent-teacher organizations in PBIS implementation are all examples of simple forms of outreach school teams can use to **incorporate family and community voice** into the behavioral and academic vernacular of a school or district support structure.

Finally, schools reporting enhanced Tier 2 and Tier 3 systems of support for students cited **district-level support for a multi-tiered system** as part of the driving force behind systems change in the building. Funding for extra staff training, substitute coverage, district-level team meetings, and learning communities all helped with improved outcomes for students at risk for academic and behavioral failure, including students who might otherwise have fallen through the cracks.

Future Directions

While the above stories generate support for embedded PBIS practices, disproportional representation of African American and Hispanic/Latino students in disciplinary outcomes will continue to persist in PBIS and non-PBIS implementer schools unless schools and districts can make concerted efforts to change. A data-driven model can only provide improvements in outcomes if data are being consulted and used to make intervention decisions. Currently, almost half of the PBIS schools using SWIS are also tracking student ethnicity data, but it is unclear whether all schools are using those data to intervene proactively and prevent school failure for students of color.

Affecting change at a broader level may necessitate the development of a demonstration model with embedded Learning Communities specifically devoted to changing behavioral and academic outcomes for students of color, particularly African American students, in Illinois.

The Illinois PBIS Network is poised to address this challenge by developing:

- Enhanced technical guidance for exploring data trends in academics and behavior, including **training modules** for organizing and responding to trends in PBIS school-widely discipline data by ethnicity;
- Specifically targeted training for **secondary schools**, including junior and senior high schools;
- Added **components in universal-level trainings** to specifically address ethnically disproportionate data patterns;
- **Decision models** based on responses to intervention, and scaling up students within a continuum of supports;

- **Partnerships with organizations** which have specifically focused training for educators on addressing ethnic inequities in education, such as the Southern Poverty Law Center’s Teaching Diverse Students Initiative (<http://www.tolerance.org/tdsi/>), the National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems (<http://nccrest.org/>), and the Equity Project at Indiana University (<http://www.iub.edu/~safeschl/Equity/>);
- A cohort among schools willing to be demonstration sites for a new **Learning Community which will further develop modules** for skills sets involved in addressing disproportionality through the use of student and school-level data;
- **School-supported conversations** addressing ethnic disproportionality and its consequences for students, parents, and staff alike; and
- Assistance in **fostering school-family and school-community relationships** to enrich PBIS implementation and infuse the behavioral curriculum with cultural and social diversity.

Conclusion

Given the current state of affairs outlined in both research and popular media, the above examples of PBIS schools in Illinois addressing the discipline gap for students of color will remain the exception, and not the rule, unless a statewide effort initiates the call for change. Even with the successes spotlighted in this paper, real progress cannot be expected without continued support for, and focus on, the remediation of disparate discipline outcomes for our African American and other ethnic minority students.

Being mindful of the fact that Illinois is the national leader when it comes to PBIS implementation, there is still much ground to cover in addressing disproportionality. The voices of administrators, coaches, teachers, and parents can all provide important perspectives on ways to remediate this crisis in education. Commitments to ongoing training and technical assistance to schools, as well as district-level support for academic and behavioral interventions for students struggling to meet school expectations, are critical to turn the tide.

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Note

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