Educational Advocacy Through The Race Equity Lens

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Presentation Objectives

- Facilitate an understanding of implicit biases, systemic inequities, and the relationship between the two, and how they function within the education system;
- Learn practical strategies to be an advocate for your foster youth's academic success.

What is the race equity lens?

The race equity lens brings into focus the ways in which race and ethnicity shape experiences with power, access to opportunity, treatment, and outcomes, both today and *historically*. Assessing racial equity in our institutions involves analyzing data and information about race and ethnicity; understanding disparities and learning why they exist; looking at problems and their root causes from a structural standpoint; and naming race explicitly when talking about problems and solutions.

Source: Grantcraft, 2011.

What does equity look like in education?

- Public education is the only system that turns no child away; regardless of race, status, language, or need. *See Noguera, 2008*
- "Equity is not the same as equal opportunity. When practiced in the context of education, equity is focused on outcomes and results, and is rooted in the recognition that because children have different needs and come from different circumstances, we cannot treat them all the same." *Id.*
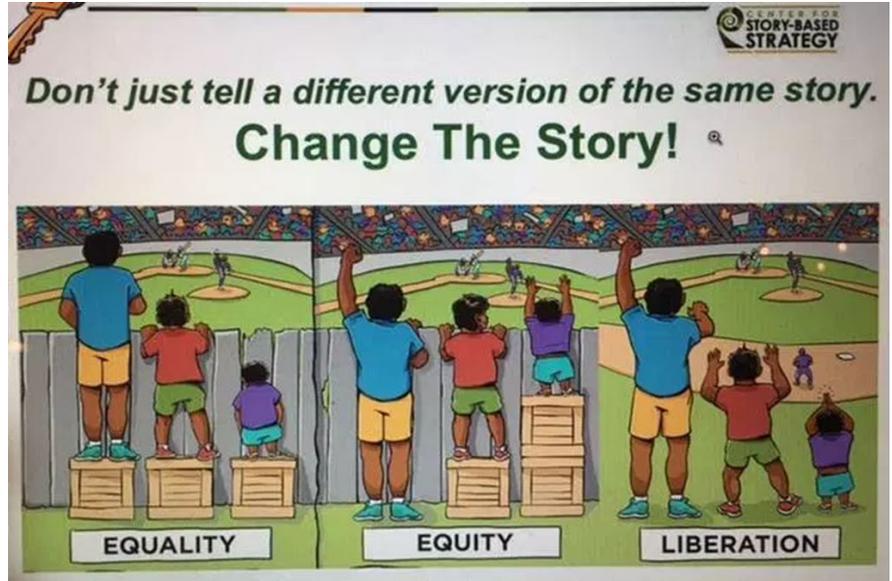
"The pretense operating in many schools is that teachers should treat all students the same, although numerous studies on teacher expectations show race, class, and gender have considerable influence over the assumptions, conscious and unconscious, that teachers hold about students." Id.

What is Implicit Bias?

- The underlying attitudes responsible for implicit bias are beliefs and simple associations we make between an object and its evaluation. These beliefs are automatically activated by the mere presence (actual or symbolic) of the object. *See Dovidio, Gaertner, Kawakami, & Hudson, 2002; also Banaji & Heiphetz, 2010*

- Implicit biases often operate at a level below conscious awareness and without intentional control.*Id.*

How does implicit bias become an institutional issue?

Implicit biases have the greatest impact when decision makers:

- Have a high level of discretion;
- Have many demonds on his or her cognitive energy;
- Have a need to make quick decisions;
- Have a low likelihood that his or her decisions will be reviewed. *See Kang et. al., Implicit Bias in the Courtroom, 59 UCLA L. REV. 1124-1186 (2012).*

- The policies and practices that reinforce academic disparities appear on the surface to be race neutral, even though close analysis of their impact reveals clear and distinct costs and benefits that break down along racial lines.*See Noguera, 2008*

- The unwillingness to confront the implications of the correlations between individual implicit biases and systemic inequities is replicated not only in school punishment, where race is a predictor, but race is also highly correlated with academic grouping and high school graduation rates. *Id.*

Inequities within Texas education:

- Public schools in the US serve as great sorting machines through which inequality and privilege are reproduced. More than any other social and economic institution, public schools reproduce existing social and economic inequities. This is because the production of workers and professionals, future leaders and future criminals, conforms to prevailing ideological conceptions of merit and mobility. That is, those we expect to succeed--such as children from affluent families--tend to be more likely to succeed, while those we expect to fail--poor children, especially those from inner city and whose primary language is not English--tend to be more likely to fail.

- Examination of disciplinary practices, at a national level, reveals that a disproportionate number of students who receive the most severe punishments are students with learning disabilities, students in foster care or under some form of protective custody, and students who are homeless or on free or reduced-price lunch.

See: Noguera, 2008. The Trouble with Black Boys...and Other Reflections of Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education.

Inequities within Texas Education: Additional Risks for Foster Youth

- The National Working Group on Foster Care and Education reviewed studies from around the country on children and youth currently and formerly in foster care. According to these studies, when compared to the general student population, foster youth were more likely to be suspended or expelled, scored lower on statewide standardized tests, were more likely to repeat a grade, were less likely to graduate and were more likely to drop out. *See National Working Group on Foster Care and Education, Education is the Lifeline for Youth in Foster Care (October 2011). Available at www.casey.org/Resources/Publications/pdf/EducationalOutcomesFactSheet.pdf.*

- According to data collected by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), in comparison to the general student population, children in foster care were more likely to drop out of school and less likely to graduate. Texas foster youth had lower high school achievement, were more likely to be in special education, and were less likely to be in the gifted and talented program. Although educational challenges are not unique to children and youth in foster care, this already vulnerable population faces additional hurdles, including multiple residential and school changes, court appearances or therapeutic or other case-related appointments that must be attended during school hours, missed school days to visit with parents and siblings, as well as a typically chaotic educational history prior to entering foster care in the first place. *See The Texas Blueprint: Transforming Education Outcomes for Children & Youth In Foster Care (March 2012). Available at http://texaschildrenscommission.gov/media/23044/TheTexasBlueprint.pdf.*

3%

of all disciplinary actions in Texas are for conduct for which state law mandates suspensions or expulsions

Nationally, white students are more likely to be expelled for *objective* violations, such as smoking and vandalism. While students of color are more often referred for *subjective* violations, such as being tardy or being disruptive.

White and Latino students are more likely to be suspended for serious, felony level violations, enforced through a school's safety legislation. The disproportionate rates we see in school discipline by race and ethnicity *do not* exist in use of non-discretionary discipline.

Inequities within Texas education:

We can trace our attitudes about discretionary discipline back to the "tough on crime" initiatives of the 1980's.

- Zero tolerance was originally meant to discourage criminal activity on school grounds, but expanded to include low risk behaviors (ie classroom disruption, truancy, and insubordination).
- Zero tolerance lead to the prevalence of exclusionary discipline practices which often remove students from the classroom for low risk behavior.
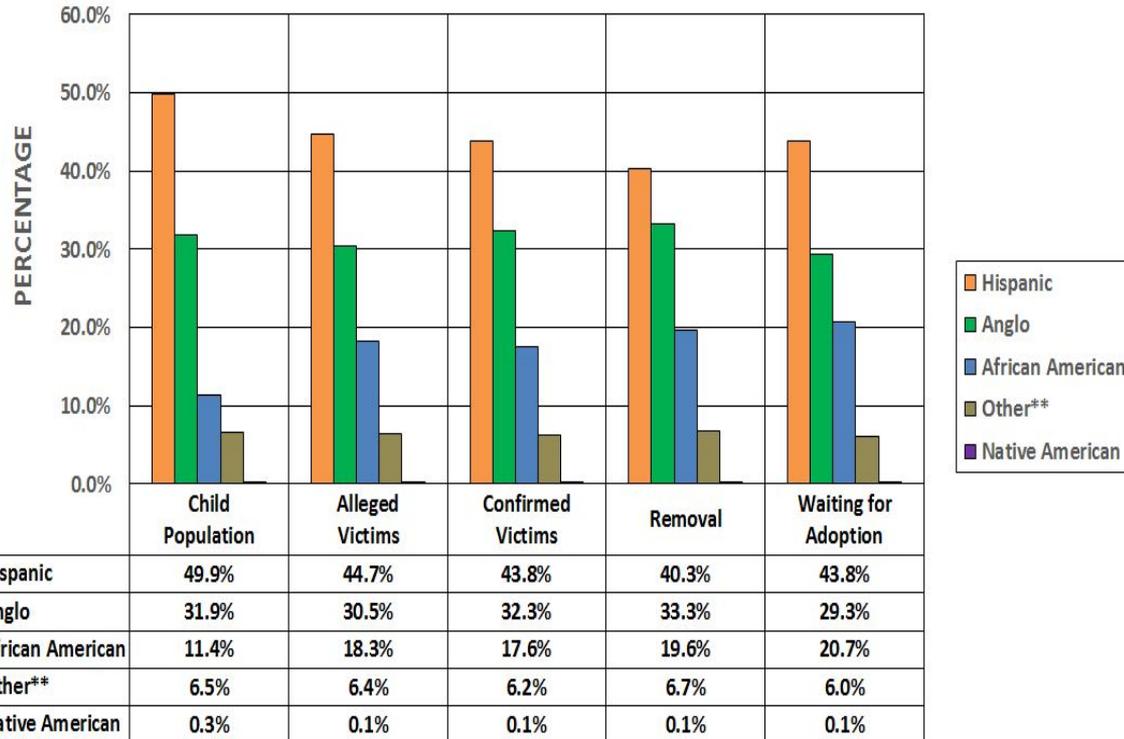
97%

of all US schools were using Zero Tolerance practices by 1997.

"Consistent with the way we approach crime in society, the assumption is that safety and order can be achieved by removing 'bad' individuals and keeping them from others who are presumed to be 'good' and law abiding. Not surprisingly, those most frequently targeted for punishment in school often look--in terms of race, gender, and socio economic status--a lot like smaller versions of the adults who are most likely to be targeted for incarceration in society." See Noguera, 2008

Inequities in Texas Child Welfare

Texas: FY 2015 Comparison of Stages

	Child Population	Alleged Victims	Confirmed Victims	Removal	Waiting for Adoption
Hispanic	49.9%	44.7%	43.8%	40.3%	43.8%
Anglo	31.9%	30.5%	32.3%	33.3%	29.3%
African American	11.4%	18.3%	17.6%	19.6%	20.7%
Other**	6.5%	6.4%	6.2%	6.7%	6.0%
Native American	0.3%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%

See Lee, Bell, et al. ;

Research shows families of color are no more likely to mistreat their children than white families but racial disparity exists within the child welfare system:

- Black families are over reported for suspected maltreatment;
- Caseworkers are more likely to substantiate abuse and remove a child in cases involving neglect (disproportionately involving black families) than those of physical or sexual violence (disproportionately involving white families).
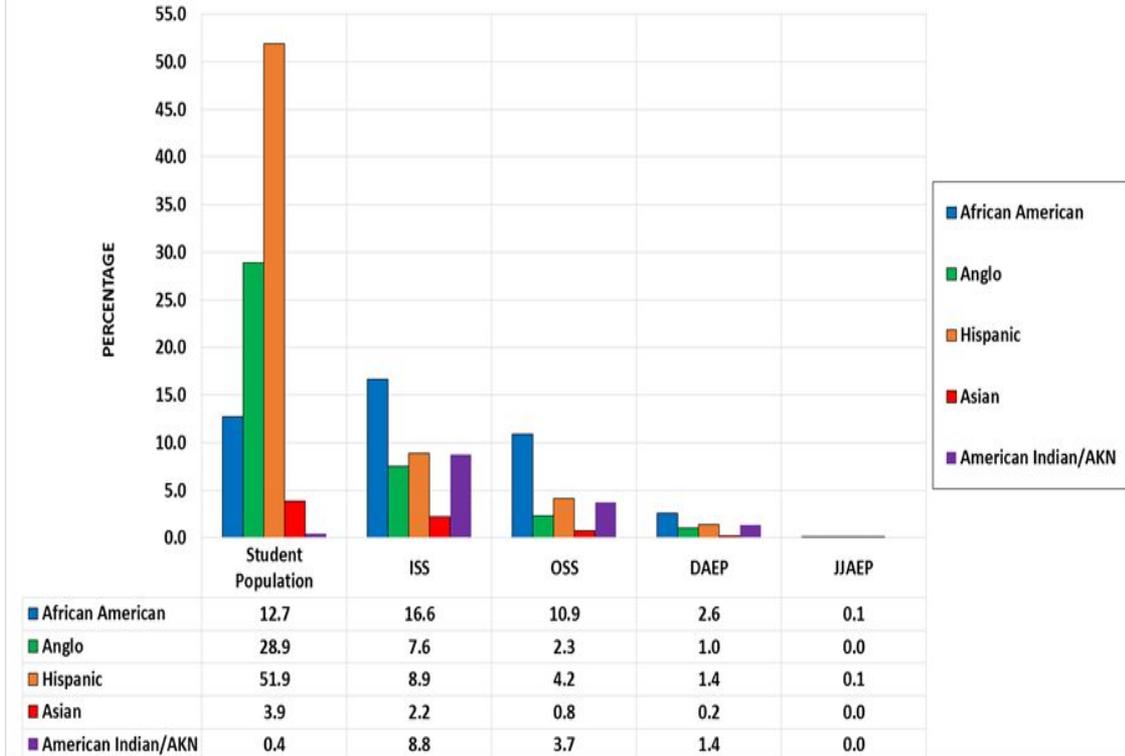
More than 90%

of all students with a disciplinary action first became involved in the school disciplinary system through behaviors not subject to mandatory removal under Texas law.

- 94.2% of Black Students
- 92.7% of Latinx Students
- 94.4% of White Students

Discipline Disparities in Texas

- Texas has the 2nd largest school system in the nation.
- Children of color account for nearly ⅔ of Texas' student population.
- White and Latinx students experience discretionary discipline at different rates, but were removed from school for mandatory violations at comparable rates.
- A greater percentage of white students (86.5%) received in school suspension as a first disposition, compared to Black (71.5%) and Latinx (79.1%) students.

2014-2015 Discipline Comparison

	Student Population	ISS	OSS	DAEP	JJAEP
■ African American	12.7	16.6	10.9	2.6	0.1
■ Anglo	28.9	7.6	2.3	1.0	0.0
■ Hispanic	51.9	8.9	4.2	1.4	0.1
■ Asian	3.9	2.2	0.8	0.2	0.0
■ American Indian/AKN	0.4	8.8	3.7	1.4	0.0

Discipline Disparities, along gender lines

Male Students

- 83% of Black students who are male had at least one discretionary violation.
- 74% of Latino students had at least one discretionary violation.
- 59% of White students who are male had at least one discretionary violation.

Female Students

- 70% of Black students who are female had at least one discretionary violation.
- 58% of Latina students had at least one discretionary violation.
- 37% of White students who are female had at least one discretionary violation.

# Discipline Disparities among students with disabilities

13.2%

Of all Texas students are recorded as having a disability or special need making them eligible for special education services under federal law.

Students with disabilities are disproportionately impacted by school discipline:
74.6% of Texas students who qualify for special education are suspended or expelled at least once during their public school careers
(compared to 55% of all students with no disability).
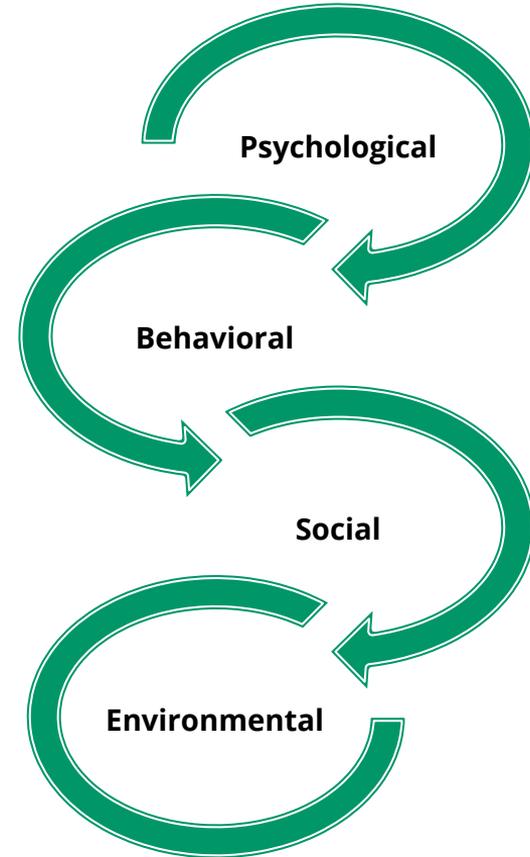
Why do discipline disparities matter?
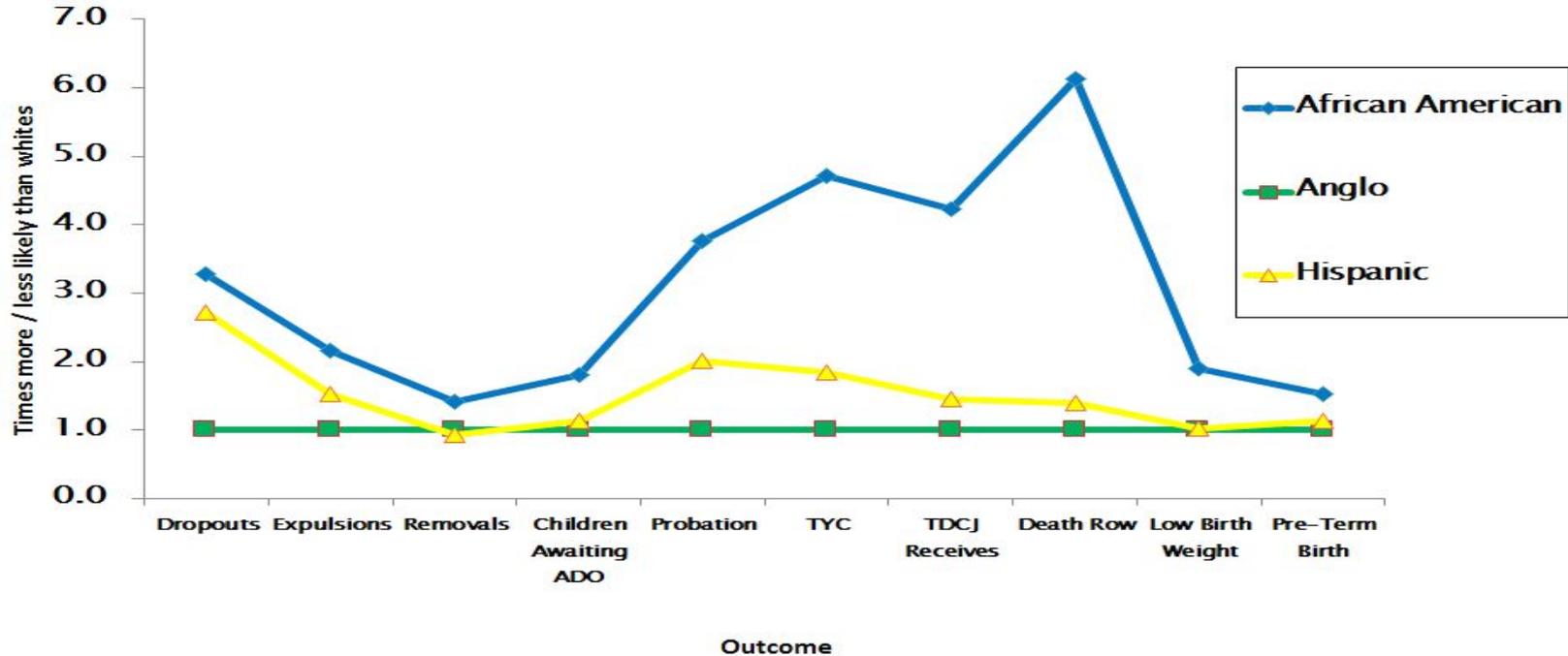
Are Social Factors Driving Education Outcomes?

Life Course Perspective

Suggests that a complex interplay of biological, behavioral, psychological, social, and environmental factors contribute to health outcomes across the course of a person's life

Social Determinants of Health

Economic Stability
- Food Security
- Employment
- Housing Stability
- Poverty
- Support

Neighborhood and Physical Environment
- Housing
- Environmental Conditions
- Transportation
- Parks & Playgrounds
- Crime & Safety

Education
- Language & Literacy
- Early Childhood & Development
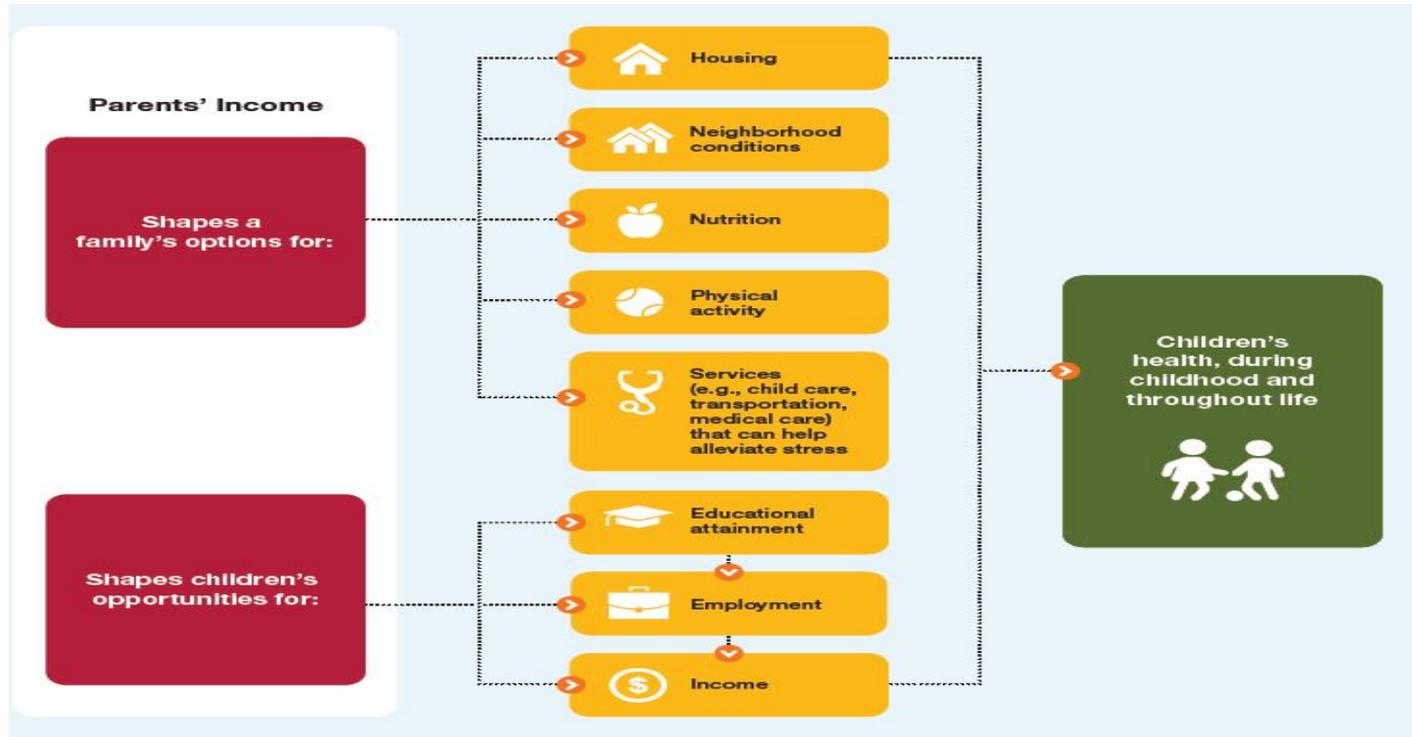- High School Graduation
- Vocational Training
- Higher Education

Community and Social Context
- Social Integration
- Support Systems
- Community Engagement
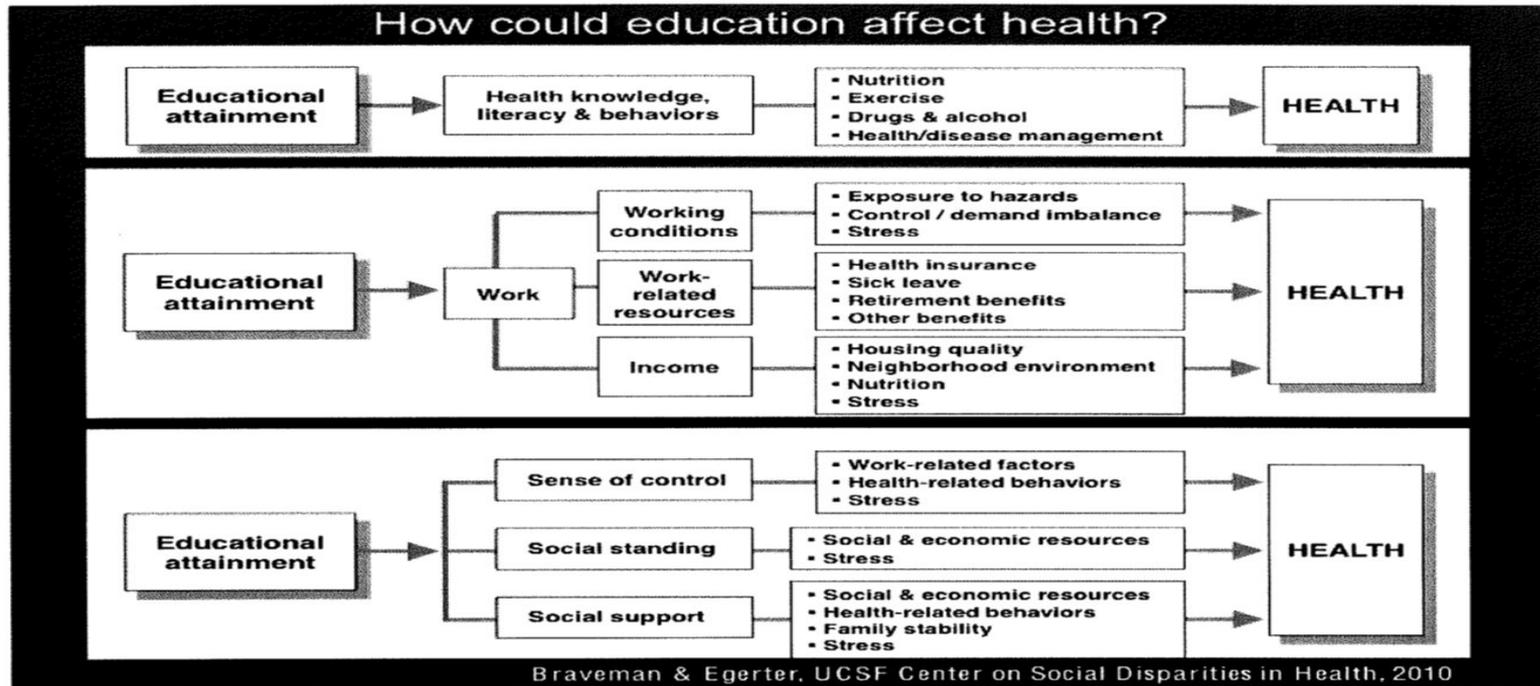- Perceptions of Discrimination & Equity
- Incarceration

Health Care System
- Access to Quality Health Care
- Provider Availability
- Provider Linguistic and Cultural Competency
- Health Literacy

Social Determinants: Community and Social Context

Prepared for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Commission to Build a Healthier America by the Center on Social Disparities in Health at the University of California, San Francisco, 2013.

Social Determinants and Education

How could education affect health?

Braveman & Egerter, UCSF Center on Social Disparities in Health, 2010

Advocating for the academic success of your youth

❖ **Strategy A: Understand your child's needs**

➢ High performing schools involve not just parents and guardians as partners, but work collaboratively with community agencies to address needs the school has neither the capacity nor the expertise to serve. *See: Noguera, 2008. The Trouble with Black Boys...and Other Reflections of Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education.*

➢ *"Often it is the needs of students and the inability of schools to meet those needs that cause children to be disciplined. Children who are behind academically and who are unable to perform at a level commensurate with grade level expectations often engage in disruptive behavior, out of either frustration or embarrassment. Likewise, children who suffer from abuse or neglect, and children who are harassed by their peers because they different, are sometimes more likely to act out and get into trouble. Too often, schools react to the behavior of such children while failing to respond to their unmet needs or the factors responsible for their problematic behavior. In doing so, they contribute to the marginalization of such students, often pushing them out of school altogether while ignoring the issues that actually cause the problematic behavior."* [Id.]

Texas Blueprint Tip: Encourage DFPS and contractors to schedule services and visits outside of school hours.

Advocating for the academic success of your youth

❖ **Strategy B: Ask your youth's school about opportunities for your youth to explore their and others' cultural identity.**

- ➢ Schools often act as places where children learn to internalize and adhere to racial stereotypes about achievement. *See: Noguera, 2008. The Trouble with Black Boys...and Other Reflections of Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education.*

- ➢ *"Because the majority of children are fostered by Euro-American families, there is significant risk of them associating their racial identity with 'failures' of their parents and contrasting these to the stability and comforts provided by their white foster families...In extreme cases, some former foster children described how they came to hate their racial identity because they associated it with the 'failures' of their parents and people of color, in general...Alienation from familial and cultural/community ties not only sever relationships that children have with their families and communities, but also commonly reinforce feelings of shame and stigma."* See C. L. Tait, et. al., 2013 Child Welfare: A Social Determinant of Health

- ➢ A factor present among schools that have significantly lowered their achievement gap is that these schools give children of color the emotional ego strength to challenge racist societal views of their own competence and worthiness and that of their families and communities. *See L. Delpit, 2012. "Multiplication is for White People" Raising Expectations for Other People's Children*

Advocating for the academic success of your youth

❖ **Strategy C: Help your youth envision his or her future**

Texas Blueprint Tips:

- Promote and target post-secondary education opportunities to youth in care beginning in middle school years;
- Encourage youth participation in permanency and placement review hearings to enable discussion of post-secondary education goals;
- Sponsor or register youth age 14 and older and their caregivers in post-secondary school education events offered statewide and regionally;
- Provide your youth's school counselor with information on programs and benefits available to current and former foster youth;
- Encourage students to seek fee waivers for costs of standardized testing and post-secondary application fees through school counselors;
- Identify statewide campus programs and initiatives for foster youth.

"Research on student motivation has shown that students who possess clear goals about the future and concrete plans for how they will achieve those goals are more likely to be successful in school. Students who understand that the hard work they engage in while in school will lead to greater opportunities after graduation are more likely to complete their assignments, even if they regard them as busy work, and more likely to tolerate teachers even if they view them as boring. Students who have clear plans about their future were also more likely to attend school regularly, more likely to become involved in school extracurriculars, and less likely to get into trouble at school...Yet clarity about future goals and the motivation to attain them rarely comes from the student, particularly when that student comes from a family where there is a history of attending college."
See: Noguera, 2008. The Trouble with Black Boys...and Other Reflections of Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education.

Advocating for the academic success of your youth

❖ **Strategy D: Don't be afraid to ask educators and staff to hold youth to high academic expectations.**

"There is research that suggests that the performance of [children of color], more so than other students, is influenced to a large degree by the social support and encouragement they receive from teachers. To the extent this is true, and if the nature of the interactions between many [children of color] and their teachers tends to be negative, it is unlikely that it will be possible to elevate their achievement without changing the way in which they are treated by teachers, and the ways in which they respond to those who try to help them." *See: Noguera, 2008. The Trouble with Black Boys...and Other Reflections of Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education.*

Advocating for the academic success of your youth

"[Poor students] constitute a captured market in public education; they typically have no option or choice but to accept what they are provided. When educators know that a constituency has no ability to challenge how it is being served, where does the incentive come from to serve it well?" See: Noguera, 2008. The Trouble with Black Boys...and Other Reflections of Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education.

❖ **Strategy E: Help build your youth's social capital.**

➢ Building your youth's social capital is about strengthening the network around your child--who can be your partner in your youth's academic success? Coaches; mentors; community members; leaders in school social organizations.

➢ A factor among schools that have significantly lowered their achievement gap is that the schools foster a sense of children's connection to community and ground children in something greater than themselves. *See L. Delpit, 2012. "Multiplication is for White People" Raising Expectations for Other People's Children*

"Several studies on extracurricular activities have shown that students who are involved in sports, music, the arts, and other clubs generally perform better in school than students who are uninvolved. Students who participate in extracurricular activities are also more likely to be engaged academically. In this way, school activities often counter alienation, antisocial behavior, and an orientation toward school that devalues the importance of academic pursuits. In addition, students who are involved in extracurricular activities are more likely to feel connected to and identify with their schools. Studies have shown the psychological effects of such a connection can positively influence academic performance." See: Noguera, 2008. The Trouble with Black Boys...and Other Reflections of Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education.

Texas Blueprint Tips:

● *Identify and recruit a stable and trusted person (CASA, foster parent, member of school community) to act as the youth's education champion;*

● **Encourage schools to establish a mentor within the school for your youth to help prevent behavioral issues before disciplinary action is required.**

Restorative Justice Practices and the Race Equity Lens

❖ **Strategy F: Don't be afraid to ask your youth's school about their current discipline practices.**

Disability Rights Texas compiled a list of 30 Texas school districts that disproportionately rely on out of school suspension, check if your youth's district made the list: https://www.disabilityrightstx.org/files/JointOSSReportAug7-2012.pd

Texas Blue Print Tip:
If a foster child's behavior interferes with his learning or the learning of his peers, urge schools to implement school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS).
Many Texas schools are making a shift away from exclusionary discipline practices and towards a restorative justice or PBIS models. While these changes should be applauded, it's important to note that these shifts alone will not affect disparities in school discipline with respect to children with disabilities and children of color. See Guilbeaux, 2015. Restorative Justice in Schools: Impact Report

Restorative Justice Practices and the Race Equity Lens

Rather than defining students by mistakes, restorative justice practices encourage school staff to understand the cause of the student's behavior and support the student in making better decisions. Through these practices, students feel reconnected to the school community instead of feeling alienated. *See Schwartz, 2016. Why Discipline Should be Aligned with a School's Learning Philosophy*

"...It is surprising that more educators are not calling for [students] to be removed from basements, detention centers, and classrooms where they are not learning. They should object not merely to the ways in which some students are physically marginalized in educational settings, but to the ways in which they have been psychologically and socially isolated as well. A large body of research has shown when students are labeled and sorted into groups on the basis of their academic ability or behavior (that is, as troublemakers or underachievers), the behaviors that were ostensibly targeted for treatment are often reinforced instead of being ameliorated. This is because such practices almost always lead to lowered expectations on the part of the adults assigned to teach them. Even more insidious, those who are labeled often internalize the labels assigned to them. As a result, instead of providing a setting where problematic behaviors can be modified, the sorting practices many schools use reinforce the very behaviors they were intended to correct...In addition to reinforcing stereotypes, grouping practices, which teachers and administrators say are not based on race but on ability or behavior, often have the effect of reinforcing racial separation." See Noguera, 2008. The Trouble with Black Boys...and Other Reflections of Race, Equity, and the Future of Public Education.

Restorative Justice Practices and the Race Equity Lens

What are the principles of restorative justice?

- Repairing harm;
- Ensuring stakeholder involvement;
- Restoring relationships.

What are the focuses of restorative justice?

- Emphasizing student accountability;
- Emphasizing stakeholder participation in restoration;
- Emphasizing community healing;
- Emphasizing behavioral development.

What are the practices of restorative justice?

- *Victim-offender mediation;*
- *Restorative circles;*
- *Peer juries;*
- *Restorative classroom management;*
- *Community building.*

Why restorative justice?

Schools that implement restorative justice practices reduce instances of exclusionary discipline by 43%; experience a 40.5% reduction in attendance issues; and a 54.1% reduction in behavior issues.

Some Scenarios

You've introduced yourself to your youth's school staff, including all of her teachers. You've primed the staff on the special challenges facing your student and asked the staff to be co-conspirators in promoting your youth's academic success. As part of the plan for your youth's success, the staff have agreed to reach out to you prior to making any disciplinary recommendations that would remove your youth from the classroom setting. You get the following calls about your youth, what will you recommend?

A. Your youth refuses to complete her daily assignments and must frequently be asked to stop using her cell phone in class. The youth's behavior is not improving and the teacher feels the youth's behavior is not only disruptive, but negatively influencing her peers. He would like to send the youth to ISS the next time she is on her phone.

B. Your youth is frequently tardy to her first period class. Though her teacher has been lenient in the past, the teacher is worried that if he does not address this behavior, it will become habit. The teacher is recommending that after your youth's fifth tardy, he will send the youth to ISS.

C. Another student's headphones went missing during class and the teacher suspects your youth took them. The teacher would like to recommend a short OSS for your youth.

D. Your youth gets into a physical altercation with another student, in which no one is injured. The school is recommending OSS and possibly DAEP.

Some Solutions!

A. Ask the student, in private, why she won't do her work and see if the issue is academic--what resources can the teacher provide to help the student with learning gaps? If the issue is not academic, give the student a grace period to turn in her back logged assignments and ask the student to prepare a short essay about her phone use during class, which will be extra credit to offset the tardiness of her school work.

B. Find out why the student is late and help the student create plans to ensure she is to class on time. If the issue is out of the student's control, what can be done to ensure the student is not missing pertinent classroom instruction?

C. Invite the students in the classroom to participate in a restorative circle in which they are each given an opportunity to voice how they feel about an item being taken without permission from their peer. After the students have had this opportunity, allow for whoever took the headphones to return them to the teacher's mailbox without repercussion.

D. Invite the students to sit down together and mediate the disagreement that led to their altercation. Once the students have processed the event, ask the students to volunteer together at an upcoming school event.

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