

# Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace



Port Huron Schools  
Advocate Innovate Educate

Central Middle School  
Shawn Shackelford, J.D., Principal  
[sshackelford@phasd.us](mailto:sshackelford@phasd.us)

# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Twitter Feedback

If you have a Twitter account, I would love to hear feedback. If you hear something that is new, beneficial, or interesting, please tweet it using the hashtags:

**#moswpbs**

**#closingthegap**

**#shawshackelford**



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

Welcome every morning with a smile. Look on the new day as another special gift from your creator, another golden opportunity to complete what you were unable to finish yesterday. Be a selfstarter. Let your first hour set the theme of success and positive action that is certain to echo through your entire day. Today will never happen again. Don't waste it with a false start or no start at all. You were not born to fail.

~Og Mandino





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Overview

- **Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MIBLSI)\* /PBIS**
  - How PBIS looks at Central Middle School
- **Equity**
  - How we addressed implicit bias at Central Middle School
- **Grace**
  - How we demonstrated Grace to achieve results

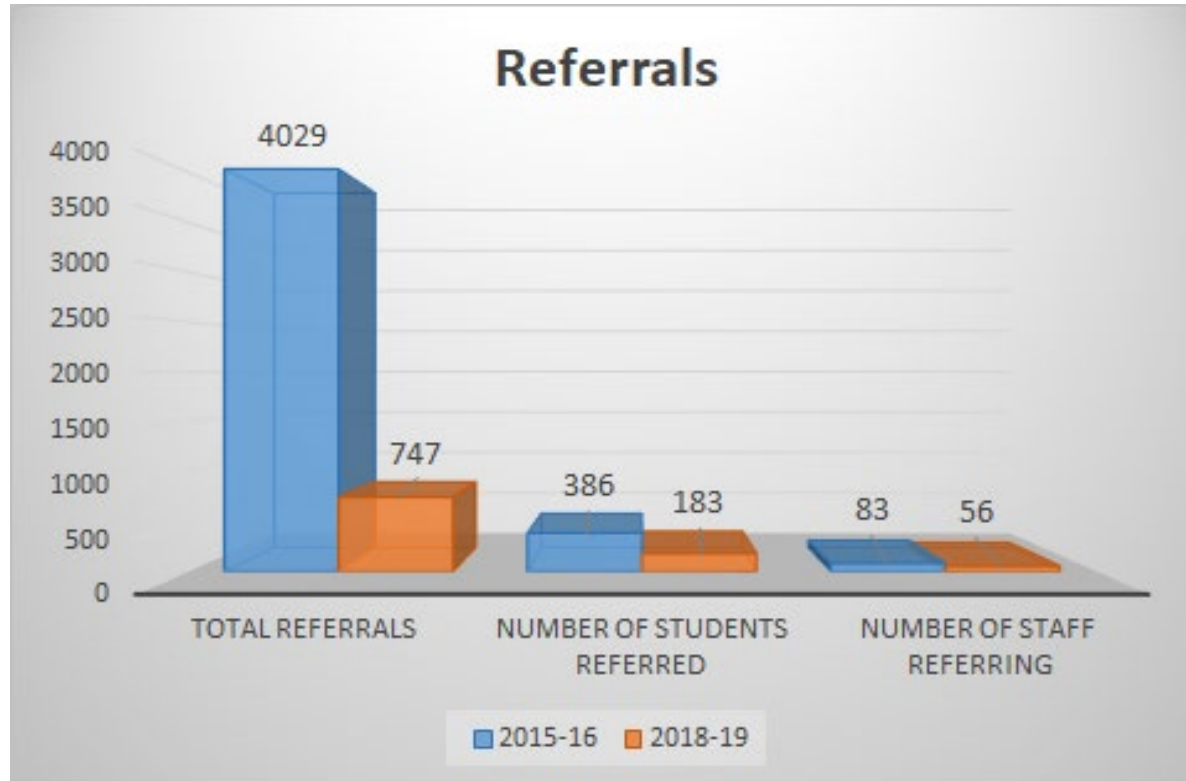
\*Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative (MIBLSI) is a Grant Funded Initiative (GFI), funded under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) through the Michigan Department of Education.

Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative



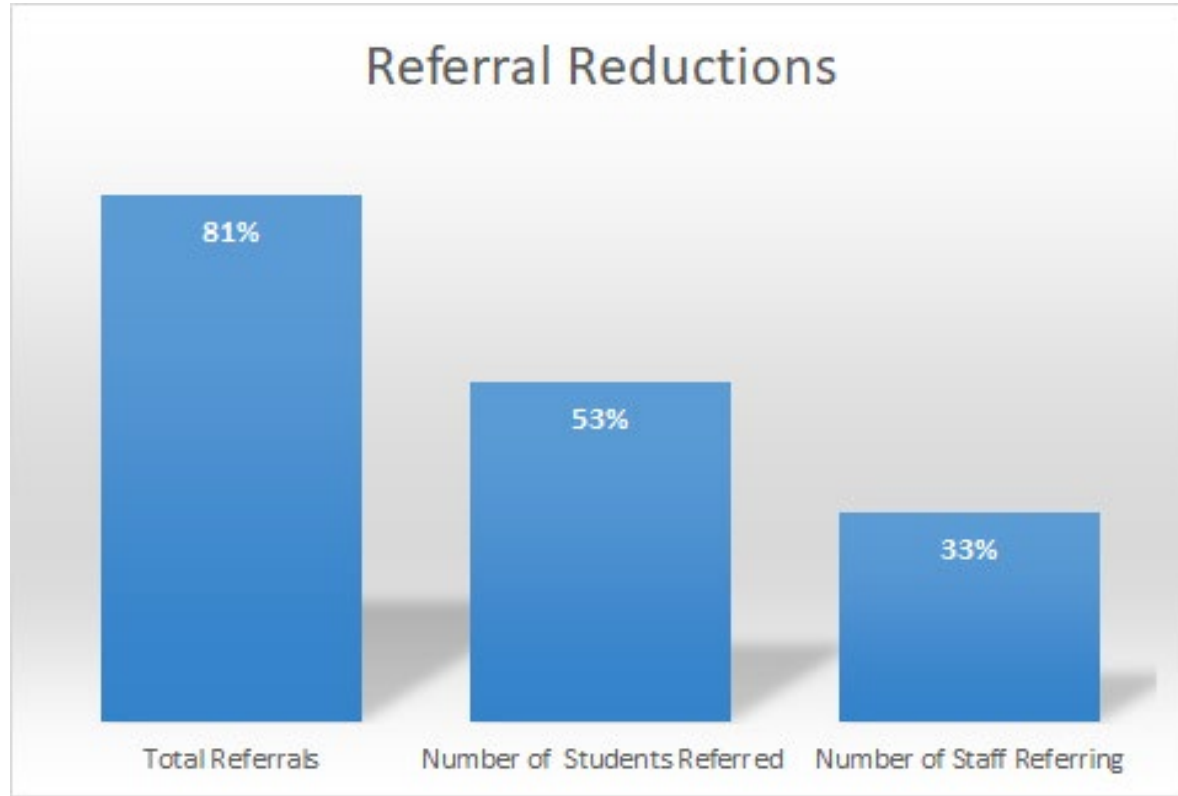


# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*



*Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

How did we do it???





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

We achieved these results by focusing on:

- teacher buy-in;
- having systems in place;
- changing adult behavior;
- having the hard conversations about implicit bias;
- demonstrating grace





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Port Huron Area School District (PHASD)

K-12

Student Population - **8247**

**16** schools

**10** Elementary

**3** Middle

**3** High Schools

White- **75%**

Black- **8%**

Hispanic- **7%**

Native American - **<1%**

Asian- **<1%**

Pacific Islander - **<1%**

Free/Reduced- **55%**

Students who receive Special Education

Services- **14%**



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Central Middle School (CMS)

Student Population - **809**

Male **421**      Female  
**389**

White- **72%**

Hispanic-**9%**

Multi -racial-**9%**

Black-**8%**

Native American -**1%**

Asian-**<1%**

Pacific Islander -**<1%**

Free/Reduced-**62%**

Students who receive Special  
Education Services-**17%**

IEP's-**10%**

504- **7%**



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## PBIS- How did we get here?

- Priority (as a staff)
- Structure (adults and students)
- Reteach (adults and students)
- Intentional focus on positive choices (adults and students)
- Rewarding and acknowledging (adults and students)
- Professional development (staff and community)





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Priority

- In 2015-2016, PHASD was awarded Promoting Positive School Climate (PPSC) grant;
- Grant is a partnership between Michigan Department of Education (MDE), MIBLSI, and PHASD;
- MIBLSI partners with school districts to help implement and sustain these supports for improved student outcomes;
- Competitive grant that provided valuable training;
- PBIS became more systemic: schools were broken up into 3 cohorts;
- State/Federal grant funded behavior coaches;
- District re-prioritized needs;
- In 2016-2017, MIBLSI approached PHASD to pilot equity and disproportionality



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## **Tier 1**

Tier 1 is the universal, school-wide support system for all students. Tier 1 establishes the school culture and expectations for behavior and learning. Effective universal supports should meet the needs of most students.



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## **Structure**

The parents dropped off in the parent loop;

The way students entered the building;

Where students must wait until the bell rings;

Procedure for picking-up chromebooks before 1st hour

Walking in the halls





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Structure con't

Bells

Dress code

“10/10” Rule

Cafeteria- One Rule: “Have a seat”

Students must leave the premises at the end the day





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

Teach/Re-teach





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

Teach/Re-teach





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

Teach/Re-teach



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Positive choices

Recognize students

- Pride Cards
- Positive Phone Calls
- [Via Social Media](#)

“Respect the place you learn”

*“My bad. I’m sorry.”*



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Acknowledgment and Rewards

- Cougar Champs
- Awards Ceremonies



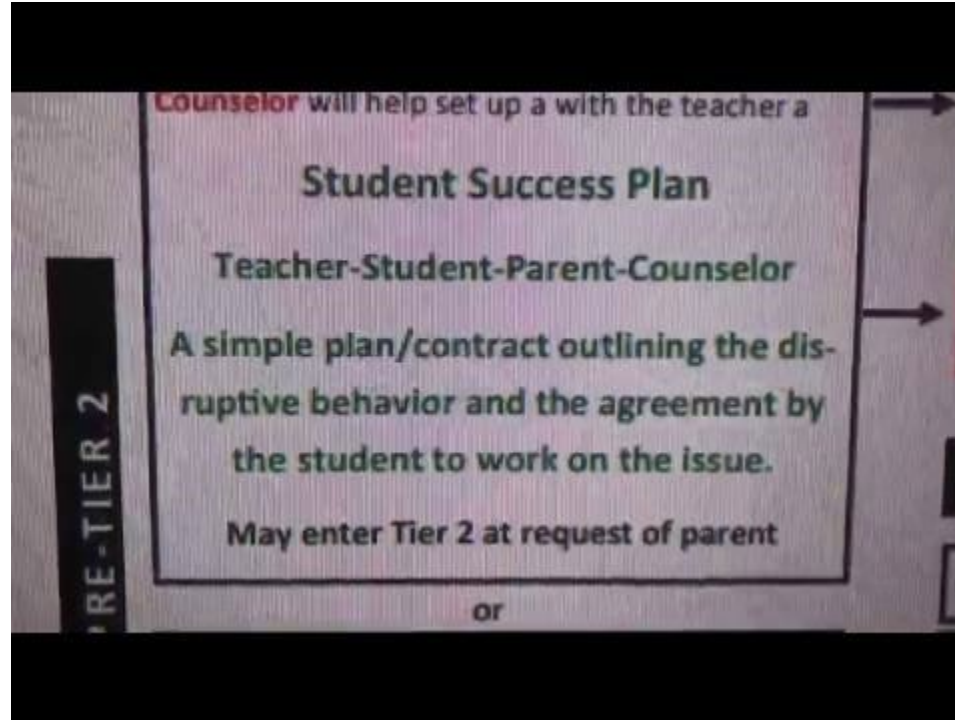
# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Tier 2

Some students still struggle, even after tier 1 supports are in place. Tier 2 supports are programs and strategies for students who need additional support. Students receive targeted supports, based on their needs, that are more intense and more frequent. If a student's performance improves, he or she may be able to continue achieving without tier 2 supports.

# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

- CICO
- High Needs Check-In
- Social Skills Group





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Tier 3

A very small number of students with severe difficulties need interventions beyond tier 2 supports. Tier 3 supports are intensive programs and strategies for students with highly individualized needs. The supports are designed to meet the student's specific needs. If a student's performance improves, he or she may be able to continue achieving without Tier 3 supports.

# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

Behavior Support Plan





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Professional Development

- Data dive
  - Building level
  - Cohort
- MIBLISI
  - Vulnerable Decision Points (VDP)
  - NRs (Neutralizing Routines)



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*



Dr. Ruthie Payne Simmons  
Equity Specialist,  
MIBLSI



Beth Hill  
Equity Specialist,  
MIBLSI



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## **VULNERABLE DECISION POINTS**

Vulnerable Decision Point (VDP): A specific decision that is more vulnerable to effects of bias.

Two parts:

1. Elements of the **situation**
2. The person's **decision state** (internal state) Setting Events

# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## **VULNERABLE DECISION POINTS**

- 1. What are one or two trigger situations that happen to you in the school environment?**

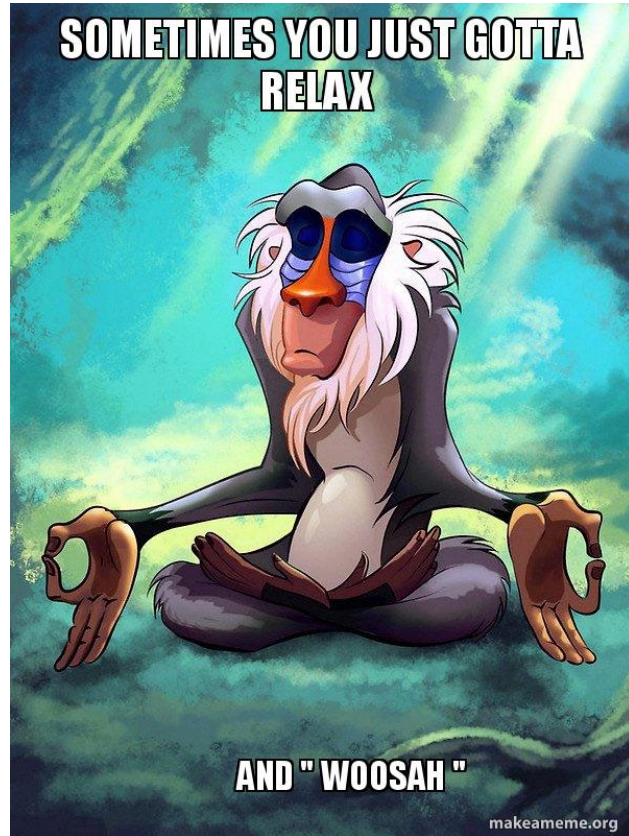
*(disrespectful attitude, student interrupting, subjective behavior, etc....)*

- 1. What are one or two common setting events that can affect you in the school environment?**

*(hunger, fatigue, ambiguity, etc....)*

- 1. Thinking of these two previous questions, what are one or two specific points (VDPs) that you have faced in the school environment?**

# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## **NEUTRALIZING ROUTINES**

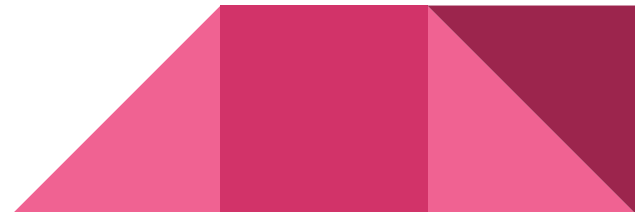
### **STOP**

- **Stop** your unconscious response
- **Take** three mindful breaths to self-regulate
- **Observe** how you are feeling
- **Proceed** positively by doing what is most effective (not what you initially feel like saying or doing)

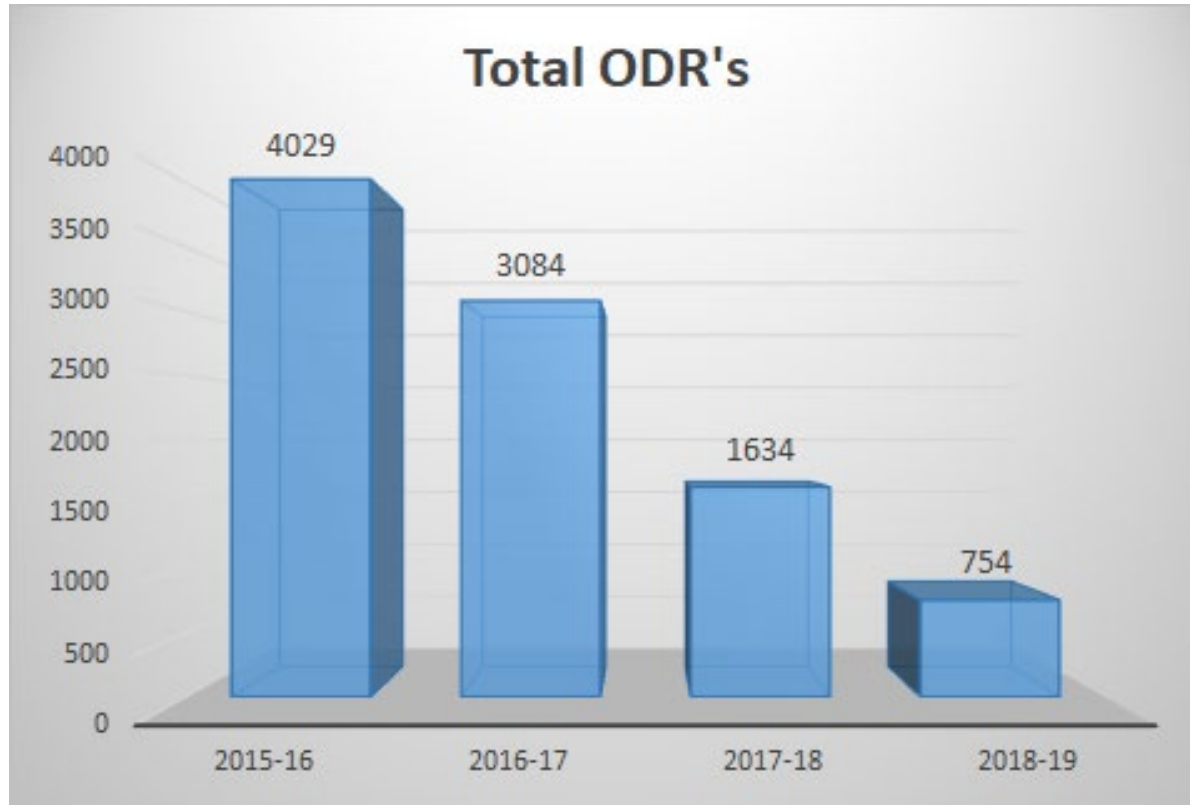
(Renshaw et al., 2015)

### **TRY**

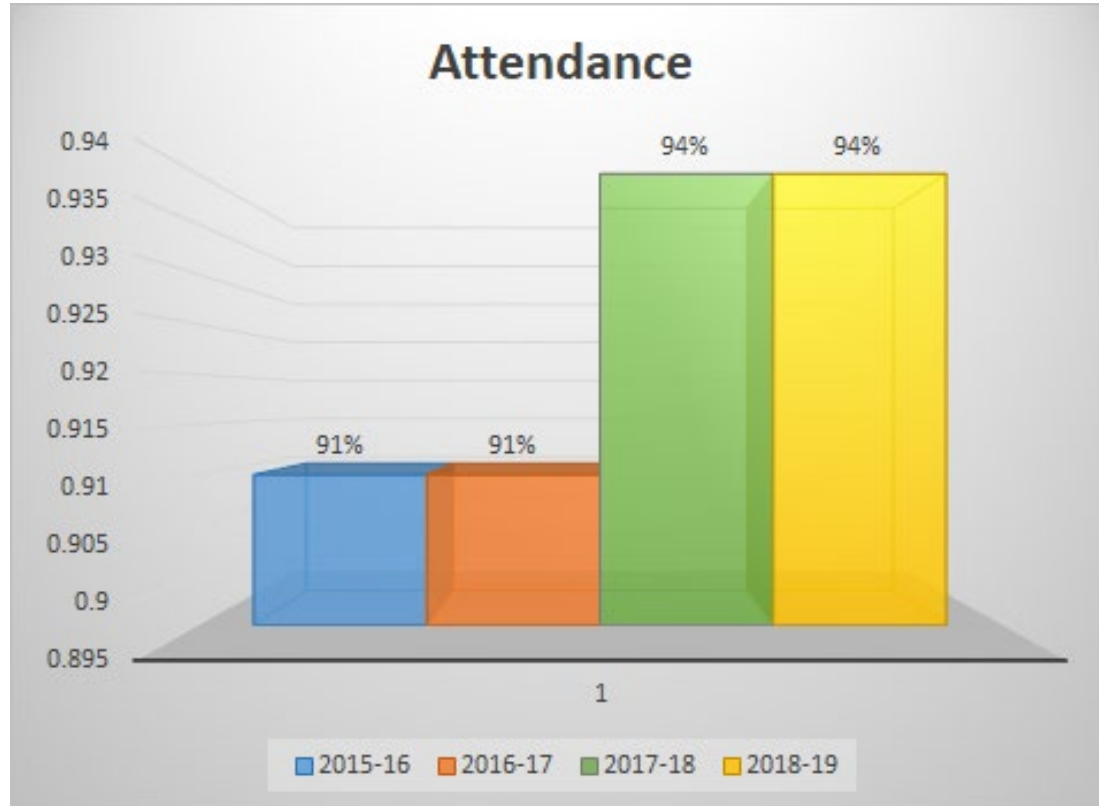
- **Take** a deep breath
- **Reflect** on your emotions
- **Youth's** best interest
  - “Let's **TRY** that again.”
  - “Let's **TRY** it a different way.”
  - “Let's **TRY** it how we do it at school.”



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

**Equity:** When some are excluded or lack the knowledge, income, equipment, or [resources] necessary to participate fully in public discourse, they must overcome obstacles to access in order to ensure fairness. In other words, fairness also demands remedies to redress historic injustices that have prevented or diminished access in the first place ...in order to maximize opportunities for access experienced by certain groups, a good society commits resources in order to level the playing field (Kranich 2001).



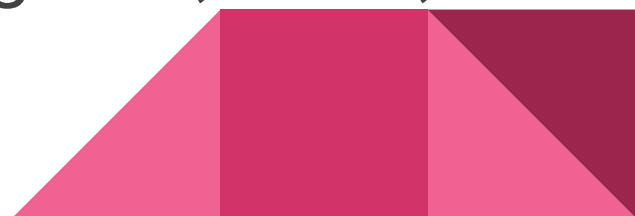
# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

**Cultural Mismatch** : Dominant culture typically influences all functions of school that often unintentionally excludes the voices of historically marginalized children and their experiences (Riddle, 2014; Fruchter, 2007; Noguera, 2003; Valenzuela, 1999)





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

**Subtractive Schooling:** A form of schooling that systematically strips historically marginalized students of their language, culture, and academic well being through the of assimilation to the dominant culture (Valenzuela 1999).

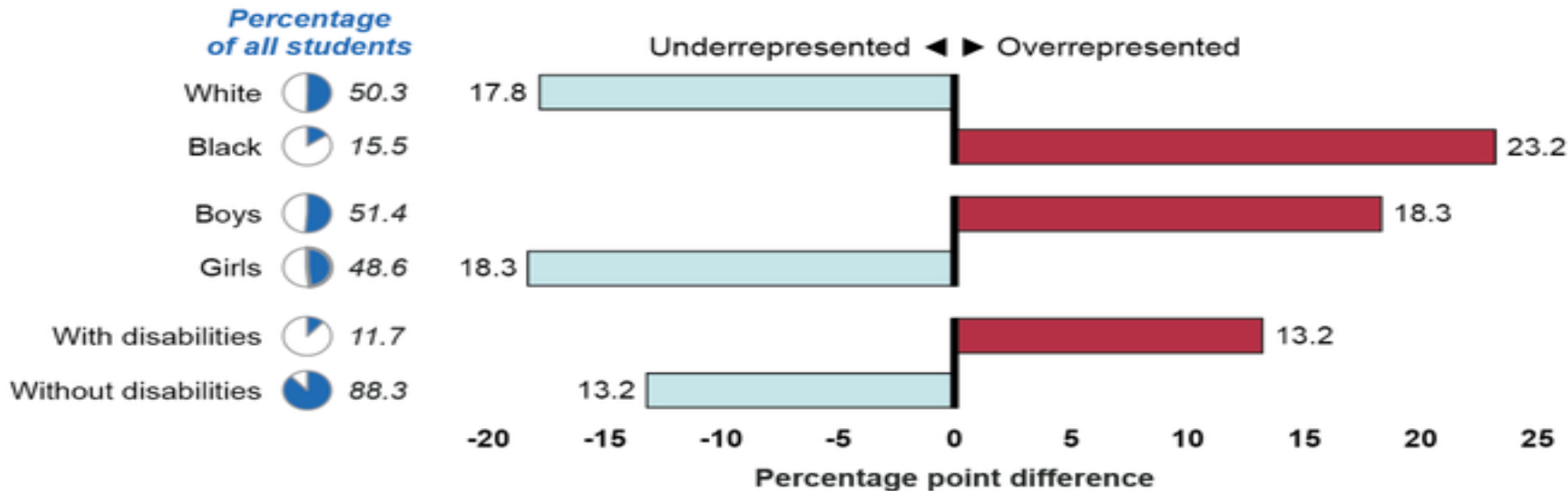
Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative



# Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace

Based on their actual population in the student body

This chart shows whether each group of students was underrepresented or overrepresented among students suspended out of school. For example, boys were overrepresented by about 18 percentage points because they made up about 51% of all students, but nearly 70% of the students suspended out of school.



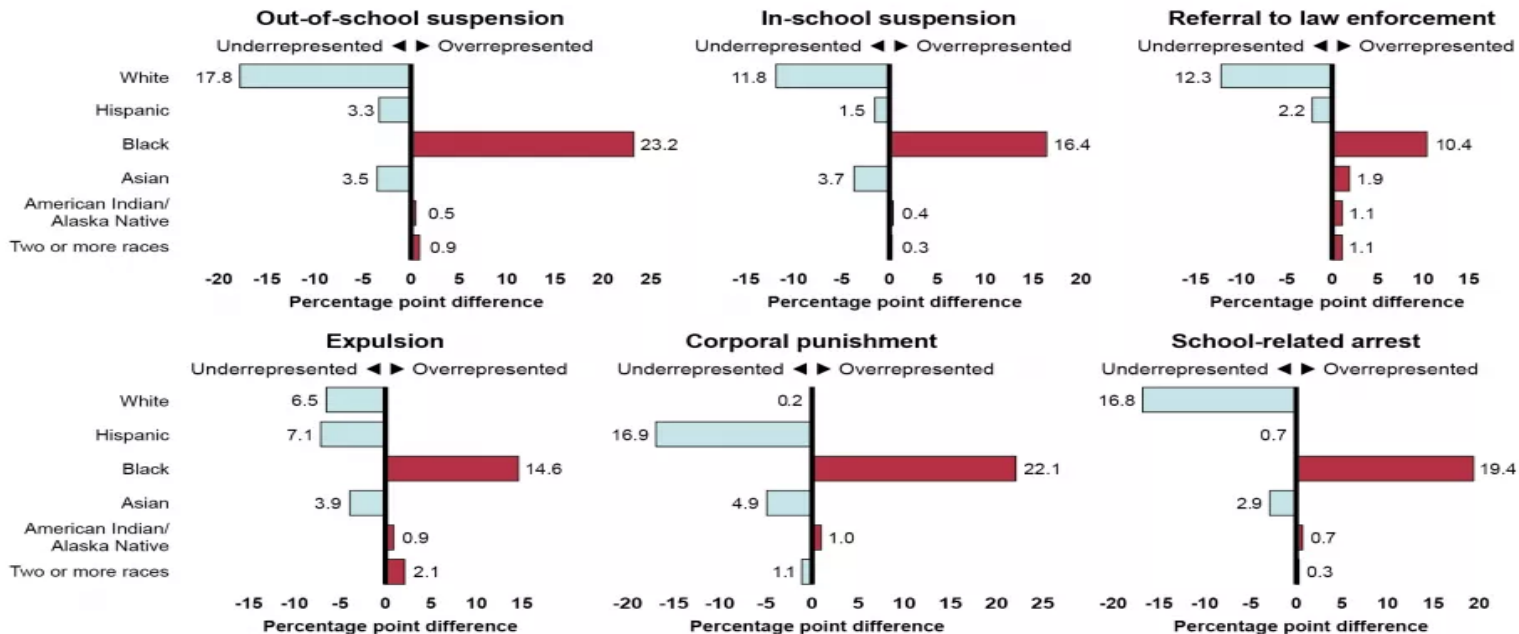


# Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace

This was true no matter the type of punishment

**Figure 2: Representation of Students Who Received Disciplinary Actions Compared to Overall Student Population, by Student Race or Ethnicity, School Year 2013-14**

This chart shows whether each race or ethnicity was underrepresented or overrepresented among students who received six types of discipline. For example, White students were underrepresented among students suspended out of school by approximately 18 percentage points, as shown in the chart, because they made up about 50% of the overall K-12 student population, but 32% of the students suspended out of school.

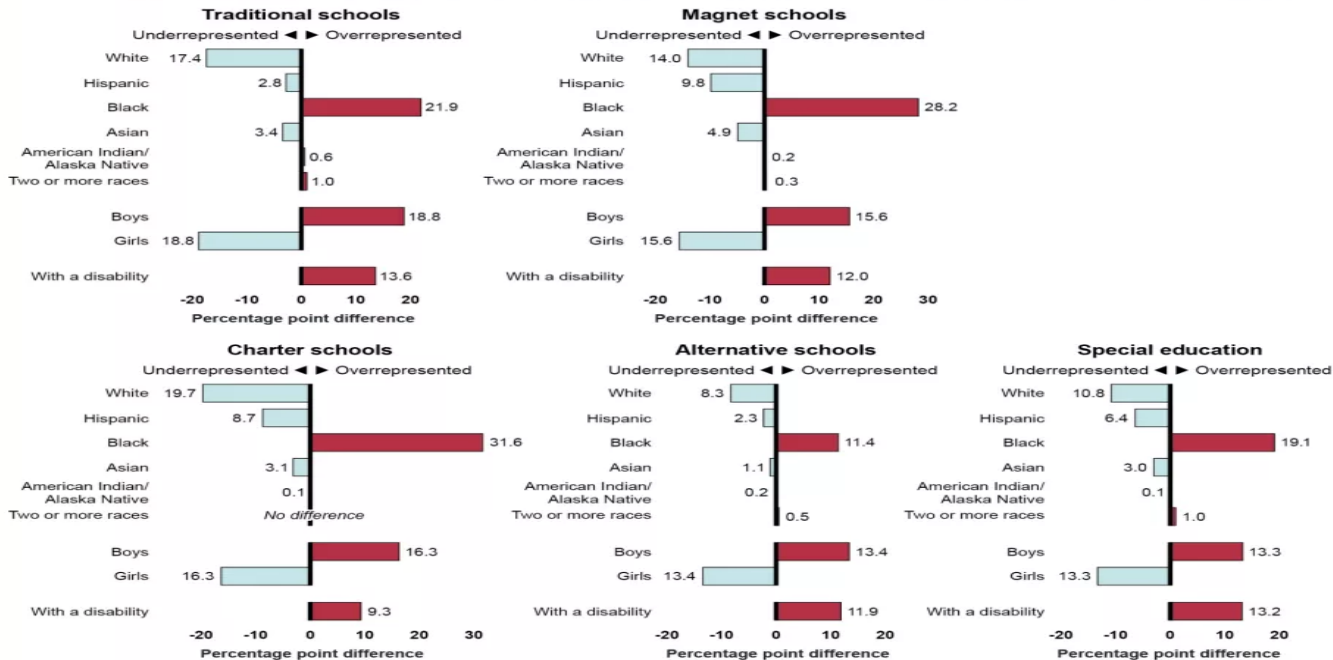


# Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace

## No matter the type of school

**Figure 7: Representation of Students Suspended Out-of-School Compared to Student Population, by School Type, School Year 2013-14**

This chart shows whether each group of students was underrepresented or overrepresented among students suspended out of school based on type of public school. For example, Black students were overrepresented among students suspended out of charter schools by nearly 32 percentage points, as shown in the chart, because they made up nearly 29% of all charter school students, but about 60% of the students suspended out of those schools.



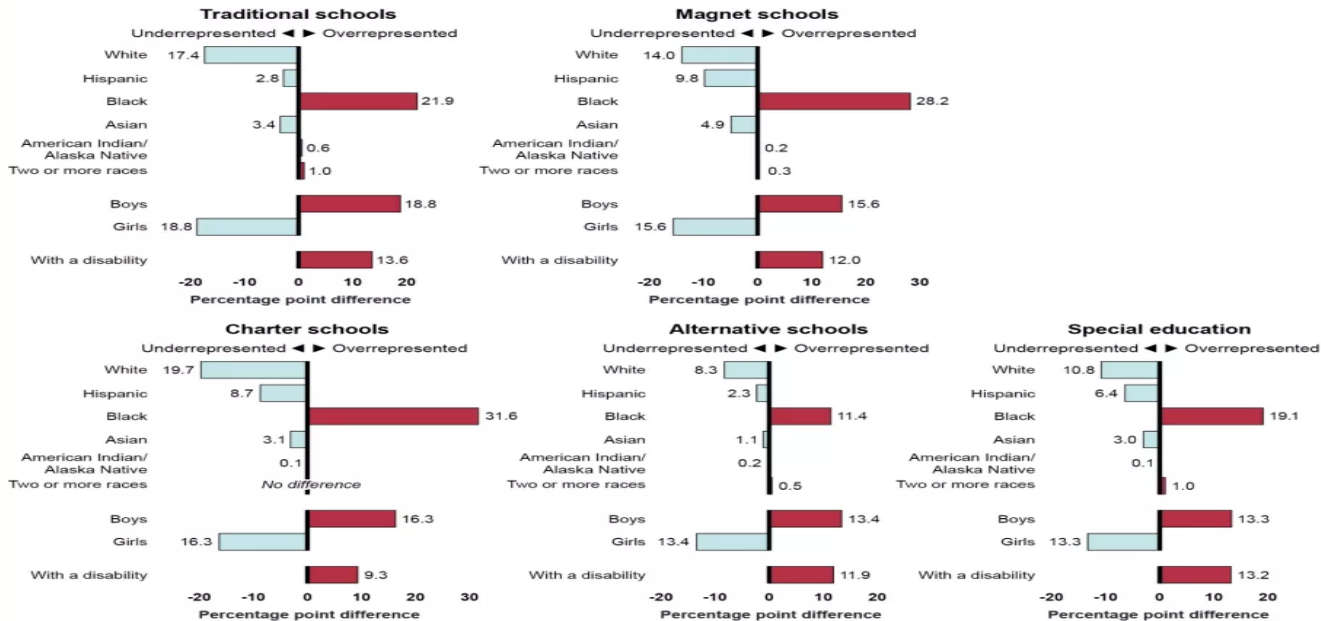
Source: GAO analysis of Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection. | GAO-18-258

# Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace

## No matter the rate of poverty at the school

**Figure 7: Representation of Students Suspended Out-of-School Compared to Student Population, by School Type, School Year 2013-14**

This chart shows whether each group of students was underrepresented or overrepresented among students suspended out of school based on type of public school. For example, Black students were overrepresented among students suspended out of charter schools by nearly 32 percentage points, as shown in the chart, because they made up nearly 29% of all charter school students, but about 60% of the students suspended out of those schools.



Source: GAO analysis of Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection. | GAO-18-258



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Years 1 and 2

### **Equity Pilot Outcomes for 2016 -17 and 2017-2018:**

Decrease disproportionate discipline across racial subgroup by:

- Focusing on adult behavior and results;
- Systematically reviewing data and action planning around closing the gap;
- Naming race and disproportionality





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Year 3

### Equity Pilot Outcomes:

Decrease disproportionate discipline across racial subgroup by

- Emphasizing results by meeting regularly to systematically examine data specific to understanding behaviors and disproportionality
- Explicitly naming and understanding the role of race in inequitable outcomes by engaging in ongoing learning around implicit bias and our socio-historical context
- Deepening knowledge of how core components of PBIS, VDPs and the Safe and Inclusive School Framework work together to create equitable experiences for all students
- Fostering critical consciousness amongst staff and administration
- Developing and carry out action plans specific to the data review process and aligning action items to school/district improvement process and plans



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Equity in Practice

- [Agenda](#)
- [Action Plan](#)
- [Trend Data Goal & Measurable Objectives](#)
- [Monthly Referral Rates by Subgroups](#)
- [Equity Pilot Problem Solving Guide for Addressing Racial and\\_or Ethnic Disproportionality](#)

# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*







# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

**Implicit Bias** : The attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. The biases, which encompass both favorable and unfavorable assessments, are activated involuntarily and without an individual's awareness or intentional control (Blair, 2002 and Rudman, 2004, as cited in Staats & Patton, 2013).

Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative



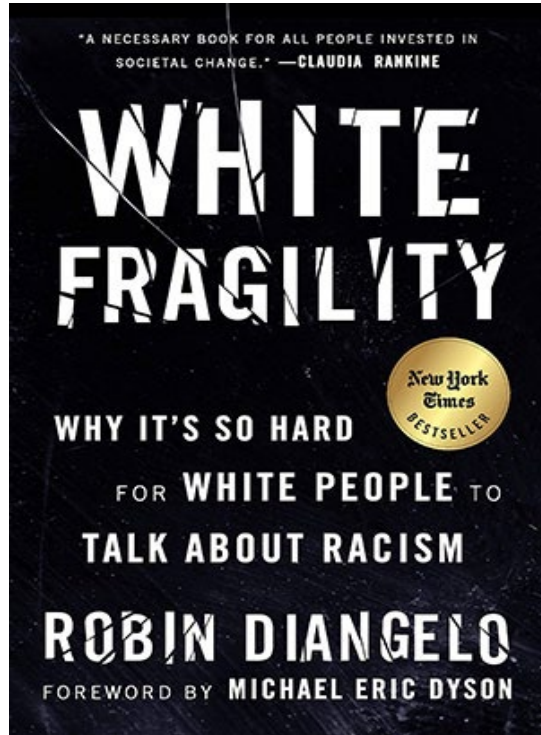
# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## A Few Key Characteristics of Implicit Biases:

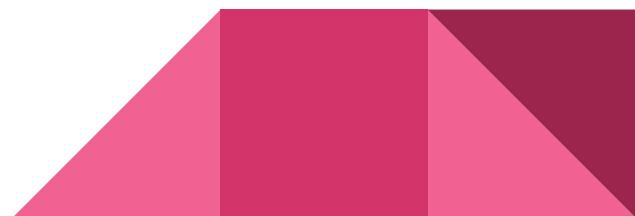
- Everyone possesses them;.
- Implicit and explicit biases are not mutually exclusive and may even reinforce each other;
- Do not necessarily align with our declared beliefs or even reflect stances we would explicitly endorse;
- We generally tend to hold implicit biases that **favor our own ingroup**, though research has shown that we can still hold implicit biases against our ingroup.
- Our brains are incredibly complex, and the implicit associations that we have formed can be gradually unlearned through a variety of debiasing techniques.



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*



**The combination of defensiveness, guilt, and silence that many white people exhibit when faced with questions about race and racism.**



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

The 5-Stages of Staff Equity Training

Denial/**Denial**

Anger/**Defensive**

Bargaining/**Rationalizing**

Depression/**Sobering Realization**

Acceptance/**Acceptance**



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Denial

*“Why is this necessary?”*

*“I’m not racist”*

*“I’m not a bigot”*

*“I don’t have biases toward my students”*



## *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

Defensive

*“Are you calling me a racist?”*

*“Do you think I’m racist?”*



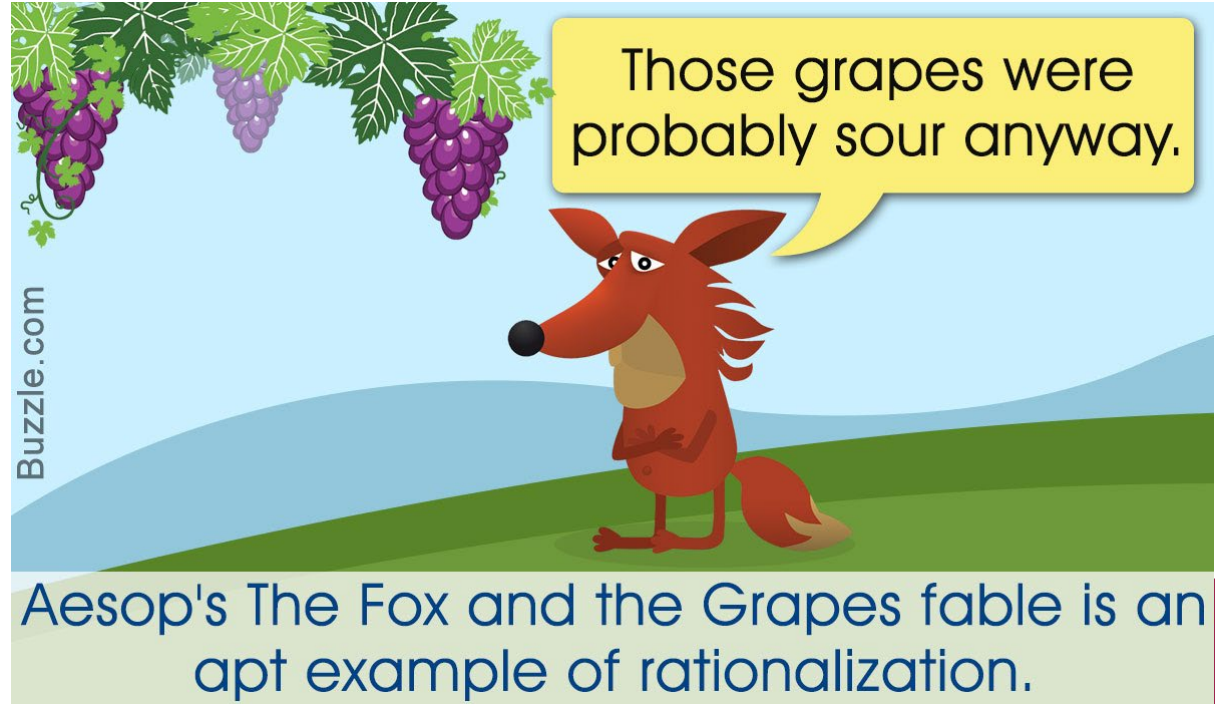
# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Rationalizing

*"I'm not racist, but..."*

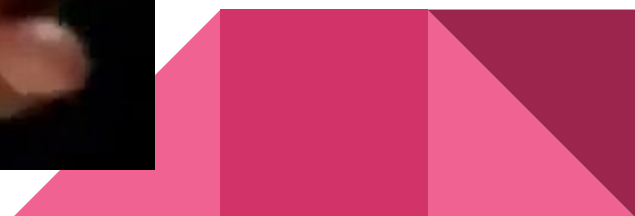
*"I don't see color/race"*

*"I deal with behavior,  
not race."*





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Sobering Realization

*“Why would anyone think that way?”*

*“Are there times when someone would think that way about me?”*

*“Could someone have perceived me or my actions as racist/bias?”*

Me: \*winks at reflection in the mirror\*

Reflection:




# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

Acceptance

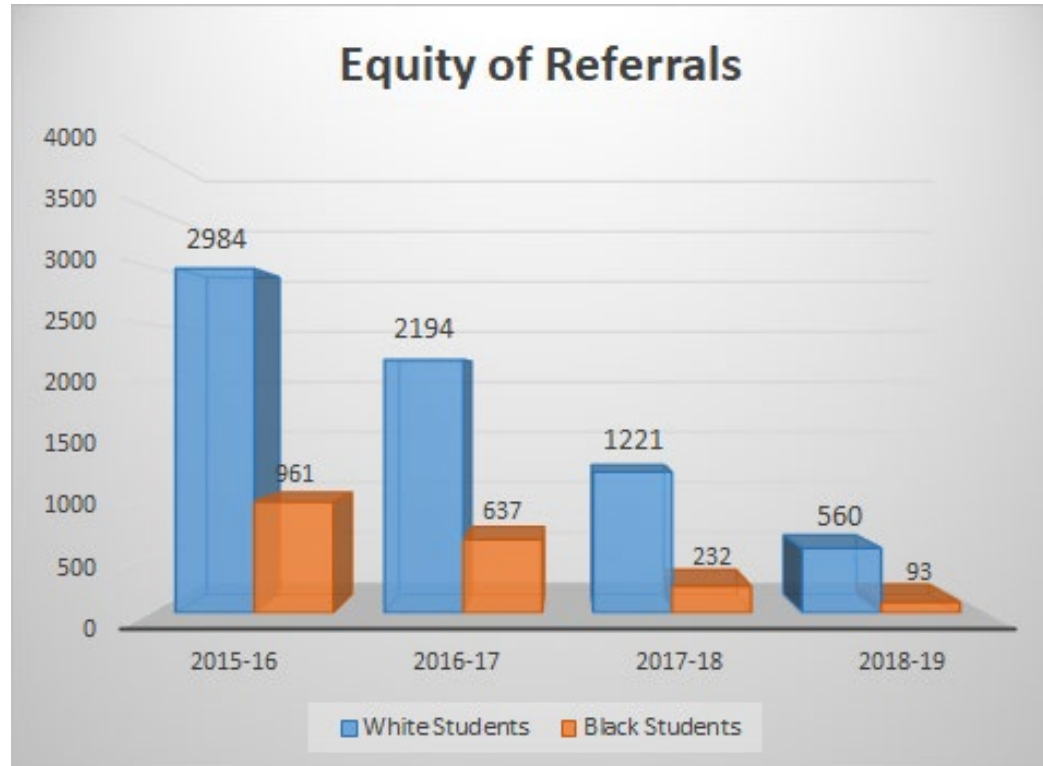


## *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

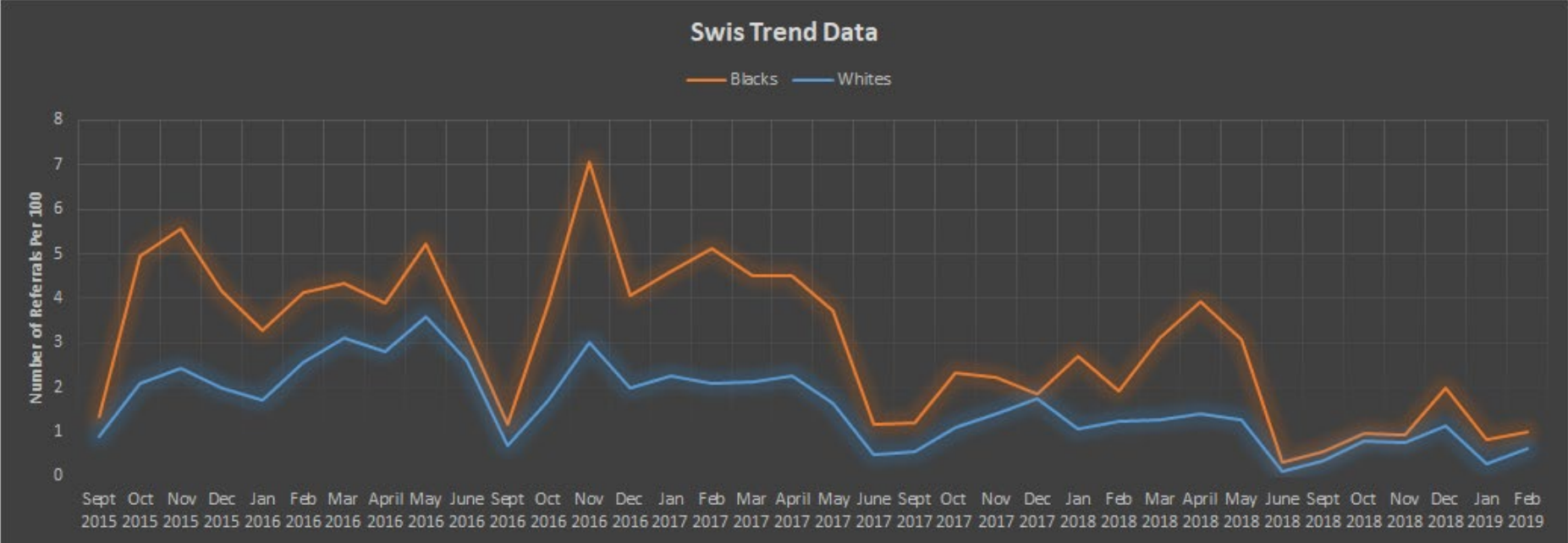
**Critical Consciousness** : The willingness and ability to see how power and privilege are at work to systematically advantage some while simultaneously disadvantaging others (Radd & Kramer, 2013).



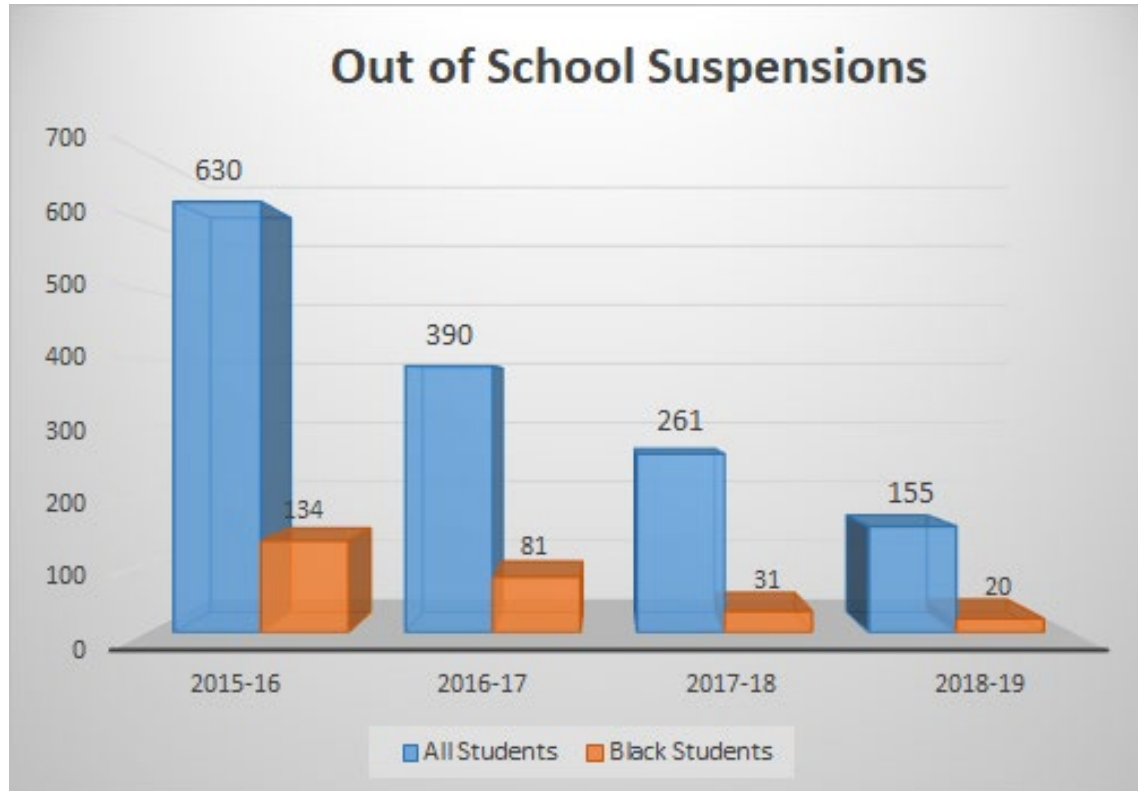
# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*



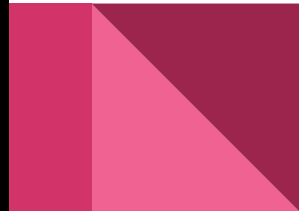
# Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*



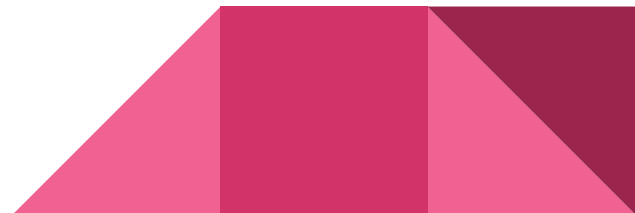
# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

What is Grace?

- Simple elegance or refinement of movement;
- Polite manner of behaving;
- Do honor or credit to (someone or something) by one's presence;
- Be an attractive presence in or on; adorn;





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

Here's what grace looks like in my house:



## *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

grace /grās/ noun:

1. The exercise of love, kindness, compassion, mercy, favor; disposition to benefit or serve another.

## *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

“Yeah hey, they say  
two thousand zero zero  
party over,  
oops, out of time...”





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

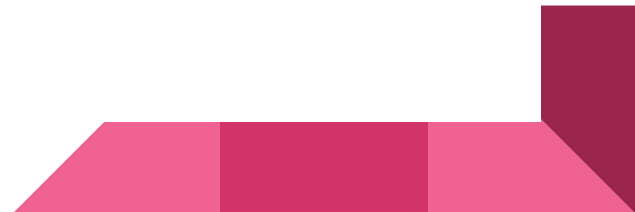
“So in school

I'm gonna

punish

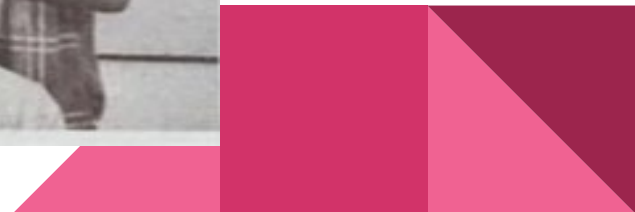
like it's....

1979





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*



## Shackelford Wisdom - "Shack-isms"

Students are different

- Distracted
- Increased social/emotional needs
- Lack coping skills



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

**Teacher:** Ms. Seely

**Date:** May 10, 2019

**Message:** Between Instagram, Snapchat, Phone, Youtube, weather, calls, texts, etc (I did not include Google Class notifications)

1st - 174

2nd - 157

3rd - 212

4th - prep

5th - 168

6th - did not do

7th - 112 (started later in the hour)

**Teacher:** Ms. Pawson

**Date:** May 10, 2019

**Message:** Results from our cell phone experiment.

2nd hour- 110 total notifications

3rd hour- 238 total notifications

4th hour- 345 total notifications

5th hour- 330 total notifications

6th hour- 470 total notifications

7th hour- 310 total notifications



*Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

**Grand Total:  
2,626 Interruptions**





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*



## Shackelford Wisdom - "Shack-isms"

Parents are different

- Distracted
- Stress about job, money, relationships
- Trust issues about school based on their past negative experiences with school



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*



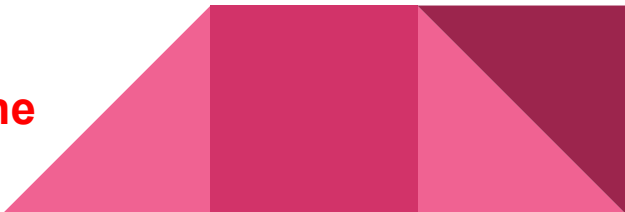
memegenerator.net

# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

My journey to Grace started with the Douglas B. Reeves article:

*“The Case Against the Zero”*

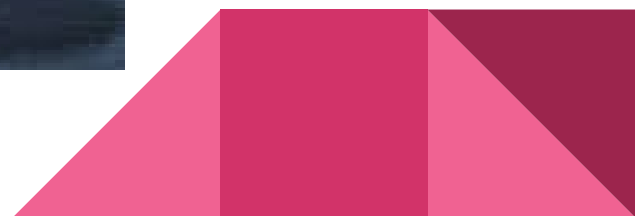
*“All Things PLC”*

- **Myth #1: Grades motivate students./**  
**ODR/Suspensions motivate students.**
  - **Myth #2: Grading homework and practice improves achievement./**  
**ODR/Suspensions improves behavior.**
  - **Myth #3: Grades drive future performance./**  
**ODR/Suspensions drive future behavior.**
  - **Myth #4: Punishment deters unwanted behavior./**  
**ODR/Suspensions deters unwanted behavior.**
  - **Myth #5: It’s okay for teachers to have their own grading systems/**  
**It’s okay for teachers to have their own discipline policies**
- 



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

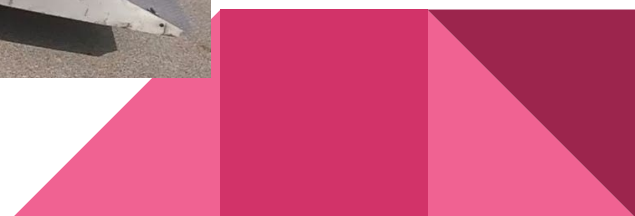
Shackelford Wisdom - "Shack-isms"





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

Shackelford Wisdom - "Shack-isms"





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

Shackelford Wisdom - "Shack-isms"



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

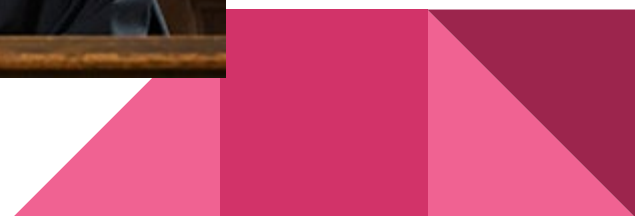
Shackelford Wisdom - "Shack-isms"





# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

Shackelford Wisdom - "Shack-isms"



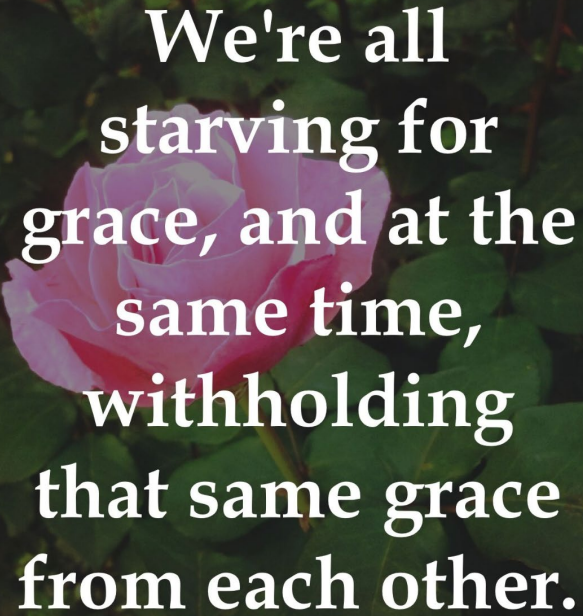




# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*




# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*



**We're all  
starving for  
grace, and at the  
same time,  
withholding  
that same grace  
from each other.**

[christywright.com](http://christywright.com)

# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

A photograph of a long wooden pier extending from the foreground into a misty sea at sunset. The sky is a soft, hazy orange and yellow, and the water is calm and reflects the light. The pier is made of dark wooden planks and leads the eye towards the horizon.

*If you want to make the world a better place,  
Take a look at yourself and make it change.*

*- Michael Jackson -*

*Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

**Thank you**

**Port Huron Area School District**

**Jamie Cain, Superintendent**

**Tracie Eschenburg, Executive Director-Employee and Student Services**

**Deb Barr, Director-Administrative Services/Behavior Supports**

**Jaime Feenstra-Supervisor, Behavior Supports**



# *Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

## Thank you

Michigan's Integrated Behavior and Learning Support Initiative

Dr. Steve Goodman, Director

Dr. Ruthie Payno-Simmons, Equity Specialist

Beth Hill, Equity Specialist



*Closing the Gap: Lessons in Equity and Grace*

Thank you

Missouri Schoolwide Positive Behavior Support Summer Institute

