

# THRIVING TOGETHER

BUILDING CONNECTIONS FOR TEACHER  
WELL-BEING AND STUDENT SUCCESS

## Creating A Sense of Belonging By Redefining What Society Says Is Possible For Black And Brown Students



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wide PBS

&

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Public Schools



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## Session Outcomes

- Outcome #1 – exploring strategies and tools to create sense of belonging for all children
- Outcome #2 – become aware of how unfair acts and practices adversely affect Black and Brown students
- Outcome #3 – think tank: participants will create different examples of equitable experiences for students within their district

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## Norms

Promote a Spirit of Inquiry

Pause...and Think

Paraphrase

Probe for Specifics

Put Ideas Out There

Pay Attention to Self and Others

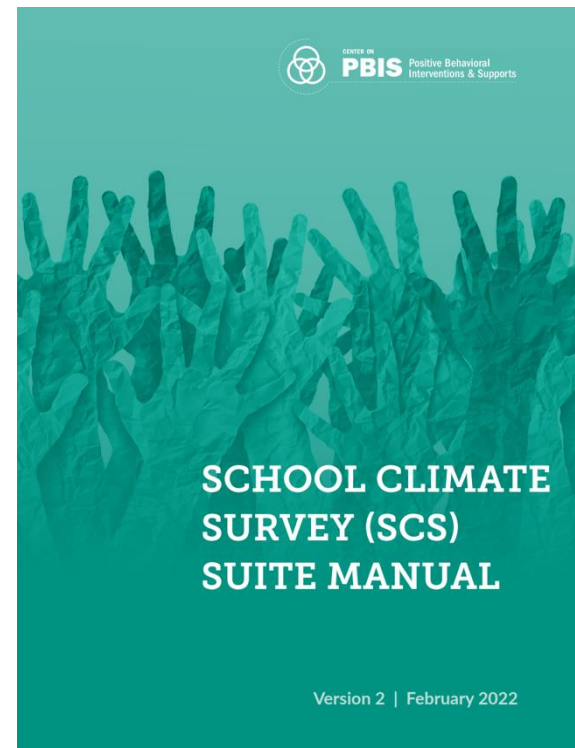
Presume Positive Intentions

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## Explore Center on PBIS Resources

<https://www.pbis.org/>



CENTER ON  
**PBIS** Positive Behavioral  
Interventions & Supports

February 2018

**A 5-Point Intervention  
Approach for Enhancing  
Equity in School Discipline**

Kent McIntosh, Erik J. Girvan, Robert H. Horner, Keith Smolkowski, & George Sugai

Discipline disproportionality is one of the most significant problems in education today (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2013). The results of decades of research consistently show that students of color, particularly African American students (and even more so for African American boys and those with disabilities), are at significantly increased risk for receiving exclusionary discipline practices, including office discipline referrals and suspensions (e.g., Fabelo et al., 2011; Girvan et al., in press; Losen & Gillespie, 2012). These differences have been found consistently across geographic regions and cannot be adequately explained by the correlation between race and poverty (Noltemeyer & McLoughlin, 2010; Morris & Perry, 2016). Given the negative effects of exclusionary discipline on a range of student outcomes (American Academy of Pediatrics Council on School Health, 2013), educators must address this issue by identifying rates of discipline disproportionality, taking steps to reduce it, and monitoring the effects of intervention on disproportionality. Disproportionality in exclusionary discipline blocks us from the overall objective of promoting positive outcomes for every student.

**Components of Effective Intervention to Prevent and Reduce Discipline Disproportionality**

No single strategy will be sufficient to produce substantive and sustainable change. Multiple components may be needed, but not all components may be necessary in all schools. We describe here a 5-point multicomponent approach to reduce discipline disproportionality in schools.

**1. Collect, Use, and Report Disaggregated Discipline Data**

Any school or district committed to reducing discipline disproportionality should adopt data systems that can disaggregate student data by race, ethnicity, and disability and provide instantaneous access to these data for both school and district teams. Some discipline data systems for entering and analyzing office discipline referrals

Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) 1

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## More resources

### Community of Practice - Equity Series 2025



#### 5. Teach Strategies for Neutralizing Implicit Bias in Discipline Decisions

Research increasingly shows the influence of implicit bias on classroom and school discipline decisions.<sup>[2]</sup>,<sup>[3]</sup> There are strategies educators can use to identify and neutralize their implicit biases before they affect decision making, including

- Identifying vulnerable decision points – specific discipline situations more prone to implicit bias
- Learning strategies to help educators respond in line with their values.

**Resource:** [Using Discipline Data within SWPBIS to Identify and Address Disproportionality: A Guide for School Teams](#)

SCTG Webinar- Resources for Enhancing  
Addressing Common Questions

“Are you saying that all teachers are racist?”

Watch on YouTube

Chat (Everyone)

Department of Ed.

Arvilla Lesnak: Arvilla Lesnak - Jefferson Parish, LA

Wendi Jenkins: Wendi Jenkins - Virginia DOE

Chris Langhorn: Chris Langhorn VA Dept of Ed

Kevin Fuller: Kevin Fuller, Enterprise Charter School

C Grafenreed: Clymba Grafenreed, Region 4 Education Service Center, Houston, TX

D. Briere: CT SCTG: Don Briere - CT Dept of Ed. - CT SCTG Project Director

Marlene Gross-Ackeret: Marlene Gross-Ackeret, Wisconsin RII Center

Cassandra Seruntine: Cassandra Seruntine Jefferson, La

Sue Deeter: lost volume on my computer

Irma Maria Munoz: South San Antonio School District: School Climate Transformation Grant- Irma Maria Munoz- PBS Team, San Antonio, Texas

Regina Oliver: Regina Oliver - Lincoln Public Schools, Lincoln, NE

Carrie Anderson Mays: Nassau County School District, Florida

Stephanie Skolasinski: Stephanie Skolasinski, WI RII Center, PBS TAC

Key Augustine: Iowa Department of Education, Project Director SCTG

quest1, Tracy Piper are typing...

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## THE SPIRIT-MURDERING OF BLACK STUDENTS FROM WHITE EDUCATORS

Dissertation Defense:  
Saturday, April 20, 2024

Dr. Casetta D. Brown

Dr. Brian C. Guilfoyle

Dr. Sarah J. Guilfoyle

Dr. Courtney D. Jude



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## Redefining What Society Says Is Possible...

- **Spirit-Murder** is as an act of racialized violence and oppression causing emotional harm to Black and Brown children, impacting their spirit, psyche, and self-confidence. The psychological and emotional damage is detrimental, regardless of whether the perpetrators are aware of it. Spirit-Murdering acts happen in schools with educators and staff members in positions of authority. Though the term, spirit-murder, was coined by Patricia Williams in the legal field, it was brought to light in the education realm by Dr. Bettina Love. Spirit-murder, according to Love (2016), is “the denial of inclusion, protection, safety, nurturance, and acceptance because of fixed, yet fluid and moldable structures of racism” (p. 2).
- **Theoretical Frameworks**
- **Accountability** for protecting Black students falls on everyone, not just the Black community, as racism is a collective problem.



**"WHAT THE PEOPLE WANT IS SIMPLE.  
THEY WANT AN AMERICA AS GOOD AS  
ITS PROMISE."**

**-CONGRESSWOMAN BARBARA JORDAN**

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## BUILDING CONNECTIONS FOR TEACHER WELL-BEING AND STUDENT SUCCESS

### Innocent Childhood:

- It began on the first day of 7th grade. This was my first time ever having white teachers and the first time that I ever remember experiencing racism.
- Though indirect, Mr. B's behavior definitely caused emotional damage that led to long-lasting impacts including issues with trust, anxiety, disliking science, and feeling inferior.
- I had always wanted to be a teacher, and I was used to having great relationships with them. So I was rooting for Mr. B and he let me down, causing me to feel naive, and heartbroken.
- Mr. B was afraid of what he deemed as rowdy students in my class. These rowdy students looked like me, and he did not differentiate his verbal abuse. Mr. B. was the first of many white teachers to murder my spirit.



"ACKNOWLEDGING TEACHER BIAS IS THE FOUNDATION OF  
WORKING WITH AND BEING COMFORTABLE HAVING AND  
SUPPORTING RACE AND CLASS DISCUSSIONS IN THE CLASSROOM."

-DR. ASHANTI BRYANT FOSTER

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### Young Adulthood:

- I was a 17-year-old freshman in a large lecture hall engaged “Popcorn” reading of my Geography text when my professor took an opportunity to perpetrate a very negative experience on me in front of a room full of my peers in what he thought was a compliment.
- He interrupted me near the end of the passage sharing how shocked he was and exclaimed, “Wow, I cannot *believe* you pronounced that word correctly. It is *rare* for a *student* to get that word right. You *must* be a Linguistics major!”
- I struggled, but was proud of myself when I responded without emotion and stuck to the facts, “Yes, I am an English major, and that will involve many Linguistics classes, however, I happen to be familiar with the word and its meaning. Thank you.”



**"I'VE LEARNED THAT PEOPLE WILL FORGET  
WHAT YOU'VE SAID, PEOPLE WILL FORGET  
WHAT YOU DID, BUT THEY WILL NEVER  
FORGET THE WAY YOU MADE THEM FEEL."**

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## Guilty Adulthood:

- I was a brand-new teacher in Houston, Texas approx. 65% most of my students were Hispanic.
- As a new teacher, I cared about creating a space that was safe and nurturing, and most importantly, free of bullying. So I made a rule that I thought was appropriate.
- I told my students that for their safety, they were not allowed to speak Spanish in my classroom.
- I banned their native language and a huge part of their identity.
- I murdered the spirits of my students.



**"WE MUST ALWAYS TAKE SIDES. NEUTRALITY HELPS THE  
OPPRESSOR, NEVER THE VICTIM. SILENCE ENCOURAGES  
THE TORMENTOR, NEVER THE TORMENTED."**

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## Fierce Parenthood:

- My son was four years old and a Pre-K student when he was spirit-murdered by his white teacher.
- He is energetic, inquisitive, a natural leader, and enjoys interacting with his classmates. His teacher saw him as unsafe, boisterous, and disobedient. She did not like him, and it was evident. What she didn't know was that my job was to train teachers in this same district on how to connect with and nurture children. So, I was able to see through her nice-racist behaviors towards my child very early on.
- My spirit was murdered during this process as his mother because I had to unfairly consider her at all times, even when I was frustrated, and when she was wrong. I had to multi-task and coach her even through her mistreatment. I had to be conscious of my body language, my tone, and facial expressions while she spirit-murdered us. I experienced anxiety, and stress due to being overwhelmed by this situation.



**"WE BEG YOU TO SAVE YOUNG AMERICA  
FROM THE BLIGHT OF RACE PREJUDICE. DO  
NOT BIND THE CHILDREN WITHIN THE  
NARROW CIRCLES OF YOUR OWN LIVES"**

**-CHARLES HAMILTON HOUSTON**

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## Research Themes & Significance

1. This is happening (daily) all around us and we likely participate in this oppressive cycle.
2. Internalized oppression, distrust, embarrassment, and anger is one of the best ways to ensure that what society says about Black and Brown children happens to Black and Brown children.
3. Difficult but necessary for educators, parents, and stakeholders and those who want what's best for children.

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## Redefining by Creating a Sense of Belonging

- Accountability
- Promoting Inclusivity, Acceptance, and Respect by Strategically Creating a Sense of Belonging
- Creating Safe Space for Learning and Curiosity
- Engage Mindfulness
- Develop Openness to Feedback
- Replacing Disproportionate Practices
- Student Empowerment via Voice and Advocacy
- Ongoing Training and Professional Development
- Comprehensive Education and Awareness Programs
- <https://www.pbis.org/resource/discipline-disproportionality-problem-solving-a-data-guide-for-school-teams>
- <https://www.pbis.org/equitable-supports>

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## What About You?

Have you ever been spirit-murdered?



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## What About You?

Have you ever spirit-  
murdered a student?



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## Equitable Experiences for Black and Brown Students in your District:

1. Parade of Nations
2. Flags in the cafeteria – any student from another country – welcome them to the school  
Student access champions – district wide – ambassadors for equity
3. Others words – fair – sense of belonging – inclusivity – accessibility – asset based – strengths based  
Student Voice – students say what they want to see done within the school
4. World culture night – sharing food – and culture – dances  
Celebrate holidays from different cultures  
Listen to children as an administrators – think who you put in front of children – mediate with teachers and students
5. Keep conversations confidential
- 6.
- 7.

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## Find a New Advocate (and Friend)

How will you advocate for Black and Brown students when you see unfair practices in place?

How will you Redefine what society says is possible for Black and Brown children?

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Share Out...

How might you share what you've learned?



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Q&A



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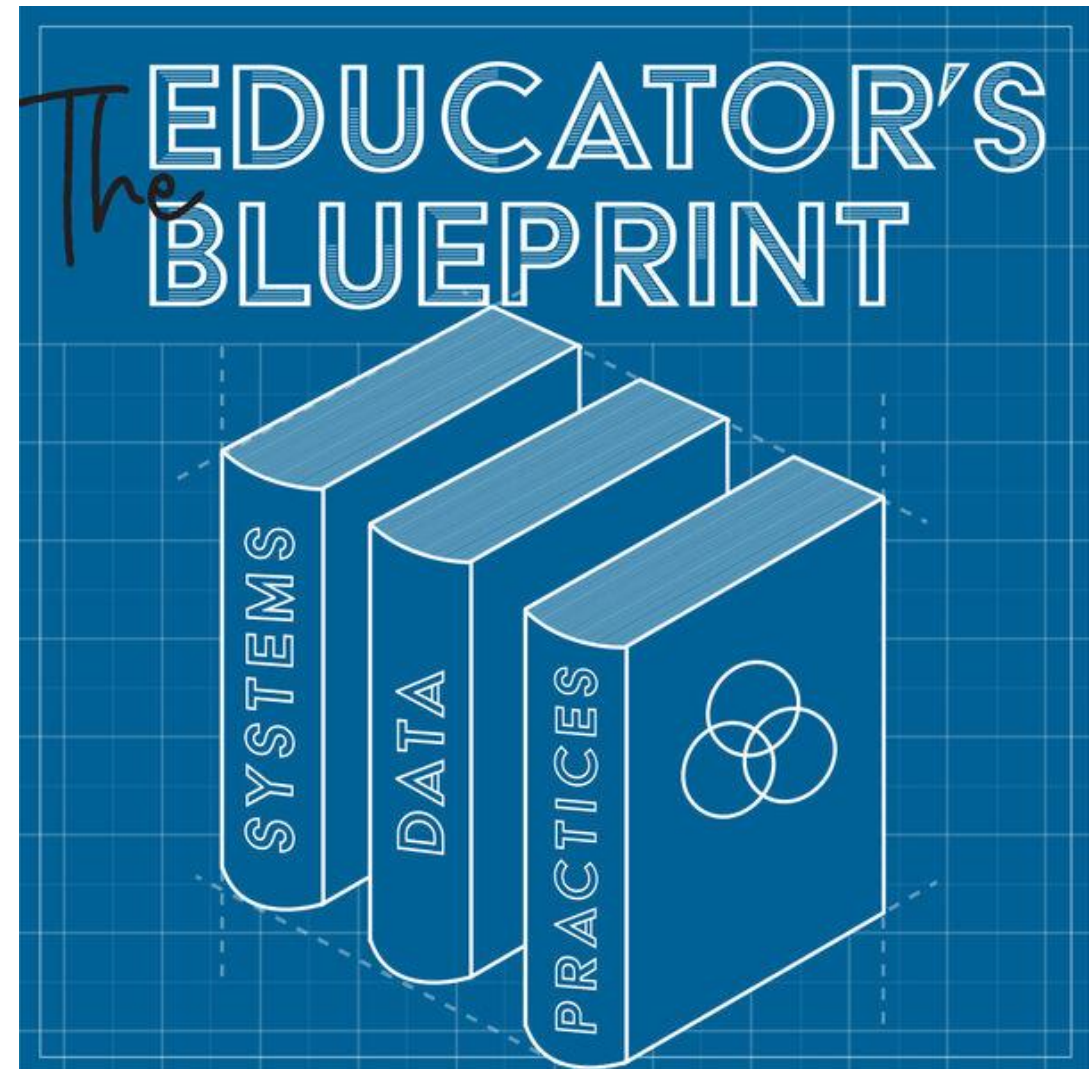
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## Join The Educator's Blueprint

Learn from friends in the field...

- Episode 7 Urban Education with Dr. Casetta Brown
- Episode 9: Wellness in relationships to Opinions, Climate, and Culture with Dr. Rhonda Nese
- Episode 24: Impact of Policy with Dr. Ambra Green
- Episode 76: Equity and Belonging with Dr. Nikole Hollins-Sims

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Save



## NATIONAL PBIS FORUMS

The National PBIS Leadership Forum & the National PBIS Implementers Forum are designed as complementary events.

Together, they create a comprehensive capacity building structure.

Save the  
Date  
Oct 22-23

### Leadership Forum



The National PBIS Leadership Forum is a 2-3

### Implementers Forum



The PBIS Virtual Implementers Forum is a half-

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Reminder ...  
Please  
complete the  
session  
evaluation in  
the Guidebook  
App

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