

School-to-Prison Pipeline Episode Guide

Focus: Dr. Daniel Losen and Dr. Amir Whitaker, Esq. discuss the inequity in educational opportunity through school discipline practices. This podcast highlights the link between educational practices and growing suspension rates to the increase in Black boys entering the juvenile justice system.

Presenter: Dr. Daniel Losen and Dr. Amir Whitaker Esq.

Key Findings

- The most at risk population for experiencing inequities are students of color, particularly Black boys and students with disabilities. The inequity in educational opportunity is a compilation of much broader issues that contribute to a school experience where educational needs are inadequately met.
- The concept of teaching obedience contributes to a legacy of discrimination. Students who are bright and challenge authority are often pushed out because they don't fit the mold.
- Black boys are 19% of Pre - K enrollment but half of Pre-K suspension
- The U.S. Department of Education reports that 90% of Black boys in Pre-K look forward to school but by middle school disengagement occurs
- A large body of research on implicit bias and activated stereotypes supports Dr. Whitaker's personal experiences in school. A Yale University Study shows that when prompted to watch negative behaviors, teachers focused on Black boys.
- Many schools' guiding principles for school climate is broken windows, a crime intervention philosophy. These policies are not developmentally appropriate and exasperate the problem.
- Over 1.6 million students have access to a school resource officer and no counselor
- Counselors and service providers play an important role in pushing up against the system.
- Teachers and administrators do not have the support that they need to do a good job either. And, in the end, it is to the detriment to the student.
- Restorative Justice is an alternative to addressing harsh school discipline policies. You want to hold students accountable in a way that says you are an important part of this community and we want you to be successful here.

- Punishment alone does not improve behavior, instead it creates resentment, harms the relationship, and contributes to the disengagement Black males experience in school settings.
- One of the most predictive factors to the school suspension rate is the Administration. It is more predictive than the race of the student. Their philosophy on how to respond to student misconduct is predictive of how many students will be suspended.
- The high cost of harsh discipline report shows a tremendous economic burden
- Culture of suspension builds an environment of less trust and lack of safety

Key Recommendations

- If you are in a school or district with harsh policies, review the school's Code of Conduct. Assess its alignment with the principles of Positive Behavior Interventions & Supports (PBIS) and Social Emotional Learning (SEL).
- Develop Learning Centers instead of out-of-school or in-school suspensions
- Shift focus from academics and compliance to the growth of the whole child
- Build a loving and trusting space to learn
- Transition from an individual focus and turn it outward to look at the system and its ability to meet the needs of the students

Resources

- *Closing the School Discipline Gap: Equitable Remedies for Excessive Exclusion* by Daniel J. Losen
- The Civil Rights Project at UCLA <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/>
 - School Discipline Data www.schooldisciplinedata.org
- The High Cost Of Harsh Discipline And Its Disparate Impact (Report)
<https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/federal-reports/the-high-cost-of-harsh-discipline-and-its-disparate-impact>

- Are We Closing the School Discipline Gap? (Report)
<https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/resources/projects/center-for-civil-rights-remedies/school-to-prison-folder/federal-reports/are-we-closing-the-school-discipline-gap>
- Charter Schools and School Discipline Report
http://www.schooldisciplinedata.org/ccrr/docs/Charter_School_Report_2016.pdf
- 2013-14 Civil Rights Data Collection: A First Look - U.S. Department of Education
<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/docs/2013-14-first-look.pdf>
- The A-Zs of Responsive Discipline
http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/TT_53_Toolkit_The%20A-Z%5B1%5D_0.pdf
- The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males
<http://www.blackboysreport.org/2015-black-boys-report.pdf>
- Requesting Office of Civil Rights Discipline Data
<http://www.dignityinschools.org/resources/ocr-data-webinar-2016>
- Project Knucklehead <http://www.projectknucklehead.org/>