



Focus: Redefining Discipline

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Stop the Bad; Do the Good – Hurting and Excluding Students Feeds the School-to-Prison Pipeline

by Morgan Craven, J.D.

I have worked on school discipline and policing issues for more than a decade as an attorney representing young people in schools and courts, as an advocate supporting local campaigns, and as a collaborator on state and national policies. In these roles, when I talk to people about strategies to dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline, I often frame the solution as “Stop the Bad, Do the Good.”

I admit that may seem overly-simplistic, particularly for an issue that so profoundly impacts the lives of and limits opportunities for so many young people. But I use this framing precisely because the lived experiences, data, and academic research on school discipline and policing are clear about what works and what doesn’t to create safe and welcoming schools for all students.

Stopping the Bad

What exactly pushes students out of school and drives the school-to-prison pipeline? The term *school-to-prison pipeline* describes schools’ systemic use of punitive discipline practices that results in missed classroom time and increases the likelihood of justice system involvement and a host of other academic, social and psychological challenges for young people.

These challenges are disproportionately felt by Black and Indigenous students, LGBTQ students, students with disabilities, and those with intersecting identities who are more likely than

their peers to be punished (and punished harshly) by teachers and administrators.

Much of the “bad” is very clear, albeit deeply-entrenched, in many schools: policies and practices (endorsed in classrooms, codified in state laws, and permitted by federal actors) allow the use of in-school and out-of-school suspensions, corporal punishment, alternative school placements, expulsions and other punitive approaches.

Studies confirm what many students and parents have complained about for years: punitive and exclusionary discipline is harmful for young people (Council of State Governments Justice Center, 2011). They suffer academically, socially, psychologically and sometimes physically. They feel cast aside, excluded from their classroom communities, and may struggle to make up the learning and socialization time they missed (IDRA, 2020). School closures during the pandemic have shown us how social and academic isolation negatively impacts students.

Exclusionary discipline policies and practices both reflect and perpetuate personal biases and systemic discrimination, resulting in a disproportionate impact on Black and Indigenous students, LGBTQ students, and students with disabilities. Research confirms that deeply-rooted biases in adults inform how they view students’ behavior and impact who and how they choose to punish (Staats, 2014).

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Maybe the need to have an alternative in place in order to stop doing something bad is a hang-up that only adults have.

(Stop the Bad; Do the Good, continued from Page 1)

Those biases are passed down, absorbed and shared by others, including many who write and enforce the laws and policies that make up our education and punitive discipline systems. The result is a vicious culture of punishment in many schools that is rooted in history, fed by policy, and carried out by the very people who should be welcoming and protecting of all students.

To stop the bad, we must boldly and intentionally change the local and state policies that allow schools to use exclusionary discipline. We must end corporal punishment, stop ignoring data that show clear racial disparities, and prohibit police and weapons in schools (Craven, 2020). And we must remove *adults* from schools if they do not deeply believe in the value and limitless potential of every young person.

Doing the Good

For a long time, I focused mainly on “stopping the bad.” My thinking was pretty simple: we should all just stop doing things that we know hurt students. But, inevitably, whoever I was talking to (parent, policymaker, teacher, etc.) would ask, “What should we do instead?” Interestingly, this question never came from students, maybe they already knew what safer schools should look like or maybe the need to have an alternative in place in order to stop doing something bad is only a hang-up adults have.

Like stopping the bad, strategies and investments that help “do the good” are also clear and supported by research and the lived experiences of students, families and teachers.

Doing the good means that schools must identify the root causes of student and adult behaviors, address the beliefs that cause adults to make decisions to punish, and create schoolwide cultures that are safe and welcoming for all. To do so, policymakers and schools must do the following.

- Value all students regardless of backgrounds and be an advocate for students’ growth and learning.
- Implement schoolwide community-building strategies, like restorative practices.
- Encourage adoption of ethnic studies courses and culturally-sustaining educational practices that connect students to their schools and make them feel that they are supported.
- Hire diverse and highly-qualified teachers and other staff.
- Have intentional discussions about discrimination, history and current events.
- Encourage and fund professional development for educators so that they may explore their personal biases and the systems that lead to disproportionate discipline for students.
- Increase the presence of school-based counselors, social workers, and other mental and behavioral health professionals.
- Fund schools equitably to ensure all students have access to excellent materials, instructional practices, and facilities.
- Review data frequently and adjust policies and practices accordingly to ensure all students can succeed.
- Support meaningful systems of student and family engagement to ensure intergenerational investment and involvement in schools.

These are a few of the many strategies that drastically improve the education experiences and outcomes for so many young people, particularly those who are systemically-marginalized.

There is no real or serious debate over the harmful impacts of punitive discipline or over the efficacy of research-based strategies that resolve conflict and build community. The discriminatory impacts of punitive school discipline and policing are clear and cannot be defended.

Research and stories of success in schools that adopt positive strategies prove that pulling students in is always better than pushing them out. We know just what to do to stop the bad and do the good. Now we must do it.

Resources

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Schoolwide Restorative Justice Practices – A Guided Tour

by Paula N. Johnson, Ph.D.

Public schools are increasingly adopting a restorative approach for building community and relationships. Restorative justice practices involve developing welcoming learning environments that are inclusive of all students and foster relationships within the school community. Studies show that using restorative justice practices positively impacts student behavior (Johnson, 2019).

Successful implementation relies heavily on understanding that behavior is not the primary focus. IDRA encourages schools and districts to implement restorative justice as a means of addressing issues of equity schoolwide.

Here, I provide a guided tour of the implementation process and share expectations, challenges and benchmarks for the first two to three years.

Plan for Implementation

For all that restorative justice has to offer, it is important to assure that your school is prepared for the endeavor. The first step is to assess the readiness of your campus for a culture shift. The Denver School-Based Restorative Practices Partnership identifies four key readiness components: “strong principal vision and commitment to restorative practices, explicit efforts to generate staff buy-in, continuous and intensive professional development opportunities, and allocation of school funds for a full-time a coordinator of restorative practices at the site” (Anyon, 2017).

Many times, superintendents, principals, teachers and staff need to reframe their thinking about what it means to be restorative in order to fully embrace a restorative mindset.

The first year will set the tone for implementation and requires a willingness to grow as a community of practitioners through the process. Another proactive strategy is to involve students, parents and caregivers in the initial phases of the preparation process (Johnson, 2019).

Before embarking on a professional development

model, the restorative practices team needs to consider a few key elements, including a timeline for professional development, how to incorporate restorative practices into the school day, and ways for teachers and staff to practice community-building with students on a regular basis.

Provide Professional Development for All Staff

It is essential for school leaders to give teachers and staff comprehensive professional development. Schools should schedule introductory professional development for teachers and staff early in the school year to maximize implementation of proactive strategies schoolwide (Yusem, et al., 2016). The goal is to build capacity for developing relationships.

Professional development should foster strong interpersonal connections when used consistently and with the intention of transforming the climate and culture of an entire school (Yusem, et al., 2016; Anyon, 2016).

Initial restorative practices training involves learning to facilitate restorative conversations and community building circles for schoolwide use with all students. This training, along with coaching, should include all administrators, counselors, teachers, campus support staff, after-school program staff and any school security officers (Yusem, et al., 2016).

Students model the behavior of the adults surrounding them (Anyon, 2016). That means all adult staff should contribute to developing restorative language and establishing a restorative campus culture. Restorative conversations then become the norm for communication with fellow teachers, students and families.

Model Restorative Practices in the Classroom

Once the entire staff begin to receive training in restorative practices strategies for building

(cont. on Page 4)

Public schools are increasingly adopting a restorative approach for building community and relationships.

(Implementing Schoolwide Restorative Practices, continued from Page 3)

relationships, it is just as important to plan for engagement. Below are several practical applications of restorative practices that teachers can use on a daily basis.

- **Begin the day with a class meeting.** This helps you build relationships with students and helps you gain an idea of their social and emotional mindsets. These brief conversations help take the pulse of the room and provide the instructional focus for the day (Yusem, et al.).
- **Practice goal setting.** This is another restorative practice strategy teachers can use to help students identify areas of success and opportunities for improvement, both academically and socially. Individual conferencing throughout the week enables students to set and review goals and action steps. Over time, students will develop reflection skills and learn to assess and refocus as needed.
- **Use collaborative decision-making** to foster sharing of ideas where all voices contribute to the process. This technique is useful when selecting the theme for a project or the location of the next field trip. Depending on the circumstances, the final decision may rest with the group through voting. Other times, the teacher has the final say after considering input from the class.

Understand that each year of implementation will have its challenges. Changes in students and staff can make you feel like you've taken a step back. Keep going! Developing a restorative community takes time and patience. Acknowledge small wins along the way.

Get Support

The IDRA EAC-South places equity at the forefront of the restorative justice practices process by integrating culturally sustaining pedagogy into our content to inform the development of schoolwide equitable and restorative practices. This includes a comprehensive professional development model with elements of diversity, equity and inclusion, growth mindsets, and increasing student and family engagement.

The primary objective of restorative practices training facilitated by the IDRA EAC-South is that educators and staff at all levels adopt the following practices that promote caring communities for all parties involved.

- Understand harm and develop empathy,
- Listen and respond to all needs,
- Encourage accountability and responsibility,

Launching Restorative Practices Schoolwide



Phase #1

Plan for Implementation

- Have strong principal vision and commitment to restorative practices
- Generate staff buy-in
- Plan for continuous and intensive professional development
- Designate school funds for a full-time a coordinator of restorative practices.



Phase #2

Provide Professional Development for All Staff

- Include all administrators, counselors, teachers, campus support staff, after-school program staff
- Build capacity for developing relationships.
- Practice facilitating restorative conversations and community building circles




Phase #3

Model Restorative Practices in the Classroom

Sample activities:

- Begin with a class meeting each day
- Practice goal setting
- Use collaborative decision-making fosters sharing of ideas



Get Support

IDRA EAC-South can help you implement district and campus restorative practices. In many cases, our services are available free to schools and districts in the U.S. South.

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- Recognize the community as valuable, contributing members,
- Create caring climates to support healthy communities, and
- Change any systemic practices that contribute to harmful environments.

Is your campus or district ready to begin building community through restorative practices? On request, the IDRA EAC-South will co-plan and facilitate district and campus restorative practices equity training with the implementation team. Campus planning follows with tailored models of implementation according to the needs of each campus. In-person and virtual coaching and mentoring provide support for facilitators through the initial stages of training and implementation.

Our facilitators also collaborate with campus and district teams to plan and deliver turnaround training and support campus implementation as needed. In many cases, these services are provided free through funding from the U.S. Department of Education, contingent upon continued

support. The IDRA EAC-South serves states and school districts in federal Region II: Alabama, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

For more information on our restorative justice practices campus team training and coaching support services visit <https://www.idra.org/services>.

Resources

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Paula N. Johnson, Ph.D., is an IDRA senior education associate and director of the IDRA EAC-South. Comments and questions may be directed to her via email at paula.johnson@idra.org.

School Districts with Higher Rates of Suspension Graduate Fewer Students – New IDRA Analysis Examines Texas Data

by Lola Solís

Exclusionary discipline practices in schools are those that result in the removal of a student from the classroom. They are proven to have adverse effects on students' academic performance and achievements, such as attrition, graduation, state assessment test performance and dropout rates.

This article describes IDRA's examination of the relationship between out-of-school suspensions, specifically, and high school non-completion rates in Texas public school districts. Using Texas Education Agency (TEA) and U.S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) data, we fit a regression model to examine one key question: Do higher out-of-school suspension rates lead to higher rates of high school non-completion?

According to TEA, in the 2017-18 school year, over 1 million students faced exclusionary disciplinary practices. There were 5,073 expulsion actions in Texas, 437,518 out-of-school suspensions, and 1,128,906 in-school suspensions in 2018-19.

Student groups do not face exclusionary practices equally. According to the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, Black students are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled than White students. And 16% of Black students experience suspensions compared to only 5% of White students. Though they represent less than 1% of the student population, American Indian and Native Alaskan students also are disproportionately suspended and expelled, making up about 2% of out-of-school suspensions and 3% of expulsions. (OCR, 2021)

Data and Analysis

We combined aggregate district-level data from TEA and CDRC for 2017-18. The combined dataset includes data on district enrollment, out-of-school suspensions and dropout rates. The combined file contained 1,204 observations, including both public school districts and public charter schools. We limited the analysis to public

school districts only and kept only the cases with complete data. Our final analytical sample was 342 Texas traditional public school districts.

To examine the relationship between out-of-school suspension on high school non-completion rates, we fit a multivariate, ordinary least squares regression model predicting school districts' high-school non-completion rates. The key independent variable was districts' out-of-school suspension rates with control variables for percent Hispanic, Black, White, Other, and economically disadvantaged student enrollments.

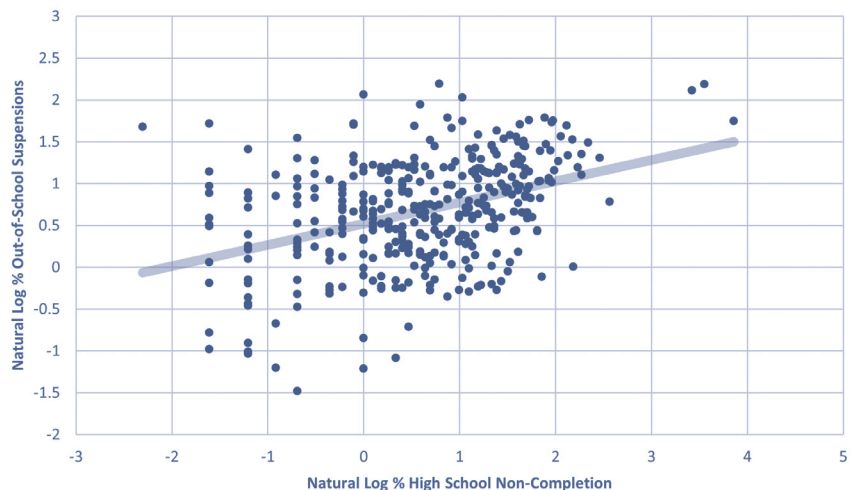
Key Study Findings

In the sample, the median school district percentage of out-of-school suspensions was 2.1%, and the median school district percentage of high school non-completion was 1.7%. The graph below shows a positive, linear association between the two key variables in the data. As the rates of out-of-school suspensions increase, the rates of high school non-completions also increase.

(cont. on Page 6)

Exclusionary discipline in schools has adverse effects on students' attrition, graduation, state assessment test performance and dropout rates.

Association Between Out-of-School Suspensions and High School Non-Completion in Texas Public School Districts



(Suspending Students from Graduation, continued from Page 5)

Put differently, among Texas school districts in the sample, higher rates of out-of-school suspensions are associated with higher rates of high school non-completion. Among Texas school districts in the study, a 1% increase in out-of-school suspension was associated with a 1.4% increase in high school non-completion, with all else held equal. Additionally, a 1% increase in the Latino and Other enrollments were associated with 1.4% and 1.1% increases in high school non-completion, respectively.

Policy Recommendations

Exclusionary discipline practices negatively impact students' dropout rates across districts in Texas. Additionally, exclusionary practices result in racial disparities, with Black students and Latino students experiencing suspension at higher rates than their white counterparts.

Schools should implement more impactful alternatives to exclusionary practices that will not result in increased dropout rates.

Following are three suggestions for educators (Ramón, 2020).

- **End policies and school practices that create hostile school environments for students.** Schools should work to keep students in class every day and should never send students to disciplinary alternative education programs for minor violations of student codes of conduct.
- **Increase the presence of counselors, social workers and nurses.** The average academic counselor had 424 students under his or her watch, according to the American School Counselor Association (2021), which recommends a 250:1 ratio.
- **Direct funds for teachers and administrators at home campuses to support students.** The legislature should increase funding for research-based supports and programs in schools to help keep students in class.

School leaders should focus on addressing root causes of discipline issues and incorporate restorative approaches to maintain school health and successful students in public school districts.

Resources

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New Data Dashboard: Corporal Punishment in U.S. States & School Districts

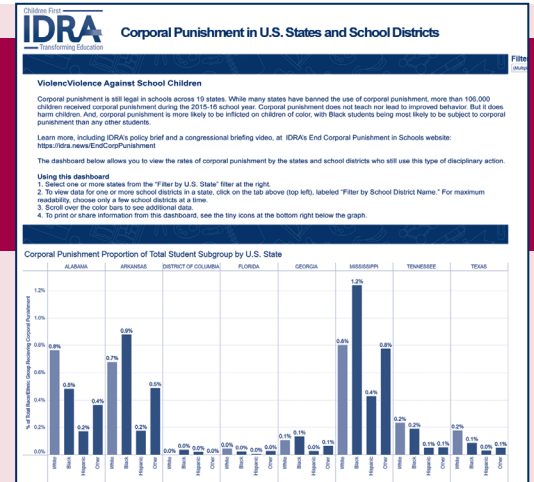
Corporal punishment is still legal in schools across 19 states, particularly across the U.S. South. While many states have banned the use of corporal punishment, more than 106,000 children received corporal punishment during the 2015-16 school year.

Corporal punishment does not teach or lead to improved behavior. But it does harm children. And corporal punishment is more likely to be inflicted on children of color, with Black students being most likely to be subject to corporal punishment than any other students.

Visit IDRA's End Corporal Punishment in Schools website to learn more:

- New Data Dashboard: Corporal Punishment in U.S. States and School Districts
- Policy Brief: *Stopping Harmful Corporal Punishment Policies in Texas*
- Video: Congressional Briefing on the Protecting Our Students in Schools Act

<https://idra.news/EndCorpPunishment>



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Lola Solis served as a summer intern with the IDRA research and evaluation team in 2021. She is earning her master's with a focus on public policy at University of California, Berkeley.

In Memoriam – Mr. Jesse S. Treviño

It is with sadness that we share the news that Mr. Jesse S. Treviño, former chair of the IDRA Board of Directors, passed away September 3, 2021, surrounded by family. His commitment to education and empowering children were driving forces in his life.

Mr. Treviño was the founding chair of the IDRA Board of Directors and served on the board for 44 years, including many years as chair. In 2018, he transitioned his service to IDRA as its founding board member emeritus.

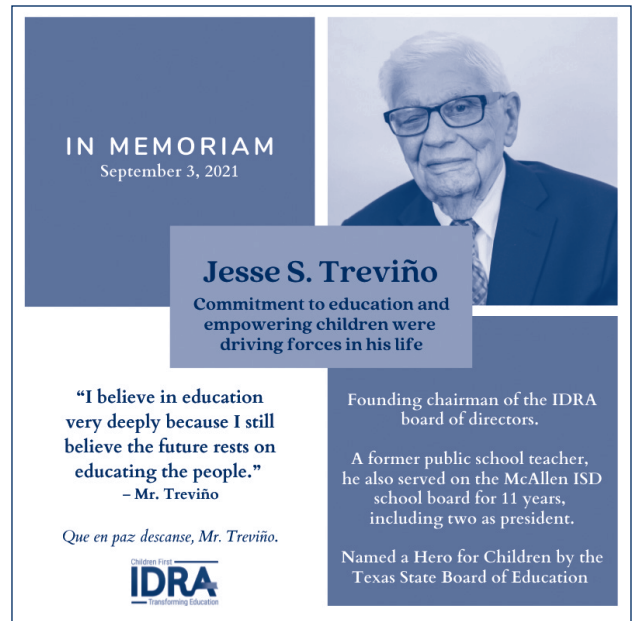
IDRA President & CEO, Celina Moreno, J.D., said: “I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to have worked with Mr. Treviño. He has been a cherished leader in the IDRA family throughout our almost five decades. We are also so grateful to Mary Lou, his beloved wife, for her friendship and support and send our deepest condolences to their family.”

Seven days after graduating from high school in Alice, Texas, Mr. Treviño was inducted into the Army Air Force and trained as a ball turret gunner in a B-24, serving three years during World War II, and was honorably discharged as a sergeant. He earned a BBA in international trade from the University of Texas at Austin in 1950 and taught sixth grade in Alice for one year. Mr. Treviño later worked for the U.S. Department of Labor as a compliance officer and as a special agent for an insurance company. He then opened his own agency, the Jesse Treviño Independent Insurance Agency. He was the first Mexican American to serve as a board member of the state Association of Independent Agents.


Mr. Treviño was elected to serve on the McAllen ISD school board, serving 11 years, twice as president. He was selected by Senator Lloyd Bentsen to develop the Council for South Texas Economic Progress, Inc. (COSTEP), a non-profit that provides financial aid to college-bound students and

their families. He served on its executive committee for 40 years.

He felt very fortunate and honored to have been named Man of the Year by the McAllen Chamber of Commerce and later by the University of Texas–Pan American as well. He served as the first layman of the grievance committee of the district for the Texas State Bar Association. He also served on the board of the Driscoll Children’s Hospital, as well as ex-officio of the International Museum of Art & Science board. The Texas State Board of Education named him a Hero for Children.



IN MEMORIAM
September 3, 2021



Jesse S. Treviño
Commitment to education and empowering children were driving forces in his life


“I believe in education very deeply because I still believe the future rests on educating the people.”
– Mr. Treviño

Founding chairman of the IDRA board of directors.

A former public school teacher, he also served on the McAllen ISD school board for 11 years, including two as president.

Named a Hero for Children by the Texas State Board of Education

Que en paz descanse, Mr. Treviño.



Mr. Jesse Treviño served as chair of the IDRA board for three decades. He did so with determination, consistency and great clarity about the importance of education for children, families and communities. He loved to tell the story of how he was able to take his students in Alice, Texas, to Austin and help young kids make lifetime memories that opened paths for them.

For both the Treviño family and for his IDRA family, he was a constant example of living a full life in the face of obstacles. With the love and undying support of Mary Lou, his wife and partner of 69 years, he met the challenges of diminishing health with faith and courage.

As chair of the IDRA board, Jesse made sure that the work and commitment of fellow board members was acknowledged. I had the good fortune of working with Jesse during most of my 26-year tenure as President & CEO of IDRA. I will be forever grateful for his consistency, support and great sense of humor.

*My condolences to the Treviño family.
Descansa en paz querido amigo. Nos vemos en el Camino.*

María Robledo Montecel
Dr. María “Cuca” Robledo Montecel
IDRA President Emerita



Focus: Redefining Discipline

IDRA Classnotes Podcast



A Culture of Student Engagement through Schoolwide Restorative Practices



Dr. Paula Johnson and Terrence Wilson, J.D. describe how restorative practice is proactive in developing community by building relationships and positive school climates that value all students. They describe a range of ways educators can start using restorative practices to create an environment where students want to engage.

Strategies for Restorative Student Discipline



Dr. Kristin Grayson and Dr. Paula Johnson outline some strategies schools have applied, such as examining codes of conduct, looking at the level of academic rigor, and understanding the role of implicit bias in expectations.



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