

Research & Practice: Reducing Disproportionality in Schools

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Bringing Education to the Head of the Class to Reduce Racial

Disparities in Juvenile Justice

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Presentation Outline

- What do the Data Tell Us About Racial Inequity in Schools?
- Why might it be happening
- How Do we Address It?

What Education Has Inherited

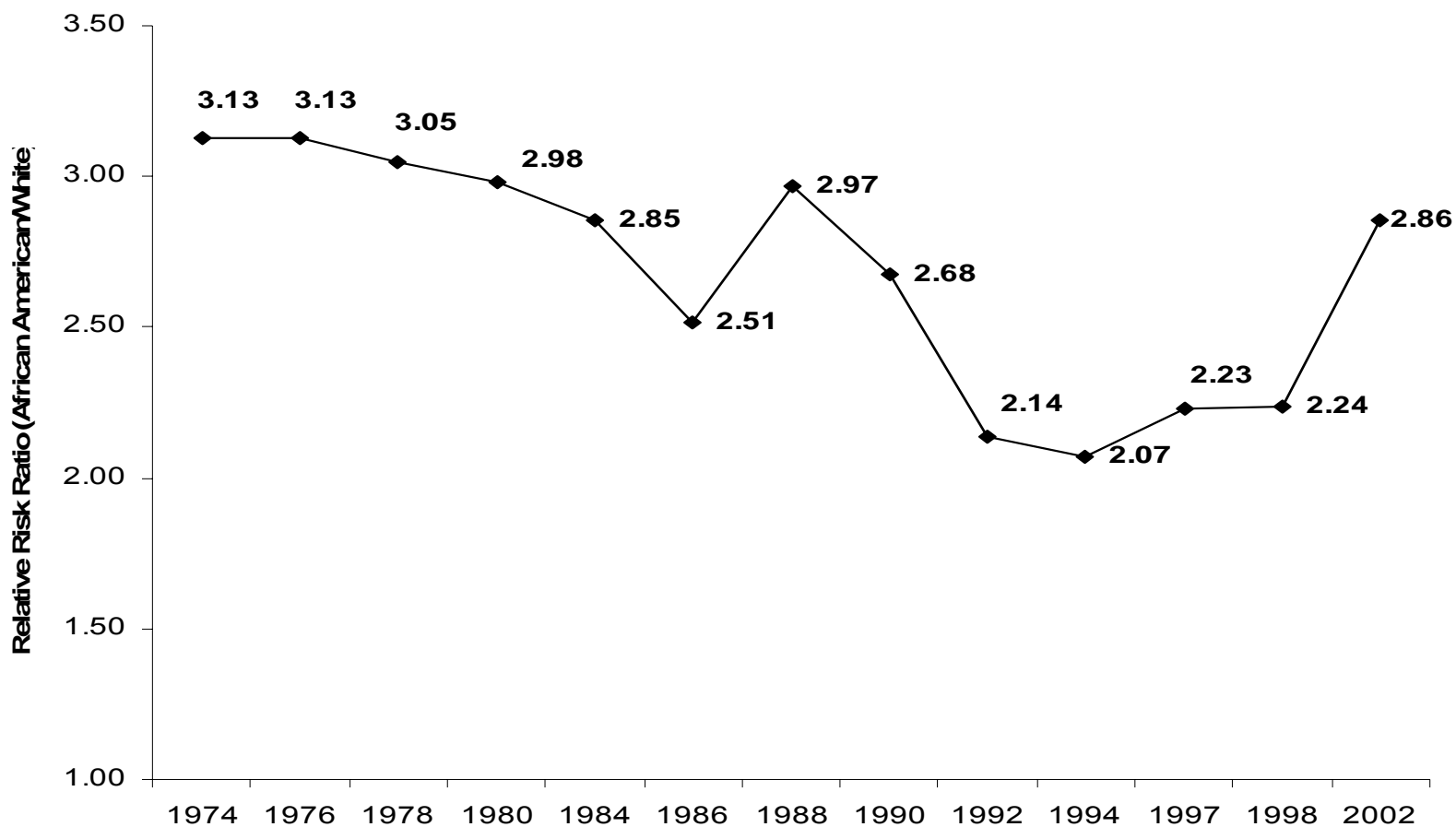
“The purpose of schooling, in that case, was to prepare each group for its inevitable social destination, and not to raise thorny questions about equality and fairness along the way....If African Americans occupied a servile position in the social order, it was not the educational system’s task to change that... Differences attributed to race and gender were seen as biologically based, and thus taken to be God-given and not subject to human or institutional intervention” (Rury, 2002; p. 168).

Minority Disproportionality in Special Education

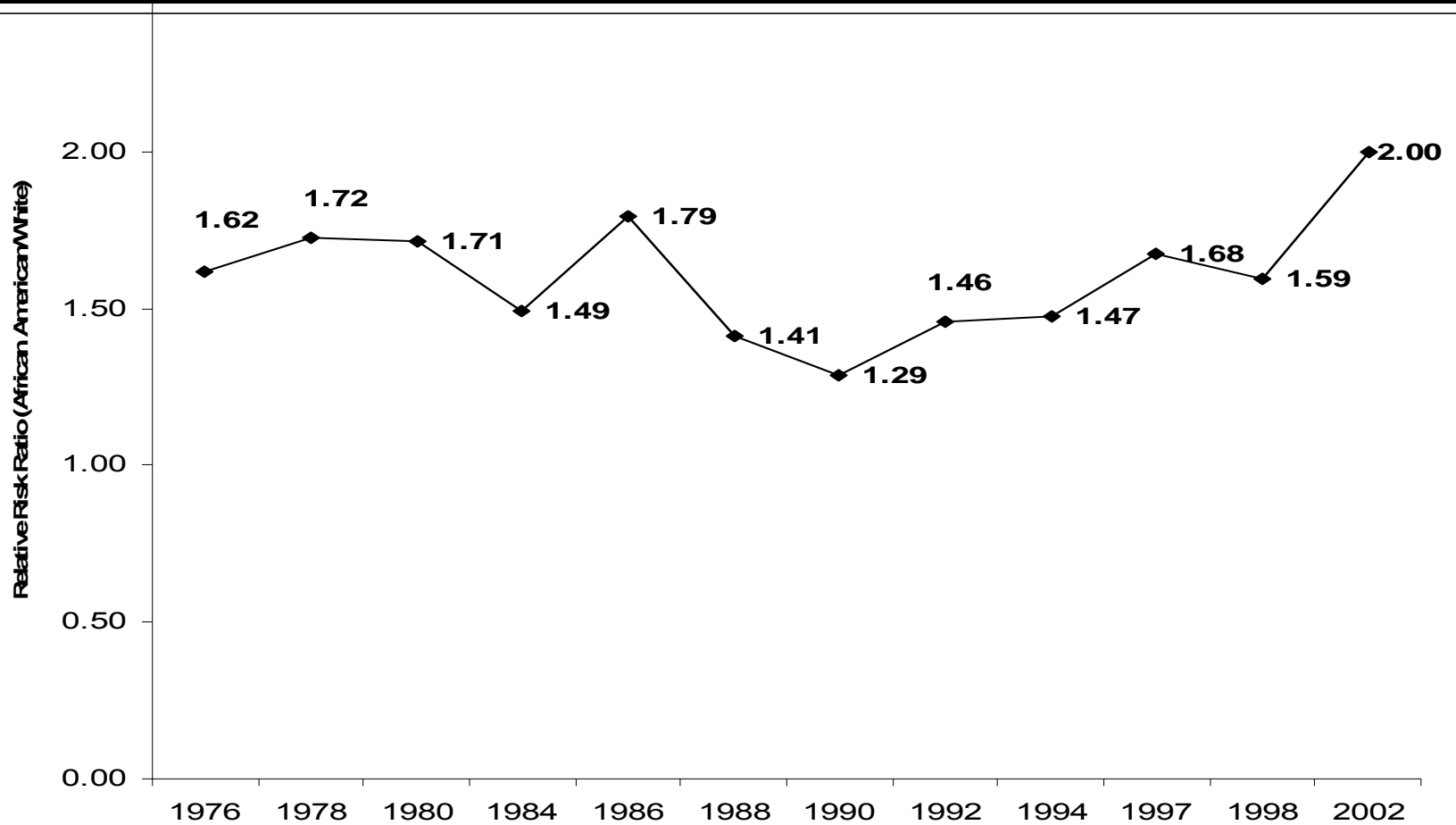
National Special Education Disability Data for African American Students

- Mental Retardation 2.28 x more
- Emotional Disturbance 1.97 x more
- Gifted and Talented 59% less
- Speech & language, multiple disabilities, hearing impairment, orthopedic impairment, other health impaired, visual impairment, autism, and traumatic brain injury all relatively proportional

National Relative Risk Ratios: African American Students; Mental Retardation



National Relative Risk Ratios: African American Students; Emotional Disability



What About in Iowa? (2006)

- Relative Risk for Iowa's AA students:
 - *Mental Disability* **1.79 x** more
 - *Emotional Disturbance* **3.02 x** more
 - *Speech/Language* **2.16 x** more
 - *Learning Disabled* **2.53 x** more

What About Racial Differences in Placement for Students With a Disability---Inclusion

- The opportunity for students with disabilities to be educated in increasingly less restrictive environments with non-disabled peers has become widely accepted as a consensual social value, and even a basic human right of children with disabilities. (UNESCO, 1994).

National Data on Inclusion

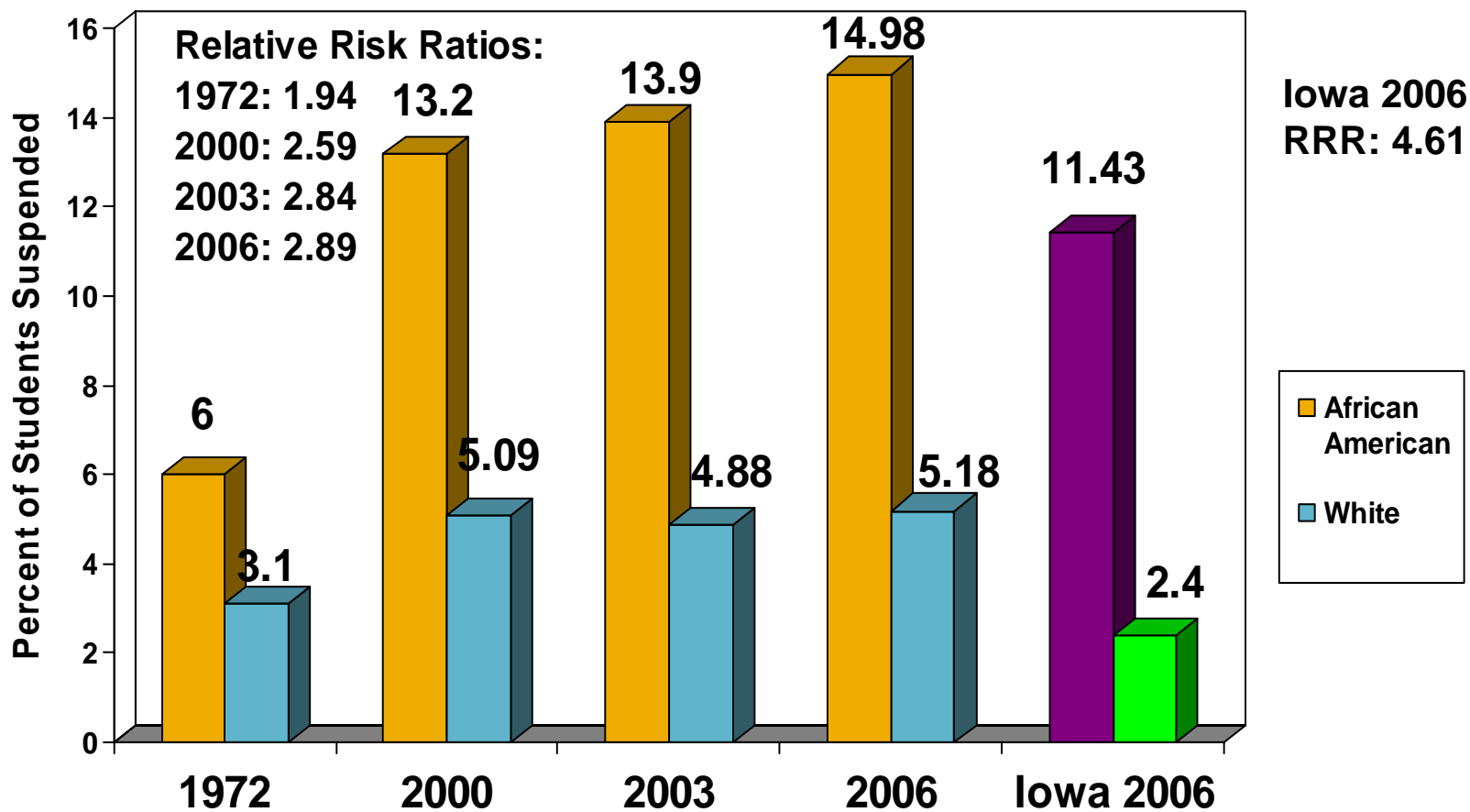
- Among students with disabilities:
 - 53% of White students educated in most inclusive settings compared to
 - 37.1% of African American students.
 - 18.5% of White students educated in most restrictive school-based settings (separate class placement), compared to
 - 34.1% of African American students

Minority Disproportionality in School Discipline

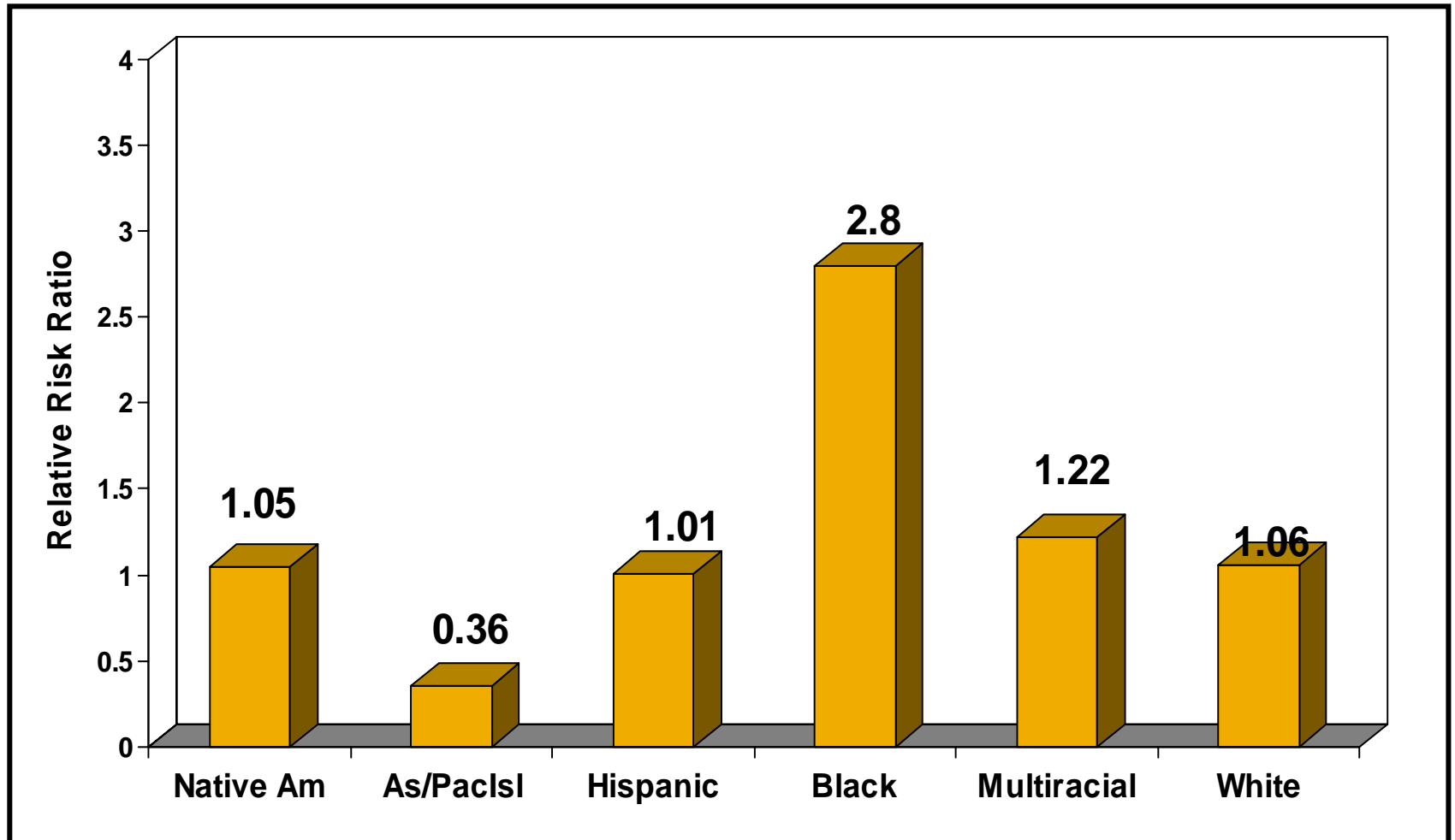
Is School Discipline Fair?: 30 Years of Study

- CDF (1975): Black students suspended 2-3x as frequently
- Studies since find disproportionality in:
 - Office referrals
 - Suspension & Expulsion
 - Corporal Punishment
- Black males 16x as likely as white females to be suspended (Gregory, 1996)

Disproportionality in School Discipline: 1972, 2000, 2003, 2006



Disproportionality in School Discipline within the Special Education Population: IDEA Disciplinary Provision Use



What do the Data Say About Why This is Happening?

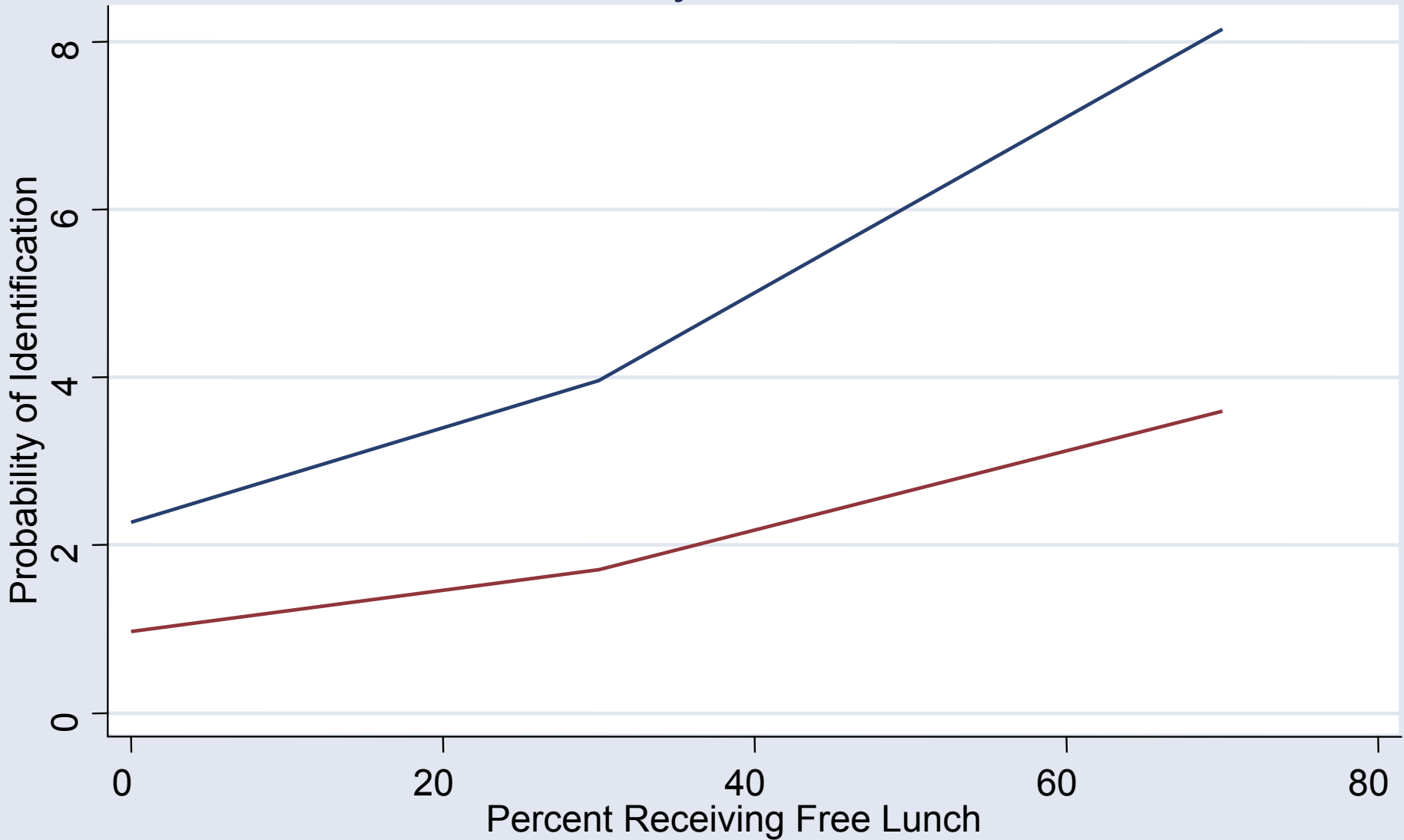
Poverty?

Bad behavior?

Is Disproportionality in Special Ed Due to Poverty?

- Poverty as inconsistent predictor
 - **Overall, MoMD and ED:** *Not significant*
 - **CD and LD:** *More disproportionality as poverty decreased*
 - **MiMD:** *Positive and significant*
- Race is a significant predictor of special education independent of poverty level
 - *Poverty magnifies* the gap created by race

Race and Poverty: Identification of MIMD



One Argument About Disproportionality in Placement...

- The *24th Annual Report to Congress* suggests, that “it is possible that the differences in placement by race/ethnicity may reflect the disproportional representation of some minority groups in disability categories that are predominately served in more restrictive settings (OSEP, 2002, p.III-45).”

Placement by Disability Findings

- Given same disability category, evidence for racial disproportionality
- Disproportionality increases *inversely* with severity of disorder
 - ED-Separate: 1.18 X as likely
 - MoMD-Separate: 1.07 X
 - LD-Separate: 3.20 X
 - S & L- Separate: 6.92 X

Disproportionality in Special Ed: Summary

- African Americans are identified for special education at disproportionate rates and are disproportionately placed in more restrictive settings
- Disproportionality found in categories that tend to require significant human interpretation
- Poverty tends to magnify already existing racial differences
- Disproportionality in restrictiveness of placement not due to identification in more severe disability categories

Disproportionality in School Discipline: Possible Explanations

- Because suspension/expulsion are driven solely by student misbehavior, there must be more misbehavior among African American students
 - 1st and 2nd premises lack evidence
- Overlap of race and poverty
 - No supporting evidence

What About More Frequent “Misbehavior” by Black Students?

Of 32 infractions, only 8 significant differences:

- White students referred more for:
 - Smoking
 - Vandalism
 - Leaving w/o permission
 - Obscene Language

- Black students referred more for:
 - Disrespect
 - Excessive Noise
 - Threat
 - Loitering

Is It Due to Poverty?

- Even after controlling for free lunch status (poverty), African Americans were overrepresented in office referrals, suspensions and number of days suspended (and effect sizes were virtually unchanged)

School Discipline: Summary

- African Americans are more likely to be suspended and expelled; disproportionality has significantly increased since 70's
- Not due to more misbehavior or poverty

Why is it Happening?

- **Blaming the Victim:** Disproportionality due primarily to characteristics of minority culture
- **Critical Race Theory:** Disproportionality as a decision to maintain the structure of white privilege (e.g. Bell, Delgado)
- **Cultural Reproduction:** Racial/economic inequity maintained by roles and actions of individuals within institutions, perhaps unconsciously (e.g., Bowles & Gintis, Oakes)
- **Maybe We Shouldn't Talk About It...**

Why Is It Happening: Systems Issues

- **Tracking & Instructional Grouping** (Oakes, 1990; Hallinan, 1996)
- **Physical facilities & school resources** (Kozol, 1991; Oakes, 1990)
- **Curriculum representation** (Anyon, 1981; Sleeter & Grant, 1991)
- **Instructional quality** (Greenwood et al., 1984)
- **Lack of Cultural Competence and Culturally Relevant Teaching** (Ladson-Billings, 1994)

Why Is It Happening?

- **Teaching differences**
 - Lower expectations
 - Cultural differences in behavioral and cognitive expectations
 - Less experienced and able teachers
- **Zero Tolerance Policies and Attitudes**

What Evidence-Based Practices Should We Be Using to Reduce Disproportionality?

The Sad Truth: We Don't Have Any Right Now

Likely because there is no magic bullet or checklist; nuances tend to be local

**But We Do Have Some Promising
Developments in the Field**

Local Equity Action Development (LEAD) Projects

- Organically developed process framework with seven school districts and the Equity Project at IU
- Guiding Principles
 - All plans must be local, addressing local realities and local needs
 - Planning and evaluation must be based on local data
 - Conversations about race, disproportionality, and equity are awkward and sometimes difficult, but critically necessary

Local Equity Action Development (LEAD) Process

ONGOING QUESTIONS

- What do we know about disproportionality in our district?
- What changes in school-based processes will have the greatest impact on disproportionality in our schools?
- How do we involve others in the process of creating ownership for and bringing about change?
- How will we know if our efforts are working?
- What impact will this have on other issues of equity?

PROCESS STEPS

Form a Planning Team

Form a preliminary planning team

Review existing data

Expand the planning team to include other key stakeholders (& focus on composition of this team)

Examine & Test Assumptions

Gather and analyze new information

Identify the Action of Greatest Potential Impact

Hold focus groups to explore the issue & approaches from diverse perspectives

Examine and discuss input from the focus groups and other data

Gather research and information on potential models/practices

Engage in honest conversations on equity, opportunities and expectations for ALL students and staff

Develop a Plan

Design a LEAD plan

Provide professional development, time, and other supports

Develop an Action Plan for Implementation

Pilot the plan

Gather feedback

Adapt the pilot

Implement & Evaluate

Widen Implementation

Assess Progress

Deepen Dialogue

Continue to Pilot and Adapt/Revise

Sample Efforts

- Early childhood Family Involvement
 - School readiness and communication with parents were contributing factors
- Pre-referral intervention process (GEI)
 - Provide additional thinking/resources to teachers when problems initially identified that may work to prevent referral
- Peer Coaching in differentiated instruction and classroom management
 - Peers can help with strategies addressing classroom issues
- Early grades literacy instruction
 - Extra opportunities for literacy support early will prevent referrals

“Disproportionality Drift”

- System Improvements does NOT always mean Equitable System Improvements
 - Lack of focus on Equity in Initial Plans
 - How will this initiative impact racial equity, rather than general system reform?
 - Lack of focus on Equity in Preliminary Results
 - Reduction in referrals, placements, behavioral issues, disciplinary infractions etc., are good, but did we impact disproportionality?

Equitable Systems Reform

- Improved Systems – overall – is a good outcome for educational reformers, but
- Racial Equity is often NOT an explicit outcome of system improvement efforts
 - If we don't explicitly focus on achieving racial equity, we may end up with a system that seems to be working, but isn't for all kids equitably
 - A Sample from PBIS is instructive...

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS)


- Set of interventions designed to improve the social climate and support programming for students with problem behavior
 - Intentionally teaching positive behavior with same rigor and attention as academic skills
- Strong and growing evidence based practice

Sample & Methods

- 2005-06 Academic Year
- 436 Elementary and Middle Schools
 - Drawn from 17 States
 - 70% from 7 states
 - Illinois, California, Oregon, Maryland, North Carolina, Louisiana, Colorado
- 180,670 students
- 372,642 Office Discipline Referrals
- Schools involved in reform efforts to change disciplinary practices (Positive Behavior Supports)

Graduated Discipline

	Detention	Moderate/ (Call home, Privilege)	In school suspension	Out of school suspension	Unknown / Unclear
Minor					
Defiance					
Disruption					
Moderate					
Major					
Use/ Possession					



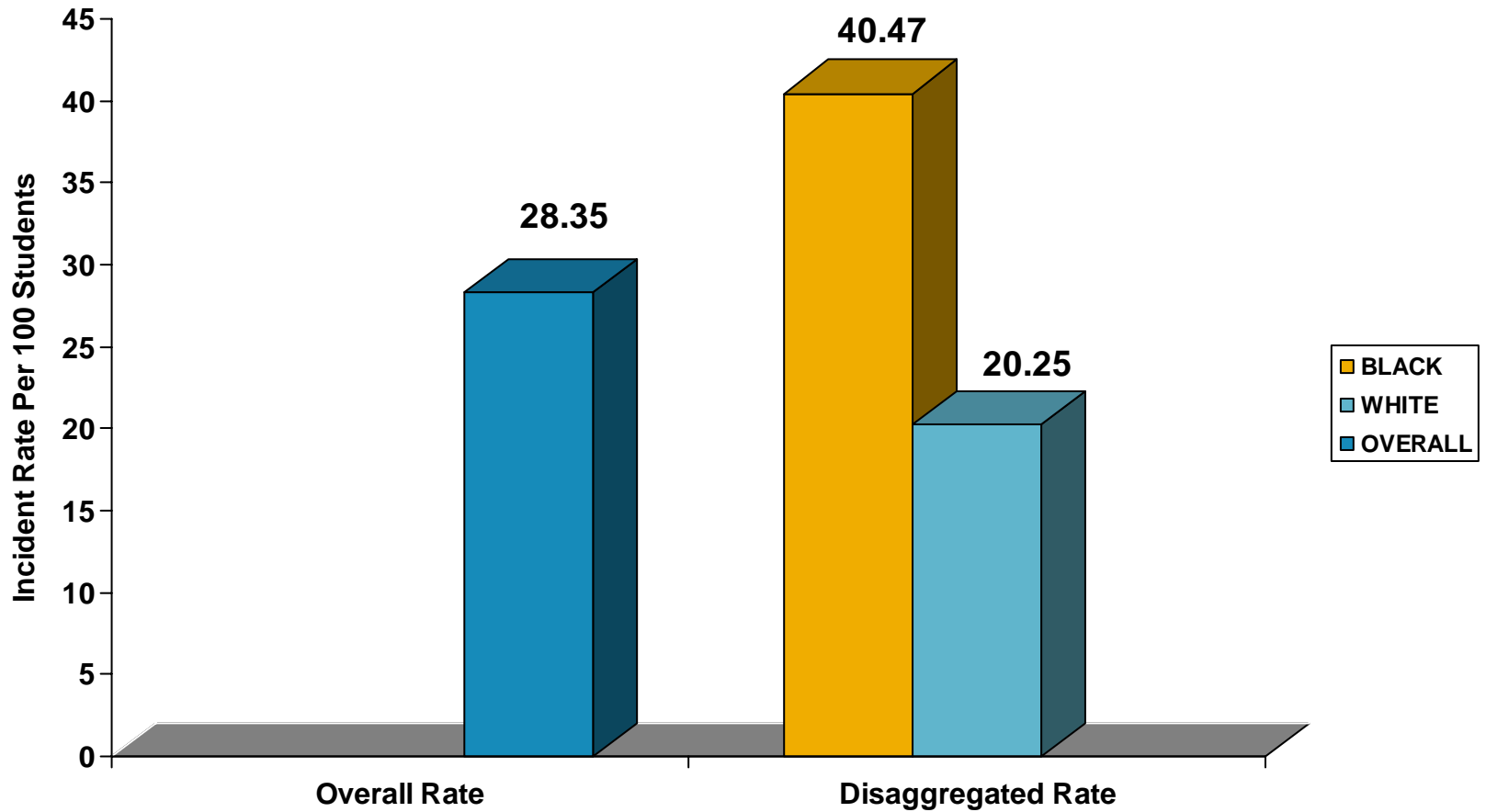
ODR & Administrative Consequences: Aggregated Data

	Detention		Moderate Punishment		In-School-Suspension		OSS/Expulsion		Other/Unknown	
	OR	Sig.	OR	Sig.	OR	Sig.	OR	Sig.	OR	Sig.
ODR (K-6)										
Minor Misbehavior	0.96		0.64		0.17 ***		0.02 ***		0.03 ***	
Defiance	0.88		1.51		0.88		0.78 *		0.01 ***	
Disruption	0.76 **		1.40		0.79 *		0.59 ***		0.01 ***	
Moderate Infractions	1.04		1.42		1.28 *		1.55 ***		0.01 ***	
Major Violations	1.19		2.53 ***		1.44 **		1.14		0.01 ***	
Use/Possession	0.94		1.84		4.34 ***		16.60 ***		0.02 ***	
Other/Unknown	1.33 **		2.25 **		1.19		1.32 *		0.02 ***	
ODR (6-9)										
Minor Misbehavior	0.48 ***		0.67 ***		1.20 ***		0.27 ***		0.33 ***	
Defiance	0.29 ***		0.41 ***		0.74 ***		1.40 ***		0.24 ***	
Disruption	0.30 ***		0.38 ***		0.58 **		1.40 ***		0.20 ***	
Moderate Infractions	0.30 ***		0.67 ***		1.20 ***		6.40 ***		0.33 ***	
Major Violations	0.38 ***		2.04 ***		1.44 ***		6.59 ***		0.50 ***	
Use/Possession	0.27 ***		1.97 **		2.05 ***		53.01 ***		0.61 **	
Other/Unknown	0.49 ***		1.20 **		1.04		2.95 ***		0.49 ***	

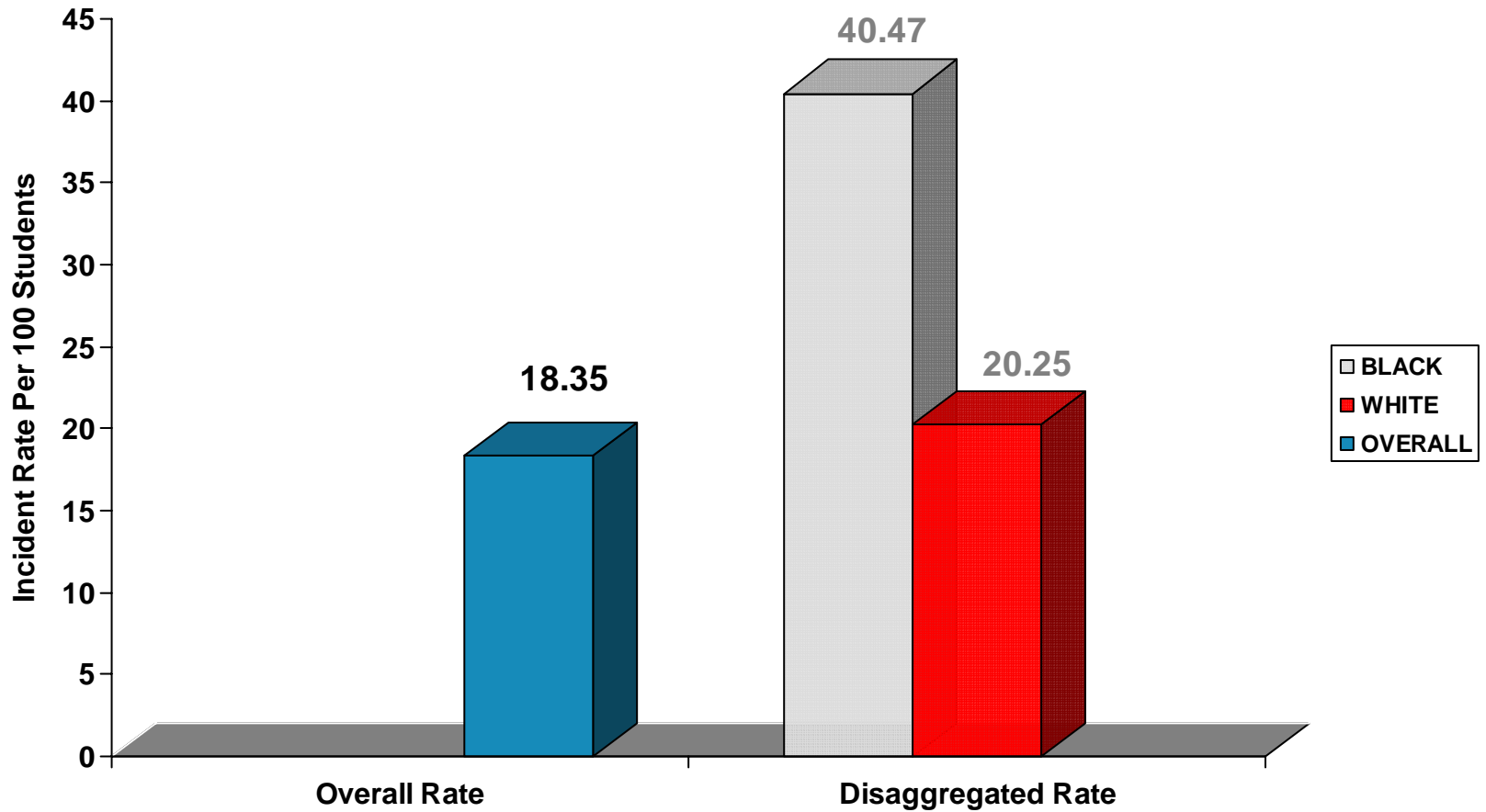
But When Looking at Disaggregated Data...

- Elementary and Middle School African American students were significantly more likely to receive the most severe punishment (OSS/EXP) given the same Office Discipline Referral
 - 2.65 – Minor ODR
 - 2.28 – Disruption ODR
 - 1.94 – Moderate ODR
 - 1.58 – Major ODR

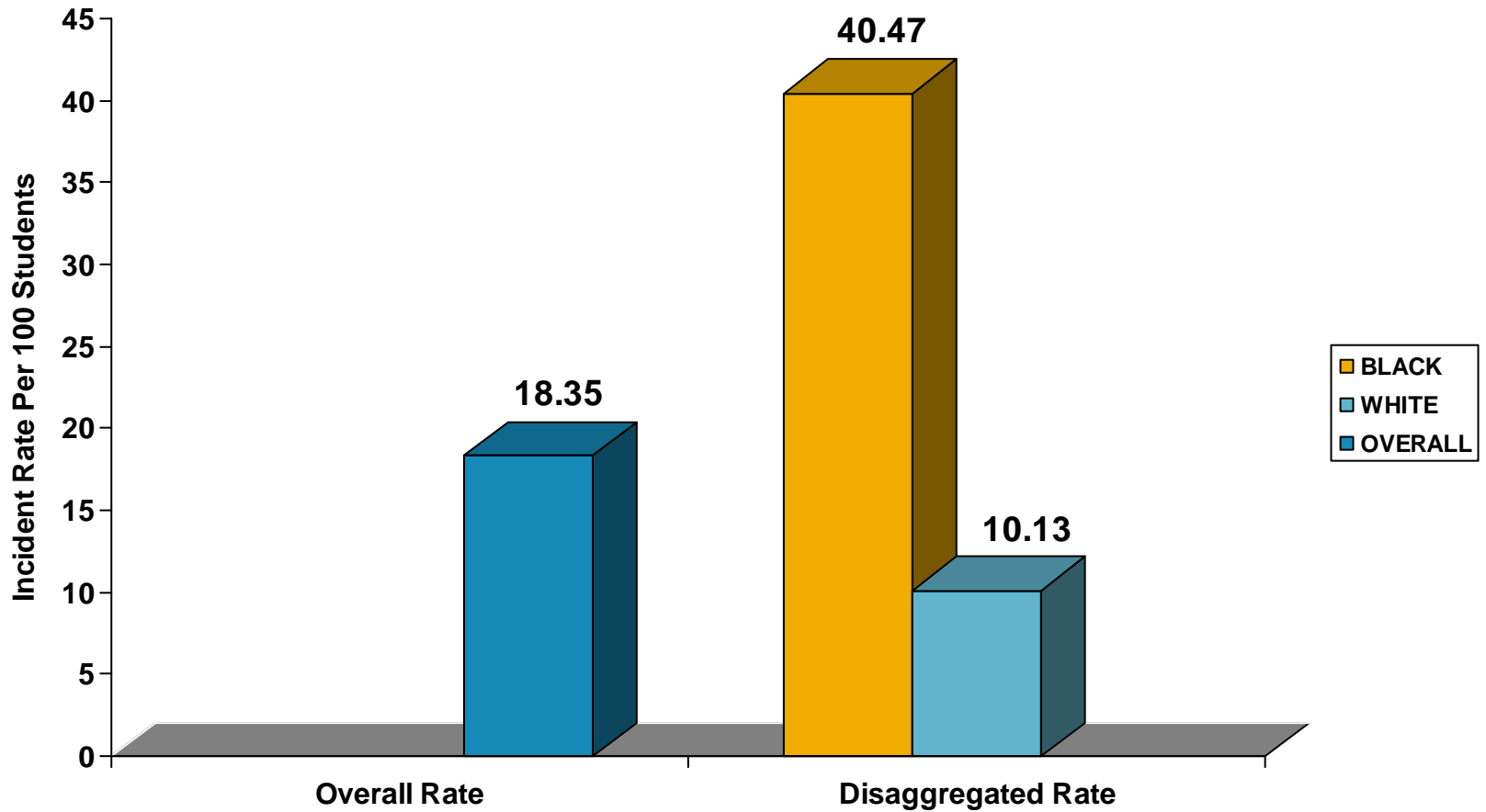
Discipline Rates



Discipline Rates



Discipline Rates Disaggregated



Equitable Systems Reform

- Challenge traditional assumption that because an intervention works for many or even most students, it works for all students
- Equitable systems reform means making proactive, ongoing, and conscious efforts to ensure that all students are benefiting equitably from our interventions

Re-Thinking Problem Solving Model from an Equitable Systems Reform Perspective

- Problem Definition
 - What is the problem we need to fix?
 - To what extent are racial/ethnic disparities evident in the problem?
- Problem Analysis
 - Why do we think our problem is happening?
 - What are the factors that we believe contribute to racial disparities within this problem?

Re-Thinking Problem Solving Model from an Equitable Systems Reform Perspective (cont'd)

- Implementation of Intervention
 - What should we do to fix the problem and what is our plan to address it?
 - Do we believe that our intervention will function in the same way for all groups across all cultures? If not, what adaptations must be made?
- Evaluation
 - Is our intervention working (or did it work)?
 - Did our intervention function equitably for all students? In addition to improving outcomes in general, has it also reduced inequity in those outcomes?

Closing Thought...

- Interventions designed to create more equitable school systems cannot be based on a “race-neutral” philosophy
 - Must include disaggregated data and examine/evaluate intervention effectiveness on equity
- What are the major systems reforms going on (or being planned) right now in your district?

Contact and Resources

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- The Equity Project at Indiana University (<http://ceep.indiana.edu/equity>)