

# 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 school discipline, especially racial inequity in schools?
- What do the data say about effectiveness?
- What might we do to 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).

# Values and Instructional Purposes of School Disciplinary Systems

- Values
  - Need to Keep Schools Safe and Productive
  - Need to Maximize Educational Opportunity
- Instructional Purposes
  - Ensure the safety of students and staff
  - Create a climate conducive to learning
  - Teach students needed skills for successful interaction in schools and society
  - Reduce rates of future misbehavior

# National Picture

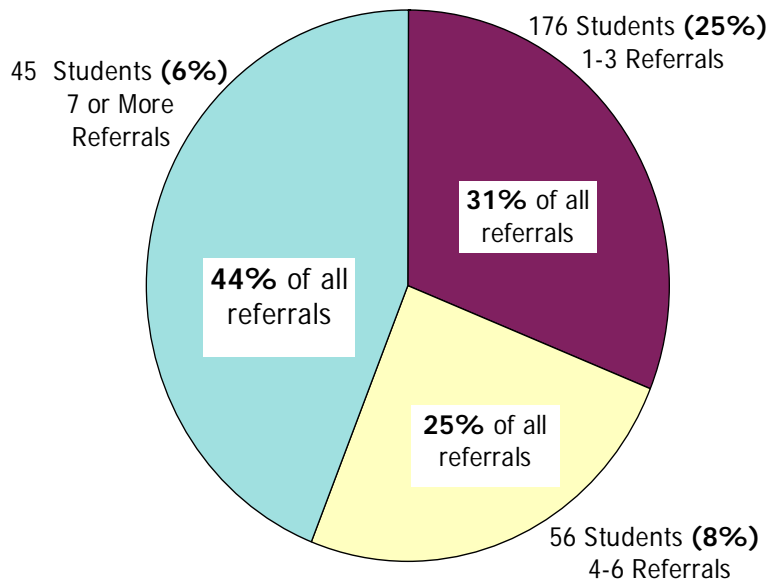
- 15+ year decline in violence committed at school
- Yet number and percent of students being removed from school continues to rise
  - Doubling of the number of students removed since the 1970's
- Is it effective?

# The Process and Effects of School Discipline: What do the Data Say?

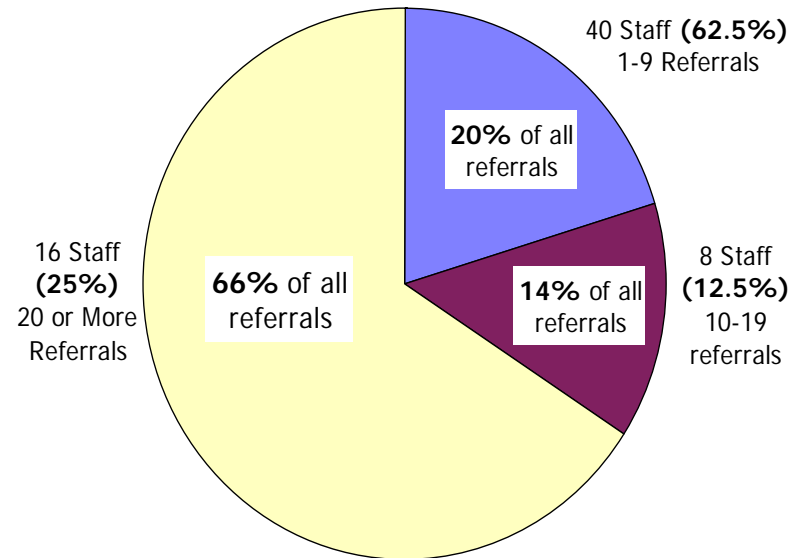
- Quality of Implementation
  - Used as intended (e.g. for serious offenses and based on student misbehavior)?
  - Used consistently?
- Non-Discriminatory
  - Equal Protection Clause of 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment
  - Title VI of Civil Rights Act
- Outcomes & Implications
  - Improved school safety?
  - Improved student behavior or achievement?
  - Improved social outcomes?

# Quality of Implementation: Response to Student Misbehavior?

# of Students by % of All Referrals



# of Referrals Made by Staff as % of All Referrals



425 Students (61%) 0 Referrals

# PERCENT OF REFERRALS LEADING TO SUSPENSION BY SCHOOL

<b>School</b>	<b>Percent of Incidents Suspended</b>
1	11.3%
2	13.9%
3	16.5%
4	17.0%
5	17.2%
6	23.3%
7	26.1%
8	30.3%
9	32.2%
10	32.9%
11	34.0%
12	35.0%
13	37.9%
14	38.4%
15	58.9%
16	86.5%

# Quality of Implementation: Student vs. School Contribution (Wu et. al, 1982)

- Student attitude and behavior contribute
- But so do:
  - Overall suspension rate
  - Teacher attitudes
  - Administrative centralization
  - School governance
  - Perceptions of achievement
- More influence of school than student factors

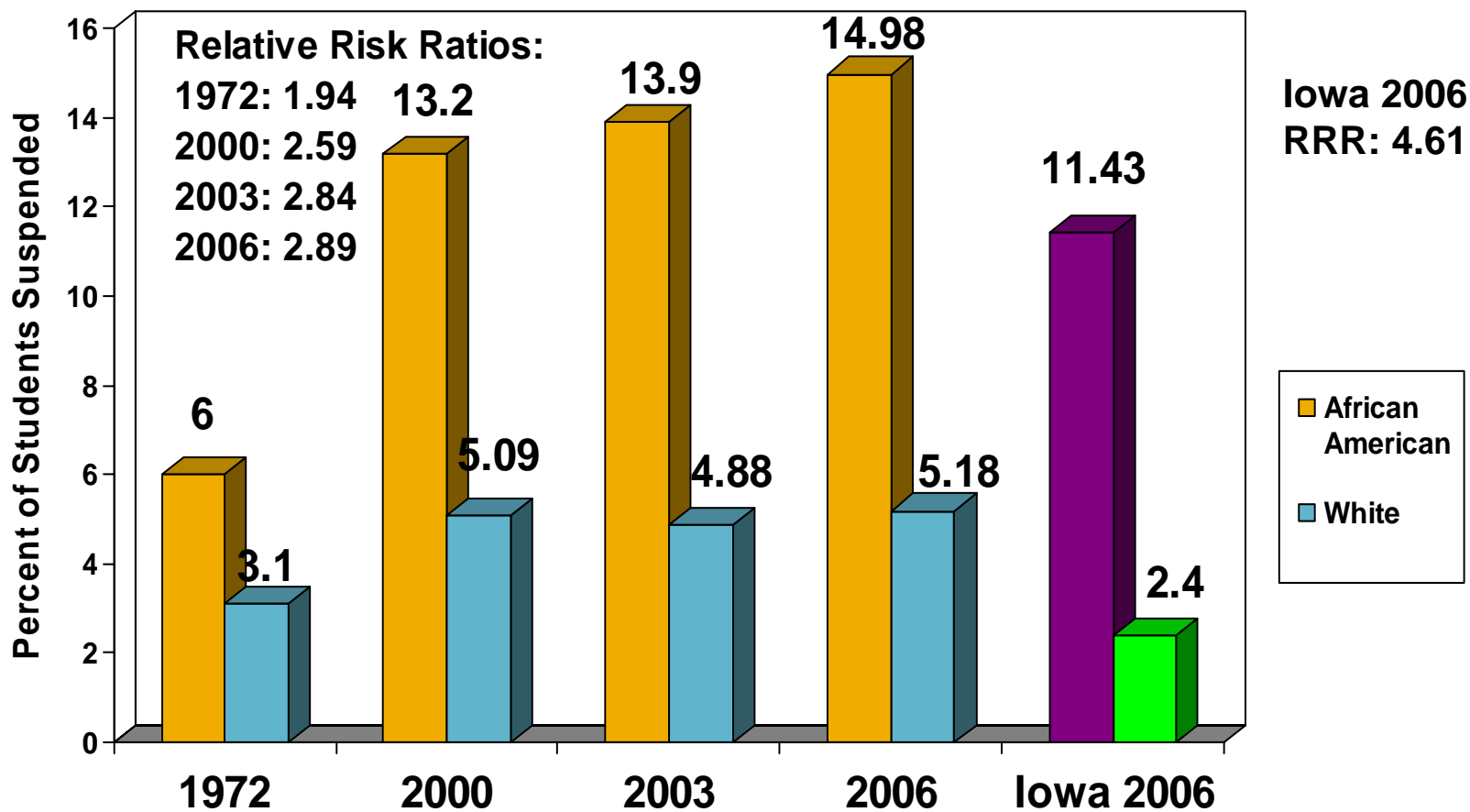
“One could argue from this finding that if students are interested in reducing their chances of being suspended, they will be better off by transferring to a school with a lower suspension rate than by improving their attitudes or reducing their misbehavior.”

--(*Wu et al., 1982*)

# 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)
- Compounding factors of put some kids at high risk (race, economic status, gender, and disability designation)

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



# Compounding Factors: Race, Gender, Poverty & Special Education

- Black + Male + Special Ed + Poor
  - = 67% suspension rate
- These students made up 5% of the population, but also made up:
  - 24% of 3-5 suspensions
  - 34% of 6-8 suspensions
  - 48% of 9-11 suspensions
  - 56% of 12-14 suspensions
  - 100% of 14+ suspensions

# Why is Disproportionality Occurring?

- Overlap between race and poverty?
- Even after controlling for SES:
  - Nonwhite students report more suspensions
  - Gap between black and white students unchanged
- Higher rates of misbehavior among African American students?

# What About More Frequent “Misbehavior” by Black Students?

*Of 32 infractions, only 8 significant differences:*

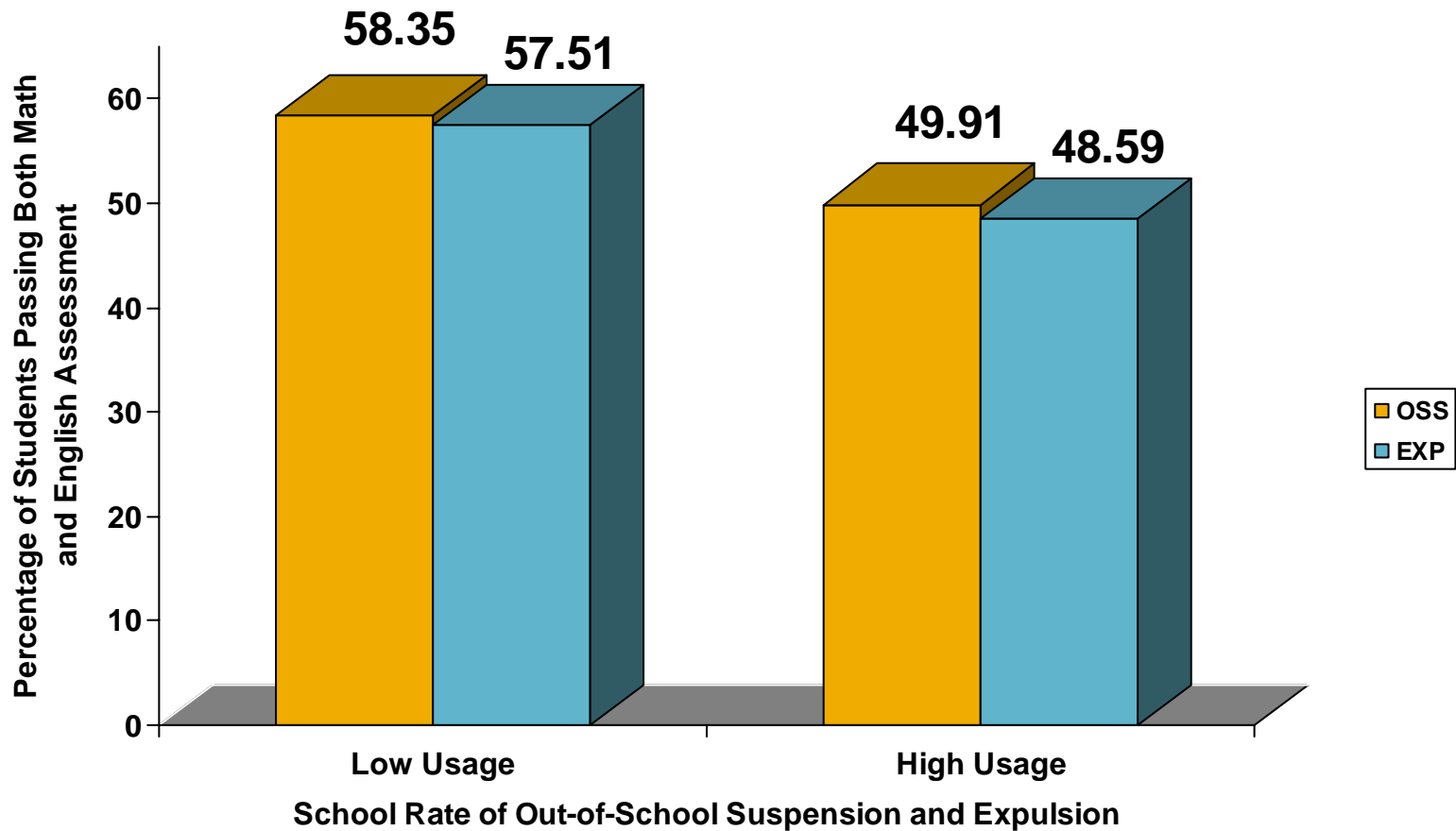
- White students referred more for:
  - Smoking
  - Vandalism
  - Leaving w/o permission
  - Obscene Language

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

# Improved Student Behavior or School Climate?

- 30-50% of students suspended are repeat offenders
  - “Suspension functions as a reinforcer...rather than as a punisher” (Tobin, Sugai & Colvin, 1996)
- Use of suspension correlates with
  - School dropout (school level)
  - On-time graduation (school level)
  - Juvenile incarceration (state level)
- Higher rates of suspension associated with:
  - Lower ratings of school climate & governance
  - *Lower* school achievement scores

# Percent Passing ISTEP by School Disciplinary Use (Adjusted for Demographic and Economic Indicators)



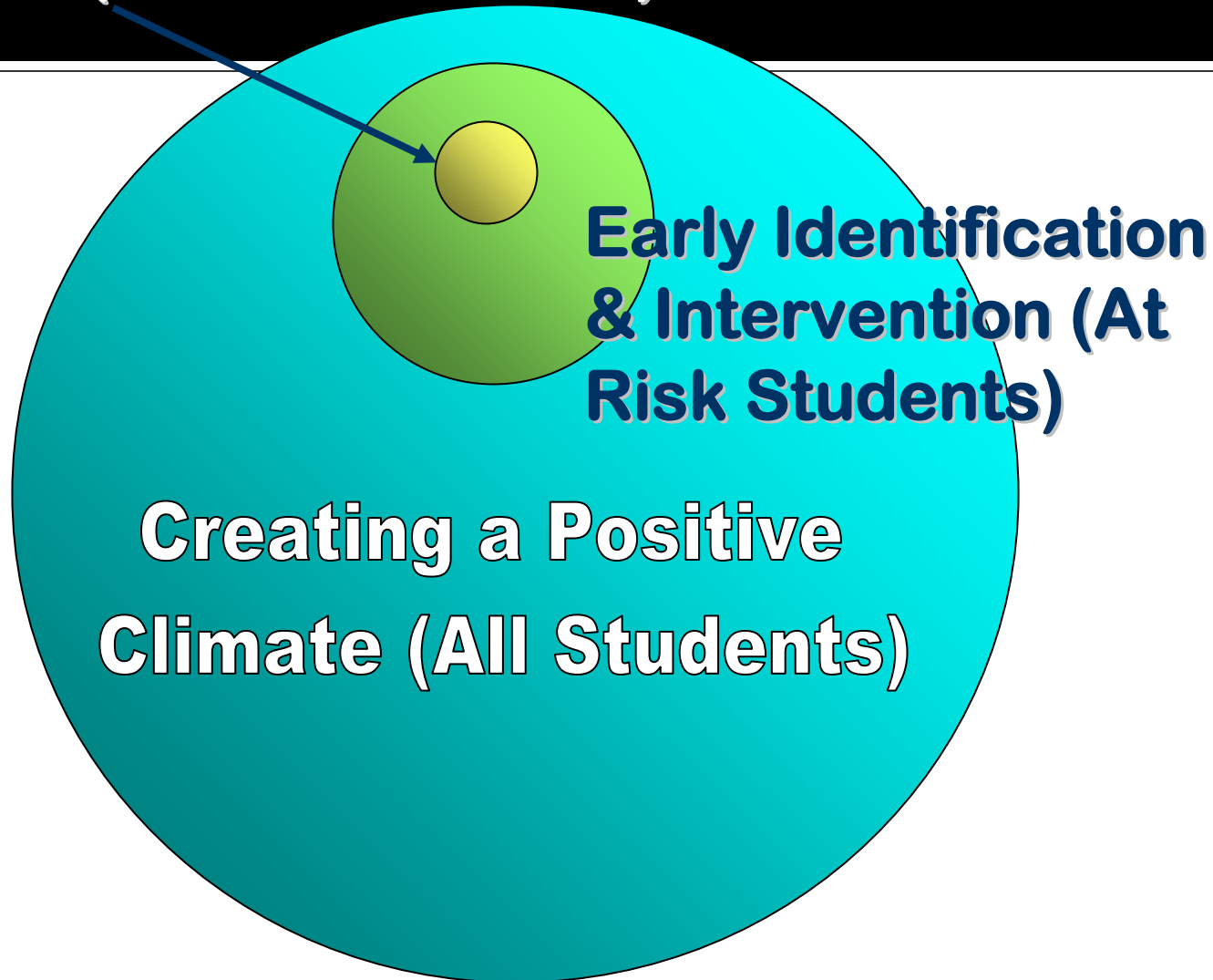
# Summary: Are Suspension and Expulsion Effective?

- Consistency?
  - Poor, inconsistent implementation
- Non-Discrimination?
  - Consistently overused with AA students, low SES
  - Over-representation not due to SES, behavior
- Outcomes?
  - More repeat offenses, dropout
  - Lower Achievement
  - Negative Social Implications

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**What Evidence-Based Practices  
Should We Be Using to Reduce  
Overuse of Suspension &  
Expulsion?**

# Effective Responses to Disruption (Intense/Chronic)



# 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

**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

# 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

# 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.
<b>ODR (K-6)</b>										
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 ***	
<b>ODR (6-9)</b>										
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

# 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

# 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

# Contact and Resources

- M. Karega Rausch
  - Research Consultant
  - [marausch@indiana.edu](mailto:marausch@indiana.edu)
- The Equity Project at Indiana University  
(<http://ceep.indiana.edu/equity>)
- Safe and Responsive Schools
  - [www.indiana.edu/~safeschl](http://www.indiana.edu/~safeschl)
  - [www.unl.edu/srs](http://www.unl.edu/srs)