Section I:
Innovations in School-University Partnerships

Reimagining Wraparound Supports to Address School Discipline: A Restorative Approach

Jaalil Hart
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Bettie Ray Butler
University of North Carolina at Charlotte

Abstract: In this article, the authors explore how educators might mitigate racial disparities in school discipline by reimagining school-community-university partnerships through restorative wraparound supports aimed at addressing the social-emotional wellness of students and teachers in urban schools. Using the Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, originally developed by Karen Mapp, we demonstrate how urban schools can develop strong, trusting, and sustainable partnerships with teacher preparation programs and community mental healthcare providers to promote healing and build positive student-teacher relationships that help foster more inclusive and equitable classrooms for students of color.

KEYWORDS: urban education, wraparound services, school discipline, restorative approaches

NAPDS NINE ESSENTIALS ADDRESSED:
Essential 4: Reflection and Innovation—A PDS makes a shared commitment to reflective practice, responsive innovation, and generative knowledge.

Essential 8: Boundary-Spanning Roles—A PDS creates space for, advocates for, and supports college/university and P–12 faculty to operate in well-defined, boundary-spanning roles that transcend institutional settings.

Reimagining Wraparound Supports in Urban Schools

One of the most important functions of a school is to meet the varying needs of students academically, physically, and socially/emotionally. In the United States, differences in school contexts are glaring, widely noticeable, and widely discussed. Long before, and since, the pandemic urban communities, students, and schools in particular have become a topic of great interest and inquiry. Scholars have studied the many variables that have both positive and negative impacts on students, their achievement, families, and the broader community. When we typically think of the term *urban education* most people think only of Black students. However, urban schools as Milner (2012) articulates, are much more nuanced. He suggests that the characteristics of urban schools are also connected to the "people who live and attend school in the social context, the characteristics of those people, as well as surrounding community realities where the school is situated" (p. 558). The plight of urban education has been well documented for decades (Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Landsman & Lewis, 2012; Kozol, 1991; Shaffer et al. 2018). While we recognize that there are many wonderful things happening in urban schools across the country, this article seeks to explain how educators can address the gaps in opportunity, achievement, discipline, and other various outcomes that plague urban schools and students by reimagining school-community-university partnerships through restorative wraparound supports.

The premise of this idea was developed in a doctoral seminar where I (the first author), along with several of my colleagues, engaged in conversations facilitated by the instructor (the second author) around power, privilege, and identity, and their impact on education. In this class, we collectively deconstructed concepts like whiteness (Anderson, 2020; Kendall, 2013), while also exploring the history of Black education (Anderson, 1988), racial inequities in school discipline (Losen, 2015), LGBTQ+ youth narratives (Mayo, 2014; White, 2015), and culturally sustaining pedagogies (Paris & Alim, 2017) and the ways in which each has influenced students' schooling experiences in urban settings. Amongst our cohort were classroom teachers, social workers, community organizers, and higher education administrators. We all came from varying backgrounds, having a diverse set of professional experiences and expertise. Empowered to address some of the challenges that plague urban schools, we began to conceptualize ways in which the educational challenges named above could be critically examined and ultimately dismantled. The diversity and breadth of our individual knowledge, coupled with our lived experiences, allowed us to think strategically around how each of our fields of professional practice could contribute to the literature on best practices for urban schools. We embarked upon co-constructing a framework that would examine wraparound services to reimagine their functionality as a school-community-university partnership that joins together university researchers, community professionals, and school educators to leverage their collective expertise in tackling racial disproportionality in school discipline through restorative practices.

To begin, this article seeks to review the extant literature around topics that have the potential to improve the schooling experiences of students in urban schools, particularly as it relates to the overrepresentation of Black students in school discipline. Research on the context of urban schools, teacher education, school discipline, social-emotional learning, and mental health services is extensive, and well-documented individually. However, there is limited understanding of how these scholarly areas work in tandem, in a practical way. The purpose of this article is to offer a developing conceptual framework that demonstrates how scholars, district

leaders, school staff, and community professionals can work together to support students' academic, behavioral, social, and emotional growth and development.

Literature Review

What is Urban Education?

Milner (2012) shares an anecdote of his visit to a small Midwestern school district to speak with district leaders and staff about "culture and teaching." When he arrived at the district office, the superintendent took him to visit what the district considered to be an *urban* school. Once they arrived at the school, the school was located in a rural setting not far from the district's central office. The population of the school was predominantly Black and Latinx. Some of the challenges of the school were low test scores, absenteeism, lack of motivation, and inconsistent parental involvement.

Milner (2012) shares this story for many reasons; most importantly, to underscore the need to have a common understanding and definition of "urban" education and schools. He provides a typology through which scholars and practitioners can discuss urban educational environments. The term *urban intensive* is used to discuss schools that are located in large cities such as New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, or Atlanta. *Urban emergent* areas are large, but not quite as large as those in urban intensive areas. Cities in this frame include Nashville, Tennessee; Charlotte, North Carolina; and Austin, Texas. Finally, schools that have *urban characteristics* describe those that are not located in large or medium-sized cities but may be experiencing similar challenges that may be associated with schools in larger, urban, or urban emergent areas. While these schools may be located in suburban or even rural communities, some of the challenges they may face include an influx of culturally and linguistically diverse students, or scarcity of resources to support schools and the community.

School Discipline Practices in Urban Schools

Disproportionality in school discipline is not new. In fact, over at least the past four decades, scholars have examined the disproportionate representation of Black students and school discipline (Taylor & Foster, 1986; Townsend, 2000). This gap was first discussed in 1975 by the Children's Defense Fund (CDF), which found: 1) during the 1972-1973 school year, more than one million students were suspended, and 2) one out of every eight African American students were suspended, compared to one out of every 16 White students, at least one time in that same school year (CDF, 1975). Since the publication of this seminal report, studies have continued to document the disparities in school discipline relative to gender, race, and grade level (Blake et al., 2015; Butler et al., 2012; CDF, 1975; Farinde-Wu, et al., 2022; Lewis et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2002).

Under the administration of President Obama, new guidelines were issued around school discipline policies and practices. In 2014, both the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice worked to establish new guidelines that sought to eliminate disparities in school discipline practices. These policies were intended to be applied in ways that avoid discrimination against students on the basis of race, ethnicity, and/or gender (Blad, 2014). These guidelines also expected school leaders to find alternatives to exclusionary practices that strip students of valuable instructional time, such as suspensions. While the extent to which these guidelines have

impacted students and educators' practice is still unclear (Sanchez & Turner, 2017), the new guidelines turned national attention to a longstanding concern in urban schools.

To address this critical issue, schools, districts, and states have employed a number of strategies. These alternative practices take the form of policy and/or program-based interventions. Program-based interventions are often tailored to students' needs, and interventions can be adjusted depending on student responses (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017). Examples of program-based interventions include the Response to Intervention (RTI) model, Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and the use of School Resource Officers (SROs). Steinberg and Lacoe (2017) also noted that, conversely, some reforms require changes in educational policy that help guide districts, teachers, and schools in their efforts to address student behavior. Examples of policy-based interventions include zero-tolerance mandates and student codes of conduct.

These types of policies and programs have largely contributed to what we widely call the school-to-prison pipeline. School districts and the juvenile justice system were not intended to work in tandem. However, over many decades, this correlation has become even more apparent—particularly to the detriment of some of the most vulnerable students (Mallett, 2015; Nicholson-Crotty, et al., 2009). The school-to-prison pipeline is "best understood as a set of policies and practices in schools that make it more likely that students face criminal involvement with juvenile courts than attain a quality education" (Mallett, 2015, p. 15). In a report by the Advancement Project et al. (2011), the pipeline operates both directly and indirectly. For example, in a direct way, schools adopt and misapply many zero-tolerance school discipline policies. Consequently, by criminalizing several disciplinary infractions, students are directly placed in the juvenile justice system. Indirectly, and likely more detrimental, are the policies and practices that stifle students' access to high-quality, culturally relevant/responsive practices, and engaging instruction (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1995). These policies and practices may cause students to become disengaged in school through suspensions, expulsions, and/or dropout.

Teacher Education and Preparation for Urban Schools

In 2018, there were approximately 26,000 teacher education state-approved programs in the United States (Kuenzi, 2018). Of those programs, about 70% are considered traditional programs. That is, "they are contained within schools of education at institutions of higher education" (Kuenzi, 2018, p. i). The majority of teacher education programs utilize a similar curriculum and process for preparing their candidates for the classroom. Candidates are engaged in classes led predominantly by White faculty, complete field or clinical experiences in predominately White schools, and participate in student teaching for a sustained period of time typically under the supervision of White clinical educators (Grant, 1994; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Weinstein et al., 2004). While state agencies of education most often control what is taught (i.e., curriculum) in teacher education programs, the schools and colleges of education design the ways in which they engage (i.e., instruction/pedagogy) students. Using current scholarship, practice, and policy around how K-12 students learn best, teacher education faculty design curricula to respond to those ever-changing needs (Kuriloff et al. 2019).

While the literature around the influences of teacher preparation programs on teacher performance and student achievement are neither well documented nor widely studied, there is evidence supporting the value of certain components of a teacher education program (King &

Butler, 2015; Darling-Hammond, 2006). Recent studies have highlighted the importance of many factors that can contribute to teachers being prepared for and successful in urban settings. Factors such as high-quality field experiences in diverse settings, service-learning, lab schools, critical consciousness in pre-service candidates, knowledge of asset-based pedagogies, and candidate identity development have been identified as components of teacher education programs that have the potential to set students up for success when they serve in urban school settings (Grant, 1994; Schauer, 2018; Talbert-Johnson, 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships

Over the last few years, schools and districts across the country have focused on fostering greater family engagement as a critical role in education reform. To further address this, Drs. Karen Mapp and Paul Kuttner (2013) designed the *Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships*. Mapp and Kuttner described the framework as "a scaffold for the development of family engagement strategies, policies, and programs" (p. 6). The framework is not a set of directions or even a blueprint stakeholders can use to plan programs and initiatives, but rather it serves as a compass "laying out the goals and conditions necessary to chart a path toward effective family engagement efforts that are linked to student achievement and school improvement" (p. 6). The Dual Capacity Framework includes four primary components that are essential to building effective and meaningful family-school partnerships. These components are:

- A description of the *capacity challenges* that must be addressed to support the cultivation of effective home-school partnerships;
- An articulation of the *conditions* integral to the success of family-school partnership initiatives and interventions;
- An identification of the desired intermediate capacity *goals* that should be the focus of family engagement policies and programs at the federal, state, and local level; and
- A description of the capacity-building *outcomes* for school and program staff as well as for families.

Adapting the Dual Capacity Framework as a Restorative Wraparound Approach for School Discipline

The Dual Capacity Framework has the potential to foster family-school partnerships in meaningful ways which can improve many outcomes for students and their families. The same could be true of an adapted Dual Capacity Framework designed to build and strengthen school-community-university partnerships to address racial disproportionality in urban schools. There are many factors that may lead to students engaging in behaviors that are not consistent with school and district norms and expectations. Through a reimagined wraparound approach , redesigning what wraparound services look like in practice has the potential to support all students, especially Black students. The four components discussed in the Dual Capacity Framework for Family-School Partnerships can be adapted to reflect the needs of schools and students relative to school discipline. For example:

- There are many challenges that serve as the antecedent for many behavioral challenges. Identifying these *challenges* through restorative processes, designed to improve intercultural communication and mitigate conflict, is a critical component of this reimagined approach to wraparound services. If the challenges are appropriately

identified, service providers could work with schools to provide culturally responsive, evidence-based support and interventions.

- Likewise, optimal *conditions* for school discipline are critical. Creating a school climate and culture that promotes community building, positive student-teacher relationships, a safe learning environment, and equitable responses to student misbehavior is integral. Partnerships between schools, community diversion programs, and school discipline scholars could help to establish alternative responses to exclusionary and punitive discipline practices.

- Clearly identified and socialized *goals* are equally important. It is critical to ensure that everyone (students and their families, schools, and the community) is working in tandem toward the same goal, with the same expectations. For instance, within this adapted model, it is a reprehensible practice to use 3rd-grade reading scores from standardized assessments to determine where to build prisons (Mid-South Literacy, 2016).

- Finally, identifying and articulating expected and anticipated *outcomes* of student behavior serves as an important accountability measure for all stakeholders. Becoming more asset-focused, that is recognizing the resources of students, families, and surrounding community and using this knowledge to create more inclusive learning environments, will work to improve student achievement, reduce suspensions and expulsion, and lower dropout rates.

There are also other components to be considered such as ensuring academically rigorous classrooms, the role of teacher education and preparation programs, social-emotional learning, and mental health services. Mapp and colleagues (2017) share a number of strategies that, if leveraged intentionally and deliberately, will help reshape how families engage with schools. Similar strategies can be employed to support how these relationships can be extended to the community (schools to community) and then from the community to researchers and faculty (community to universities) in their efforts to close the school discipline gap, and ultimately dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.

Recommendations for Practice
Recommendations for Teacher Education

Teacher education and preparation programs (EPPs) play one of the most important roles in ensuring that teachers are prepared to serve as classroom teachers. The onus is largely on these programs to help candidates obtain the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to be successful in all classrooms, most notably those which are becoming increasingly diverse. With regard to the adapted framework for restorative wraparound supports used to address school discipline, EPPs will serve a vital role. First, it is critical that programs produce candidates who are culturally responsive. While the majority of teachers are White, middle-class, monolingual English speakers, this is not representative of the student population in many schools today, as students of color currently represent the numerical majority in public elementary and secondary schools (Hussar et al., 2020; Irwin et al., 2021). EPPs should work to gain an understanding of where, and in what ways, they engage their students in the work of building cultural competence around culturally responsive and restorative practices.

Likewise, it is equally important that EPPs ensure that their candidates are regularly in high-quality field experiences in multiple, diverse settings. This practice not only gives candidates the opportunity to see students at different levels, but also allows them to see the policies and practices that contribute to student misconduct, and how veteran teachers respond. Another critical aspect of this framework, relative to teacher education, is the understanding that faculty members remain engaged in K-12 schools. The research-to-practice gap is widening steadily. This may further perpetuate a disconnect between teacher education faculty and K-12 schools. (Re)building intentional relationships between universities and schools and school districts is vitally important in our adapted Dual Capacity framework.

Recommendations for School Districts

This type of work will require schools and districts to reflect intentionally and deliberately on their current realities. Staff should examine school discipline data through a critical lens, cogitating on what the data indicates and how this shows up in schools. The Office of Civil Rights dataset, which collects national discipline data and disaggregates the data by state, school district, and school, would be particularly useful in understanding the degree of racial disproportionality in exclusionary discipline practices. Likewise, a thorough review of policies and practices will be required. Restorative, rather than punitive, practices have been known to be more effective in decreasing racial disparities in school discipline (Jain et al., 2014). Furthermore, school districts should also begin the process of co-creating goals and expectations with students and their families, educators, community professionals, and researchers. Once these goals have been established, consistent progress monitoring should be employed as an accountability mechanism to ensure that these collective goals remain at the forefront of education. Co-constructive efforts might include facilitating professional development for educators by university faculty, engaging students and families in creating new discipline policies, and working to ensure that the school climate and culture are equitable for student success.

Discussion

Racial disparities in exclusionary school discipline practices, and reform efforts to address them have been long documented (Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Hess, 2011; Vincent et al., 2015). Studies over the last four decades have placed a keen focus on marginalized populations of students—namely, students of color and those experiencing poverty—seeking to better understand why and how these disparities in suspensions exist (Lewis et al., 2012; Lustick, 2021; Nolan, 2011). From government initiatives to school and district-level programs and policies, many stakeholders have attempted to close the school discipline gap and provide alternatives to suspensions and expulsions through restorative practices (Gbolo & Grier-Reed, 20219; Losen, 2015; Steinberg & Lacoe, 2020). While some have experienced varying levels of success, the need for a more robust, sustainable, and practical approach is evident.

In silos, scholars from several fields have shared studies that examine school discipline data, practices, and policies that offer solutions, of some sort, to address the disparities in exclusionary practices (Lewis et al., 2010). A framework–in which several areas of research and practice intersect– to address school discipline in urban schools has the potential to not only impact students while they are in schools but can change the trajectory of their lives and society

as a whole. Such a framework, grounded in culturally responsive approaches and restorative philosophies, would draw on literature, best practices, and cross collaborations from mental health professionals, educators, community leaders, schools/colleges of education, and others to find intentional ways to 'wrap around' students and their families, building strong school-community-university relationships in which students, particularly Black students, can thrive.

What Does (Could) This Look Like?

At present, such implementation does not exist in totality, however there are examples of researchers, practitioners, and communities engaging in portions of this work in singular ways. In an ideal world, a partnership would be established between a College of Education (CoEd), a local school or district, and the community. Leaders from all groups would engage in conversations to understand the needs of each other, and how they can work collaboratively to ensure that their efforts support students, teachers, and the local schools. The following are examples of what these collaborative partnerships could look like in practice:

- The CoEd and school district leaders can work to intentionally prepare teacher candidates (both graduate and undergraduate) for 21st-century classrooms but equipping them with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be culturally responsive teachers, and ensuring that candidates have diverse, high-quality placements to engage in clinical practice.
- CoEd faculty, community leaders/experts, and school district leaders co-facilitating professional development sessions for both teacher candidates, school staff, and families around topics of mental health supports for teachers and students, restorative practices, and family-school partnerships.
- All stakeholders engaging in relationship and trust-building activities to understand the assets, current reality, and challenges faced by each institution. These activities should all center the ways in which the groups can work to support schools and students address school discipline challenges.

Conclusion

Through a careful and thoughtful review of the extant literature around school discipline, we find that there have been many efforts to address the disparities in exclusionary sanctions in urban schools. These efforts, facilitated by schools, government initiatives, and other stakeholders show effectiveness to varying degrees. Stakeholders have turned to programs—such as PBIS—to support their efforts in addressing this critical issue (Benshoff, et al., 1994). Some have turned to policies–such as zero-tolerance– in hopes to create ideal classroom environments (Camacho & Krezmien, 2019). However, the disparities remain and, therefore, a more comprehensive approach to address these disparities has the potential to begin closing the school discipline gap. We have sought to introduce school-community-university partnerships, through an adapted version of the Dual Capacity Framework, to propose a further examination of a restorative wraparound that works towards addressing racial disparities in school discipline. Through this approach, we introduced and discussed best practices that educators, community professionals, and university faculty could leverage in their collective efforts to close the school discipline gap and ultimately dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.

Author Bios

Jaalil Hart (jaalil.hart@uncc.edu) is a doctoral student in the Curriculum and Instruction program at the University of North Carolina Charlotte. His research focuses on urban education, culturally sustaining practices, family-school partnerships, and teacher education.

Bettie Ray Butler, Ph.D. ([bettie.butler@uncc.edu).](mailto:bettie.butler@uncc.edu), is an Associate Professor of Urban Education and the Program Director of the M.Ed. in Urban Education Program at the University of North Carolina Charlotte. Her research focuses on school discipline, culturally responsive practices, and restorative approaches.

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