

**STUDY OF THE EFFECTIVENESS  
OF STRATEGIES EMPLOYED AT TUSD  
TO PROMOTE A SENSE OF INCLUSIVENESS OR BELONGING  
AND A CULTURE OF CIVILITY**

**Introduction and Summary**

TUSD concurrently employs four specific strategies to promote a sense of inclusiveness or belonging among its students, and a general culture of civility within its community: restorative justice and practices; positive behavior interventions and supports; culturally responsive courses; and culturally responsive pedagogy. All are built on the underlying principles of social and emotional learning. These strategies are implemented across the district by school teaching and administrative staff both in their own interactions with students, and also in their intermediation in interactions between and among students.

This study assesses the effectiveness of these strategies, set against the backdrop of a current climate at TUSD high in inclusiveness and civility, and one in which feelings of inclusiveness and civility do not vary significantly among different racial and ethnic groups with the student community at TUSD.<sup>1</sup> This report also addresses whether there are other strategies not currently employed at TUSD which should be employed, or at least considered for implementation in the future.

The ideal way to assess effectiveness of a particular strategy is a quantitative comparison of two otherwise similar groups of students, one for which the strategy has been employed, and other for which it has not. However, this is not feasible at TUSD, primarily because TUSD employs several strategies concurrently, and they interlink and support each other, making it impossible to isolate the effect of any one strategy. Additionally, because there are many other factors which strongly influence inclusiveness and civility, TUSD student populations are not large enough to control for these other factors and still produce robust results. TUSD concluded that it would be impossible to assess effectiveness of individual strategies based on any quantitative analysis of TUSD student data.

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<sup>1</sup> See Study of Students' Sense of Inclusiveness, ECF 2156-1.

Accordingly, TUSD has based this assessment on studies and analyses undertaken elsewhere, including those appearing in educational literature and in results experienced by other school districts which have employed one or more of these strategies. This review also forms the basis for TUSD's conclusion that the strategies currently used by TUSD represent the current best practices in use around the country, and that TUSD should continue to monitor and build on its success with the current strategies. In the event that continued monitoring discloses an issue in the future, the District may want to consider implementing an actual curriculum for students based on principles of social emotional learning.

## **PART A. EFFECTIVENESS OF CURRENT STRATEGIES**

### **1. Background and Context**

The District's approach to the fostering of inclusive school environments, and cultures of civility is based on the principles of social and emotional learning (SEL). All four specific strategies used by the District employ particular aspects or disciplines within the SEL framework. SEL is a broad discipline fundamentally concerned with the development and promotion of empathy and building of prosocial skills in students. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), a leader in the practice and research of SEL, defines SEL:

"SEL is the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions."<sup>2</sup>

SEL serves as an umbrella for many types of educational interventions such as Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports, Restorative Practices, bullying prevention, conflict resolution, and social skills training. Ultimately a reciprocal relationship exists between

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<sup>2</sup> Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, <http://www.casel.org/what-is-sel>, last visited June 27, 2019.

SEL and school climate. A positive school environment promotes SEL, and SEL facilitates a supportive climate.<sup>3</sup>

The District has employed four specific strategies based on the general principles of social emotional learning. Each is evaluated below.

## **2. Specific Strategy: Restorative Practices (Restorative Justice)**

Restorative practices (RP), sometimes also called restorative justice (RJ), is a particular implementation of social emotional learning, using practices such as restorative circles, restorative conferences, restorative conversations, and community conferencing. It is an inclusionary, nonpunitive strategy used across the country to help reduce suspension rates. Proactively improving relationships among students and staff while building a sense of community in classrooms and schools may make students less inclined to misbehave. Using a restorative approach can both prevent harm through relationship-building and respond to conflict in ways that repair damaged relationships,

Despite the popularity of a restorative approach in schools nationally, most programs are still at the infancy stage (West Ed, Justice & Prevention Research Center, 2019). As such, there are a limited number of evaluations and other studies. One trend in the available literature is that restorative practices/restorative justice qualitative reviews and descriptive reports are much more prevalent than evaluation studies. The following studies have assessed the effectiveness of one or another forms of restorative practices in promoting inclusiveness and civility:

a. A study in a mid-sized urban school district represents one of the first randomized controlled trials of the impacts of restorative practices (RP) on classroom and school climate and suspension rates. The researchers collected extensive data about implementation to examine how RP related to effects and to develop operational guidance for school district leaders. The 44 schools participating in the study were all part of the Pittsburgh Public Schools district and implemented restorative practices for two school years (2015–16 and 2016–17) under the leadership of the International Institute for

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<sup>3</sup> Appendix A sets out some of the key studies validating the use of principles of social and emotional learning in fostering inclusiveness and civility.

Restorative Practices. The schools were evenly split between treatment and control schools.

Two key findings were that the school climate in RP schools improved compared with the school climate in the control schools and the number of days lost to suspension declined, as did the disparities in suspension rates by race and by income. Interestingly this decline was most apparent in elementary grades. The researchers noted that staff at the RP schools seemed to buy-in to the practices by the end of year one. The practices used most often were affective statements, restorative circles and restorative conferences.<sup>4</sup>

b. A study published in 2015 showed that over the course of just one school year, greater use of restorative practices (RP) was associated with lower teacher referrals for misconduct/defiance. The study draws on data from two large and diverse high schools in a small city of the East Coast during the first year (2011-12) of restorative practice implementation in these schools. The analyses show that high school teachers who implemented RP had more positive relationships with their diverse students. Students perceived these teachers as more respectful and issued fewer exclusionary discipline referrals. Additionally, fewer discipline referrals were issued to Latino and African American students which suggests that well-implemented RP can help in narrowing the racial discipline gap. Typically school wide interventions require at least two years to take hold, so given that this study was a one year snapshot, the results show potential for RP to improve schools.<sup>5</sup>

c. In 2008 after reforming their discipline policy, the Denver public school district (90,546 students and 180 schools), decided to implement restorative interventions as an alternative to traditional suspension practices. Restorative conferencing, mediations, and circles were the key interventions being implemented. Building on prior findings indicating that the implementation of restorative programming varies widely across

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<sup>4</sup> Augustine, C., Engberg, J., Grimm, G., Lee, E., Wang, E., Christianson, K., & Joseph, A., *Can Restorative Practices Improve School Climate and Curb Suspensions? An Evaluation of the Impact of Restorative Practices in a Mid-Sized Urban School District*, Rand Corporation, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> Gregory, A., Clawson, K., Davis, A., & Gerewitz, J., "The Promise of Restorative Practices to Transform Teacher-Student Relationships and Achieve Equity in School Discipline," *Journal of Educational & Psychological Consultation*, Vol. 25, 1-29 (2015).

schools, Yolanda Anyon and her team of researchers examined the association between restorative interventions and students' future discipline outcomes.

Their study sample of 9,921 students included all students in grades k-12 who were issued one or more office discipline referrals (ODRs). Analysis showed that with each restorative intervention administered to students during the first semester, the odds of students receiving another ODR or suspension in the second semester of the same school year were lower. For ODRs the strength of association between restorative practice participation and adverse discipline outcomes was more pronounced in schools with high rates of restorative practice use. This finding held after accounting for student racial background, special education status, free or reduced lunch eligibility, and frequency and seriousness of disciplinary referrals.<sup>6</sup>

Other school districts have reported favorably on their use of restorative practices:

- **Oakland Unified School District (OUSD)**

Cole Middle school was a pilot school in OUSD where RJ was integrated into Cole's daily activities to correct behavior that previously had led to suspensions or expulsions. At the time of the pilot, Cole's student body was 63 percent African American, 15 percent Hispanic/Latino, 13 percent Asian/Pacific Islander, and zero percent white, with 85 percent of students receiving free or reduced cost lunch. RJ became a way to build the school community while also helping students, staff and parents to cope with violence in the community beyond the school. During the implementation of RJ, suspensions at Cole declined by 87 percent and expulsions to zero.

The positive outcomes from the pilot school led OUSD to expand implementation of RJ from one school to 24 schools and after three years of implementation saw their suspension decrease over three years by 23 percent across the 24 schools. The restorative justice incorporated into OUSD's school were many commonly used elements of restorative justice, including the circle, shared values, and circle keepers. Circles were also used creatively for non-disciplinary reasons. For example some circles emphasized community

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<sup>6</sup> Anyon, Y., Gregory, A., Stone, S., Farrar, J., Jenson, J., McQueen, J., Downing, B., Greer, E., & Simmons, J., "Restorative Interventions and School Discipline Sanctions in a Large Urban School District," *American Educational Research Journal*, Vo. 53, No. 6 (2016).

building or were used as bridges to more formal teaching, using them to discuss both routine and high-profile events.

- **Palisades Middle School (PALMS) - Pennsylvania**

Restorative practices was introduced at Palisades Middle School (PALMS) in grades 6-8 in fall 2000. Prior to 2000, climate was discourteous and disrespectful and altercations were common. Edward Baumgartner principal at that time said, “We were suspending 200 students a school year for everything from disrespect to not making up gym.” All staff were trained in RP, including support staff. Restorative circles, where students and staff share information and problems, were used in the classroom. In discipline situations, students were asked to write in their personal journals to share what happened and provide suggestions of how to take care of it. The entire continuum of restorative practices was also employed, from affective statements and questions to formal restorative conferences. The school has seen a statistically significant decrease in the amount of problems that occur each day. Data gathered over a two year time frame indicated a substantial drop in disciplinary referrals from 913 to 516. Restorative practices has also had a positive effect on academic performance, said Baumgartner.<sup>7</sup>

- **Denver Public School District (DPS)**

In the Denver Public School District, the overall suspension rate dropped from 10.58 percent to 5.63 percent with the gap between Black and White decreasing from twelve - to an eight-point gap from the first year of implementation to seven years later. These findings are based on a case study analysis of DPS conducted from 2008 to 2013. A key consideration that evolved from this study was that systemic implementation of restorative justice at the school and district levels, coupled with discipline policy reform, can play a key role in addressing disproportionality in discipline outcomes.

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<sup>7</sup> Mirsky, L., “SaferSanerSchools: Transforming School Culture with Restorative Practices,” Restorative Practices Eforum, International Institute for Restorative Practices (2003), available at <https://www.iirp.edu/news/safersanerschools-transforming-school-culture-with-restorative-practices>, last visited on June 27, 2019.

**3. Specific Strategy: Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS)**

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) has been defined, described, and studied since its introduction in the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (1997). PBIS is an implementation framework that is designed to enhance academic and social behavior outcomes for all students. This is accomplished by (1) emphasizing the use of data to inform decisions regarding selection, implementation, and progress monitoring of evidence based practice; and (2) organizing resources and systems to improve program fidelity. As a framework PBIS is defined as a process or approach rather than a curriculum.<sup>8</sup>

Originally, PBIS was designed to assist in the selection, implementation, and documentation of students with behavior disorders. In 1997 the National Technical Assistance Center on PBIS shifted focus to a school-wide behavior support for all students, and an emphasis on implementation and practices. As a result, PBIS is defined as a framework for enhancing the adoption and implementation of a continuum of evidence-based interventions to achieve academically and behaviorally for all students. The continuum notion emphasizes how evidence (research) based behavioral practices are organized within a multi-tiered system of support. The supportive relationship between positive school and classroom wide culture and student success is also emphasized.

In TUSD, a primary focus of PBIS is on improving school climate and culture. PBIS is the framework that interconnects with the district's Social and Emotional Learning and Restorative Practices. TUSD seeks a more inclusionary district with fewer exclusionary practices. To that end, PBIS provides a system to review school wide data to determine student responsiveness and outcome impact of other TUSD programs (Restorative Practices, Social Emotional Learning).

The following studies have assessed the effectiveness of the PBIS framework:

- a. A study reviewed data provided by 16,000 schools with trained school teams in the PBIS framework. The study revealed that schools that are effective in their implementation have:

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<sup>8</sup> Lewis, T., & Sugai, G., "Effective Behavior Support: A Systems Approach to Proactive Schoolwide Management," *Focus on Exceptional Children*, Vol. 31, No. 6, 1-24 (1999).

- more than 80 percent of their students and staff who can indicate the desired positive behavioral expectations for a given setting,
- had high rates of positive acknowledgements for contributing to a safe and positive school,
- have more than 70 percent of their students who have not experienced an office discipline referral for a disciplinary rule infraction,
- have knowledge regarding students that may require more intensive behavior supports,
- have systems in place to regularly review school-wide behavior data to guide action planning and decision making.<sup>9</sup>

b. A study of 12,344 elementary school children enrolled in SW (school-wide) PBIS schools data demonstrates several positive behavior outcomes.<sup>10</sup> The study revealed SWPBIS schools had lower levels of aggression and disruptive behaviors compared with students in control schools. This four year study also noted positive improvements in concentration problems, prosocial behaviors and emotion regulation. There was no significant difference in SWPBIS schools between grade, gender, race/ethnicity, regular education, or exceptional education status.

c. A literature review examined the use of school-based PBIS support as an alternative to traditional disciplinary practices that includes data based decision making and team collaboration.<sup>11</sup> Overall findings were positive, showing that PBIS

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<sup>9</sup> George Sugai, Jeffrey R. Sprague, Robert H. Horner, Hill M. Walker, “Preventing School Violence: The Use of Office Discipline Referrals to Assess and Monitor School-Wide Discipline Interventions,” *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, Vol. 8, No. 2 (2000).

<sup>10</sup> Bradshaw, C., Waasdorp, T., and Leaf, P., “Effects of School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports on Child Behavior Problems,” *Archives of Pediatrics and Adolescent Medicine*, Vo. 166, No. 2, 149-156 (2012).

<sup>11</sup> Safran, S. P., & Oswald, K.. “Positive behavior supports: Can schools reshape disciplinary practices?” *Exceptional Children*, 69(3), 361-373. (2003).



offers positive, effective, data driven, collaborative alternatives to traditional discipline. The analysis offered the following conclusions:

- i. First, collaborative teams can use data to establish school-wide priorities and pre-intervention baselines, as well as to evaluate intervention effectiveness.
- ii. Second, school wide PBIS that utilize multiple measures including archival data, direct observations, teacher ratings, and consumer satisfaction inventories, have resulted in extremely positive academic and behavioral outcomes for many students across grade levels.
- iii. Third, PBIS designed for specific settings (e.g. hallways, cafeteria, playgrounds, and transitions) have demonstrated positive behavioral change using strategies such as active supervision, pre-correction, and group contingencies.

d. A study in the *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* examined the features of school-based prevention programs in substance abuse, dropout/non-attendance, and other conduct problems.<sup>12</sup> It summarizes, using meta-analytic techniques, results from 165 studies of school-based prevention activities that ranged from individual counseling or behavior modification programs through efforts to change the way schools are managed (utilizing the PBIS framework). The study shows the following:

- i. School-based prevention practices appear to be effective in reducing alcohol and drug use.
- ii. Appear to be effective in improving attendance rates and decreasing dropout rates.
- iii. Appear to be effective in decreasing other conduct problems.

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<sup>12</sup> Wilson, D., Gottfredson, D., & Najaka, S., "School-based prevention of problem behaviors: A meta-analysis," *Journal of Quantitative Criminology*, 17(3), 247-272 (2001).

e. SWPBIS was studied in a five year, longitudinal randomized controlled effectiveness trial conducted by Johns Hopkins University.<sup>13</sup> Thirty seven elementary schools were studied to determine the impact of training in SWPBIS on implementation fidelity as well as student suspensions, office referrals, and academic achievement. The study found that schools trained in SWPBIS experienced reductions in student suspensions and office disciplinary referrals.

f. In the *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, Carol Sadler and George Sugai described the development and ten-year implementation of an effective behavior and support model (PBIS) in a mid-sized northwestern Oregon school district.<sup>14</sup> The district experienced a sustained reduction in student discipline referral rates, an increase in the percentage of students on track for early reading benchmarks, and an improvement in special education evaluation of learning disabilities. These important outcomes were associated with the systemic integration of effective practices, including capacity building professional development, school wide positive behavior support, and identification using student responsiveness to intervention. At the school and district levels, a continuum of behavior and academic supports was established for all students, and specialized interventions were implemented for students struggling with behavior and/or academic challenges.

g. In a paper delivered by George Sugai and Brandi Simonsen (Center for PBIS, University of Connecticut), the following national data was reported:

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<sup>13</sup> Bradshaw, C., Mitchell, M., & Leaf, P., "Examining the Effects of Schoolwide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports on Student Outcomes: Results from a Randomized Controlled Effectiveness Trial in Elementary Schools," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2010).

<sup>14</sup> Sadler, C., & Sugai, G., "Effective behavior and instructional support: A district model for early identification and prevention of reading and behavior problems," *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 11, 35–46 (2009).

- i. Currently, there are three states with more than 60 percent of schools involved in PBIS implementation.
- ii. Currently, there are nine states with more than 40 percent of schools involved in PBIS implementation.
- iii. Currently, there are sixteen states with more than 30 percent of schools involved in PBIS implementation.<sup>15</sup>

Other school districts have reported favorably on their implementation of the PBIS framework:

**h. Jefferson County Public Schools, Louisville, KY (JCPS).** Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) is a large, urban school district in Louisville, KY, serving over 101,000 students at 175 schools. The student population is very diverse, with 55 percent students of color, 5.3 percent receiving ESL services and 66.3 percent receiving free/reduced lunch. The district began implementation of a comprehensive behavior support systems model in 2016 to address increasing rates of in-school and out-of-school suspensions, as well as ethnic disproportionality in behavior referrals.

JCPS adopted the ICPS Behavior Support Systems Model. This model is an integration of Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports (PBIS), including evidence based positive behavior classroom strategies, and Restorative Practices (RP). The goal was to use PBIS as the framework to implement a full range of evidence based practices in behavior supports to meet specific behavioral and relationship needs for students, staff, families, and leadership in Jefferson County.

The district began systematic implementation of PBIS in 2013 with a long term goal and strategic plan for district wide capacity. During the 2013-2014 school year the district trained 50 school teams to implement Tier 1 positive behavior supports. Each year after the initial roll out, JCPS trained an additional 10-20 schools. By 2018, JCPS had trained 86 percent of the schools in PBIS (107 out of 156

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<sup>15</sup> Sugai, G. & Simonsen, B.. “Positive behavioral interventions and supports: History, defining features, and misconceptions” (2012), available at [http://pbis.org/school/pbis\\_revisited.aspx](http://pbis.org/school/pbis_revisited.aspx), last visted June 27, 2019.

schools). Restorative Practices (RP) were aligned and integrated into the PBIS framework to complement the continuum of high yield classroom practices. A key element of the training is that it is a whole school training, with custodians, clerks, nutrition workers, teachers, bus drivers, and administrators receiving training.

The initial student outcome data is promising, showing positive trends of decreasing office referrals in elementary, middle, and alternative schools that participated in the pilot. Data from 2018 shows a decrease in suspensions and repeat suspensions for high schools in the PBIS/RP cohort. While referrals decreased more noticeably for the elementary, high and alternative schools in the PBIS/RP cohorts, the impact on suspensions for high schools is most promising.

i. **Milwaukee Public Schools, Milwaukee, WI (MPS)**. Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) serves over 75,000 students in the greater Milwaukee area. The student population is diverse with 89.2 percent students of color, 82.5 percent students of economically disadvantaged homes, and 20.3 percent of students having special needs. MPS is an open enrollment district that allows students to choose from 161 schools.

Milwaukee Public Schools has had a Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) system in place for several years (2014). Schools that establish systems with the capacity to implement school wide PBIS have teaching and learning environments that stress:

- less reactive, aversive, dangerous, and exclusionary practices,
- more engaging, responsive, preventive, and productive practices.

In MPS, school wide PBIS emphasizes four integrated elements: (a) data for decision making, (b) measurable outcomes supported and evaluated by data, (c) practices with evidence that these outcomes are achievable, and (d) systems that efficiently and effectively support implementation of these practices. Within the PBIS framework, Milwaukee Public Schools has adopted evidence based classroom strategies including Social, Emotional Learning (SEL). The goal is to incorporate a

model that allows students the ability to recognize and manage emotions while establishing and maintaining positive relations. PBIS/SEL has shown success in:

- addressing classroom management and disciplinary issues (attendance, tardiness, antisocial behavior),
- improving supports for students whose behaviors require more specialized assistance,
- maximizing academic engagement and achievement for all students.

j. **St. Paul Public Schools, St. Paul MN (SPPS)**. St. Paul Public Schools is one of Minnesota's largest districts with more than 37,000 students. Student population is diverse, with more than 125 languages and dialects being spoken. 34 percent of SPPS students are ELL, 15 percent require exceptional education services, and 70 percent qualify for free or reduced lunch. St. Paul Public Schools has 63 schools in the district. It adopted PBIS as a framework for schools to create and sustain positive, effective, and culturally inclusive environments that support academic and social success for all students. The Minnesota Department of Education recognized SPPS for sustaining exemplar PBIS capacity. Of its 63 schools, 30 have been trained in PBIS through the state cohort model and an additional 32 have been trained internally. In 2018, 60 schools measured fidelity and 49 are implementing SWPBIS at Tier 1 with fidelity.

#### **4. Specific Strategy: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy.**

Culturally responsive pedagogy is an educational approach based on student needs. These needs are identified as social, emotional, intellectual, contextual, orientational, and effective. In academia, CRP is often used interchangeably with related terms such as culturally relevant pedagogy (Gloria Ladson Billings), culturally sustaining pedagogy (Django Paris), and others. It is strongly linked to the work of critical multiculturalism (Christine Sleeter), critical race theory (Derrick Bell), and social and emotional learning (SEL) (Zins).

According to the research, a culturally relevant (CR) educator should be responsive to the needs of the children served. The teacher invests time in becoming knowledgeable about the social, historical, cultural, economic needs and realities of their students' lives. Academic instruction must be informed by the lived experiences of the students being taught. Dr. Angela Valenzuela defines this as "authentic caring." The culturally relevant (CR) educator must work vigorously to find literature and historical accounts that are reflective of their students' ethnic backgrounds, filling a void that traditional textbooks often neglect to address.

Based on the work of Dr. Luis Moll,<sup>16</sup> CR teachers must be responsive to the "funds of knowledge" that their students bring to the classroom. This is done by incorporating culturally responsive strategies into the classroom in both curriculum and pedagogy. The byproducts of this approach to education are students who become engaged in what they learn and begin to see themselves as scholars. Student engagement becomes infectious and classroom disruption and student discipline problems become nonexistent.

Tucson Unified has elected to implement a multi-year professional development plan to prepare teachers, classified staff and administrators on how best to implement this approach in their respective roles.

While there is ample research on the topic, very few examples of implementation are available at the scale at which TUSD has utilized.<sup>17</sup> Due to this limitation, the following research highlights the theoretical and associated implementation of this approach. This selection documents the effectiveness of culturally responsive pedagogy in promoting achievement, inclusiveness and civility:

a. In her book, **Culturally Responsive Teaching: *Theory, Research and Practice***, Geneva Gay states:

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<sup>16</sup> Dr. Luis Moll, former professor of Teacher and Teacher Education at the University of Arizona, is the lead researcher in groundbreaking work in asset-based pedagogy, also referred to as Fund of Knowledge.

<sup>17</sup> The CRPI Department at the District consults regularly with Dr. Gay, Dr. Sleeter, and members of the National Panel on Culturally Responsive Curriculum & Instruction. The District demonstrated its commitment to culturally responsive pedagogy by modifying its teacher evaluation instrument to include culturally responsive teacher behaviors.

Culturally responsive teaching is validating and affirming because

- It acknowledges the legitimacy of the cultural heritages of the different ethnic groups, both as legacies that affect students' dispositions, attitudes and approaches to learning and as worthy content to be taught in the curriculum.
- It builds bridges of meaningfulness between home and school experiences as well as between academic abstractions and lived sociocultural realities.
- It uses a wide variety of instructional strategies that are connected learning styles.
- It teaches students to know and praise their own and one another's cultural heritages.
- It incorporates multicultural information, resources and materials in all the subjects and skills routinely taught in schools.

*Cooperation, community and connectedness are also central features of culturally responsive teaching. Students are expected to work together and are held accountable for one another's success. Mutual aid, interdependence, and reciprocity as criteria for guiding behavior replace the individualism and competitiveness that are so much a part of conventional classrooms. The goal is for all students to be winners rather than some winning and others losing, and for students to assume responsibility for helping one another achieve to be the best of their abilities.*

b. **Siwatu, K. O. (2007).** Preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs. *Teaching and teacher education*, 23(7), 1086-1101. Guided by the theoretical and empirical research on self-efficacy and outcome expectancy beliefs, and the Culturally Responsive Teaching Competencies. [Siwatu, K.O. (2006a). The development of the culturally responsive teaching competencies: Implications for teacher education. Manuscript under review], two measures—the Culturally Responsive Teaching Self-Efficacy Scale (CRTSE) and the Culturally Responsive Teaching Outcome Expectancy (CRTOE) Scale—were developed and administered to a sample of preservice teachers in the Midwest. The findings from this study suggest that preservice teachers are more efficacious in their ability to help students feel like important members

of the classroom and develop positive, personal relationships with their students, than they are in their ability to communicate with English Language Learners. Preservice teachers' culturally responsive teaching outcome expectations was highest for the possibility that a positive teacher–student relationship can be established by building a sense of trust in their students. Item-specific means were lowest among the preservice teachers for the possibility that encouraging students to use their native language will help to maintain students' cultural identity. The implications for these findings for both research and teacher education are discussed.

c. **Brown, D. F. (2004).** Urban teachers' professed classroom management strategies: Reflections of culturally responsive teaching. *Urban Education*, 39(3), 266-289. Thirteen urban educators teaching from 1st through 12th grade selected from seven cities across the United States were interviewed in this qualitative research study to determine if the classroom management strategies they use reflect the research on culturally responsive teaching. Participants revealed using several management strategies that reflect culturally responsive teaching: development of personal relationships with students, creation of caring communities, establishment of business-like learning environments, use of culturally and ethnically congruent communication processes, demonstrations of assertiveness, and utilization of clearly stated and enforced expectations. Questions arise concerning the ability of teacher education programs to effectively prepare preservice teachers for successful classroom management in urban schools.

d. **Lopez, F. A. (2017).** Altering the trajectory of the self-fulfilling prophecy: Asset-based pedagogy and classroom dynamics. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 68(2), 193-212. Prior research has contributed to our understanding about the ways teachers communicate their expectations to students, how students perceive differential teacher behaviors, and their effect on students' own perceptions of ability and achievement. Despite more than half a century of this work, historically marginalized students continue to be underrepresented in a vast array of achievement outcomes. Scholars have argued that asset-based pedagogy is essential to effective teaching, but reviews of research repeatedly point to a need for empirical evidence.

This article describes a study wherein asset-based practices are applied to a classroom dynamics framework to examine how teachers' asset-based pedagogy beliefs



and behaviors are associated with Latino students' ethnic and reading achievement identity. Analyses revealed that teachers' critical awareness moderates their expectancy, resulting in higher achievement; and teachers' critical awareness and expectancy beliefs were found to be directly associated with teachers' behaviors, which were in turn related to students' ethnic and achievement identities. Implications for teacher education are discussed.

### **5. Specific Strategy: Culturally Relevant Courses.**

Culturally Relevant Courses are a set of identified secondary level (high school and middle school), core content courses in ELA and Social Studies courses from a particular ethnic viewpoint. Through the use of ethnic studies curricular content, and culturally responsive pedagogical approaches such as asset-based pedagogy, TUSD provides an opportunity for students to satisfy graduation requirements using focused curricular resources from a Mexican and African American perspective. At the elementary level, identified CR teachers are provided training on CR curriculum development as well as sample lessons to be implemented in their classrooms.

Identified CRC teachers are provided extensive training in the theoretical underpinnings of culturally responsive pedagogy. This training is provided through a monthly, four-hour training provided by the department of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Instruction. During these trainings, teachers have the opportunity to collaborate on the development of culturally relevant curriculum for their use in class.

The department of CRPI supports the implementation of CR courses by assigning a "Master Teacher" to serve as a mentor for effective application of CR curriculum during the initial three years of the teacher electing to teach the course. At the conclusion of the third year, veteran CR teachers continue to be offered training, but are no longer assigned a master teacher.

Course such as these have proven effective at significantly minimizing the disparities in achievement between identified White students and minoritized racial and ethnic groups. Broadly classified as ethnic studies courses focusing on the African American and Mexican American experience, CR courses provide a validating educational experience for students within and outside of these sub groups.

The field of ethnic studies in K-12 education has recently gained steam across the country. In Texas, California, Oregon and other states, ethnic studies in K-12 schools has become a legislative movement. Much of the steam powering this movement has come from a study that was conducted within Tucson Unified- Mexican American Studies Department. In this study, (highlighted below) researchers found that implementation of culturally relevant courses not only improved academic achievement, but they also improved the culture within the classroom and school. This improved culture points to the increased sense of inclusion and belonging to the specific class and the school in general. The following research has assessed the effectiveness of culturally relevant courses in promoting achievement, inclusiveness and civility:

- a. Dee, T. S., & Penner, E. K. (2017). *The causal effects of cultural relevance: Evidence from an ethnic studies curriculum*. American Educational Research Journal, 54(1), 127-166.

An extensive theoretical and qualitative literature stresses the promise of instructional practices and content aligned with minority students' experiences. Ethnic studies courses provide an example of such "culturally relevant pedagogy" (CRP). Despite theoretical support, quantitative evidence on the effectiveness of these courses is limited. We estimate the causal effects of an ethnic studies curriculum, using a "fuzzy" regression discontinuity design based on the fact that several schools assigned students with eighth-grade GPAs below a threshold to take the course. Assignment to this course increased ninth-grade attendance by 21 percentage points, GPA by 1.4 grade points, and credits earned by 23. These surprisingly large effects suggest that CRP, when implemented in a high-fidelity context, can provide effective support to at-risk students.

- b. Cabrera, N. L., Milem, J. F., Jaquette, O., & Marx, R. W. (2014). *Missing the (student achievement) forest for all the (political) trees: Empiricism and the Mexican American studies controversy in Tucson*. American Educational Research Journal, 51(6), 1084-1118.

The Arizona legislature passed HB 2281, which eliminated Tucson Unified School District's (TUSD's) Mexican American Studies (MAS) program, arguing the curriculum was

too political. This program has been at the center of contentious debates, but a central question has not been thoroughly examined: Do the classes raise student achievement? The current analyses use administrative data from TUSD (2008–2011), running logistic regression models to assess the relationship between taking MAS classes and passing AIMS (Arizona state standardized tests) and high school graduation. Results indicate that MAS participation was significantly related to an increased likelihood of both outcomes occurring. The authors discuss these results in terms of educational policy and critical pedagogy as well as the role academics can play in policy formation.

- c. Valenzuela, A. (2010). *Subtractive schooling: US-Mexican youth and the politics of caring*. Suny Press.

Subtractive schooling is a framework that emerged from a three-year ethnographic study aimed at analyzing the influence of generational status on academic achievement and schooling orientations for Mexican immigrant and Mexican American students. Valenzuela argues that schools are structured in ways that subtract resources from youth, divesting them of their cultures, languages, and community-based identities. Progressing toward an additive schooling model requires that educators be purposeful about establishing authentic caring relationships and about countering subtractive policies and practices.

#### **PART B: Other Strategies.**

TUSD also addressed whether there were other strategies to promote a sense of inclusiveness and culture of civility which the district should employ, or at least consider for future use. Research suggests that although there are a plethora of different names for programs from various sources, almost all are based on the same common underlying principles already in use in the District. Whether a school district chooses to implement Restorative Practice instead of Restorative Justice, or PBIS instead of Safe & Civil Schools, each set shares the same primary features. For example, PBIS and Safe & Civil Schools both employ positive behavior strategies. Indeed, since the five strategies currently used by the District are viable options implemented to some extent by a number of school districts across the nation, the key for TUSD success is to implement the chosen strategies with fidelity, monitor, evaluate, and improve as needed over time.

There is one additional strategy that has been used in other districts, however, that TUSD has not yet attempted: the use of a specific social-emotional learning curriculum for students. An SEL curriculum appears to be most effective when used across all grade levels, especially in grades Kindergarten – Eighth Grade. This may be a strategy that the district can consider later as an extension for building SEL skills.

There are 25 high-quality leading SEL programs which have been shown to produce positive outcomes for students, but there continues to be further research conducted to better understand which combination of social-emotional skills most effectively influences which outcomes for different subgroups of students and how best to support staff as they implement interventions (CASEL, 2008).

The District will continue to build on the strong base that has been established, continuing to monitor and analyze responses to the student and teacher surveys, and discipline data. Should the continuing analysis show a significant change in the future, in addition to emphasizing fidelity in implementation of the existing strategies, TUSD will consider the integration of a formal SEL curriculum within the overall curricula for teaching at TUSD.

## Appendix A

The following studies have assessed the effectiveness of one or another forms of social emotional learning in promoting inclusiveness and civility:

a. A meta-analysis of 213 school-based SEL practices involving 270,034 kindergarten students through high school, showed that compared to the control groups, SEL participants demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior as well as academic gains. The effects were consistent across all grade levels and school demographics, as well as in urban, suburban, and rural areas. School teachers and staff were responsible for the implementation of SEL strategies which suggests that SEL interventions can be incorporated into routine educational practices and therefore does not require any external people for effective delivery.<sup>18</sup>

b. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) prepared a report in 2008 that summarized the results of three large-scale scientific reviews on the impact of SEL practices on 324,303 elementary and middle school students across 317 studies. The collective results yielded multiple benefits for implementing school-level SEL strategies. The outcomes obtained included improved students' social-emotional skills, more positive attitudes about self and others, more positive connection to school, positive social behavior and better academic performance. The researchers stated that in comparing the findings to results obtained in other reviews of evidence-based interventions by other researchers that SEL programs are among the most successful interventions ever offered to school-aged youth.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Durlak, J., Weissberg, R., Dymnicki, A., Taylor, R., & Schellinger, K., "The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions," *Child Development*, Vol. 82, 405–432 (2011).

<sup>19</sup> Payton, J., Weissberg, R.P., Durlak, J.A., Dymnicki, A.B., Taylor, R.D., Schellinger, K.B., & Pachan, M., "The positive impact of social and emotional learning for kindergarten to eighth-grade students: Findings from three scientific reviews," Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, (2008).

c. An article published in *Child Development* shared the results of a meta-analysis of 82 school-based, universal SEL interventions involving 97, 406 kindergarten to high school students. This research was an extension of previous meta-analytic reviews of SEL programs that found positive effects on a range of outcomes. This review differed in that the researchers collected post-intervention follow-up assessments starting six months or later. An important finding was that students in school-based SEL interventions continued to demonstrate significant positive benefits on average from 56 weeks on up in seven outcomes: SEL skills, attitudes, positive social behavior, academic performance, conduct problems, emotional stress, and drug use.<sup>20</sup>

d. An article published in the *Journal of Social and Emotional Learning* shared the results of a study conducted in the New York City Public School System. The study was repeated five years later. In 1998 developmental data was analyzed from a SEL program designed to provide students with skills to enable conflict resolution. 5,053 students, grades 2-6, from eleven elementary schools were taught lessons by teachers with a moderate amount of SEL training. Students who received the lessons showed significantly slower growth in aggression related processes and less of a decrease in competence related processes compared to children who received no lessons.<sup>21</sup> The study was repeated in 2003. Data was collected from 11,160 New York City Public School students in grades 1-6. Students receiving the lessons demonstrated positive changes in their social-emotional developmental trajectories, and deflections from a path towards future aggression and violence. They also had lower levels of hostile attribution bias, aggressive strategies,

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<sup>20</sup> Taylor, R., Oberle, E., Durlak, J., & Weissberg, R., "Promoting Positive Youth Development Through School-Based Social and Emotional Learning Interventions: A Meta-Analysis of Follow-Up Effects," *Child Development*, Vol. 88, 1156-1171 (2017).

<sup>21</sup> Aber, J., Jones, S., Brown, J., Chaudry, N., & Samples, F., "Resolving conflict creatively: Evaluating the developmental effects of a school-based violence prevention program in neighborhood and classroom context," *Development and Psychopathology*, 10(2), 187-213 (1998).

expression and conduct problems, and higher levels of competent interpersonal strategies.<sup>22</sup>

Other school districts have reported favorably on their use of SEL strategies:

e. **Austin Independent School District (AISD)** AISD developed a strategic SEL plan that was approved in 2011 and revised for school years 2017-20. Their model for systemic SEL started with two high schools and their feeder schools and since 2015-16 has evolved into implementing SEL in all 129 schools (83,300 students) in their district. Aside from explicit SEL skills instruction, SEL has become central to AISD's academics, school culture, and school climate. Key results reported on SEL include:

- Discipline referral rates decreased 45 percent at elementary schools and decreased 29 percent at middle and high schools within three to four years of SEL implementation.
- In regard to school connectedness, middle and high school students are able to talk about their problems with adults at schools more, improving 30+percent year over year.
- Middle and high schools participating in SEL for more years experienced a greater decrease in chronic absenteeism than schools participating in SEL did for fewer years.

Paul Cruz, Superintendent for AISD explains, "It is not something we do separate and apart, or a five minute time period, this [SEL] is the way we teach. It is a very proactive way for students to learn how to manage their emotions, how to work with others, understanding empathy. And those are life skills."<sup>23</sup>

f. **Metro Nashville Public Schools (MNPS)**. In an effort to become a district where stakeholders are invested in the social, emotional, behavioral and academic success of

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<sup>22</sup> Durlak, J., Weissberg, R., Dymnicki, A., Taylor, R., & Schellinger, K., "The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions," *Child Development*, Vol. 82, 405–432 (2011).

<sup>23</sup> Quoted at <https://casel.org/partner-districts/austin-independent-school-district>, last visited June 27, 2019.

all students, MNPS has integrated SEL into the district's work around creating positive district wide, school-wide and classroom climate/culture, equity, trauma-informed school environments supported by Restorative Practices and/or PBIS strategies. With a majority of students (70 percent) considered academically disadvantaged, nearly 20 percent English-language learners, and a large number of students behind in reading proficiency, the district hoped that a holistic, SEL strategy would help turn things turnaround. The results were dramatic:

- Expulsions in the district went down 64 percent
- Suspensions were down 24 percent.
- Since 2012, the district's graduation rate increased four percent.

Teachers and administrators in Nashville have come to understand that to really make SEL work, districts must commit to changing their culture.<sup>24</sup>

**g. Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD).** In 2007, the former superintendent of CMSD, as part of his school safety strategy, did a comprehensive evaluation of the conditions for learning in the district's schools which included the status of SEL in schools. CMSD is the second largest school district in Ohio, serving more than 40,000 students, with nearly 68 percent of whom are students of color and 100 percent qualify for free and reduced lunch. Results from the evaluation pointed to eight contributing factors to poor school climate and student misbehavior.

Lack of SEL was listed as one of the contributing factors to poor school climate. To improve school climate, the district implemented strategies to monitor students' behaviors and intervene at the first indication of difficulties by strengthening social and emotional competencies to reduce and help prevent future misbehaviors. Five years after CMSD's SEL initiative, the district witnessed several positive behavioral outcomes including:

- a drop in incidents of disobedient and disruptive behavior (from 132 to 74)

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<sup>24</sup> Korbey, H., "Nashville Confronts SEL Resistance Head-On," Edutopia (2018), available at <https://www.edutopia.org/article/nashville-confronts-sel-resistance-head>, last visited June 27, 2019.



- a drop in in fighting and violence (from 55 to 36)
- a drop in in harassment and intimidation (from 13 to 6).
- A drop in average number of suspensions by 58.8 percent.

Though SEL was only one of ten strategies implemented, the Chief Executive Officer of CMSD during the time period of growth in SEL programming suggested that districts “look at the important ongoing needs for social and emotional wellness of children and our adults in our communities” when looking to make schools safer with more supportive environments.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Bridgeland, J., Bruce, M., & Hariharan,. The Missing Piece: A National Teacher Survey on How Social and Emotional Learning Can Empower Children and Transform Schools. Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, (2013).