# Missouri Developmental Disabilities Council
## CC18.01: School-to-Prison Pipeline

# Final Report

**June 1, 2019 – May 31, 2021**

MODDC School-to-Prison Pipeline Final Deliverable Report

*Community Partnership of the Ozarks, Francine Pratt, grant administrator*

*Research and Recommendations Report submitted by*

*Lyle Q. Foster, Ed. D. and A. Leslie Anderson, Ph.D.*

*Interviewer and Project Evaluation by Monica Horton, MPA, MMT, MT-BC*

June 30, 2021

# Table of Contents

# Project Framework

The Report has two main sections:

1. **Research and Recommendations Report** (based on Coalition discussions, research, shared stories, and analysis).

2. **Final Deliverable Report** (based on data and discoveries while working on the grant requirements for the project)

The *Final Deliverable Report* aligns with MODDC's Notice of Funds Available (NOFA) numbering system for easier identification of deliverables.

**Data Collection and Final Report Expectations and Clarity**
Additional data collection was requested from MODDC for the final report:

- Missouri comparisons and contrasts with other states.

- Provide research that shows the issues with recommendations.

- Infographics to tell the story with more numbers and less stories.

- Highlight different pathways the Coalition started to pursue for the research to display initial thinking, but then changed as additional discussions and research continued (e.g., Critical Race Theory, School Police, etc.).

- Show if all contract requirements were met.

- Describe lessons learned.

**Additional Data Examples:**

- How many restraints and seclusion incidents?

- How many calls to law enforcement?

*"I am the main father figure for my nephew because his father lives out of state. For over six-months, my nephew would tell me how a White boy at school bullied him every day and called him the "N" word. I told him to tell the teacher and the principal. The response he received was that teenagers are just going to be teenagers, and nothing was done. The harassment continued, so I finally told him to punch the guy. The guy received on-campus suspension, but my nephew received out of school suspension."*

# Lessons Learned

One of the biggest lessons learned was adaption to change was a must for this project. Building time into the project plan for the unexpected was a key factor in meeting the milestones and time frame for the project. COVID-19 negative impacts drastically changed original plans. However, research and participation were not hindered.

## Challenges Experienced/Lessons Learned

- COVID-19 prevented face to face interviews. We learned that it is extremely hard to build relationships with organizations and develop trusting relationships with those we wanted to interview during a pandemic. We also learned many families had given up hope that anything would be done to change the trajectory of the school-to-prison pipeline. Before COVID-19, the story collection team planned to meet face to face with families a few times and develop relationships before asking families to participate in interviews.

- To no surprise to the Coalition, we learned that many school districts are bound to the polices set by their school boards as well as interpretation of how to apply certain policies. This made it difficult for school districts to share openly some of their challenges.

- The initial plan was to work with school districts and community advocates to identify families to interview. The Coalition found that it was difficult to have school districts identify families to interview for several reasons (e.g., reasoning for selecting certain families versus others, possible bias, etc.). This discovery reduced the participation of the some of the school districts.

- Harder to build a relationship through Zoom with families who do not know members of the Coalition. More assistance was needed from community advocates who had relationships with families.

- The story collection team wanted to interview six to eight families in each region. They were able to interview, via Zoom and telephone interviews, families with youth from 13 different school districts.

- The Coalition needed to wait for Missouri State University's (MSU) IRB approval before moving forward to ensure that research protocols were at the appropriate standards. (IRB approval received September 2020).

The Coalition was passionate about this work with a focus on data and research to develop a neutral report that is factual with recommendations that are doable. Implementation of the recommendations of this report can have the greatest impact in changing the trajectory of the school-to-prison pipeline for African American/Black students.

# Research and Recommendations Report

MODDC School-to-Prison Pipeline Final Deliverable Report

*Community Partnership of the Ozarks, Francine Pratt, grant administrator*

*Research and Recommendations Report submitted by*

*Lyle Q. Foster, Ed. D. and A. Leslie Anderson, Ph.D.*

*Interviewer and Project Evaluation by Monica Horton, MPA, MMT, MT-BC*

June 24, 2021

# I.   INTRODUCTION

March 2020 marked the beginning of what would be labeled twin pandemics in the United States:  a global pandemic COVID-19, which the CDC reported had a disproportionate impact and death rate for non-White racial/ethnic groups; and what quickly became labeled our "racism pandemic" after the deaths of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and George Floyd as the latest in a long list of African American/Black deaths prompted weeks of protests and demands for reform. The increased interest in racial issues and the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States resulted in multiple book titles on the subjects selling out in a week's time and social media burgeoning with recommendations for policy and social action items to address historic and continuing racial disparities.

Much attention has been directed to the persistent evidence of systemic racism in policies and practices in all sectors of society.  In addition to the undeniable and searing impact of video coverage of events that might have been dismissed as hyperbole in the past, there has been a keen interest in the narratives--the *stories*—of marginalized people whose lived experiences tell the "rest of the story" that is required for systemic change and capacity building. Contemporary topics particularly relevant to this study are the  criminalization of African American/Black and brown people (starting in childhood and persisting into adulthood), the role of implicit biases in decision making at all levels of society, and the militarization of police including ACLU's report that 14 million children across the United States attend schools with police presence but no counselor, nurse, psychologist, or social worker on site (ACLU, 2017b).  Without appropriately trained professionals or responsive services for mental or physical health or social support needs, it would follow that a wide range of classroom behaviors would instead be criminalized.

As Abraham Maslow once said, "if the only tool you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." This investigation into the school-to-prison pipeline as it relates to African American/Black students diagnosed with intellectual and developmental disabilities will be carried out in this context; at this unprecedented time in our nation's history; and with impacts being felt across the nation. Critical Race Theory provides a framework to capture this richness in the gathering and analysis of data for this research by centralizing the voices of people who have had the experiences, through story.

# II.   METHODOLOGY

## a. Overview

The Project Director convened a coalition of stakeholders, representing school districts statewide, advocacy organizations, higher education, and concerned citizens. Stakeholders completed a survey to determine degree of cultural consciousness, for the purpose of identifying training needs for the coalition. This was followed by a targeted training for all stakeholders focused on history, policy and practice, contemporary literature, and educational impacts.  Coalition members then collaborated on a literature review of the historical/sociological origins of the school-to-prison pipeline and applied two theoretical frameworks (Critical Race Theory and Disability Studies) for understanding the school discipline gap at the intersection of race and disability. Coalition members researched applicable literature and discovered DisCrit, a dynamic framework that provides continuity for the information requested by the grant.

One of the aspects of DisCrit that impressed coalition members was the value of relying upon and utilizing community cultural wealth, in that communities often hold resourcefulness that is unrecognized. DisCrit therefore values the importance of story and amplifying voices of underrepresented and marginalized groups to share their experiences in community building. This allows parents and community members to offer perspectives from their lived experience of both the problems and possible solutions.  Prior to story collection, the project was submitted and approved by MSU's Internal Review Board (IRB). Following IRB approval, coalition members conducted interview training sessions to ensure conformance to the research protocol. Coalition members conducted interviews between October 1, 2020, and October 31, 2020, via ZOOM, to accommodate COVID-19 protocols. The purpose of these interviews was to gain a greater understanding of the experiences of African America/Black students with intellectual and developmental disabilities and how they and their families experienced school discipline.

## b. Sampling Method

This study utilized the purposive sampling method. This method belongs to the family of convenience sampling methods because participants are chosen specifically based on their specialized knowledge of the topic of interest (Kalton, 1983). More specifically, the focus group interviews were considered "key informant" interviews because the interviewees are experts on the topic we wanted to investigate.

### c. Consent Procedures

Based on interested families and snowball sampling referrals, eleven families were interviewed by videoconferencing (due to COVID-19 restrictions). At the beginning of the interview, consent was reviewed and obtained verbally, including privacy, the procedures of the study, the risks and benefits, voluntary participation, including participant's ability to stop being part of the interview at any time without repercussions. Digitally signed consent forms were also collected.

### d. Data Collection/Analysis

Coalition members completed 11 interviews via zoom using a coalition-developed survey instrument designed to elicit the parent or guardian's perceptions of their child's school experience. Interviews were conducted with 10 families of students who were identified as African American/Black or bi-racial and who had a disability diagnosis or IEP. Data were compiled, coded, and analyzed after the interview cycle, using iterative and thematic analysis of the text. Thematic codes were used to report the experiences of the participants, analyzed through the lens of Dis-Crit framework. This project concludes with school and public policy recommendations with the goal of improving equitable access to special education services and increasing graduation rates for African American/Black students with and without an I/DD. Analysis of data reflect the following results:

Demographics

Interviews were conducted with 11 families of students who were identified as African American/Black (n= 8) or bi-racial (n=5) and who had a disability diagnosis and/or IEP. 13 children were included (some sibling experiences were also described), including nine identified as male and four identified as female.  Students ranged in age from 4-20.  In an effort to provide breadth in a wider scope of statewide experiences, families represented 11 school districts and included private and public schools in urban, rural, and suburban districts in various regions of the state. Disability diagnoses included ASD, ADD/ADHD/SLD (reading/math), ADHD/intellectual disability and non-verbal/ASD, Speech and Language disorder; ODD/ADHD; medical migraines (504 Plan); sensory processing disorder/ADHD (unmedicated)/anxiety (medicated); Intellectual disability/TBI; Intellectual disability/ADHD/SLD (math/reading).

# III.   TERMINOOGY

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| **ALLY** | Someone who makes the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice. Allies understand that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways.  Allies commit to reducing their own complicity or collusion in oppression of those groups and invest in strengthening their own knowledge and awareness of oppression. http://racialequitytools.org/glossary |
| **ASSUMPTION OF CRIMINALITY** | One of Derald Wing Sue's categories of microaggressions in which people of color are assumed to be dangerous or deviant. |
| **BIAS** | A predisposition toward or against someone that promotes (and justifies) unfair attitudes and treatment. |
| **BIPOC** | An acronym representing Black, Indigenous and People of Color, intended to be inclusive and recognize both similarities and differences in experiences of being non-White groups in the United States under colonialism. |
| **CULTURE** | The collective and shared behavior patterns, including attitudes, values, institutions, standards, roles, rules, and norms that are unique to a group of people, are socially transmitted, and serve as a model of expected behavior within the group.  A "roadmap" for navigating the human experience, shared by a group of people. |
| **CULTURAL COMPETENCE** | An ability to successfully negotiate cross-cultural differences in order to accomplish practical goals. Cultural competence has four components:  Awareness, attitude, knowledge, and skills.  The outcomes of cultural competence are observable and measurable practices that support and promote inclusion. |

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| **CULTURAL CONSCIOUSNESS** | Begins with cultural competence, and rather than being an endpoint, *it is a skill set* that includes the fostering of a **critical awareness and <u>inclusion</u>**—of the self, others, and the world.<br><br>It results in **regular self-assessment, learning, and developing skills** to **flexibly and effectively navigate the complex world of diverse others**, and a commitment to addressing issues of societal relevance such that all persons can bring their best to the endeavors of life and work. |
| **DENIAL** | Declaring something to be untrue, even when evidence suggests it is true. Denial is often a response of someone who belongs to the more socially powerful group when hearing about the experiences of those with less social power. |
| **DISCRIMINATION** | Unfavorable or unfair treatment towards an individual or group based on their race, sex, color, religion, national origin, age, physical/mental abilities, or sexual orientation. (Achugbue, 2003) |
| **DIS-CRIT** | An intentionally interdisciplinary exploration and conversation at and about the intersection of disability and race in Western, Eurocentric culture. |
| **DISPARITY** | All other things being equal, (health, employment, educational, criminal justice, and other) outcomes differ on some unrelated aspect of the person (race, gender, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) Race-based disparities exist across societal sectors (Wise, 2010). |
| **DIVERSITY** | **Individual differences** (e.g., personality, learning styles, and life experiences) **and group/social differences** (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations) **that can be engaged in the service of learning.** |

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| **DISPROPORTIONALITY** | Defined by a group's over- or underrepresentation in an educational category, program, or service in comparison with the group's proportion in the overall population; i. e., racial proportionality in special education; and special education and disciplining of students with disabilities (Voulgarides, Fergus & Thorius, 2017; Donovan & Cross, 2002) |
| **ETHNICITY** | Often used interchangeably with "race", ethnicity usually refers more to cultural heritage, including specific norms and values that are shared with a group; such as language, foods, religion and/or nationality. The term is often used to describe those whose characteristics or cultural values and norms are not typical of persons of White/European ancestry. |
| **EQUITY** | The condition resulting from attention to access and success such that race, gender, religious orientation, sexual orientation, and other categories of identity not relevant to the task are no longer predictors of achievement. |
| **GENERATIONAL TRAUMA** | Sometimes referred to as trans- or multigenerational trauma, generational trauma is defined as trauma that gets passed down from those who directly experience an incident to subsequent generations. Intergenerational trauma may begin with a traumatic event affecting an individual, traumatic events affecting multiple family members, or collective trauma affecting larger community, cultural, racial, ethnic, or other groups/populations (historical trauma). From GoodTherapy.org |
| **HISTORICAL TRAUMA** | Traumatic experiences or events that are shared by a group of people within a society, or even by an entire community, ethnic, or national group. Historical trauma meets three criteria: widespread effects, collective suffering, and malicious intent (2). Historical Trauma Response (HTR) can manifest as substance abuse, suicidal thoughts, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, violence, and difficulty in emotional regulation. From GoodTherapy.org |

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| **IMPLICIT BIAS** | Also known as **implicit** social cognition, **implicit bias** refers to the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an unconscious manner. (Kirwan Institute, 2015) |
| **INCLUSION** | **The active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity**—in people, in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect—**in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and empathic understanding** of the ways individuals interact within, and transform systems and institutions. |
| **INTERSECTIONALITY** | An approach largely advanced by women of color, arguing that classifications such as gender, race, class, and others **cannot be examined in isolation from one another**; they interact and intersect in individuals' lives, in society, in social systems, and are mutually constitutive. <br><br> Exposing [one's] multiple identities can help clarify they ways in which a person can simultaneously experience privilege **and** oppression. For example, a Black woman in America does not experience gender inequalities in exactly the same way as a White woman, nor racial oppression identical to that experienced by a Black man. Each race and gender intersection produces a qualitatively distinct life. http://racialequitytools.org/glossary |
| **MARGINALIZATION** | The process of pushing a particular group or groups of people to the edge of society by not allowing them an active voice, identity, or place in it. Through both direct and indirect processes, marginalized groups may be relegated to a secondary position or made to feel as if they are less important than those who hold more power or privilege in society. (Syracuse University Counseling Center) |

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| **MICRO-AGGRESSION** | **Micro-aggressions are commonplace** verbal, behavioral, or environmental **indignities**, whether intentional or unintentional, **that communicate** hostile, derogatory or negative slights and **insults to people on the basis of an aspect of the person's identity** (usually referring to categories such as race, gender, age, ability, class, sexual orientation, or religious affiliation). |
| **MULTI-CULTURAL** | Pertaining to more than one culture.  Also used to describe organizations or communities that are intentionally inclusive and celebratory of cultural influences and act in ways that help to sustain that diversity while also working toward social justice. |
| **PERSON(s) OF COLOR** | Terminology referring to non-White people that acknowledges the racialization hierarchy in the United States (with White on top) and emphasizes the common experiences of systemic racism.  (Moses, 2016) In the continuing evolution of terminology used to describe people, it is always best to ask if you are not sure what the person's preferred identity group descriptor is, but terms such as "colored" and "Negro" are outdated and usually offensive, and "N***" or other slurs obviously should be avoided. |
| **PREJUDICE** | Unfounded negative beliefs or judgments made about an individual or group prior to (and sometimes in spite of) any actual knowledge or experience involving that person or group.  Also, rejection or minimization of an individual or group based on superficial knowledge (stereotypes). |
| **PRIVILEGE** | Rights, benefits, advantages, and access extended to a person simply on the basis of "group membership".  *In our anti-racism work, we also acknowledge the historical benefits of being White as equivalent to desirable, superior, and the "norm", and the ways that Whiteness is embedded in social and institutional spaces such that White privilege is often equivalent to not knowing about and/or being able to avoid the experiences of (and disadvantages felt by) persons of color.*  Privilege is a function of systems (social, economic, institutional) and confers power to persons on the basis of an identity characteristic. |

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| **RACE** | Historically thought to be a scientific concept of sub-grouping humans into categories, the Human Genome Project revealed that 99.9% of variance among human beings is *shared* and that previous groupings (often based on skin color, eye shape, hair texture, facial and other physical features) describe more about geographic dispersion and genealogical lineage than actual meaningful predictions of ability, behavior, or potential. Race, therefore, is a "social construct" whose meaning is best understood by exploring the legal, social, and political impact of the "race" label ascribed. |
| **RACIAL RECONCILIATION** | Reconciliation involves three ideas. First, it recognizes that racism in America is both systemic and institutionalized, with far–reaching effects on both political engagement and economic opportunities for minorities. Second, reconciliation is engendered by empowering local communities through relationship-building and truth–telling. Lastly, justice is the essential component of the conciliatory process—justice that is best termed as restorative rather than retributive, while still maintaining its vital punitive character. http://racialequitytools.org/glossary |
| **RACISM** | Practices and policies based on the superiority of one "race". The ability to impact others' lives (social power) + prejudices and outdated views of "racial" differences = racism. This often results in depriving persons and groups of their civil liberties, rights, resources, and opportunities for social, educational, and political advancement, simply on the basis of their perceived "race".  Racism can be individual (in the case of a single person's beliefs and actions), group (in the case of shared meanings about another "race"), and/or institutional (laws and policies that restrict access and success). |
| **SOCIAL JUSTICE** | *Social justice* is a concept of fair and just relations between the individual and society. This is measured by the explicit and tacit terms for the distribution of wealth, opportunities for personal activity, and *social* privileges. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_justice |

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| **STEREOTYPE** | "A standardized mental picture held in common by members of a group and representing an oversimplified opinion, affective attitude, or uncritical judgment (as of a person, a race, an issue, or an event)." Webster's Third New International Dictionary (2002) |
| **TRAUMA** | An event that causes a person to feel severely threatened emotionally, psychologically, or physically or an event that causes harm in any of these ways. Not all people experience or react to events in the same way, and different types of trauma may provoke significantly different reactions.  For some, effects may be lasting and can cause deep emotional pain, fear, confusion, or posttraumatic stress (PTSD) long after the event has passed. From GoodTherapy.org |
| **VALUES** | A culture's or group's shared standards of what is good and bad, acceptable, or unacceptable, desirable or undesirable.  Values may be transmitted directly or indirectly, formally, or subtly, written, voiced, or simply enacted. Some values remain "invisible" when widely shared and can be thought to be simply "human". |
| **WHITE SPACES** | "White spaces" are the legacy of our historical developmental roots in the United States.  "The wider society is still replete with overwhelmingly White neighborhoods, restaurants, schools, universities, workplaces, churches and other associations, courthouses, and cemeteries, a situation that reinforces a normative sensibility in settings in which Black people are typically absent, not expected, or marginalized when present." -Elijah Anderson, 2015 |
| **WHITE SUPREMACY** | A term used to characterize various belief systems central to which are one or more of the following key tenets: 1) Whites should have dominance over people of other backgrounds, especially where they may co-exist; 2) Whites should live by themselves in a Whites-only society; 3) White people have their own "culture" that is superior to other cultures; 4) White people are genetically superior to other people.<br> Anti-Defamation League<br>https://www.adl.org/resources/glossary-terms/White-supremacy |

# IV.   LITERATURE REVIEW

## a. Introduction

Broadly speaking, the school-to-prison pipeline is a systematic pathway towards youth involvement in the juvenile and criminal justice system. The pathway begins in the school system where American youth matriculate through a disciplinary structure of zero tolerance policies, harsh disciplinary practices for minor behavioral offenses, and increased police involvement in school discipline. And while all student referrals result in some form of consequence, disciplinary practices are not found to be experienced fairly by whole groups of students.

In general, students with disabilities, students of color, and students at the intersection of race and disability experience significantly higher rates of in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, law enforcement referrals, seclusion and restraints, corporal punishment, and expulsions than their counterparts. Each disciplinary decision thrusts marginalized students on a trajectory towards either successful re-entry into the learning environment or school detachment (ACLU, 2017).

## b. Historical/Sociopolitical Context: School-to-Prison Pipeline

Origins of present-day discretionary disciplinary school practices on youth in public school has early roots in the sociopolitical context of the U.S. government's history of policing Black youth traced back to 19th century *Black codes,* convict leasing and beyond. After the 13th amendment of the U.S. Constitution was ratified, in 1865 outlawing slavery and involuntary servitude, southern states enacted discriminatory laws criminalizing Black citizens for minor offenses such as breaking a curfew, loitering, and not carrying proof of employment (Equal Justice Initiative, 2013). As a result, Black men were overwhelmingly over-represented in the southern states' system of convict leasing.

The aforementioned convict leasing system ensured monetary profit to prison systems who leased the labor of Black prisoners to private sector enterprises such a railroad and farming businesses (Equal Justice Initiative, 2013). Consequently, convict leasing is still practiced in the prison system today where the inmate population is disproportionately African American/Black male and female where they "have no forceable right to be paid for their work under the Constitution" (Equal Justice Initiative, 2013). Studies show that the prison population also represents a disproportionate number of individuals who are Black males and Black females with a form of disability who would normally be protected under 2005 Individuals with Disabilities Act, the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act, and certainly under the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

The rise and advancement of President Lyndon B. Johnson's "War on Crime" in the mid-20th century demonstrated how federal funds were allocated to militarize local police precincts translating into the criminalization of minor and major offenses alike which has had the greatest impact on minority and low-income neighborhoods (Hinton, 2016). By the 1970s, increased federal resources to equip the police and the justice system targeted President Richard Nixon's "War on Drugs" was expanded under Ronald Regan presidency in the 1980s. The impact of such policies has been a 500 percent increase in the prison population between 1990-2020 (Center for Law and Justice, 2020). With no protection under current law, prison inmates provide free labor particularly to for-profit prison which also makes the privatization of prisons questionable. Public schools now become a new feeder system of participants into the criminal justice system, hence, the social, political, and historical context for the school-to-prison pipeline.

# V. SCHOOL DISTRICT DISCIPLINE POLICY: MIRRORING the LARGER MODERN-DAY SOCIETAL CONTEXT

A more direct, less historical, but equally sociopolitical link between school discipline policy and modern-day societal context is associated with: 1) Increased juvenile crime rates between 1985-1994 followed by the subsequent rising belief in John DiLulio's (1995) impending "super-predators" theory influencing public and political opinion; and 2) The surge in mass school shootings in the late 90s (Nelson & Lind, 2015). As a consequence, lawmakers enacted legislation during the 80s/90s hoping to curb crime and forge law and order in America's neighborhoods, particularly neighborhoods characterized as urban, low-income, and blighted with abandoned properties.  Subsequently, similar solutions were adopted in the educational system over time. For example, the 1994 Gun-Free Schools Act mandated out-of-school suspensions for the equivalent of 3 school semesters (Nelson & Lind, 2015). School officials' vague interpretation of zero tolerance policies have led to suspensions/expulsions for girls having a fingernail file in their purses and even students signaling gun motions with their fingers (Nelson & Lind, 2015).

## a. Broken Window Theory of Policing

Enacting school discipline polices in response to larger society problems, though, underscores the greater impact of a school district's tendency to crack down on "small offenses in order to make residents feel safer and discourage more serious crimes…" (Nelson & Lind, 2015). This idea is called the "broken window theory of policing" (Kelling & Wilson, 1982). In school disciplinary practice, broken windows theory manifests in the form of assigning harsh discipline for minor offenses such as skipping class or using profanity. Simultaneously, school districts employed more school resources officers, increasing school police presence by 1/3 between 1997-2007 (Nelson & Lind, 2015). Nelson and Lind (2015) conclude that this school action was adopted mainly in response to the Columbine High School shooting in 1998.

In short, according to Sarah Redfield and Jason Nance (2016), in an American Bar Association report over a 30-year period, "a distinct shift among many lawmakers, school officials, and teachers regarding how to discipline children for violations of school rules. While at one time it was common for educators to send students involved in a fight to the principal's office for assessment and discipline, in too many schools, today it is just as common to refer those students to law enforcement for arrest and prosecution" (p. 50).

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## b. Micro/Macro-Level Etiology: School-to-Prison Pipeline

Respected media outlets, policy institutes, and civil rights organizations cast careful scrutiny on the systematic pathways which fast track youth towards involvement in America's justice system. But also, with scientific inquiry, spheres of academia examine the school-to prison pipeline with calculated analysis. For example, the school-to prison pipeline has been described as, "a social phenomenon where students become formally involved with the criminal justice system as a result of school policies that use law enforcement, rather than discipline, to address behavioral problems" (Owens, Wettach, & Hoffman, 2015, p. 11). The mechanisms by which school behaviors become associated with later criminal behavior can be multi-faceted. They can occur on the on the micro-level, interactions between individuals like teachers and peers, or on the macro level, reflecting school conditions and policies.

## c. Micro-Level Etiology: School-to Prison Pipeline

The etiology of the school-to- prison pipeline can best be demonstrated on the micro level in which delinquent or other behaviors in high school are associated with later incarceration. In a recent study, for instance, suspension by the age of 12 is associated with justice system involvement directly and indirectly by associating with deviant peers in adolescence, another factor that increases odds of justice system involvement (Novak, 2019). However, males and African American/Black students are more likely to be suspended than Whites and females which translates into higher rates of incarceration after high school.

The link between deviance in high school and afterward is complicated by the fact that racial inequalities lead to variations in school-based punishments, sometimes called the "discipline gap" (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). The discipline gap is important to understanding the school-to- prison pipeline because, as one study showed, racial differences in punishment explained 16 percent of later arrests (Barnes and Motz, 2019). Hence, if discipline is not fairly distributed, it creates a cycle in which minorities are more likely to start the school -to- prison pipeline process. Research also suggests that these processes go deeper than race in-and-of itself to include other factors and background characteristics.

In another study, "colorism" or negative biases against darker skin tones, was found to impact the dynamics associated with school -to- prison pipeline. Blake and colleagues (2017), for instance, showed that teenage African American females with darker complexions had twice the suspension rates as their White peers but no such difference existed with lighter-skinned African American females (Blake et al., 2017). Suspension rates for students with disabilities are higher than those without disabilities (Losen & Martinez, 2013) and members of the LGBTQ community report experience distress at school which may lead to similar outcomes associated with school -to- prison pipeline (Snapp et al., 2014).

Educational disparities may go beyond discipline in schools to include things like student engagement. The principle is the same: racial disparities lead to less engagement which creates a situation in which students are more likely to participate in delinquent behaviors and relationships. Looking at unexcused absences, for instance, McCarter and colleagues (2019) showed that disengagement is associated with justice involvement. Interestingly, the same study showed that Whites reported more disengagement than African American/Blacks and yet African American/Blacks had more problems, supporting the differential selection and processes hypothesis (see Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010).

## d. Macro-Level Etiology: School -to- Prison Pipeline

Linking macro-conditions to individuals' behaviors can be challenging because individuals may not consciously process those conditions into their decision-making processes. One theory that attempts to make this connection is called the racial threat hypothesis in which areas with greater representations of African American/Blacks have more punitive criminal justice policies. In terms of schools, a study utilizing a national sample of 294 public schools showed that those schools with a larger percentage of African American/Black students are more likely to use punitive disciplinary responses and implement zero tolerance policies (Welch & Payne, 2010).

Another study showed that schools with largely African American/Black student bodies had higher out of school suspension rates compared to schools with largely Hispanic and White student bodies (Raffaele, Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron, 2002). But these and other studies do not necessary examine what happens after high school, linking high school conditions to prosecutions. One study that did this found none of the school-level variables in their study – including enrollment, percentage minority students, percentage of disadvantaged students – explained the number of later felony bookings (McCarter, Venkitasubramanian, & Bradshaw, 2019). Hence, schools may have different social conditions which impact behaviors in those schools but the impact of those conditions on outcomes once leaving school are less clear.

If problems occur at both the macro and micro levels, it suggests that resolving the problem would require responses at both levels. In some ways, individuals have more control over their immediate social environments. Indeed, research utilizing the micro-level approach to the problem is not without hope. Teachers, the ones with the most direct contact with students, can make a difference. In a personal reflection on her attempts to reduce the school -to- prison pipeline, the author states:

*"The school -to- prison pipeline works when students do not see school preparing them for anything but prison… Disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline begins by creating classrooms that do not mimic prisons. As demonstrated by Kayla, this is something a teacher can do by offering a place where students can succeed, feel in control, and are not bound by imposed labels. Will a relevant curriculum presented in a classroom that engages students as real, knowledgeable people prevent every student from joining a gang or going to prison?"* (Gass & Laughter, 2015, p. 343)

# VI. AN INTERSECTIONAL THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: DISABILITY/CRITICAL RACE THEORY (DISCRIT)

Research suggests school districts assign exclusionary discipline practices to Black and Latinx students at significantly higher rates than White students, nationwide, increasing the likelihood of youth contact with the juvenile justice system during the formative years. Adequate theoretical frameworks explaining disparate discipline rates are few, however, critical race theory provides a perspective.  Initially applied to the effects of "colorblind" legal proceedings (Bell, 1980), critical race theory broadly serves as a theoretical lens taking into account institutionalized racism and implicit racial biases. Moreover, critical race theory provides a way to understand why racial inequities thrive in school discipline, while disability critical race theory, or DisCrit,  aptly explains the more nuanced experiences of students impacted by discretionary school disciplinary practices at the intersection of race and dis/ability (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2013).

The intent of this nuanced transdisciplinary framework is to provide "new opportunities to investigate how intersecting patterns of oppression target students at the margins of Whiteness and ability, DisCrit has since been taken up by scholars to expose and dismantle entrenched inequities in education" (Annamma, Connor, & Ferri, 2018; Annamma, Jackson & Morrison, 2016; Annamma, Morrison, & Jackson, 2014).  Mahon-Reynolds & Parker (2016) described this entwined relationship in how the reinforcement of racial and ability hierarchies show up in schools, in that "some teachers' and administrators' enforcement of discretionary discipline policies creates a school climate that. . .punishes any acts done by African American/Blacks or Hispanic/Latinx students, those with special needs, that may appear to violate school culture and normative expectations around how students should behave and learn" (p. 146).

One foundation of critical theory (including CRT and DisCrit) is that people and their behavior cannot be understood without looking through the lens of their social and historical contexts. Social behavior and individual behavior are mutually influencing and reinforcing, and we often rest on historical precedent (as individuals, what we have learned and how we have interpreted our experiences; and in a social sense, the premises utilized when our institutions were built—exploring who they benefited and who they excluded.)

DisCrit embodies an intersection of CRT with disability discrimination. The field offers several tenets for consideration (drawn from Mahon-Reynolds & Parker, 2016):

1. Ableism (disability status) and racism are mutually dependent and used to establish and reinforce societal norms—a hierarchy of value with regard to these identity characteristics. These aspects of identity intersect to perpetuate the marginalization of  students of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Mahon-Reynolds & Parker, 2016).

2. All identity aspects are seen as important rather than choosing either/or among multiple characteristics.  All persons are seen as multidimensional in a DisCrit analysis.  In this study, the focus is on two aspects, intellectual/developmental disability diagnosis and African American racial identity, yet from a DisCrit perspective, the researchers will also recognize other aspects of intersectional identity as they arise in the study.

3. DisCrit recognizes the social construction and maintenance of ability and race, and at the same time that individuals so labeled in these hierarchies may also experience real consequences—both psychological and material in terms of access, support, and opportunities to succeed.

4. Consistent with Critical Race Theory, DisCrit centers the voices of marginalized populations who have lived experiences related to the inquiry. The interviews in this study are therefore central in terms of analysis.

5. Mahon-Reynolds & Parker (2016) writes that "DisCrit focuses on how race and dis/ability have been used historically and legally to deny citizens their rights" (p. 148). This layer of complexity in understanding relates directly to the school -to- prison pipeline.

6. From a DisCrit perspective, the hierarchical power relationships of the target aspects of identity (in this case, White and able-bodied), can be seen as property. In this analysis, interest convergence would occur when the power group will advocate for change as long as they also benefit themselves. This potential for convergence of interest will be investigated throughout the study, particularly given the unique context of the timing of the study.

7. Annamma, Connor, & Ferri (2013) also recommend that DisCrit analysis should connect to communities, to inform action steps combatting injustice and providing necessary support for equitable outcomes. This study will therefore include community interviews for a broader understanding.

As a theoretical framework, DisCrit will let us explore the impact of racial identity and its meaning as well as the convergence of disability labeling and its impact.  It requires examination about what policies and practices we may have accepted as normal or natural without fully considering the outcomes or the convergence of beliefs about populations of students in our educational system.  In this way, the framework calls for the integration of sociohistorical underpinnings as well as contextual factors in an analysis of the school -to- prison pipeline.

# VII.  NATIONAL TRENDS

Prior to 2012, researchers found a 40-year trend, across K-12th grade, a widening gap among Black-White suspension rates and the Latinx-White suspension rates (Losen, Hodson, Keith, Morrison, & Belway, 2015).

## a. Suspensions

Out-of-school suspension rates were statistically higher in secondary education compared to elementary education during the 2011-2012 school year. In either educational setting, suspension rates were doubled for Black students and students with a disability compared to their counterparts (Losen, Hodson, Keith, Morrison, & Belway, 2015). Two years prior, Losen and Gillespie (2012) found that Black males with a disability have the highest suspension rates among the top10 school districts with the nation's highest suspension rates.

Irrespective of racial group, the suspension rate for students with disabilities was over 13 percent compared to 6 percent for students without a disability in 2011-2012 (Redfield & Nance, 2016). Among students with disabilities at the intersecting identities of race/ethnicity and gender, suspension rates were the highest for Black/Latinx male students at the elementary and secondary school levels. Among female students with a disability, suspension rates were the highest at the elementary and secondary level for those students who were Black (Losen, et al., 2015).

Two years prior, in middle school alone, but certainly across all grade levels, Black and Latinx males with disabilities represented groups with the highest suspension rates, nationwide, in the 2009-2010 school year (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019; National Council on Disability, 2015). Similarly, in recent years of reporting to the Civil Rights Data Collection, Black, multi-racial, Native American and Pacific Islander students with disabilities reflect suspensions at disproportionate rates in 2013-2014 and 2015-2016 (U. S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019; Harper, 2017).

## b. Law Enforcement Referrals/Arrests

On a national level, referrals to law enforcement reflect similar trends based on race with Black and American Indian-Alaska Native  student referral rates disproportionately higher compared to their respective total populations (Redfield & Nance, 2016). For students with disabilities, 2011-2012 Civil Rights Data Collection Survey showed a 75 percent law enforcement referral rate and arrest rate compared to a 25 percent rate for students without a disability. According to the 2005 Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, disability demographics of students detained comprised 47 percent with an emotional disability, 38.6 percent with a learning disability, 9.7 percent with an intellectual disability, 2.9 percent diagnosed as other health impaired, and 0.8 percent with multiple disabilities (Redfield & Nance, 2016).

## c. Seclusion/Alternative Schools

Similarly, during the 2011-2012 school year, students of color labeled as disruptive or dangerous were found to be placed in increasingly punitive alternative schools (Redfield & Nance, 2016). 58 percent of students with disabilities experience secluded placement (Redfield & Nance, 2016). Nearly seventy percent of student with disabilities experiencing seclusion/restraints represented 12 percent of the total student population during the 2013-2014 and 2015-2016 school years.

## d. Incarceration Rates

According to the Education Department's Office of Civil Rights, African American/Black students are three times more likely to be suspended or expelled than White students (OCR, 2014; Darensbourg, Perez, & Black, 2010). They are also much more likely to be referred to law enforcement while in school. It appears that these processes will continue as out-of-school suspensions increased by 10 percent between 2010 and 2015 and doubled since the 1970s, creating the dynamics which lead to the school -to- prison pipeline (Nelson & Lind, 2015).

In 2013, three percent of African American/Black males were imprisoned compared to only 0.5 percent of Whites (Cheesman, 2016). African American/Blacks represent over a third of the males in prison although they reflect less than 20 percent of the American male population. If negative school experiences lead to a process in which African American/Blacks are a greater risk of later incarceration, the national trends are quite clear. National trends for Black male exclusionary discipline practices and institutional confinement tend to overshadow the increasing trend and impact of exclusionary school discipline policies for Black females.

Researchers who disaggregated national data based on gender found that Black girls are the fastest growing population of youth in residential care and who are experiencing stark rises in suspension rates (Morris, 2014; Sickmund et al., 2011; Puzzachanchera, Adams, & Sickmund, 2011; Losen & Skiba, 2010). Furthermore, School -to- prison pipeline research scholars have found school disciplinary conditions and involvement in the juvenile justice system are close correlates, providing insights into the Black female experience within public schools (Blake, Butler, Lews & Darrensbourg, 2010; Nicholson-Crotty, Birchmeier, & Valentine, 2009; Nolan, 2011).

# VIII. MISSOURI'S SCHOOL DISCIPLINE GAP

State-level school -to- prison pipeline trends ofttimes reflect national statistical patterns of school discipline with Missouri being no exception. In the last 10 years, researchers in Missouri have studied racial disparities linking school discipline decisions to juvenile detention referrals (Nicholson, Birchmeirer & Valentine, 2009; Losen, Hodson, Keith, Morrison & Belway, 2015; ACLU Missouri, 2017; Furtado, Duncan, Kocher & Nandan, 2019).

## a. School Discipline Gap Correlates

Although consensus agrees that the school -to- prison pipeline exists, causal factorial relationships are difficult to pinpoint. Nicholson, Birchmeirer, and Valentine (2009), studied 2004-2005 data on Black and White youth 10-17 years old in 53 Missouri counties. Key findings from juvenile justice records from the Missouri Division of Youth Services revealed that income disparities and population density were the strongest predictors of Black-White juvenile referral rates (Nicholson, Birchmeirer, & Valentine, 2009).

After controlling for poverty and population density, exclusionary discipline decisions were positively and significantly correlated with juvenile justice referrals (Nicholson, Birchmeirer, & Valentine, 2009). The Nicholson, Birchmeirer, and Valentine (2009) study observed that Black and White student discipline disparities existed for the same major offenses. For example, the Black student suspension rate was 95 percent compared to the 85 percent White student suspension rate for the major offenses such as violence and weapons.

## b. Racial Discipline Disparities in Missouri: National Studies

The school discipline gap along racial lines exists in the state of Missouri reflective of national trends (ACLU Missouri, 2017; Furtado, Duncan, Kocher & Nandan, 2019). In 2011-2012, the suspension rate for Black students was 14 percent compared to 1.8 percent of White students ranking Missouri at #2 for the widest Black-White disciplinary gap at the elementary level. At the secondary level, Missouri ranked 4th with a twenty-seven percent Black student suspension rate compared to 7 percent of White students (Losen, Hodson, Keith, Morrison, & Belway, 2015). In a national comparison, three school districts in Missouri ranked in the top 10 for the highest-suspending districts for all elementary school students: St. Louis City (#2), Normandy (#5), and Riverview Gardens (#6).

In the aforementioned Missouri school districts, suspension rates in 2011-2012 were also the highest for students with disabilities: Riverview Gardens (85 percent), Normandy (72 percent). Male students showed higher suspension rates than females: Riverview Gardens (39 percent), Normandy (44.5 percent). These Missouri school districts ranked 7th and 8th for suspension rates by gender and disability (Losen, Hodson, Keith, Morrison, & Belway, 2015).

## c. Suspensions

In another study on Missouri's racial discipline gap, the ACLU Missouri (2017) examined 2013-2014 data from the Office for Civil Rights and the Missouri Juvenile and Family Division. Based on individual student characteristics, Black students were five times more likely than White students to be suspended in Missouri. Similarly, Missouri students with learning and behavioral disabilities were three times more likely than students without IEPs to be suspended. At the intersection of race and gender, Black males were four times more likely to be suspended than White males. Black females were five times more likely to be suspended from a Missouri public school than White female students in 2013-2014. Trends were the same based on race, disability, and gender for the 2015-2016 school year (ACLU Missouri, 2017).

**Missouri's School Discipline Gap**

**School Discipline Gap Correlates**

Exclusionary discipline decisions were positively and significantly correlated with juvenile justice referrals.

Black student suspension rate was 95% compared to the 85% White student suspension rate for major offenses such as violence and weapons.
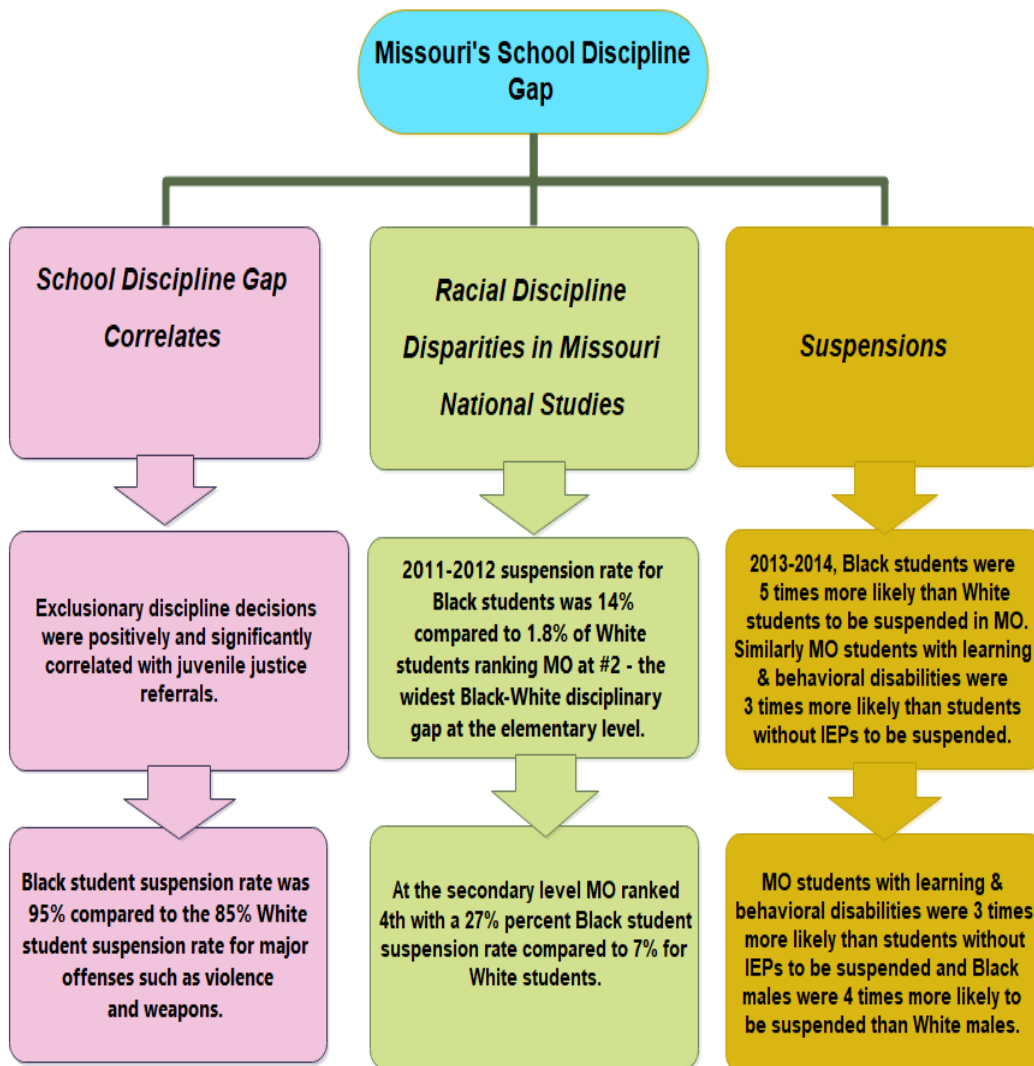
**Racial Discipline Disparities in Missouri National Studies**

2011-2012 suspension rate for Black students was 14% compared to 1.8% of White students ranking MO at #2 - the widest Black-White disciplinary gap at the elementary level.

At the secondary level MO ranked 4th with a 27% percent Black student suspension rate compared to 7% for White students.

**Suspensions**

2013-2014, Black students were 5 times more likely than White students to be suspended in MO. Similarly MO students with learning & behavioral disabilities were 3 times more likely than students without IEPs to be suspended.

MO students with learning & behavioral disabilities were 3 times more likely than students without IEPs to be suspended and Black males were 4 times more likely to be suspended than White males.

### d. Expulsions

Out-of-school suspensions are not the only school disciplinary practices affecting Black students and students with disabilities. Both sub-groups are over-represented in other exclusionary disciplinary rates such as expulsions, corporal punishment, seclusion, restraints, school arrests and referrals to law enforcement (ACLU Missouri, 2017). For example, Missouri's expulsion rate doubled between 2011-2014 with IDEA students being twice as likely to be expelled in 2013-2014 than the 2011-2012 school year. 17 percent of Black students with IEPs were expelled from school in 2013-2014. By racial comparison, Black students with IEPs were 1.12 times more likely to be expelled than White students with IEPs. Compared with White students, Black student's expulsion rates during this time were higher. Specifically, sixteen percent (16percent) of Black students were removed from a public school in 2013-14.

### e. Corporal Punishment

In cases of corporal punishment, the ACLU Missouri (2017, p. 23) report also illustrated that Black students are "almost twice as likely to be hit in schools as their White peers" experiencing corporal punishment. 24 percent of Black students total and 21 percent of Black students with IEPs (who only represent 16percent of the IDEA population) in 2013-2014.

### f. Law Enforcement Referrals

In the 2013-2014 Missouri Juvenile and Family Division reported that youth represented 21 percent of all law enforcement referrals, and Black youth were over-represented at 26 percent across the state. Similar over-representation in 2013-2014 were examined from Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) data, African American/Black students represented 14 percent of the total population with a 17 percent law enforcement referral rate and an 18 percent arrest rate. Black students were 1.34 times more likely to be arrested than White students (ACLU Missouri, 2017). According to the ACLU Missouri (2017), the Missouri Juvenile and Family Division reported that 20 percent of Black students with IEPs were referred to law enforcement compared to representing only 16 percent of the total IDEA population.

## Missouri's School Discipline Gap

### Expulsions

MO's expulsion rate doubled between 2011-2014 with IDEA students being twice as likely to be expelled in 2013-2014 than the 2011-2012 school year.

17% of Black students with IEPs were expelled from school in 2013-2014. By racial comparison, Black students with IEPs were 1.12 times more likely to be expelled than White students with IEPs.

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### Suspensions

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Over-representation was examined from MO DESE, Black students represented 14% of total population with a 17% law enforcement referral rate & an 18% arrest rate. Black students were 1.34 times more likely to be arrested than White students.

## g. In-School Suspensions

Less severe forms of exclusionary discipline such as in-school suspension (ISS) are experienced more often among students with specific characteristics than others. Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary data showed in 2013-14 that Black students represented 14 percent of the total student population but received 29 percent of all ISS referrals. And by comparison, White students were 2.5 times less likely than Black students to be assigned ISS (ACLU Missouri, 2017). Similar ISS racial discipline gap data were found during the 2014-2015 school year. The intersection of race and gender differences were also noted. Black girls were only 14 percent of the female student population and received 35 percent of all ISS referrals assigned to females. Students with IEPs also experiences disproportionate rates of in-school suspension. For example, in 2013-2014, Black students with IEPs represented 16 percent of the population and represented 29 percent of ISS assignments.

## h. Seclusion and Restraints

Due to the nature of discipline, students with disabilities are more likely to experience seclusion and restraints by school personnel than any other student group. In 2013-2014, nearly 200 incidents of mechanical restraints and approximately 1,000 cases of physical restraints reported to the Missouri DESE (ACLU Missouri, 2017). Twenty-eight percent of Black students experienced physical restraint, unfortunately, higher rates of restraints were reported for IDEA students (1,400) and 20 percent involved Black students. Over 500 cases of seclusion were reported and African American/Black students with IEPs represented 16 percent of all cases (ACLU Missouri, 2017).

In summary, the U. S. Department of Education Civil Rights Data Collection Survey allows school -to- prison pipeline scholars the opportunity to analyze and interpret disparate discipline data. Results show that if a student is male, Black, Latinx, Indigenous, or have a disability (or encompass a combination of these intersecting identities), they are statistically more likely to experience exclusionary discipline in school than their counterparts. Black female students with a disability are the fastest growing population of confined youth in the juvenile and criminal justice system. While no empirical cause and effect relationship exists in scholarly literature between racism, ableism and harsh school disciplinary practices, disability critical race theory provides a theoretical framework towards understanding the historical, sociopolitical influences resulting racial and disability-related disparities in school discipline. The effects of discipline disparities on student achievement and life trajectories are enormous.

# IX.   DISCIPLINARY ACTIONS

In reviewing the types of discipline reported, students in this study experienced a wide range of disciplinary actions. Through the lens of DisCrit, Mahon-Reynolds and Parker (2016) draw on the work of Erica Meiners (2007) seminal "*Right to be hostile: Schools, prisons, and the making of public enemies",* positing that "because the concept of 'Blackness' has been associated with crime and deviant behavior, students of color are often disciplined and punished with greater severity, leading to higher rates of suspensions and expulsions, disproportionate labeling of emotional or behavioral disabilities, and earlier and more frequent engagement with the criminal justice system" (p. 146).

This is consistent with recent data published by the U.S. Department of Education showing that special education students (ages 3-21) included only 17.7 percent African American/Blacks, but that African American/Black students accounted for 36.6 percent of those with a disciplinary removal. (Cai, J., 2019). In Missouri, Ibrahim & Ritter (2020) investigated statewide data from 2005-2019 and found that "while Black students represent only 15 percent of K-12 students, they represent 35 percent of students suspended once, 44 percent of students suspended repeatedly, and 36 percent of expelled students" (p. 1, St. Louis University PRiME Center Discipline Policy Brief).

Disciplinary practices reported by parents in this study ranged from behavioral modification to class removal to physical restraint and handcuffing by school resource officers or police. Behaviors preceding the discipline range from fighting for being called N-word, being bullied, anxious behaviors resulting from the disability; rolling eyes/huffing; not staying focused; and others linked to specific disciplinary action in Table 1. Disciplinary incidents are described below in terms of discipline type and frequency (when reported).

## Missouri's School Discipline Gap - Disciplinary Actions

17% of Black students with IEPs were expelled from school in 2013-2014. By racial comparison, Black students with IEPs were 1.12 times more likely to be expelled than White students with IEPs.

2005 - 2019, MO statewide data found Black students represented 15% of K-12 students but represented 35% of students suspended once, 44% students suspended repeatedly, and 36% of expelled students.

Behaviors preceding the discipline, ranged from fighting for being called n-word, bullied, anxious behaviors from disability; rolling eyes/huffing; not staying focused; and others linked to specific disciplinary action.

Disciplinary practices reported by parents ranged from behavioral modification to class removal to physical restraint and handcuffing by school resource officers or police.

**TABLE 1:**

| Type of discipline | Frequency reported | Comments |
|---|---|---|
| **No harsh discipline for incidences** | 2 | Behaviors:<br>• not following directions |
| **Class removal** | 9 | Behaviors:<br>• as a de-escalation request<br>• in the bathroom too long/not sitting still/asking friend for help/damage to school property<br>• child restrained for acting out for wanted recess<br>• lying/being inappropriate with teacher<br>• if son is too upset and unable to self-regulate (wouldn't stop crying for an hour)<br>• asking a question/raising hand to go to restroom/talking/ "petty stuff" |
| **Suspension** | 5 | One suspension was for ten days; one child had "many" suspensions<br>Behaviors:<br>• Fighting<br>• wouldn't keep his shoes on(disability related)<br>• biting a teacher<br>• bringing knife to school to deal with bullying |
| **ISS (In-School Suspension)** | 5 | Behaviors:<br>• fighting<br>• acting out to be in a different class<br>• in lieu of suspensions |
| **Resource officer involvement** | 4 | Behaviors:<br>• brought home by officer because parent couldn't pick him up<br>• police questioned son about whereabouts of another student<br>• daughter thrown against wall by officer/handcuffed suspended after a fight about racial slurs<br>• resisting arrest/trespassing/2counts of assault |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Alternative school** | 2 | Behaviors:<br>• repeated suspensions<br>• expulsion from public school<br>• in alternative school (mostly African American/Blacks attend) student perceives kids are treated better than in regular ed.<br>• believes staff work with kids |
| **Restraint** | 2 | Behaviors -Pinned against the wall; |
| **Expulsion** | 1 | Behaviors: assault charge |
| **Juvenile Justice involvement** | 1 | Behaviors: has PO and community service hours |
| **Kicked off the bus** | 1 | |
| **Focus Room** (elementary) | 1 | |
| **Phone calls home** | 1 | |
| **Walked laps** | 1 | Behaviors: not staying focused |
| **Behavioral monitoring/marks on behavior chart/quiet time/conscious discipline/sits in a corner** | 1 | |

# X.    DATA ANALYSIS

## Themes from Parents' Stories

Themes from parents' stories could be seen through the lenses of generational trauma, race, disability, and parents' perception of services. In this part of the report, we will include direct quotes from parents who were interviewed for the study. They will be identified only by participant number to protect their identity.  Through these quotes, additional insight can be gained about the themes and context of the lived experiences of these families.

### a.  Generational Trauma Impact

*". . .somebody who without a mama without a daddy was a ward of the court, in the system, they whole life jacked up, f\*ked up, excuse my mouth, but had to make it.  And then you get this kid.  And they diagnosed him with a disability and ya'll still warming up, figure out how to be a mama ho to be this, how to be that and my skin is Black?  And I'm still trying to deal with my own trauma"*
(Part. 01, p.8)

A clear consideration when analyzing the data was the impact of generational trauma, whether specifically identified or not. The narrative above provides a clear example of one family's experience. The generational impact of marginalization on the basis of race, and the additional burdens of diagnoses that may have generational repetition points to both impact and often the disconnect of resources for understanding or navigating systems of support.

### b.  Race Impact

1. Parents reported that they were very aware of an expectation of lower standards; unaware of marginalization; (tracking) mostly Black students, while teachers are mostly White but invested.

2. Another parent indicated that both children have been bullied with racial slurs and have been disciplined for responding; the child's side of the story isn't listened to in racialized incidents; the parent was forced to withdraw kids from school and go to another school district.

3. It was clear that there was a sense of lower expectations; letting certain behaviors slide; the school is primarily White and affluent and disconnected from racialized experiences of son; School staff use words in IEP meetings such as needing to communicate fear of son being a "walking target" (another example of tracking).

4. A parent with a Bi-racial son has been called the n-word on the bus by students. They had the need to have ongoing conversations with her kids about racial experiences. Her husband had to refused to leave the school until he was addressed about his son's racialized experience.

5. Parent indicated their child experienced "ridicule" from White and Black students; experienced low expectations; the school setting did not seem to be designed for excellence but rather basic achievement of his son.

6. Parent felt like her kids were getting harsher punishments; not enough Black teachers. In fact, her child (never had a Black teacher), but the focus room teacher was Black.

7. A White parent of a Black child stated she was not sure if race has been a factor; did know if race was an issue; she claimed to be aware and indicated she had some anxiety about the potential of child experiencing racism.

8. A parent had to talk to teachers about stopping class from playing a game at recess that was racially insensitive. Parent reported their child attended a predominately White school and believes there's less racial bias and more ignorance of race issues.

9. A parent indicated that they had dealt with racialized labeling (aggressive behavior) at age 2 when he would push and shove other kids and after the advice from support system, the parent requested that staff stop labeling her son as an aggressive kid; parents are not used to lack of diversity in schools; son is consistently the only Black child in classrooms.

10. Race is a factor while dealing with the juvenile and court systems for son.


## c. Disability Impact

*"Yeah, in kindergarten he was suspended 3 times that year. I have actually been very vocal about the kids and so we actually had to come to the meeting, and he has special meetings the principal spending for behaviors related not keeping on his shoes. The entire school is not designed for students with disabilities, especially autism. They just have a special class for the kids the entire school kids disabilities especially awesome so when they will have to transfer from the cafeteria or the library you know, my kid especially would be disciplined for not transitioning well. He would not have his shoes on."* (Part. 03, p. 3)


1. A parent shared that they were told their child was told he could not remain in his private school; there were not a lot of services for catatonic ASD; professionals need to cater to the IEP.

2. The school environment had been a good experience for their son, received great feedback; and noticed learning improvements.

3. Parents related their child had received a negative experience: this included inexperienced staff at their child's school; attitudes of school toward his disability (felt unwelcoming); and there were few services for complexity of multiple diagnosis.

4. One family noted they had a great experience with speech therapy; and they knew how to advocate because of her social capital (mother and school principal from an urban district); advocated for IEP service extension and request was granted.

5. A parent reported that the experience for daughter has been positive with a 504 plan, because she has access to medication to get relief.

6. Parent reports mixed experiences as a child with ADHD – student has been afraid to go to school for fear of walking lapse; district is great with meeting demands of IEP and kids with disabilities get what they need early on.

7. For one parent it took a year to get a behavioral plan in place for their child; they struggled for inclusion, but overall positive when behavior plan was in place with professional and responsive staff; in meetings parent is concern that the IEP team doesn't consider the impact of his race and struggles to have IEP team help him transfer skills to real life (intersectional).

8. A child was diagnosed before preschool and experiences have been mixed depending on educational setting; incidences of support from mentoring and service coordination; occasional teacher support for meltdowns; IEP implemented emotional supports.

### d. Parents' Perception of Services/Recommendations

*"Um, and this is speaking for the districts in their totality. Okay, they will push out children that do not fit their vision, their narrative and that will affect the picture that they want to present. i.e. , charter schools, I love you to death, I am a hard pro-choice parent. But you don't get to throw kids away because you can't produce the special education services that they have. Provide a free and appropriate public education. You got authorized to do your job. And I don't see any blind kids."*

*I don't see any kids in wheelchairs in charter schools make it make sense. Now, public schools, traditional schools, you don't get to quarantine your special needs kids in this little bitty box, where they have no access to anybody else that's different than them. You do not provide any education to your other students and or faculty about the awesome differences of these beautiful people. You put them in a quarantine box and let everybody see that they're different, they're less, and they're a step down. You don't get to do that either. And how will our children ever incorporate into society when you box us out?"* *(Part 1, p. 7)*

This study is built from the DisCrit framework that amplifies voices of people who have lived the experiences being investigated.  Within the recommendations, our first section will include the family perceptions of recommendations in response to four questions the coalition recommended be posed to the families regarding how to make schools more welcoming, more inclusive, and more attractive to families of students with disabilities who identify as African American/Black or bi/multi-racial.

As recommended by Annamma, Reynolds & Parker (2013), through the lens of DisCrit analysis, the communities should be connected and should be involved in informing action steps to address injustices and to provide necessary support for equitable outcomes.  In this vein, parent/guardian recommendations were sought about how the districts could become more welcoming and inclusive.

# XI.  DISAGGREGATING DATA

*"Um, and this is speaking for the districts in their totality. Okay, they will push out children that do not fit their vision, their narrative and that will affect the picture that they want to present. i.e. , charter schools, I love you to death, I am a hard pro-choice parent. But you don't get to throw kids away because you can't produce the special education services that they have. Provide a free and appropriate public education.*

*You got authorized to do your job. And I don't see any blind kids. I don't see any kids in wheelchairs in charter schools make it make sense. Now, public schools, traditional schools, you don't get to quarantine your special needs kids in this little bitty box, where they have no access to anybody else that's different than them. You do not provide any education to your other students and or faculty about the awesome differences of these beautiful people. You put them in a quarantine box and let everybody see that they're different, they're less, and they're a step down. You don't get to do that either. And how will our children ever incorporate into society when you box us out?"*
*(Part 1, p. 7)*

This study is built from the DisCrit framework that amplifies voices of people who have lived the experiences being investigated.  Within the recommendations, our first section will include the family perceptions of recommendations in response to four questions the coalition recommended be posed to the families regarding how to make schools more welcoming, more inclusive, and more attractive to families of students with disabilities who identify as African American/Black or bi/multi-racial.  As recommended by Annamma, Reynolds & Parker (2013), through the lens of DisCrit analysis, the communities should be connected and should be involved in informing action steps to address injustices and to provide necessary support for equitable outcomes.  In this vein, parent/guardian recommendations were sought about how the districts could become more welcoming and inclusive.

## a. Assessment

- Problem with structure of Special School Districts
- IDEA laws not being followed
- Eliminate handcuff restraints from IEPs

## b. Staffing

A number of concerns were expressed in this area including:

- The need for Black leaders, teachers, counselors, school board members
- Need more invested Black teachers; more parents in positions of leadership and on related boards
- Hire more Black teachers
- Recognized the need for more Black faculty so their kid can see Black excellence
- More staff of color; representation in faculty for students of color
- Improved hiring practices of employees of color; attracting diverse pool of candidates

## c. Environment

- A parent observed when at a previous school in the district kids were not motivated to go to school and didn't feel safe because of staff targeting their behaviors; they enjoyed it at first but then their spirits were crushed, and they dreaded waking up to go to school.
- Parents indicated their students reported feeling unsafe when they see confederate flags; the school not as inclusive as parent would like for it to be.
- A parent noted that they had seen changes over the last 10 years with the school being more diverse
- Parent indicated that they were aware of the strides toward diversity by the urban district, but at the same time is aware that many don't feel safe
- A parent stated the need for a more diverse setting
- Parent has seen confederate flag from the car line and has been fearful for her daughter
- A concern was voiced that the idea of "justice for all" did not exist
- Mother believes the district is welcoming; and would recommend the district to other Black families, but says the family will leave in the next 5 years because of the lack of diversity
- A parent shared referenced a negative experience with parent's White children talking about relative's queer marriage in school; and believes they are not ready to work with Black administrators

## d. Training

*"Um, I feel like there is a lot of opportunity for improvement, I feel like, you know, I do see where people you know, try, you know, to make us feel included and things like that, you know, my children they do get compliments by, you know, teachers and staff as far as their work ethics and, you know, feeling like they belong, you know, so there are, you know, but I just feel like there are various opportunity for improvement with how they handle especially conflict within schools and behavior patterns with the students who may be dealing with difficult things."* (Part. 2, p. 9)

*"It is welcoming as much as it can be. It is predominately White. So, it is welcoming without them having the ability to really understand any other kind of culture.  But there's a disconnect in what is helpful and what is not, because of a lack of awareness."* (Part. 3, p. 6.)

- Parents share the need for invested teachers; recommended a better job of informing  parents of resources; learning Black history in schools which also benefits White students
- Parent indicated the need for student acknowledgement
- One parent shared that her daughter is queer and was in a judgmental/minimizing environment; and experienced insensitivities from teacher.
- One respondent shared that the school was welcoming, but unhelpful; there was a need for better communication about what services are available when transitioning to kindergarten
- Another parent wanted to be more informed about meals being served to kids
- A parent mentioned the need for more respite services for families in the community and there's a need for increased personnel expertise for kids with disabilities;
- One parent believes White female teachers struggle with Black boys and their attributes resulting in stereotyping and level of education within preschools.

# XII. DISCUSSION

In the wake of the pandemics of COVID-19 and newly heightened racial justice awareness, topics around racial equity and issues related to race in education have come to the national forefront in a profound manner.  This has come at a time when the American Academy of Pediatrics, in an introduction to a special policy brief in 2019, writes, "Although progress has been made toward racial equality and equity, the evidence to support the continued negative impact of racism on health and well-being through implicit and explicit biases, institutional structures, and interpersonal relationships is clear." (AAP, 2019, para 1), and the CDC in 2021 identifying racism as a "serious threat to the public's health".

As noted in the literature review and reinforced in the findings from the interviews; educational systems, and in particular the inequitable application of discipline practices can and do have a profound impact on the experiences of marginalized students in Missouri school systems. Furthermore, the dual labeling of a disability and racially marginalized identity have a compound impact on the students and their families, resulting in many parents feeling further distanced from their children's school.

Collins (2016) writes, "Once a disability has been employed as a mechanism to remove children and youth considered "atypical" from the classroom, these children and youth are at an even greater risk of being pushed out of school altogether. Behaviors and ways of being deemed out of place are frequently criminalized through school disciplinary procedures; the child is pushed further out of place in school and enters the school -to- prison pipeline" (p. 200). Parent accounts in this study echo these themes, and we see some districts creating special schools and often literally a separate structure itself, reinforcing the disturbing removal of children from the classroom community.  This removal is echoed and normalized in the larger culture through mechanisms of the criminal justice system and disproportionate incarceration.

The growth of charter and private schools has created another challenge for parents of children with disabilities because the diagnosis in most cases results in the children not being able to continue attending those schools, according to the parents in this study.

Recommendations from this study are therefore embedded in a recognition that the solutions must include or begin with an analysis and subsequent restructuring of accepted norms and cultural narratives such as "*dangerous Black male"* that seep into the educational system and are applied to disciplinary responses beginning in preschool (cite rate of preschoolers being expelled then leading to higher ED diagnosis). These trends seem to surface primarily in disparate disciplinary practices, higher rate of suspensions, disconnecting parent experiences, and community isolation.  Further, this normalizes disability and separation practices for African American/Black students. Is this a haunting echo of "separate but (un) equal"?

This separation has resulted in these students having a school within a school—effectively reinforcing a "pipeline" effect, often with labels that precede them and set them up for repeating experiences in subsequent years. Clearly this reinforces how important the educational environment is for our students, families, and communities.

# XIII. ANALYSIS and RECOMMENDATIONS

*"Education and incarceration rates are linked at a systems level to create and perpetuate subordinated others. Thus, the education system creates a situation where we punish those who are labeled as "disabled" to keep them from an education.  We label those in prison as felons to create legal and social disability"*
*(Fenton, 2016, p. 210).*

## *Overview*

Nationally, the increase in disability diagnoses has been notable, and in particular, for those students who are already marginalized on the basis of race and SES. Demographic shifts in the past 30 years show White populations declining (80 percent to 66 percent between 1980 and 2008), Hispanic/Latinx populations more than doubling during that same time from 6 percent to 15 percent, and Black populations remaining steady at about 12-13 percent nationwide. In an analysis of disproportionality, Voulgarides, Fergus & Thorius (2017), conclude that "as the nation diversifies, education research continues to show *who* a student is matters more for their educational attainment more so than *how* a student performs in school" (p. 62). They continue, using Tilly's 1998 term "durable inequalities", to describe "social markers of difference in American society [as] racial disproportionality in special education" (Voulgarides, Fergus & Thorius, 2017, p. 62), documenting research spanning forty years.

> *Research on disproportionate suspensions identifies patterns in which nondominant students (i.e., Black, Hispanic, and American Indian) are not only identified with a high-incidence disability (e.g., emotional disturbance, LD, speech and language impairments, other health impairment) but also suspended more severely for the same infraction as their White counterparts, are suspended more repeatedly, and most devastatingly, these patterns heighten the likelihood for youth to engage with the criminal justice system " (Voulgarides, Fergus & Thorius, 2017, p. 64)*

Much has been said about the school -to- prison pipeline stemming from "zero-tolerance" policies in the 1980's, and advanced by Michele Alexander's (2010) "New Jim Crow" illustrations of the prison industrial complex and mass incarceration policies. The impact of disability diagnoses to further marginalize students of color has been raised as a concern by many authors.

Zipper & Hing (2014) report that students with disabilities are five times more likely to be incarcerated than those without. The recognition of these themes and needs on a national level is echoed at the state level (ACLU Missouri, 2017; Furtado, Duncan, Kocher & Nandan, 2019). The population of Missouri is increasingly diverse, also reflective of national trends.  School districts have attempted to address disability diagnoses in a variety of ways, and it is clear that additional efforts and strategies are needed to interrupt this disturbing trend of African American/Black youth being marginalized by both racial identity and disability diagnoses.

Meiners (2007) reports that disproportionate impacts of suspensions, expulsions, and disability diagnoses for youth of color result in "undereducation, and potentially incarceration…(so) the processes through which students are identified as 'special education' require scrutiny" (p. 3). Further stating that it is incumbent on all researchers and educators to consider how policy and practice separate students (and in particular students of color) through the extended relationship between incarceration and schools, the author invites us to recognize the ways this is normalized, including physical structures resembling prisons (metal detectors, school uniforms), practices of "naturalizing racial profiling, endemic in school discipline and special education categories,...[normalizing] constructs of discipline and punishment as 'logical' and 'just' social practices" (Meiners, 2007, p. 5).

Results from this study point clearly to a need for fundamental restructuring of educational systems and their approach to student success. We must be very careful in applying a "disability" label to a child because it most likely becomes a lifetime designation with severe and profound implications. This study illustrated the disconnections between the students and their families, the school personnel who are working with them, and the history of how students are marginalized on the basis of race and disability. For instance, one participant very succinctly noted that if you know how to work within the system, you can have very different outcomes.

Once the family finds out they have a diagnosis their lives can shift dramatically to accommodate testing, responsive services, and learning what is involved in their child's diagnosis (where other parents' time may be focused on athletic or other extra-curricular activities with their children). By default, this removes the parent from community, or at minimum, repositions them with regard to their child's diagnostic implications. When this happens in already stressed and under-resourced families, the compound effect can be devastating. In particular, when the family is also experiencing this disability diagnosis through the lens of historical and generational trauma, issues of trust, lack of representation, and limited personal resources, an additional challenge of epic proportion emerges that families are not prepared to face, and the pipeline is assured.

Bacher-Hicks, Demings and Billings (2019) found a negative impact of removing disruptive students from the classroom and that "students assigned to a school that has a one standard deviation higher suspension rate are 15 to 20 percent more likely to be arrested and incarcerated as adults" (p. 2). Interview respondents in this study made note of the differences between how students were treated and who they knew (in terms of access to resources).

# XIV.  REPRESENTATION, RESOURCING and RESTORATION

We think of school as a rite of passage and a positive occurrence. In these families with such dual marginalization, however, the experiences can be vastly different. Parents are parents, and not professionals equipped to deal with the intricate and complex needs introduced by multiple categories of marginalization (vis a vis racial identity, SES, and disability diagnosis). We need to once again create a positive experience for parents through a commitment to representation, resourcing, and restoration; to shift the narrative from adversarial and criminalized to collaborative and inclusive, seeing the child through the lens of their full potential for success.

## a.  Representation

*"I feel like their side of the story isn't honored as much or even listened to ask much, because they're automatically guilty or automatically. Wrong. You know, like, there was a time where, you know, my son got into an incident, and he automatically got in trouble. And I'm like, well, what about the kid who called him the N-word? What about that? He's like, Well, you know, there's no proof that he said it, but he has proof that your son reacted, you know, and so, things like that, you know, that mean?"* (Part. 2, pg. 8)

Research on disproportionality (Voulgarides, Fergus & Thorius, 2017) identifies practice-based factors, such as a "cultural mismatch between middle class, White teachers, and school administrators with low-income and/or racial and ethnic minority students' populations and [concomitant] gaps in the development and implementation of interventions and other referral systems, which cause disproportionate outcomes" (p. 65). We therefore recommend recruitment within the educational structure; shifting the notion of "pipeline" from a pejorative to an opportunity to develop staffing and expertise from within the community (paraprofessionals and advocates, as well as developing the pipeline for professional teachers and administrators).

We recognize that with the changing demographics there will be more students of color and we need more staff who ameliorate the cultural mismatch.

## b. Resources

One of the clear themes from participants in the study was that school districts are strapped for financial resources and that clearly additional funding needs to be provided or directed toward districts so that students, families, and the larger communities can have sufficient resources to address the needs for training and program support. Also, parents are often faced with additional out-of-pocket needs that further stress tight budgets. These limitations on funding and other necessary resources increase the vulnerability of students who are marginalized in multiple ways, thus enhancing the repetition of the school -to- prison pipeline.

- Resources need to be directed toward developing staffing and expertise to close the gaps in student success and representation in staffing, and support for families and communities.

- The financial burden of testing and ancillary services and support for children with a disability diagnosis should be borne by the district.

# XV.  RESTORATION THROUGH DATA, ASSESSMENT, TRAINING and STAFFING

## 1. Data

    a. Districts should be required to address causes of disproportionality in performance indicators, including disciplinary and diagnostic data.

    b. All data should be disaggregated and represented clearly as to demographic, diagnostic, and disciplinary actions.

    c. Analysis should consider layers of impact from multiple angles, including historical and generational trauma, SES, and intersectionality.

## 2. Assessment

    a. Districts should be required to investigate and mitigate disproportionality in special education, discipline, suspension, expulsion, free/reduced-price lunch, and services and support available. Structural disparities must be reviewed and analyzed in all aspects.

    b. School disciplinary practices should be reviewed with clarification of purpose and what is in best interest of child and their educational goals.

    c. Districts should review best-practices in other districts related to interrupting school -to-prison pipeline.

## 3. Training

We recommend a rigorous approach in the following areas:

    a. Restorative practices of challenging what is considered "normal". As Collins (2016) recommends, "we must choose through actions that challenge taken-for-granted notions of normalcy, inclusion and belonging" (p. 201), and exploring "least restrictive environments".

    b. The medicalization of disability should also be challenged because it perpetuates marginalization and exclusion (Fenton, 2016). Impairments are not necessarily disabilities if we adopt models of universal design in our policy and practice.

    c. Development of expertise and training (better understanding of impact of race and disability diagnosis and historical practices; cultural consciousness).

d.   Greater awareness in understanding the impact of historical and generational trauma, cultural styles, and practices of parenting in student interaction to reduce labeling and tracking into the "pipeline".

e.   Resource officers should receiving specialized training to include bias, cultural intelligence, and trauma-informed mitigation practices.

f.   Addressing theme of race lens (potential and value of children historically).

g.   Consideration of restorative justice models (mediating conflict, building community, relational skills, social engagement rather than social control, building healthy relationships and community, academic social and community growth as goals).

h.   In response to parents' concerns about a general lack of safety, respect for diversity, practicing inclusion, sense of fairness and equity, we recommend additional assessment and training to identify the sources of "cultural mismatch" and lack of cultural competence. There should be a foundational practice of respect, accountability and empathy practiced by all district personnel and reflected in the experiences of students, families, and communities.

i.   Policy and practice should be reviewed and/or developed to create inclusive environments designed for the success of ALL students. Districts need to place in writing the value they place on equity and respect for all and should hold themselves accountable for these practices.

## 4. Staffing

a.   Increase staffing to provide necessary support for students and families.

b.   Recognize importance of representation in district leadership (reflecting community demographics).

c.   Create community advocate positions for culturally competent staff who work on behalf of students and their families, maximizing their access to resources, and interrupting the school -to- prison pipeline.

d.   Develop stronger models of engagement of parents and community: trust relationships, community building and resourcing.

e.   Create emphasis on impartial community advocates who promote and advocate for student success and attend to necessary resources for students and their families.

## 5. Future Research

Future research should identify existing or develop new program models to focus on responses that will restore or interrupt the pervasive School-to-Prison Pipeline that has been traumatic for African American students. The intersection of disability with racial identity has emerged to ensure further marginalization of African American/Black students and reinforce the school -to- prison pipeline.

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# Final Deliverable Report



Final project meeting June 17, 2021. Coalition members: Francine Pratt, Monica Horton, Jordana Vera, Tyree Davis IV, Dr. Yvania Garcia-Pusateri, Dr. Lyle Foster, Jennifer Kocher, and Dr. Leslie Anderson

# A. NOFA Purpose Section

# Coalition Members

- **Amy St. John** - Springfield Public Schools (SPS)/Student and School Services, Springfield
- **Amy Washington, Megan Hinkle, and Rhonda Reddick** – Allen Village School, Kansas City
- **Bret Range** – SPS/Student and School Services, Springfield
- **David Rohall** – MSU - Sociology/Anthropology, Springfield
- **Francine Pratt** – Community Partnership of the Ozarks (CPO)/Prosper Springfield, Springfield
- **Jeff Johnson** – MO Department of Mental Health and, Columbia
- **Jennifer Kocher** – West County Community Action Network, St. Louis
- **Jimi Sode**, SPS/Department for Equity and Diversity, Springfield
- **Jordana Vera**, (CPO)/Prosper Springfield and the Alliance for Leadership Advancement and Success, Springfield
- **Lawrence "LA" Anderson**, SPS/Department of Equity and Diversity, Springfield
- **Lauren Rogers** – MSU Graduate Assistant/Social Work Student, Springfield
- **Leslie Anderson** – MSU Counseling/Catalyst Consulting, Springfield
- **Lyle Foster** – MSU Sociology/Vision Group, Springfield
- **Marijana Kotlaja**, MSU Dept. of Criminology and Criminal Justice, Springfield
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- **Monica Horton** – Lenica Consulting Group, Springfield
- **Rhonda Wallace** – North Technical High School, Florissant
- **Scott Dill** – Poplar Bluff Schools, Poplar Bluff
- **Sharonica Hardin-Bartley** – University City School District, University City
- **Sophie Scott** – Washington University Intern/American Culture Student, Springfield
- **Tyree Davis IV**, CPO, Springfield
- **H. Wesley Pratt** – MSU, Division for Diversity & Inclusion, Springfield
- **Yvania Garcia-Pusateri**, SPS/Department of Equity and Diversity, Springfield

Members of the Coalition were from various parts of the state of Missouri. Some members moved or changed jobs during the project period. Some members did not need to attend meetings as often as others based on the agenda they received in advance of the meetings. However, all Coalition members received detailed notes from each meeting as well as literature, articles, documents, and other information to provide input and feedback at any time.

## Recommendations

*Develop recommendations to help communities heal and build a future for students to receive support they need from members of the community, so they are not pushed towards the prison system:* **See Research and Recommendations Report**

## Pathway Maps

*Design pathway maps to outline resources and services for families to increase graduation rates for students of color:* Pathway maps were created for the top five career demands in Springfield: Health/Medicine, Manufacturing/Engineering, Business/Entrepreneurship, Teaching/Education, and Information Technology.
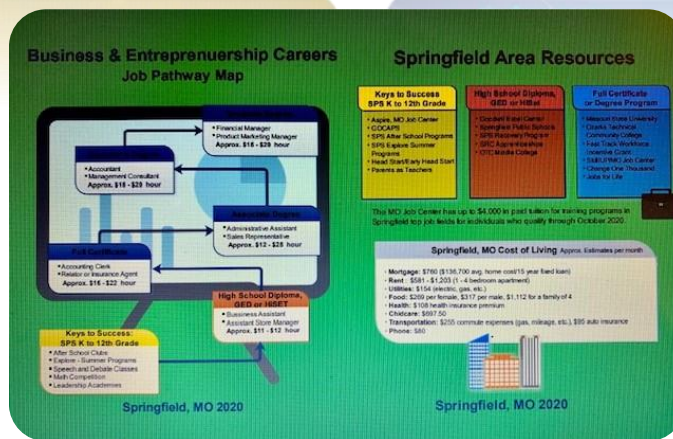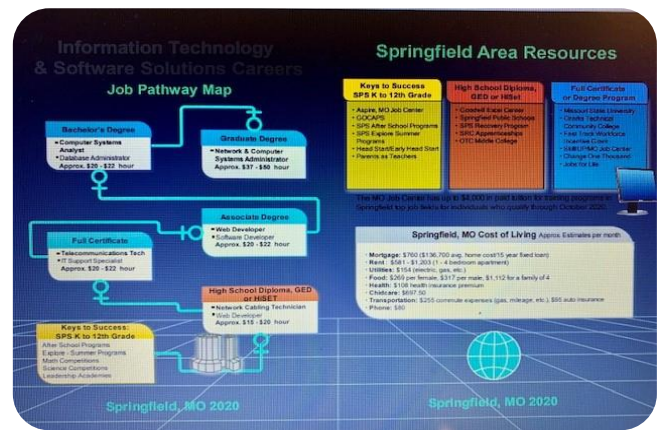


Pathway maps were distributed to the job center and community and faith-based organizations that serve large populations of African American/Black students. The maps were also printed in free publications, which included the Unite Publication (African American/Black community focus). Full size pathway maps are in the Appendix - Attachment A.

## Community Sustainability

*CPO existing programs and community partners will provide long-term sustainability beyond the project period.* CPO has been a trusted leader, catalyst for change, and a valued resource in Springfield and the surrounding region for over 27 years. CPO has several programs to support Black students with pathways to college and careers. A few years ago, CPO established the Student African American Brotherhood (SAAB), Bridge Springfield: Brother to Brother program as a new program to support Black male college and career pathways with sustainable support systems. Other community partners focused on students of color and their untapped assets include:

- o Boys and Girls Club
- o Children Youth and Family Development Center
- o Community Foundation of the Ozarks Diversity and Inclusion Grant
- o CPO/Prosper Springfield Equity and Prosperity Commission
- o CPO/Springfield Education Network
- o CPO/Tough Talks
- o Drew Lewis Foundation RISE Program
- o Drury University
- o Freedom Baptist Church
- o International Institute of Springfield
- o Leadership Springfield
- o Mayor's 2021 Equity and Equality Initiative
- o Missouri Job Center
- o MSU, Division for Diversity, and Inclusion
- o New Growth Ministries
- o New Hope International Ministries
- o Ozarks Technical Community College
- o SPS Public Schools Brother to Brother High School Program and Middle School Empowerment Groups
- o SAAB
- o Turning Point Church
- o Ujima Language and Literacy

# MODDC AFRICAN AMERICAN School -to- Prison Pipeline PROJECT
# SUSTAINABILITY PLAN
Updated June 2021

**SUSTAINABILITY OBJECTIVE:**

*To achieve lasting or permanent change through this project after MODDC funding ends.*

| STEPS TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVE | WHO WILL DO THE WORK? | WHAT DOES SUCCESS LOOK LIKE? WHAT NON-FINANCIAL RESOURCES ARE NEEDED? |
|---|---|---|
| **Community Newsletters** | Prosper Springfield<br><br>City of Springfield Public Information Office<br><br>Unite Publication | Regular reporting of project related information through a newsletter or other online materials solely focused on resources, services and updates related to African American/Blacks with and without an I/DD. |
| **Establishment of Support Groups** | SPS Empowerment Clubs & Brother to Brother Program<br><br>CPO - Parent Cafes | Central High School and Glendale High School pilot B2B programs become permanent programs with expansion to the other SPS high schools.<br><br>Interviewees participating in virtual quarterly support group meetings with an established online Parent Café. |
| **Regular meetings with organizations that can provided needed services and resources.** | CPO – Springfield Education Network<br><br>Community Diversity & Equity Director | Enhancement of the Springfield Project 2025 Steering Committee to become a "cradle to career" network to create a stronger support system that includes representation from empower: abilities (advocates for individuals with disabilities)  to assist with IEP advocacy – community recommendations with a three-year plan to address inequities by changing policies, practices, and procedures to reduce barriers and increase access to resources and services.<br><br>Annual workshop at MSU's Collaborative Diversity Conference to convene and provide updates. |

## Lumina Foundation Grant

*Leverage the work from the Lumina Foundation project for the Coalition to understand the work performed under this grant focused on increased high school graduation rates for African American/Black and Hispanic/Latinx students.* SPS is the largest school district in Missouri and over 25 percent of the 25,000 students who attend school in the district are racial/ethnically diverse. In February 2007, SPS held a series of forums to initiate a systemic approach to improve persistence to graduation for African American/Black students. Goals were set and strategies were developed to increase high school graduation rates. SPS focused on three major goals to improve the graduation rate:

1.  Established a full-time coordinator of site intervention (CSI) position in each of the district's five high schools to work individually with students who were at risk for dropping out.

2.  Created unique action plans for each of the district's five high school feeder school patterns (K-12).

3.  Identified at-risk indicators and provided building leaders with student-level data to begin focused intervention strategies starting at the 3rd grade level.

SPS increased graduation rates for African American/Black students four consecutive years, 2011 to 2014. The chart below reflects 2011 to 2014 data from Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary  Education (DESE). SPS surpassed Missouri graduation rates for African American/Black students.

| Name | YEAR | 4-YR. GRAD. RATE | ASIAN 4-YR. GRAD. RATE | BLACK 4-YR. GRADE RATE | NATIVE AM. 4-YR. GRAD. RATE | HISPANIC 4-YR. GRAD. RATE | WHITE 4-YR. GRAD. RATE | MALES 4-YR. GRAD. RATE | FEMALES 4-YR. GRAD. RATE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MISSOURI | 2011 | 78.6 | 86.2 | 61.9 | 74.4 | 72.7 | 83.6 | 75.0 | 82.6 |
| MISSOURI | 2012 | 83.7 | 87.8 | 68.9 | 86.3 | 78.0 | 87.5 | 80.6 | 87.0 |
| MISSOURI | 2013 | 85.7 | 91.2 | 72.0 | 82.0 | 80.7 | 89.2 | 83.5 | 88.1 |
| **MISSOURI** | **2014** | **87.3** | **91.2** | **74.9** | **83.7** | **80.0** | **90.5** | **85.0** | **89.8** |
| SPRINGFIELD | 2011 | 78.9 | 93.0 | 68.5 | 76.5 | 81.4 | 79.3 | 76.6 | 81.2 |
| SPRINGFIELD | 2012 | 85.4 | 91.7 | 70.4 | 75.0 | 82.3 | 86.6 | 83.8 | 87.0 |
| SPRINGFIELD | 2013 | 86.6 | 89.8 | 81.6 | 80.0 | 84.3 | 87.1 | 85.3 | 87.9 |
| **SPRINGFIELD** | **2014** | **89.5** | **91.3** | **86.5** | **100.0** | **85.0** | **89.9** | **87.3** | **91.8** |

Source: Missouri Comprehensive Data System, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (http://mcds.dese.mo.gov)

The next chart is for the past five years with the state of Missouri and SPS African American/Black student's comparisons. For the past three years, SPS has increased high school graduation rates for African American/Black students:

| Name | YEAR | 4-YR. GRAD. RATE | ASIAN 4-YR. GRAD. RATE | BLACK 4-YR. GRADE RATE | NATIVE AM. 4-YR. GRAD. RATE | HISPANIC 4-YR. GRAD. RATE | WHITE 4-YR. GRAD. RATE | MALES 4-YR. GRAD. RATE | FEMALES 4-YR. GRAD. RATE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| MISSOURI | 2015 | | | 79.0 | | | | | |
| MISSOURI | 2016 | | | 79.6 | | | | | |
| MISSOURI | 2017 | | | 80.0 | | | | | |
| MISSOURI | 2018 | | | 80.8 | | | | | |
| MISSOURI | 2019 | | | 78.9 | | | | | |
| SPRINGFIELD | 2015 | | | 80.3 | | | | | |
| SPRINGFIELD | 2016 | | | 82.7 | | | | | |
| SPRINGFIELD | 2017 | | | 76.3 | | | | | |
| SPRINGFIELD | 2018 | | | 84.6 | | | | | |
| SPRINGFIELD | 2019 | | | 85.6 | | | | | |

Source: Missouri Comprehensive Data System, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (http://mcds.dese.mo.gov)



CPO Janet Dankert, CEO and SAAB members at the April 2021 recognition celebration with the establishment of SAAB chapters at two of the local high schools with feeder patterns to the local colleges and workforce.

# C1. Project Overview

## Coalition Creation

*The Project Director will create the coalition with existing professional contacts aware of the school-to-prison pipeline.* Prosper Springfield had existing professional contacts with the following organizations who were aware of the school-to-prison pipeline:

- o Ambassadors for Children
- o Boys and Girls Club
- o Children Youth and Family Development Center
- o Community Foundation of the Ozarks
- o CPO/Prosper Springfield Equity and Prosperity Commission
- o CPO/Springfield Education Network
- o CPO/Tough Talks
- o Drew Lewis Foundation RISE Program
- o Drury University
- o Leadership Springfield
- o Mayor's 2021 Equity and Equality Initiative
- o Minorities in Business
- o Missouri Job Center
- o MSU, Division for Diversity, and Inclusion
- o Ozarks Technical Community College
- o SPS
- o SAAB
- o Turning Point Church
- o Ujima Language and Literacy Program

## African American/Black Partners

*Partners will include African American/Black therapists, attorneys, social workers, community members that work closely with African American/Black children and youth in foster care or who have aged out of foster care.* African American/Black partners included the following professionals: Sociologist, Attorney, Social Worker, NAACP President, Former NAACP President, Business Owner, Advocate, Fostercare Advocate, Pastors, and Community Leaders. Coalition members included a sociologist, psychologist, social worker as well as a chief diversity officer/attorney. There were three advocates from Missouri's three largest cities who shared many lived experiences. Coalition members were culturally diverse with a history of advocating for African American/Black students.

## Culturally Diverse Members

*The Coalition will be comprised of culturally diverse members and others whose efforts target disparate populations marginalized by the dominant culture.* Coalition members participated in a stakeholder assessment analysis to determine any gaps in Coalition members based on lived experiences. The chart to the right reflects a very balanced Coalition.

## Ground Rules

*The project will start with the development of ground rules and presentations will take place to educate all coalition members on existing research from Missouri related to the school-to-prison pipeline, existing policies/practices that create disparities and other recommendations for presentations from the coalition.* The Coalition established ground rules by the second project meeting (June 2019). Ground rules were read at each meeting for the first six months. Members were asked to read the ground rules before each meeting for all other meetings. The ground rules were critical to frame how the Coalition would move forward with the work of the project. The ground rules are below:

### How We Will Operate

a. The coalition will move forward with any decisions made during a meeting. Individuals unable to attend meetings will receive detailed meeting notes to help understand the rationale behind decisions.
b. The coalition will focus on student experiences and systems to avoid individual school decisions to stay focused on the scope of the project work.
c. The coalition will develop a shared description of the project and agree on a consistent message to share information about the project with others.
d. The coalition will develop a consistent template or format to document information when collecting research and participant stories.
e. The coalition will develop consistent language with agreed upon terms using MODDC and the MO Equity Project definitions as a baseline of terms (e.g., Populations and Ability).
f. When making important decisions, all members must agree to support the decision. If a member does not agree, the member needs to share their reasons with facts. Discussions will continue toward consensus, which means a person may not agree with the decision, but they can support the decision with fidelity as the team moves forward with research.

# C2a. Project Components

## Coalition Representation

*The coalition will include the DD Network, civil rights organizations, educators, and officers throughout Missouri.* Developmental Disability Networks were utilized for the project through communications with Springfield-based empower: abilities, Alliance for Leadership Advancement and Success Latino Leadership project partners. The Project Director shared information and data with the Springfield NAACP Branch. Red Circle West Coast Community Action Network, Jeffrey Johnson as well as other Coalition members represented different civil rights organizations in Missouri.

Several educators from K-12 and higher education institutions were part of the Coalition. Some of the educators included SPS, Allen Village, MSU, University City School District, and others. Engagement with law enforcement officers took place though various forums such as Leadership Springfield program days, biased-based police training for new officers in Springfield and discussions with the Springfield Police Department through the Prosper Springfield Equity and Prosperity Commission.

# C2b. Project Components

## Existing Studies

*Start with existing studies for conversations to bring awareness about the school-to-prison pipeline and impacts to students with disabilities and students of color.* The Coalition created a matrix with existing research and policy recommendations to use as a baseline to start research for the project. A snapshot of the report is provided on the next page with the full matrix in the Appendix – Attachment B.

## Existing School-to-Prison Pipeline Research and Policy Recommendations

| Study | Location | Contact Information | Abstract/Summary | Policy Recommendations |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Black Girls and School Discipline: The Complexities of Being Overrepresented and Understudied | Denver Public Schools | Subini Ancy Annamma, Professor at KU School of Education- Special Education: subiniannamma@ku.edu | Using Critical Race Theory and Critical Race Feminism as guiding conceptual frameworks, this mixed-methods empirical study examines Black girls' exclusionary discipline outcomes. First, we examined disciplinary data from a large urban school district to assess racial group differences in office referral reasons and disparities for Black girls in out-of-school suspensions, law enforcement referrals, and expulsions. Next, we used a multivariate analysis to determine whether these patterns held after accounting for other identity markers. Finally, we used Critical Discourse Analysis to consider whether office referrals for Black girls were for subjective or objective behaviors and whether they aligned with dominant narratives. All three of the categories for which Black girls were most likely to be referred were subjective, and conversely, they were less likely to be referred for objective referral reasons. | - Publicize counter-narratives, stories marginalized people tell about themselves and their sociocultural context in which they function, about Black girls<br>- Train teachers on understanding both historical and contemporary racism, equity, and power and biases/stereotypes about Black girls<br>- Address the dominant culture of white femininity |
| Durham Public Schools Resolution Agreement | Durham, North Carolina | Durham Public Schools:(919) 560-2000 | Following the news that Durham Public Schools was suspending Black students more than white students they entered into a resolution agreement detailing what they would do to combat the school-to-prison pipeline. | - Designation of responsible employees and development of discipline action plan<br>- Creation of definitions of misconduct that are clear and objective to the maximum extent possible<br>- Objective guidelines for documentation and when certain methods should be used<br>- Data Collection and Self-Monitoring<br>- District staff training on de-escalation approaches, including restorative justice and/or positive behavior interventions<br>- Develop guidelines for investigating SRO concerns raised by staff, students, or parents/guardians |
| Eliminating Zero Tolerance Policies in Schools: Miami-Dade County Public School's approach | Miami-Dade County Public School District | Jeremy Thompson, US DOJ Attorney | Adopting Critical Race Theory, this Article offers insight into the causes of racial inequality in America in general and in schools specifically. Adopting Restorative Justice Theory, this Article also argues that alternatives to zero-tolerance policies are more sufficient disciplinary policies than zero-tolerance policies. In this Article, I will examine the alternative disciplinary policies that the Miami-Dade County Public School District (MDCPS) has adopted as a potential model for other school districts. After adopting alternatives to school discipline, Miami-Dade County reduced school-related arrests, expulsions, and suspensions. Schools can not only play their part in reducing discrimination, but schools can also play their part in reducing U.S. debt by eliminating zero-tolerance policies, which will shut off the School-to-Prison Pipeline. | Alternatives to zero-tolerance policies:<br>- Restorative Justice<br>- Positive Behavior Support<br>- Positive Behavior Support Systems<br>- District Level Positive Behavior Support Systems<br>- See Miami-Dade County Public School District method |

# C2d. Project Components

**Page 6**

## Student Characteristics for Academic Success

*Examine findings from a 2015 report reflecting "The Effect of Student Characteristics on Leading indicators of Academic Success for Students in SPS."* Findings in this report were examined and discussed by the Coalition. A copy of the summary/implications of the report is provided below with the full report in Appendix - Attachment C.

"…Summary/Implications of the Springfield Public School Gaps in Research If racial/gender/income level disparities exist locally reflecting state and national academic achievement trends on lagging indicators, then perhaps student characteristics also impact leading indicators of academic success or failure in Springfield's public schools. While lagging indicator educational data is made readily available for analysis and interpretation, little is known about the impact of leading indicators on academic achievement in the Springfield Public School System.

National education policies are often based on latent data analysis and interpretation, which research suggests, may undermine a local school district's effort toward narrowing the educational achievement gap (Supovitz, Foley, & Mishook, 2012; Foley, et al., 2008). What if local education leaders in Springfield, MO derived policy decisions based on early [rather than latent] signs of student achievement? Leading indicator analysis and interpretation is highlighted as the key to improving academic performance and, subsequently, closing the achievement gap (Foley, et al., 2008). Irrespective of why achievement gaps exist or why policies are not working to narrow educational disparities, school districts are held accountable for student outcomes…"

**Leading Indicators of Academic Success for Students (2015 Report)**
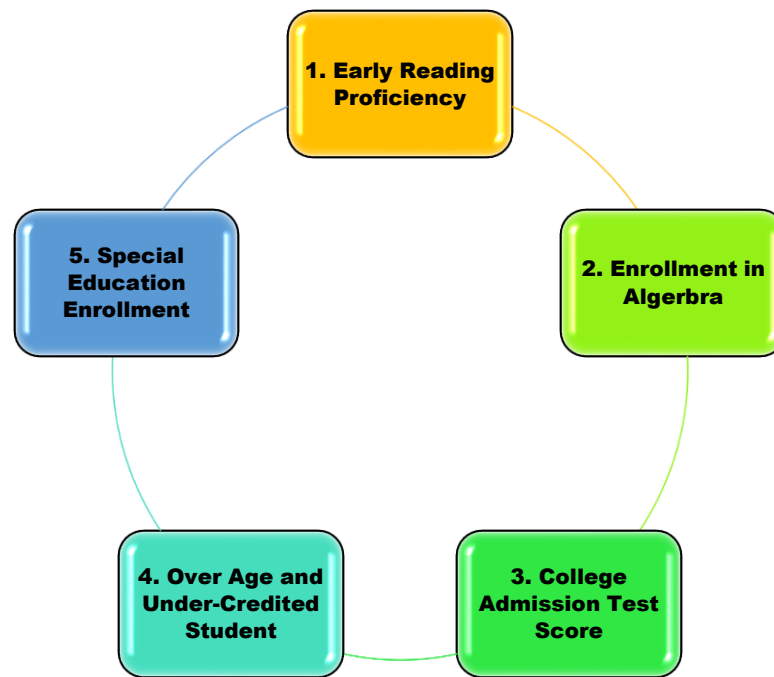


# C2e. Project Components

## Suspensions and Expulsions

*Discuss the 2012 report "How Suspensions and Expulsions Impact Students of Color" and a local Springfield/Greene County area study on expulsion of children in kindergarten.* The Coalition reviewed and discussed the report. An abstract was taken from the report and is provided below with the full report in Appendix - Attachment D.

"…While it is widely agreed upon that young children benefit from high quality preschool experiences, young children are being expelled from early childhood programs at alarming rates. Nationwide, preschoolers are expelled three times more than kindergarten through 12th grade students. Preschool expulsions are associated with expulsions in later school grades as well as negative educational and life outcomes. This study examined and determined the preschool suspension and expulsion rates in early childhood programs in Springfield, Missouri using a survey of program directors and administrators.

A total of 58 children were expelled from the 40 responding programs in the previous 12-month period giving an expulsion rate of 1.2 percent in Springfield, Missouri. There were 85 total suspensions reported by the responding programs in the previous 12-month period giving a suspension rate of 1.8 percent. The study found that Springfield's preschool expulsion rate is nearly twice that of the national average. Springfield's preschool expulsion rate of 1.2 percent is the same as the state-wide Missouri preschool expulsion rate in state-funded preschools (Missouri Preschool Project). This is 17 times higher than the K-12 expulsion rate in Missouri. The results of this study point to the need for resources for early childhood programs to meet the needs of children with challenging behavior."

# C2f. Project Components

**Page 6**

### Conscious Discipline with SPS Classrooms
*Present with local educators on the implementation of incorporating conscious discipline with five SPS classrooms and other local programs including Special Education.* The Project Director shared information on a regular basis with Springfield's Child Advocate, Dana Carroll, for the Springfield Every Child Promise project. Every Child Promise focused on addressing early childhood needs in the Springfield community. January 2018, Darr Family Foundation provided a grant that included funding to work with five SPS elementary schools and five private entities to address emotional/social needs as well as Kindergarten readiness. Conscious discipline and trauma informed training were provided through the Foundation's grant.

# C2g. Project Components

**Page 6**

### Discipline Policies

*The Project Director will facilitate conversations to review existing policies related to school behavior and discipline. Conversations will include discussions about changes made or changes that need to be made to policies and practices to reduce the student-to-prison pipeline. Conversations will include practices with children and youth in foster care or aging out of foster care as well as alternative schools that may contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline.* September 2018, SPS released its first ever student engagement survey with input from students, teachers, and community members. Report data was disaggregated by race/ethnicity, gender, free and reduced lunch, Special Education, and other factors. The report was shared and discussed with the Coalition. SPS representatives participated in the project as the pilot school district.

Prior to the start of this project, SPS started analyzing the data from the survey and making changes to practices and policies. Discussions about discipline policy changes that need to be made were included in the conversations as well as research. The Coalition had several conversations regarding different policies across the state that related to school behavior and discipline. SPS recognized the new data from the survey would enable SPS to develop specific programs based on the needs of schools to enhance achievement and opportunity for students. SPS created an internal committee who met December 2018 through May 2019 to discuss their discipline policies. The following guiding questions were used for their discussions:

1. How do we compare to peers?
2. How can we use "interventions" prior to suspension to assist schools in managing behavior?
3. Do discipline codes need to be condensed and are all discipline codes used?

**SPS committee's work led to revisions of disciplinary codes with the following principles:**
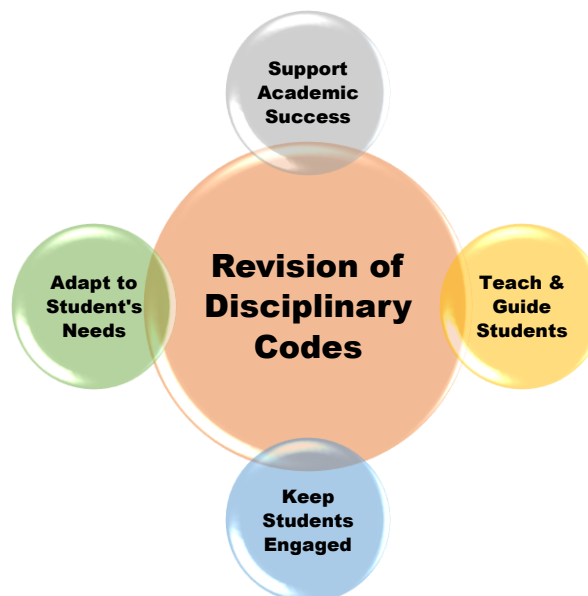


The SPS internal committee reduced the number of discipline codes from 71 to 55 and incorporated before and after school detention as the primary intervention to use before suspension. The revisions were approved by the SPS Board of Education and were implemented August 2019-2020 school year. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, the traditional school year ended mid-March of 2020 and students did not return to campus the remainder of the 2019-2020 academic school year. SPS schools reopened August 2020 with students attending two days each week from August through November. Students returned to four days in-person learning from November 2020 to mid-March 2021. All students returned to five days a week by mid-March 2021. The chart below reflects a decrease in discipline every year.

## District Discipline Incidents

| SPRINGFIELD R-XII | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Enrollment | 24,937 | 24,924 | 24,679 |
| Total Number of Incidents | 728 | 571 | 254 |
| Incident Rate (per 100 students) | 2.90 | 2.30 | 1.00 |
| **Type of Offense** | | | |
| Alcohol (number \| rate) | 40 \| 0.2 | 43 \| 0.2 | 24 \| 0.1 |
| Drug (number \| rate) | 158 \| 0.6 | 135 \| 0.5 | 87 \| 0.4 |
| Tobacco (number \| rate) | 1 \| 0.0 | 3 \| 0.0 | 0 \| 0.0 |
| Violent Act (number \| rate) | 13 \| 0.1 | 3 \| 0.0 | 8 \| 0.0 |
| Weapon (number \| rate) | 84 \| 0.3 | 88 \| 0.4 | 19 \| 0.1 |
| Other (number \| rate) | 246 \| 1.0 | 144 \| 0.6 | 67 \| 0.3 |
| **Type of Removal** | | | |
| In-School Suspension (number \| rate) | 14 \| 0.1 | 4 \| 0.0 | 1 \| 0.0 |
| Out of School Suspension (number \| rate) | 696 \| 2.8 | 567 \| 2.3 | 249 \| 1.0 |
| Expulsion (number \| rate) | 1 \| 0.0 | 0 \| 0.0 | 0 \| 0.0 |
| **Length of Removal** | | | |
| 10 Consecutive Days (number \| rate) | 530 \| 2.1 | 458 \| 1.8 | 215 \| 0.9 |
| More than 10 Consecutive Days (number \| rate) | 198 \| 0.8 | 113 \| 0.5 | 39 \| 0.2 |

Incidents -- Each incident is to be reported in which a student is removed from the traditional classroom setting for ten or more consecutive days.
NOTE: Multiple Short Sessions (cumulative removals adding up to 10 days) are not included in this analysis.
Type of Offense -- *Weapon* -Device or instrument capable of causing serious bodily injury. Does not include a knife with a blade of less than 2 1/2 inches in length. *Alcohol* -Use, possession, sale, or solicitation of intoxicating alcoholic beverages. *Drug* -Use, possession, sale or solicitation of drugs. Does not include alcohol or tobacco. *Tobacco* -Use, possession, sale, or solicitation of tobacco. *Violent Act* -As defined by school board and including, but not limited to, exertion of physical force with intent to do serious bodily harm. *Other* -Other offenses not listed above.
Type of Removal -- *In School Suspension* -Removal of student from regular classroom setting (within a school building) for a fixed amount of time with student automatically returning to regular classroom setting after the suspension is completed. *Out of School Suspension* -Removal of student from school for a fixed amount of time with student automatically returning to school after the suspension is completed. *Expulsion* -Removal of student from school for an indefinite period of time until student is reinstated by local board of education.

Data as of: 4/17/2021

Report as of: 4/21/2021

2

It is important to note that SPS also took other actions. In August 2019, a group of 28 community stakeholders and 21 SPS educators, leaders, and students, as well as active and former Board of Education members, formed the Equity and Diversity Advisory Council. The Council included representation from all five high school attendance zones and mirrored the diverse population of SPS. The Council was charged with developing recommendations and action steps for SPS to consider to positively impact four focus areas aligned with the district's strategic plan:

- Academic Success
- Attendance
- Diverse Workforce
- Graduation

Over the course of five months, the Council's work involved understanding lived experiences, heightening awareness to terminology related to equity and diversity, dissecting district data (student and staff demographics, achievement, attendance, and graduation rate), and identifying current programming and supports for underrepresented and under-resourced student groups. Additionally, the Council studied several best practices connected to the four focus areas to guide their work and recommendations. Through robust dialogue and discussion, the Council prioritized strategies in the four focus area work groups. During the final meeting December 2019, council members provided input across work teams to create an initial list of strategies for SPS to review. Final recommendations were presented to the district Spring 2020.

Through the discussions with SPS and other school districts, the Coalition learned that certain data elements are not collected and reported to DESE. For example, if a student is placed in an alternative program (previously referenced as continuation schools) because of discipline, certain demographic information is not tracked because alternative schools are considered programs. The Coalition learned that disciplinary actions are not tracked by race and ethnicity nor the number of students with an individual education plan that encounter discipline because Special Education is considered a program. The Missouri DESE does not track this data either.

# C2h. Project Components

## Page 6

### Create Community and School-Based Programs

*Provide recommendations to create community and school-based programs that offer leadership and mentoring opportunities for displaced children and youth as well as alternative discipline practices.*
SPS started empowerment groups to enhance academic success and persistence to high school on time. SPS focused on students of color at six of their 9 middle schools prior to the formation of the Coalition. By January 2019, empowerment groups were started at the other three middle schools. SPS partnered with the community-based organization, Ujima Language and Literacy Program, to build a better bridge to serve families.

In 2020, SPS partnered with CPO and the SAAB to pilot the SAAB/Brother to Brother program at two high schools, Central and Glendale. Fall 2021, Hillcrest high school will be added with plans to have the program at all five high schools. The partnership includes pathways to careers and college. As a member of the Coalition, SPS was part of conversations that took place with Missouri College Access Network (MOCAN) and several community and faith-based organizations to establish learning labs in the community to provide tutoring and technology access through the Greene County's Care Act funding with grant received by MOCAN. MOCAN is a statewide nonprofit focused on college and career pathways for students of color and students who qualify for free and reduce lunch or are Pell grant eligible.

# C2h. Project Components

## Develop Recommendations

*The Coalition will be divided into sub-committees to develop recommendations with a focused area such as legislative, existing policies, practices, and resources and services for families. The sub-committee will present their recommendations to the entire coalition for further discussions for proposed recommendations* The Coalition had several sub-committees who collectively developed and presented recommendations to the Coalition. The final meeting for the project included discussions of the proposed recommendations and Coalition members were able to provide input before the report was finalized. The recommendations are in the Research and Recommendations Report.

# C2j. Project Components

## Story Collection

*Collect stories that illustrate systemic barriers and discipline disparities, noting the consequences for students, families, and the state of Missouri. The stories will be used as part of the framework to develop recommendations.* Stories were collected from 11 families. The recommendations are in the Research and Recommendations Report.

# C2k. Project Components

## Community Tough Talks

*Hold community "Tough Talks" to increase ongoing awareness throughout the project to build support for the families, develop greater awareness and continue with the healing process.*

A series of three Tough Talks took place October to November 2020. The topics included lived experiences from people of color, which included a high school student sharing situations where he or his friends were treated or disciplined more harshly than students identified as White. Participants asked for resources on how to talk to their families/coworkers about race. Participants also shared places that were not very welcoming for students and families. These issues were delivered to the Prosper Springfield Equity and Prosperity Commission for follow up. Below, find language taken from the news release:

> "…During the 2019 Springfield Leadership visit to Lexington, Kentucky, community leaders developed a plan to scale 'Tough Talks' conversations across Springfield to provide a "safe space" for community members to participate in facilitated conversations through relevant and meaningful dialogue related to how Springfieldians experience belonging to the community. Last year, a grant through Community Foundation of the Ozarks was provided to start the Tough Talks conversations. The Tough Talks were scheduled to launch March 2020. However, impacts of COVI-19 delayed starting the series.

> Outcomes from the conversations will seek to increase dialogue, engagement and change in the Springfield community. The first topic of conversation is e-Racism: Action Toward Positive Change. The Tough Talk series will launch as part of MSU's Public Affairs Conference with a panel discussion on September 29, 2020, related to e-Racism and a community Tough Talk series that starts October 1, 2020, at 6:30 P.M. through virtual platforms.

> Individuals can access the event through www.prosperspringfield.org or the Prosper Springfield and City of Springfield Facebook pages. The "Tough Talks" series will also air through the city cable channels: Mediacom Channel 15.1 and 80 and AT&T U-verse Channel 99. To learn more about Tough Talks or how to register, please email Justin Lockhart, Director of Community Collaboratives at JLockhart@cpozarks.org."

## Stories for Baseline "What-ifs"

*The stories will serve as a baseline to create "what if" scenarios to outline alternative discipline practices and creative solutions with the success stories that can influence developing recommendations* Stories were used toward developing recommendations. The recommendations are in the Research and Recommendations Report.

# C3. Communications and Reporting

## Communications Inclusive of Project Director

*All communications will include the Project Director as well as submission of required reports.* The Project Director was included in all communications and completed all reports. In the rare instances when the Project Director was not able to attend the meeting, the Project Director provided a working agenda with details of information to share and to obtain from Coalition members.

# C4. Facilitate Planning Activities

## Communications Inclusive of Project Director

*The Project Director will document finalized planning activities using project management software.* The Project Director utilized Microsoft Project. Below, is a copy of the final updated project plan:

| Task Mode | Task Name | Duration | Start | Finish | Resource Names | % Complete | Actual Cost |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Manually Scheduled | **School-to-Prison Pipeline** | 522 days | Sat 6/1/19 | Mon 5/31/21 | CPO/PROSPER SPRINGFIELD | 100% | $0.00 |
| **Manually Scheduled** | **PHASE I - Planning** | **176 days** | **Sat 6/1/19** | **Fri 1/31/20** | **CPO/PROSPER SPRINGFIELD** | **100%** | **$0.00** |
| Manually Scheduled | Contact MODDC primary staff to schedule kick-off meeting | 3 days | Sat 6/1/19 | Tue 6/4/19 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Confirm coalition members and best dates to meet | 22 days | Sat 6/1/19 | Sun 6/30/19 | Operations Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Reserve meeting rooms | 5 days | Sat 6/1/19 | Thu 6/6/19 | Operations Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Schedule Stakeholder Analysis and Community Engagement Analysis | 5 days | Sat 6/1/19 | Thu 6/6/19 | Operations Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Develop agenda for first core team meeting | 3 days | Sat 6/1/19 | Tue 6/4/19 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Review Project Plan and make updates prior to first meeting | 94 days | Mon 6/10/19 | Thu 10/17/19 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |

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|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Manually Scheduled | Review timeline and adjust planning schedule | 92 days | Wed 6/12/19 | Thu 10/17/19 | Operations Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Work with cultural consciousness and diversity training to provide training in Sep 2019 | 102 days | Wed 6/26/19 | Thu 11/14/19 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Review Budget and make updates after first meeting. | 158 days | Wed 6/26/19 | Fri 1/31/20 | Financial Officer/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Have consultants submit W9s for services. | 89 days | Mon 7/1/19 | Thu 10/31/19 | Financial Officer/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Submit 1st Quarterly Report & Invoice | 86 days | Mon 6/3/19 | Mon 9/30/19 | Project Director | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Draft Research Plan and Make Assignments | 66 days | Mon 7/1/19 | Mon 9/30/19 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| **Manually Scheduled** | **PHASE II - Research and Data Collection** | **175 days** | **Mon 7/1/19** | **Fri 2/28/20** | **Project Director/Francine** | **100%** | **$0.00** |
| Manually Scheduled | Draft Plan for Analysis | 109 days | Tue 10/1/19 | Fri 2/28/20 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Finalize Data Collection, Research and Analysis Action Plan | 175 days | Mon 7/1/19 | Fri 2/28/20 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Draft Data Collection Plan and Make Assignments | 89 days | Mon 7/1/19 | Thu 10/31/19 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Present Lit Review & Seek Additional Input | 45 days | Sun 9/1/19 | Thu 10/31/19 | Monica Horton | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Complete 2nd Qtr. Report & Invoice | 87 days | Sun 9/1/19 | Mon 12/30/19 | Project Director | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Order identified books and other literature based on research and data collection. | 15 days | Mon 2/10/20 | Fri 2/28/20 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| **Manually Scheduled** | **PHASE III - Project Analysis** | **107 days** | **Mon 2/3/20** | **Tue 6/30/20** | **Project Director/Francine** | **100%** | **$0.00** |
| Manually Scheduled | Develop protocol for analysis and questions to prepare for report and recommendations. | 93 days | Mon 2/10/20 | Wed 6/17/20 | Contracted Services | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Update Project Plan | 10 days | Wed 3/18/20 | Tue 3/31/20 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Complete 3rd Qtr. Report & Invoice | 87 days | Mon 12/2/19 | Tue 3/31/20 | Project Director | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Adjust schedule due to COVID-19 | 64 days | Mon 3/23/20 | Thu 6/18/20 | Project Director, Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Manually Scheduled | Prepare for MODDC presentation. | 25 days | Tue 4/14/20 | Mon 5/18/20 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Identify additional research needed associated with School Resource Officers. | 32 days | Mon 5/18/20 | Tue 6/30/20 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Meet with SPS to discuss ways to increase high school graduation rate for 2020/2021 school year. | 88 days | Sun 3/1/20 | Tue 6/30/20 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| **Manually Scheduled** | **PHASE IV - Story Collections** | **164 days** | **Fri 5/1/20** | **Wed 12/16/20** | **Project Director/Francine** | **100%** | **$0.00** |
| Manually Scheduled | Contact KIP, Allen & Private Schools for Participation and to Identify Families for Story Collection | 109 days | Fri 5/1/20 | Wed 9/30/20 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Complete 4th Qtr. Report & Invoice | 87 days | Mon 3/2/20 | Tue 6/30/20 | Project Director | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Draft protocols and interview questions for story collections | 35 days | Fri 5/1/20 | Thu 6/18/20 | Analysis Team | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Update Lit. Review based on additional findings. | 117 days | Thu 5/21/20 | Fri 10/30/20 | Analysis Team | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Interview possible researcher for School Resource Office research. | 117 days | Thu 5/21/20 | Fri 10/30/20 | Research Team | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Solicit families to interview from school districts and community organizations. | 86 days | Thu 6/18/20 | Thu 10/15/20 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Develop contact form a research study permission form for interviews. | 24 days | Mon 5/18/20 | Thu 6/18/20 | Analysis Team | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Develop schedule for interviews. | 86 days | Thu 6/18/20 | Thu 10/15/20 | Analysis Team | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Submit IRB approval request to MSU | 66 days | Wed 7/1/20 | Wed 9/30/20 | Research Team | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Identify interviewers and provide training. | 77 days | Wed 7/1/20 | Thu 10/15/20 | Research Team | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Conduct interviews | 23 days | Thu 10/1/20 | Sat 10/31/20 | Analysis Team | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Draft findings from interviews | | Thu 10/15/20 | 11/30/20 | Analysis Team | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Conduct project evaluation for year one of project | 66 days | Sat 8/1/20 | Fri 10/30/20 | Evaluator | 100% | $0.00 |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Manually Scheduled | Complete 5th Qtr. Report & Invoice | 88 days | Mon 6/1/20 | Wed 9/30/20 | Project Director | 100% | $0.00 |
| **Manually Scheduled** | **PHASE V - Draft Findings and Recommendations** | **87 days** | **Tue 12/1/20** | **Wed 3/31/21** | **Project Director/Francine** | **100%** | **$0.00** |
| Manually Scheduled | Complete 6th Qtr. Report & Invoice | 88 days | Tue 9/1/20 | Thu 12/31/20 | Project Director | 100% | $0.00 |
| **Manually Scheduled** | **PHASE VI - Evaluation and Wrap Up** | **346 days** | **Mon 2/3/20** | **Mon 5/31/21** | **Project Director/Francine, Project Evaluator** | **100%** | **$0.00** |
| Manually Scheduled | Final Quarterly Report | 22 days | Sat 5/1/21 | Mon 5/31/21 | Project Director | 100% | $0.00 |
| Manually Scheduled | Complete 7th Qtr. Report & Invoice | 87 days | Tue 12/1/20 | Wed 3/31/21 | Project Director/Francine | 100% | $0.00 |

## Monthly Activities Report

*A monthly activities report will be used internally to coordinate updates, milestones, expected outcomes and program evaluation data on a predetermined schedule.* The Project Director developed and delivered to Coalition members monthly meeting notes that included updates, milestones, expected outcomes and predetermined schedules.

## Project Management Software

*The Project Director will use project management software to track communications, due dates, set alerts, milestones and ensure timely submittal of reports and the following data will be tracked: pertinent records, budget estimates to actuals, receipts, resources, project tasks.* The Project Director used Microsoft Project to track project status, dues dates, set alerts and capture milestones for timely submittal of reports. Budget estimates to actuals and receipts were tracked through CPO financial tracking software. Project resources and project tasks were tracked through Microsoft Project and monthly meeting notes.

# C4. Facilitate Planning Activities

## Finalized Planning Activities

*The Project Director will document finalized planning activities using project management software.* The Project Director used Microsoft Project software to document finalized planning activities.

## Finalized Planning Activities

*All planning activities will be in the project plan. The project plan will have detailed information related to tasks, project priorities, project updates, milestones, upcoming meetings, planned sessions with families, resources, budget comparisons with estimates and actuals and other related relevant notes.* The Project Director used Microsoft Project to track project status, dues dates, set alerts and capture milestones for timely submittal of reports. Budget estimates to actuals and receipts were tracked through CPO financial tracking software. Project resources and project tasks were tracked through Microsoft Project and monthly meeting notes.

## Engagement Incentives

*Incentives will be utilized to keep families engaged and participating with a community disability and academic success resource fair near the end of the project.* The Project Director learned through the MODDC Contract Manager that incentives were not allowed. Gift cards, for a store of their choice, were donated to the families who interviewed. The resource fair did not take place of COVID-19 restrictions. However, when we follow up with the families, we plan to provide resources.

# C5. Outreach

## Communication Plan

*A communication plan with coalition recruitment materials will be developed to demonstrate the methodology that will be used to conduct outreach to the African American/Black families with children and youth.* The negative effects of COVID-19 severely impacted outreach plans that would have taken place statewide for the duration of the project with face-to-face interactions. The Project Director did conduct outreach through Facebook, News-Leader (a local newspaper) and the local Unite Publications with a large African American/Black readership. Coalition members also recruited Coalition members, guest speakers and identified families to interview. Several news articles were written over the past two years with a focus on students of color, resources, and opportunities.

## African American/Black Churches and Community Events

*A communication plan with coalition recruitment materials will be developed to demonstrate the methodology that will be used to conduct outreach to the African American/Black families with children and youth.* The negative effects of COVID-19 severely impacted outreach plans that would have taken place in the local Springfield community. All gatherings of 10 or more people were cancelled. However, the Project Director used Zoom, telephone calls, text messaging and emails to connect with the churches and provide resources as well as grant funds through the MOCAN Greene County Cares funds to provide tutors and create learning labs, so students would not become further behind.

## Organizations Who Provide Resources for Families

*Organizations that provide services and resources to families with children and youth who have I/DD will connect with other families to share their stories.* The negative effects of COVID-19 severely impacted outreach plans that would have taken place in the local Springfield community. All gatherings of 10 or more people were cancelled. However, the Project Director connected by Zoom, telephone calls, text messaging and emails to connect with organizations who contacted members to share stories. Ujima Language and Literacy Program was a key connection in Springfield. Also, Coalition members who are advocates for this work connected families to the project to share their stories.

## Spanish Translations for Interviewees

*Alliance for Leadership, Advancement and Success (ALAS) will provide Spanish translation services if needed.* No translation services were needed for any of the families. However, ALAS did translate the quarterly reports that were submitted to MODDC to Spanish.

## Balance of Self-Advocates and Families/Parents

*The Operations Director will ensure there is a balance between self-advocates and parents/family members as part of the outreach for recruitment of families to share their stories.* There was a balance.

**Tough Talks – Near End of Project**

*Near the end of the project, "Tough Talks" will take place in the community to further the awareness about the issues.* Tough Talks took place in October 2020 and November 2020. A high school student spoke at one of the events and shared his lived experiences. Other issues were discussed that involved different truant practices for Black students versus other students. Recommendations were provided that are included in this report. Due to COVID-19, a hybrid model of in-person and Zoom was utilized because of limited physical distancing. Also, we were not able to develop relationships across the state to hold regional Tough Talks for the same reason.

**Full Outreach Plan**

*The full outreach plan will be finalized the first month of the project.* This was completed.

# C6. Logistics Arrangements

**Page 7**

**Travel, Food, Lodging and Meeting Arrangements**

*The Operations Director will make all travel, food, lodging, and meeting arrangements following state guidelines and within state per diem rates.* All meetings took place via Zoom because of COVID-19, so very little was spent on travel.

# C7. Organize All Project Materials

**Translation Services**

*The Operations Director will arrange verbal and written translation services.* Translation services were not needed by any members of the Coalition or families interviewed. However, the quarterly reports were translated into Spanish for future use (Appendix – Attachment H).

# C8. Coordinate Meetings

## Coordinate Meetings

*The Project Director will coordinate, facilitate, and ensure the meeting environment for participants is conducive to meet the goals of the project through coalition discussions and collecting stories from families.* The Project Director coordinated all meetings and arranged for the Zoom meetings.

# D. Expected Outcomes

## Logic Model Outcomes

*Prosper Springfield will provide measurable outcomes that are further defined in the Logic Model.* The Project Director reviewed the logic model located in the Appendix – Attachment D. All outcomes were met except for the annual meeting with MSU because of COVID-19. MSU plans to have a face-to-face meeting in 2022, the Coalition plans to report of their findings and recommendation at the MSU Collaborative Diversity Conference in 2022.

**Project Objectives Achieved:**

**IFA.1.1** -13 African American/Black students with/without an I/DD were represented within school discipline and success story interviews shared by parents/caregivers.

**IFA.1.2** - 10 Family members (representing 13 students with/without I/DD) participated in virtual interviews sharing their lived experiences with school discipline/success.

**IFA.1.3** - 19 'other individuals' (Coalition Members) participated in Council-supported in activities designed to increase their knowledge.

**SC.1** Research project activities reflect a minimum of five research-supported recommendations for systemic changes designed to help transform fragmented approaches into a coordinated and effective system that assures individuals with developmental disabilities and their families participate in the design of and have access to needed community services, individualized supports, and other forms of assistance that promote self-determination, independence, productivity, and integration and inclusion in all facets of community life.

**SC.1.3.1** Findings from the school -to- prison pipeline research project show promising practices that will promote systems change increasing the likelihood of equitable access to special education services and improving graduation rates for African American/Black students with and without an I/DD.

## Sustainability Recommendations

*Any recommendations that can be implemented in Greene County can be sustained in the current Prosper Springfield infrastructure for continuous review of updates and success measurement.* SPS had initiatives they started before this project to address disparities in discipline. There were several other initiatives and programs that were enhanced during the project and will continue with sustainable systems SPS put in place. Springfield's Mayor created an Equity and Equality workgroup to make recommendations for the city to enhance access and accountability. Prosper Springfield Director chairs the Equity and Prosperity Commission, who is developing recommendations that address system issues in the areas of education, housing, job/financial security, transportation, health, housing, and public safety. These efforts are reported publicly for accountability and continuous review.

## Education Recommendations

*Expected outcomes will be added to the Education Section of the Prosper Springfield work for ongoing review and success measurement.* Prosper Springfield is in the process of developing citywide recommendations with a focus on equity and equality. Recommendations from this project will be included in this work that has oversight by the Mayor's Office. The recommendations will be completed by December 31, 2021.

## Stakeholder Partnerships

*Establishment of partnerships between stakeholders including civil rights organizations, and other community organizations representative of diverse populations students, families, school staff, law enforcement, juvenile justice practitioners and faith communities.* Prosper Springfield recently realigned Springfield's educational steering committee to create the Springfield Education Network with a "cradle to college/career model" focused on students of color, free and reduced lunch eligible and Pell grant eligible.

## School -to- Prison Pipeline Awareness

*Measurable increase in awareness by all stakeholders of the issues that have culminated in the school-to-prison pipeline.* Critical Race Theory perceptions have been heightened across the nation and at SPS board meetings. Triple the number of parents expressed the need to continue diversity and equity training through SPS than previously and SPS has a diversity task force with members from the community. SPS has provided a series of trainings. All trainings, with the exception of Facing Racism, were facilitated by members of SPS Department of Equity and Diversity.

**2019 Fall "Facing Racism" Training facilitated by Missouri State, Division of Diversity, and Inclusion** Senior Leadership, Board of Education members and Equity Champions attended

**2019 Fall District-Wide Equity Training (inaugural, topics included)**
- Implicit Bias
- Stereotypes
- Microaggressions
- Impact vs. Intent

**2019-2020 Equity Champion Trainings (topics included)**
- Historical Analysis of Race and Racism in US
- Identity Development
- Intersectionality
- Implicit Bias
- Xenophobia
- Equity Barriers faced during Covid-19

**2020 Spring Executive Leadership Team Equity Growth Learning (topics included)**
- Identity and Intersectionality
- White Privilege

**2020 Senior Leadership Team Equity Growth (topics included)**
Case Studies to address incidents of bias and microaggressions

**2020 Fall District-Wide Equity Training (2nd, topics included)**
- Systems of Oppression
- Systemic Racism
- White Supremacy
- Anti-Racism

**2020 Fall Induction Equity Training (Induction is for new certificated staff hired by the district)**
- Implicit Bias
- Stereotypes
- Microaggressions
- Impact vs. Intent

**2020-2021 Equity Champions Training (topics included)**
- Anti-Racism
- Systemic Racism
- Covid-19 and Racism
- Ethnic Identity Development
- Implicit and Unconscious Bias
- Microaggressions
- Identity and Intersectionality

**2020-2021 Equity Leadership Team Equity Growth Learning (topics included)**
- Anti-Racism
- White Supremacy
- Identity and Community

**2020-2021 Senior Leadership Team Equity Growth Learning (topics included)**
- Anti-Racism
- Case Studies to address incidents of bias and microaggressions

# Future Graduation Rates of African American/Black Children and Youth

*Formulation of knowledge, data, and ideas to provide a foundational plan for future project implementation to address the graduation rates of African American/Black children and youth, school discipline disparities and the school-to-prison pipeline.* One of the recommendations includes establishing advocates for students across the state like the MODDC Latino Leadership Project and to have DESE collect additional data that is not currently collected that could provide better data to track improvement and be more proactive than reactive. For example, when requesting additional data asked from the MODDC, SPS provided the following information: "Depending on the content, we may have to enter into a MOU with SPS for further details outside of public and state reporting."

SPS was a key partner and member of the Coalition. The Project Director believes SPS' responses to the additional data requests would be like other school districts. It may be best to ask DESE to require school districts to report the data requested in the questions below for statewide analysis.

1. **How many culturally diverse allies advocated for at least one system change initiative that will show a measurable increase in the graduation rate of African American/Black youth with I/DD?** SPS does not track this information.

2. **How many youth mentoring projects were identified to increase the graduation rates of African American/Black youth?** SPS has partnered with the SAAB, which is a mentoring program focused on enhancing academic success and graduation rates for African American/Black male students. SPS started middle school empowerment groups as an initiative born out of the Lumina Foundation grant a few years ago. This initiative also enhances academic success and graduation rates. The SAAB program launched in 2021 and the student empowerment groups are in year four. For these reasons, there is no current data to assess the impact on graduation rates.

3. **How many best practices are recommended for systems change to address the school -to- prison pipeline in Missouri?** SPS utilizes external entities to assess current data. These entities provide strategies on increasing the number of underrepresented and under-resourced students taking advanced coursework, therefore creating a pathway to increase the graduation rate of the groups and ultimately address the school -to- prison pipeline in the state of Missouri. The entities are Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) and Equal Opportunity Schools (EOS). Last year, SPS formed a taskforce of community members, students, district staff and administrators to address equity and diversity in school systems. One of the focus areas was graduation. A sub-committee engaged in this topic on a deeper level and provided recommendations to the SPS administration and Board of Education members.

4. **How many urban school districts, identified evidence –based practices they can utilize in their schools to improve the graduation rates of African American/Black youth with I/DD?** See answer No. 3 above.

5. **How many youth mentoring projects will be recommended to the full Council?** SPS has two youth mentoring projects in place that are sanctioned by SPS: SAAB/Brother to Brother Program and Student Empowerment Groups.

6. **How many policies and systems changes will be recommended to raise the graduation rates of African American/Black youth with I/DD?** There are not any policy and system changes specific for Black students at this time. However, SPS sees the last question related to practices that are in place for students who require an IEP that addresses graduation and successful education outcomes.

7. **How many policy and system changes will be recommended to identify and decrease targeted disparities in school discipline?** A review of the student handbook takes place yearly, which is when recommendations regarding discipline are made. Discussions regarding disparities are part of the conversations and a member of Equity and Diversity participates in these discussions. African American/Black students with I/DD will have a measurable increase in graduation rates and successful education outcomes.

   The student's IEP team convenes annually, and more frequently if needed, to review the student's IEP and transition plan to determine a program of study that outlines the four-year plan to work towards the student's postsecondary goals. This includes services, supports, and activities required for the student to meet their transition goals for training, education, employment, and where appropriate, independent living skills. Part of the transition plan is to help provide information and link to outside agencies such as the Regional Center and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

# 3B1. Roles and Responsibilities

## Children/Youth with and Without Disabilities

*The Project Director will establish a balance between participants with children and youth with and without disabilities.* The interviewer selected a balance of participants to ensure a balance of youth with and with an I/DD. The participants were as follows:

11  individuals participated in the Council-supported activities including 10 parents/caregivers and one adult male with an intellectual disability. Interviewees represented a total of 13 children ages 4-20 years old. Sixty-nine percent (69 percent) had a disability diagnosis in seven disability categories defined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (2004):

- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Emotional Disturbance (Oppositional Defiant Disorder)
- Intellectual disability
- Other Health Impaired (ADD/ADHD/Medical Migraines/Sensory Processing Disorder)
- Specific Learning Disability (math/reading)
- Speech or Language Impairment
- Traumatic Brain Injury

Interviewed participants' children represented students from urban (38 percent), rural (54 percent), and suburban (8 percent) school districts across 11 school districts in Missouri. Eight students were African American/Black, and 5 students were African American/Black bi-racial. The majority of children represented were male (69 percent) and had a disability diagnosis (77.7 percent). The top four disability representative of students in this study were: ADHD (55 percent), Intellectual disability (33 percent), Autism (22 percent) and Specific Learning Disability (22 percent).

# 3B2. Roles and Responsibilities

## Stakeholder's Engagement Analysis

*The Operations Director will conduct a Stakeholder's Engagement analysis to ensure the coalition participants represent private, public, and social sectors of the community.* The analysis was conducted, and all three sectors were contacted and participated in the project. Coalition members who participated by Zoom provided their information through email and it was added to the analysis.

# 3B3. Roles and Responsibilities

## Community Equity-Focused Analysis

*The Operations Director will conduct a Community Equity-Focused analysis to confirm that outreach to culturally informed stakeholders and/or cultural brokers are identified and included at the beginning of the project and maintained throughout the project.* A community equity focused assessment was completed at the beginning of the project to ensure that there were no gaps.

# 3B4. Roles and Responsibilities

## Culturally Competent Coalition

*MSU, Division for Diversity and Inclusion will measure cultural competence for the project.* MSU had Coalition members complete an assessment to determine level of cultural competence. Based on the results of the surveys, MSU provided cultural competence training for Coalition members. Members who were not able to attend the training were able to read the meeting notes from the training to obtain the same information.

# 3B5. Roles and Responsibilities

## Story Collections

*Dr. Shurita Thomas-Tate will work with Monica Horton to collect the stories.* Monica Horton worked with Dr. Shurita Thomas-Tate, founder of Ujima Language and Literacy. She is an associate professor of speech-language pathology in the Department of Communication Sciences and Disorders at MSU. Last year, Dr. Shurita Thomas Tate was elected to the SPS Board of Education.

# 3C2. Long Term Goals

## Connection to Interviewed Families

*Opportunities to stay connected with the families will be established based on input from the story-sharing participants to connect them to community resources and services to support the needs of their families.* Monica Horton has contact with the families. COVID-19 impacts did not allow face to face engagement with the interviewees to develop long-term relationships. However, the Coalition plans to stay connected and share resources as outlined in the project Sustainability Plan.

# 3D1. What to Measure

## Monthly Scheduled Review

*The schedule will be evaluated monthly to ensure that the project stays with the schedule by creating milestones that will be reported in the monthly activity report.* Microsoft Project Planning software was used for the duration of the project. The schedule was also discussed at each meeting and action items captured in meeting notes.

# 3D2. Quality

## Pre and Post Evaluations

*Pre- and post-evaluations will be provided to project participants before meetings to assess how much participants know about the topics and if greater knowledge and awareness was gained by the end of the meeting. The post evaluation will include an option to share ideas for improving meetings and focused goals for the work.* Pre evaluations were provided in 2019 and 2020. As far as the post evaluation, the Project Director was delayed in sending the post evaluation to Coalition members. Most of the Coalition members who are in education, ended their school years late May 2021. The Project Director did not send the post-evaluation until June 2021. As of the submission date of this report, only seven Coalition members submitted a post-evaluation.

| Satisfaction Survey (COALITION MEMBERS) |
|---|

Pre survey response rate was 50 percent.

| Satisfaction Survey (INTERVIEWEES) |
|---|

Interviewee surveys were submitted to the research project manager for review and analysis which includes a response rate of 100 percent.

| Satisfaction Survey (COALITION MEMBERS) |
|---|

Post survey response rate was 33 percent.

# 3D3. Cost

**Page 9**

## Monthly Budget Meetings

*The Financial Officer will ensure sufficient funds are available for the duration of the project. Monthly budget meetings will take place to forecast and adjust. The CPO accounting system will be utilized to track funds separately from other funds and monthly income and expense statements will be prepared for the financial officer to track and fund balances, variances and develop projections.* The Financial Officer reviewed funding monthly with reports from the CPO accounting system and shared updates on a regular basis with the Coalition. The Financial Officer included budget reports with the quarterly reports to the MODDC Contract Manager. All funds and expenses were tracked and supported with invoices. Budget projections and variances were provide to Coalition members. The final financial budget report and budget adjustments is in Appendix – Attachment G.

# 3D4. Stakeholder Satisfaction

## Evaluation Ratings

*Evaluations using a rating from 1 to 5 will measure the level of satisfaction as well as informal interactions when discussing the progress of the project.* Pre evaluations were provided in 2019 and 2020 to Coalition members. Adjustments were made based on some of the comments (e.g., project was slow in starting because of the infrastructure development and assessments). Interviewees also completed an assessment, but only one time because there was only one interaction via Zoom with the interviewees. Interviewee feedback from satisfaction surveys revealed overall positive ratings with the interview process. In some cases, interviewees were less hopeful that systemic changes would take place from project participation. The project evaluation is in Appendix - Attachment E.

# 3D5. MODDC Performance Measures

## Logic Model Long Term Goals

*The MODDC performance measures will be included as long-term goals in the Logic Model that serves as the framework for measuring outcomes from the project.* Logic Model includes the MODDC performance measures in the Appendix – Attachment F.

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## What to Measure - MODDC Performance Measures

| | |
|---|---|
| (IFA.1.1) | Measure the number of people with developmental disabilities who participated in Council supported activities designed to increase their knowledge of how to take part in decisions that affect their lives, the lives of others, and/or systems. |
| (IFA.1.2) | Measure the number of family members who participated in Council supported activities designed to increase their knowledge of how to take part in decisions that affect the family, the lives of others, and/or systems. |
| (IFA.1.3) | Measure the number of "other individuals" who participated in Council supported activities designed to increase their knowledge. |
| (SC.1) | Measure the number of efforts to transform fragmented approaches into a coordinated and effective system. |
| (SC.1.3.1) | Measure the number of promising practices created. |
| (SC.1.4.1) | Measure the number of people trained or educated through systemic change initiatives. |
| (SC.1.5.1) | Measure the number of Council supported systems change activities with organizations actively involved. |
| (SC.2.1) | Measure the number of efforts that led to the improvement of best or promising practices, policies, procedures, statute, or regulation changes. |

# E. Methodology

## Measure Cultural Competence

*The pre-evaluations and meeting evaluations will serve as the means to identify and measure cultural competence of the project by ensuring that part of the outcomes include community engagement that can lead to increased knowledge and awareness of the school-to-prison pipeline.* The interviewer selected a balance of participants to ensure a balance of youth with and with an I/DD.

<u>**DEMOGRAPHICS**</u>

**Total** children: 13
**Race**: African American/Black: 8
Mixed race (African American Black Bi-racial): 5
**Male**: 9
**Female**:  4
**Urban district**: 5
      a)  Males: 5
      b)  Females: 0
**Rural district**:  7
      a)  Males: 4
      b)  Females: 3
**Suburban district**: 1
      a)  Males: 1
      b)  Females:0
**Age range**: 17 males; 12 male/18 female; 10 male; 14 male/8 female; 10 female/12 male, 7 female; 4.5male; 20 male
Males: ages 4-20
Females: ages 7-18

**Disability**:
None: 4 (2 male, 2 female)
Yes: 9 (7 male, 2 female)
**Type**
ASD: 2
ADD: 1
ADHD: 5
SLD: 2
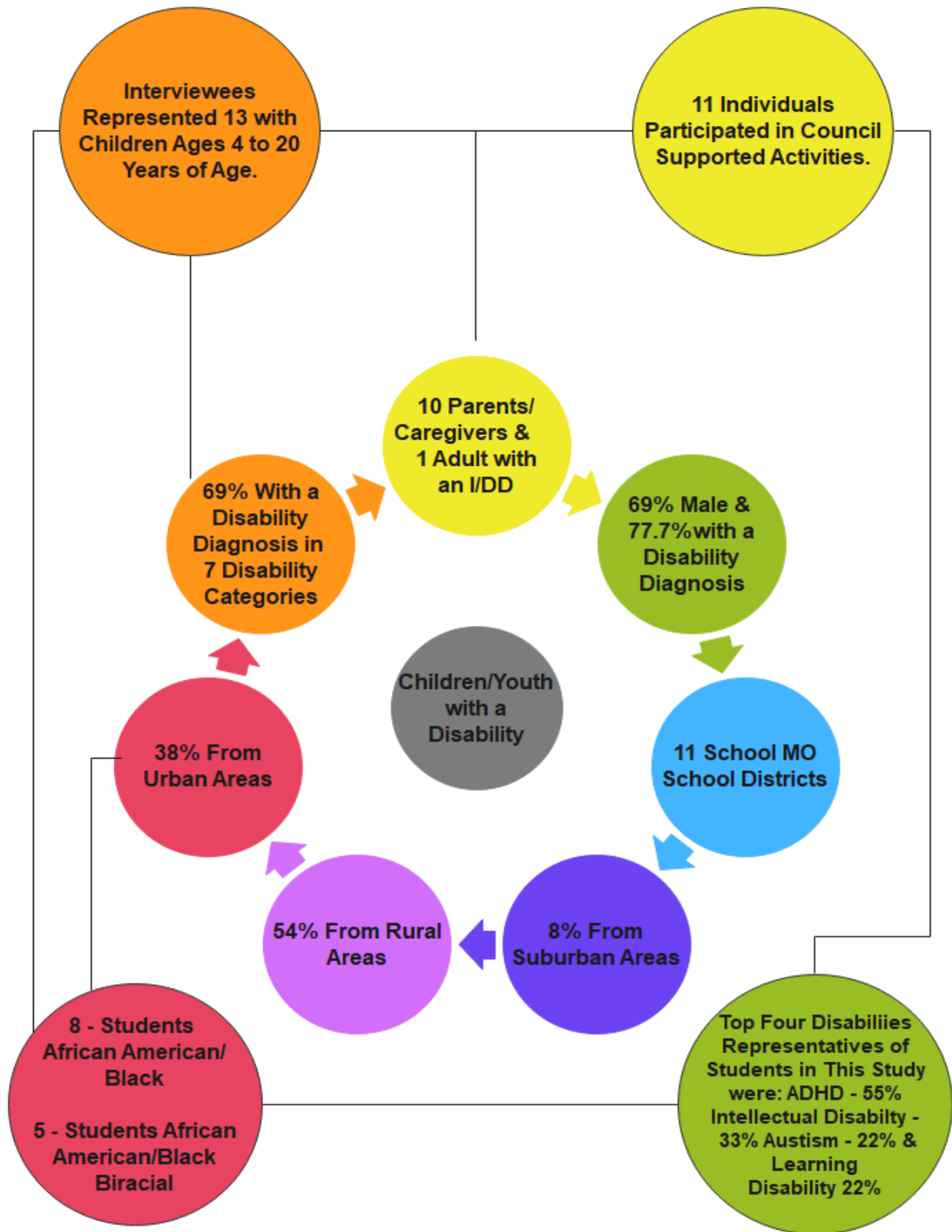Intellectual disability: 3
Speech and language impairment: 1
ODD:1
OHI - Medical Migraines: 1
Sensory Processing Disorder: 1
TBI: 1

# DEMOGRAPHICS

Interviewees Represented 13 with Children Ages 4 to 20 Years of Age.

11 Individuals Participated in Council Supported Activities.

10 Parents/ Caregivers & 1 Adult with an I/DD

69% With a Disability Diagnosis in 7 Disability Categories

69% Male & 77.7% with a Disability Diagnosis

Children/Youth with a Disability

38% From Urban Areas

11 School MO School Districts

54% From Rural Areas

8% From Suburban Areas

8 - Students African American/ Black

5 - Students African American/Black Biracial

Top Four Disabiliies Representatives of Students in This Study were: ADHD - 55% Intellectual Disabilty - 33% Austism - 22% & Learning Disability 22%

## Community Updates

*Online updates through the Prosper Springfield website and newspaper publications will provide updates to the community to know about the discussions taking place in the meetings.* Online and face to face updates took place through community leadership engagements, Leadership Springfield, newspaper articles and Facebook.

## Tough Talk Sessions

*Monthly "Tough Talk" sessions will be held after coalition meetings to keep the conversation "alive" in the community to further educate the community and increase awareness.* Needing more time to discuss and analyze the Tough Talk conversations was one of the major lessons learned. The Tough Talk Collaborative determined that every other month was better for the Tough Talk series. The Collaborative also learned that sensitive issues need to be talked about publicly at the right time and not when major national issues are taking place. For example, a discussion about police interactions was going to take place but it was near the time the Springfield NAACP Chapter delivered a set of demands to the Springfield Police Department related to choke-holds, body cameras and other related issues. The conversation has stayed alive across the State of Missouri because of racial tensions and academic achievement disparities, especially for African American/Black students.

Missouri Department of Higher Education and Workforce Development, Missouri Department for Elementary and Secondary Education and MOCAN partnered shortly after learning shifted to online learning, March 2020, to address technology and equipment needs based on data that demonstrated African American/Black students had less access than other students. MOCAN obtained a grant as part of the Greene County CARES Act to provide direct funding to higher education institutions, and faith-based/community-based organizations to provide tutoring, mentoring, devices, internet access and create learning labs for entities where African American/Blacks had trusting relationships.

All 14 organizations received information about this project and the importance of creating pathways for access and success for increasing on-time high school graduation rates for African American/Black students. The grant also was used to address the needs of students who either had an IEP or should have had an IEP. In one case, the grant paid for an assessment for one family to determine if their child had dyslexia. The assessment led to an IEP. In another case, a biracial college student was not able to complete their freshman year because the only equipment for her to use was on campus. The grant covered the cost of the glasses ,and the student was able to see her grandparents for the first time in life without just seeing fuzziness!

# E. Phase I: Planning

## Refinement of Project Plan Components

*In Phase 1, the Project Director will refine components of the plan that includes: project plan, meeting planning matrix, logic model, budget, communication plan, sustainability plan.* This was completed and documented in meeting notes and through the Microsoft Project Planning software.

# E. Phase V: Reporting

## Meeting Outcomes/Inputs

*Outputs and outcomes for each meeting, and any needed changes, based on evaluations, will be captured in a comprehensive report.* This was completed and documented in meeting notes and through the Microsoft Project Planning software.

## Contracted Project Evaluator

*A contracted project evaluator will assess project performance against the project plan, Logic Model, and NOFA to evaluate.* Lenica Consulting Group, LLC was hired to conduct the evaluation. The executive summary is provided below, and the full report is in the Appendix – Attachment E.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Missouri Developmental Disability Council (MODDC) awarded grant funds to CPO to examine the school-to-prison pipeline in Missouri. The school-to-prison pipeline research study was a two-year analysis of the Missouri's school discipline data, the disparate impact of exclusionary disciplinary practices, and recommendations for systemic changes for African American/Black students with and without an intellectual/developmental disability (I/DD). Coalition members reviewed the literature, conducted interviews with 10 African American/Black families with children with and without an I/DD, then made recommendations to MODDC.

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, results showed that project objectives all 6 phases of the project plan are complete. Coalition members finalized a literature review to include school-to-prison pipeline background, data, and best practices. Ten families have been interview for research purposes but have not participated in an improvement program. Results from interviews show that interviewees representing nine African American/Black children with a disability, have been impacted by school disciplinary practices at the intersection of race and disability. Parents provided anecdotal evidence from their lived experiences. Additionally, based on self-reports, parental responses offered insights into systemic changes that require consideration. Council-supported research project activities among Coalition members and Interviewees have also been evaluated based on satisfaction surveys.

# E. Phase VI: Data Collection

## Data Collection Methods

*The Project Director will use the following data collection methods: evaluations, informal interviews, and observations during the meetings.* This was completed by the Project Director, documented in meeting notes and through the Microsoft Project Planning software. Also, Lenica Consulting Group, LLC was hired to conduct the interviews, evaluations and make observations during meetings.

## Operations Director Data Collection

*The Operations Director will collect the data for the chosen methods through evaluations (after each meeting), informal interviews (impromptu conversations with participants), and observations during the meetings (note taking).* This was completed by Lenica Consulting Group, LLC to ensure integrity to the process. The contractor provided the information to the Operations Director. The project had a dedicated staff person to the project through October 2020. The Project Director absorbed the project responsibilities of this staff person after the person ended their employment with Prosper Springfield.

## Project Value

*Data collection will include monitoring outputs and outcomes for each meeting and tracking participant participation so that part of the evaluation can "tell the story" of the value of this project.* This was completed by the Project Director, documented in meeting notes and through the Microsoft Project Planning software.

# 4. Sustainability

## Project Participant Engagement

*The Project Director will keep project participants engaged and connected to resources to further engage and connect the African American communities to needed services, resources, and advocacy.* This was a challenge for a research project and because of limitation with COVID-19. Only one engagement took place with the project participants in the form of the interviews. The Coalition plans to follow up with the 11 families represented. However, a recommendation in the Research and Recommendations Report includes advocacy training.

Part of the Coalitions discussions on long-term sustainability included information and presentations that can be incorporated into existing organizations that work with students with I/DD. CPO/Capable Kids and Families Program, People First, Red Circle, Ujima Language and Literacy and the Urban League of Greater Kansas City, Parent Education and Empowerment Center.

CPO Capable Kids and Families Program (Springfield, MO)
Support system for families with children with special needs. The program empowers parents and families to focus on their children's potential for development and the program works to increase the children's developmental gains while supporting the family with appropriate resources and connections.

People First Boone County (Columbia, MO)
People First is a self-advocacy organization. The members of People First formed the organization to be run by and for people with developmental disabilities, but membership is open to anyone. They provide aid, training to work with individuals with disabilities, they partnered with ACLU for research on disciplinary practices in Boone County. They also have an attorney network and are connected to an ACE alternative school and help families with expulsions. They offer a "race matters" support group, a work group on how IEPs work and share rights with ADA and IDEA. They have Zoom meetings and provide education around IEPs, resources to advocate, and educate parents and youth about their rights. They also provide education around technology with families to continue to be a part of the decision-making/discussions.

Red Circle (St. Louis, MO)
A Red Circle's Education Advocacy Coalition focus is to improve educational outcomes for North County's students. They focus on the following school districts: Normandy, Jennings, Ferguson-Florissant, Hazelwood, and Riverview Gardens. The Red Circle's Education Advocacy Coalition has three committees:

1. School Discipline/RJ/Social Emotional Learning
2. Equitable School Funding
3. IEP Support and SSD in North County

Urban League of Greater Kansas City/Parent Education and Empowerment Center
They equip parents with the necessary skills and resources to serve as engaged advocates throughout their child's academic journey. They provide parents with support to navigate school systems and manage their child's education. They provide , the parent education and parent empowerment coaches and legal consultants free of charge and  provide one-on-one support to help parents overcome obstacles, navigate detours, and avoid the potholes they may encounter as they guide their child's journey towards a quality education.

Ujima Language and Literacy (Springfield, MO)
Their goal is to provide opportunities to increase language and literacy skills for all children, ages birth-11 years old. Their goals include:

- Increasing summer learning opportunities and decreasing summer learning loss
- Increasing kindergarten readiness skills
- Increasing grade-level reading by third grade
- Increasing early literacy skills
- Promoting family literacy
- Promoting healthy families
- Encouraging a love of reading and learning

## Establishment of Community Workgroups

*Community work groups will be established through the Prosper Springfield initiative to keep participants engaged and to recruit additional families and individuals to grow the community network.* Springfield, MO has the largest school district in Missouri. SPS created a diversity task force with community engagement and presented recommendations to the school board to establish Goal 5, with a direct focus on diversity and inclusion. The newly redesigned Springfield Education Network will also focus on establishing community work groups.

**-o-**

# Appendix