The promise of a teacher professional development program in reducing the racial disparity in classroom exclusionary discipline

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Authors and Affiliations:

Anne Gregory, Ph.D.
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

Joseph P. Allen, Ph.D.
University of Virginia

Amori Yee Mikami, Ph.D.
University of British Columbia

Christopher A. Hafen, Ph.D.
University of Virginia

Robert C. Pianta, Ph.D.
University of Virginia
Why classrooms matter

Classrooms are where students become:

• Engaged in academics
• Motivated to pursue learning
• Invested in school community and rules
Why classrooms matter

Classrooms are where students become:

- Disengaged, unmotivated, disinvested.

Classrooms are where negative teacher-student interactions occur.

- Teachers issue exclusionary discipline
Classroom exclusionary discipline

• Teachers send students to administrator offices for perceived misbehavior.

• Administrators issue consequences (e.g., suspension).

• Black-White gap in classroom exclusion.

(Gregory, Nygreen, & Moran, 2006; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002)
Teachers and African American students

• Compared to White students, African American students tend to experience less support and more unfair treatment from their teachers.

• Teachers have more negative perceptions of African American students.
  – Seen as more defiant and disruptive
  – Issued harsher disciplinary consequences

(Bradshaw, Mitchell, O’Brennan, & Leaf, 2010; Fabelo et al., 2011; Gregory & Weinstein, 2008; Horner, Fireman, & Wang, 2010; Thompson, 2012; Wald & Kurlaender, 2003)
Strengthening relationships is prevention

- With stronger relationships and more engaging instruction, negative interactions might be prevented in the first place.
- When a student breaks the rules, stronger relationships can help diffuse conflict and disrupt any preconceived notions or unconsciously held stereotypes.
- With trust and good will, cooperation can be elicited.

Policy Challenge

• If systematic teacher supports are mandated in high suspension schools, what should policy makers look for when selecting a promising program to reduce the racial discipline gap?

(Losen, 2011)
The My Teaching Partner-Secondary (MTP-S) professional development program

- **Sustained** over the whole school year

- **Focused** on teachers’ interactions with students as viewed through regular video-recorded instruction

- **Rigorous** – based on research/theory and the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)
Classroom Assessment & Scoring System - Secondary (CLASS-S)

**Emotional Support**
- Positive Climate
- Teacher Sensitivity
- Regard for Adolescent Perspectives

**Classroom Organization**
- Behavior Management
- Productivity
- Negative Climate

**Instructional Support**
- Instructional Learning Format
- Content Understanding
- Analysis & Problem Solving
- Quality of Feedback

**Student Outcomes**
- Student Engagement
Classroom Assessment & Scoring System - Secondary (CLASS-S)

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**Student Outcomes**
- Student Engagement
Overview of MTP™ Cycle

The Two-Week Cycle

Step 1: Teacher records classroom video

Step 2: Coach reviews and selects video and writes prompts

Step 3: Teacher reviews video and responds to prompts

Step 4: Teacher and coach discuss prompts and practice

Step 5: Summary and action plan inform next cycle

The MTP™ Cycle:

myTeachingPartner
SECONDARY

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The MTP™ Cycle:
Current study

- Randomized controlled trial
- 5 middle and high schools
- 82 teachers (one focal classroom each)
- 979 participating students (59% African American, 30% White, 8% Hispanic, and 3% Asian)
- Rigorous controls in analyses (e.g., student SES, prior achievement)
Percentage of students receiving at least one exclusionary discipline

- Control Teachers: 13.7%
- Intervention Teachers: 6.0% (African American), 5.8% (All Others)
Statistical probability of exclusionary discipline by race and program condition*

Analyses include classroom, student and teacher controls: the percentage of AA students in the classroom, course subject area, teacher race/gender, years of teaching experience,
Statistical probability of exclusionary discipline by race and program condition

- In the intervention classrooms, African American students had a similar probability of receiving exclusionary discipline.

- In the control classrooms, the gap between African American and other students persisted (AA = 2X more likely to receive excl. disc.)

- The statistical models isolated the effects of the program on student race:
  - African American students of equivalent achievement, income, and gender in an intervention classroom, compared to the control classroom, had a lower probability of receiving exclusionary discipline.
Prior positive findings of MTP-S

- Prior evidence for the positive impact of MTP-S
  - Increased student performance on standardized tests (held across racial groups). Average increase from 50th to the 59th percentile for students in MTP-S classrooms
  - Increased student engagement and positive peer interactions in MTP-S classrooms

- Already wide dissemination of the program from pre-k to high schools across the nation

(Allen, Pianta, Gregory, Mikami, & Lun, 2011; Gregory, Allen, Mikami, Hafen & Pianta, 2012; Mikami, Gregory, Allen, Pianta, & Lun, 2011)
Policy Implications

• We offer a guide for selecting promising “gap-reducing” professional development programs.

• In MTP-S, teachers systematically reflect on their interactions with students through videorecordings. MTP-S uses a research validated tool to guide change (the CLASS-S).

• Programs should have a sustained, focused, and rigorous approach—characteristics of high quality PD.

• Programs need evidence of a high yield for the investment.

• MTP-S’ focus on prevention by improving teacher-student interactions may be key to its success.
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Additional Information

• For queries about this presentation, please contact: Anne Gregory, annegreg@rutgers.edu

• For queries about the MTP program, please contact:
  Robert Pianta (rcp4p@virginia.edu) or Joseph Allen (allen@virginia.edu).

• Also see: www.mtpsecondary.net