Safe Schools, Thriving Students
Fostering Restorative Practices and Safe and Supportive Communities
Speaker

Linda Darling-Hammond
President & CEO,
Learning Policy Institute
@LDH_ed
@LPI_Learning
Speakers

Senator Chris Murphy
Member, Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee

Tatiana Chaterji
Restorative Justice Facilitator, Oakland Unified School District

Linda Darling-Hammond
President, Learning Policy Institute

Sean Darling-Hammond
Assistant Professor of Community Health Sciences & Biostatistics, University of California, Los Angeles

Gerry House
Former President of the Institute for Student Achievement, Division of ETS

Sarah Klevan
Senior Researcher, Learning Policy Institute

Pedro Noguera
Dean, University of Southern California’s Rossier School of Education

Carolyne Quintana
Deputy Chancellor of Teaching and Learning, New York City Public Schools
Congressional Remarks

Senator Chris Murphy
Member, Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee

@ChrisMurphyCT
Moderator

Gerry House
Former President for the Institute for Student Achievement,
Division of ETS
Research Presentation Speakers

Sarah Klevan
Senior Researcher, Learning Policy Institute
@KlevanSarah
@LPI_Learning

Sean Darling-Hammond
Assistant Professor of Community Health Sciences & Biostatistics, University of California, Los Angeles
@SeanDarlingHmnd
@UCLA
Effects of Exclusionary Discipline

▷ Studies show that suspensions do not make schools safer. Instead, they:
  ○ Increase alienation and disengagement
  ○ Undermine overall school climate
  ○ Reduce academic progress
  ○ Increase dropout rates
School Exclusions Are Racially Disparate

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Trends in Out-of-School Suspension Rates in K–12 Schools, by Race and Ethnicity, 1973–2018

What Are Restorative Practices?
Defining Restorative Practices

- Restorative approaches “proactively build healthy relationships and a sense of community to prevent and address conflict and wrongdoing.” (Schott Foundation)

- Restorative practices are designed to:
  - Build a sense of community in schools
  - Teach interpersonal/communication skills
  - Proactively meet student needs
  - Repair harm when conflict occurs
Range of Restorative Practices

Tier I
- all settings and all students

Building relationships, trust, and community
- Classroom, advisory, and schoolwide circles
- Community agreements
- Affective statements

Tier II
- small groups of students

Non-punitive responses to disruptive behavior
- Conflict mediation
- Healing or problem-solving circles
- Repair conversations

Tier III
- individual students

Re-entry and re-integration
- Intervention circles
- Re-entry circles

Re-entry and re-integration circles
Repair conversations
Re-entry and re-integration circles
Re-entry and re-integration circles
Restorative Circles

- Restorative circles can be used for many purposes including community building, to help students connect with academic content, and to repair harm after an incident.
- Questions asked during restorative circles used to repair harm:
  - What happened?
  - What were you thinking when this happened?
  - Who was affected by what happened?
  - What needs to happen to make this situation right?

Students at Fremont High School participate in a restorative circle.
Fostering Belonging, Transforming Schools: The Impacts of Restorative Practices
# My Orientation to This Work

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Orientation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legal advocate in juvenile courts</td>
<td>The status quo is harmful.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-director of a HS restorative justice program</td>
<td>Restorative practices can be transformative.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education law and policy attorney</td>
<td>There are better and worse ways to implement change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant professor in education and health</td>
<td>We can identify broad impacts via causal research.</td>
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</tbody>
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The Context:
The Disciplinary Status Quo
Disparities are potent, persistent, and pervasive
Discipline is a function of both:
- Student behavior
- School response

When Black students misbehave, teachers are more troubled and respond more harshly.

What does that mean for Black students' mental health?

What school practice shifts can address this inequity and avoid this harm?
Discipline is harmful for all students and discipline disparities uniquely harm Black students

- For all students, exposure to “high discipline” schools causes declines in academic achievement, increases in misbehavior, and increases incarceral involvement.
- For Black students, exposure to discipline is related to depression, disconnection, and suicidal ideation.
A Solution?

Restorative Practices, Racial Disparities, and Student Well-Being
The transformative potential of restorative practices

I dropped out of school – actually they kicked me out because I didn’t want to give them my hat. It was real zero tolerance! I was expelled for defiance for putting a hat in my backpack instead of giving it to them. And I had had bad experiences since preschool, so it was easy for me to be like “[forget] this.” As a teenager, I was thinking “you don’t care about us anyway. You just get paid checks per student in a seat.”

It was the first time in my life I ever wanted to be at a school! Like we got circle today, I gotta go! I wanted to be in class, do projects, interact, be one of the first students called on. I felt good being up here! Without [restorative practices], I’d probably be dead or in jail too.
Defining Restorative Practice Exposure

CHKS student survey items utilized to measure restorative practice exposure, subdivided by practice type

**Repair practices**
1. This school helps students solve conflicts with one another
2. If I tell a teacher that someone is bullying me, the teacher will do something

**Community building practices**
3. This school encourages students to feel responsible for how they act
4. This school encourages students to understand how others think and feel
5. This school encourages students to care about how others feel
6. Students are taught that they can control their own behavior

**Breadth measures**
7. Teachers show it is important for students of different races to get along
8. The adults in this school respect differences in students
RP exposure predicted less suspension and fewer days suspended for all groups, and smaller disparities.
RP exposure predicted improved ELA and math achievement for all groups and smaller disparities.
Schools that became more restorative saw myriad benefits

- Misbehavior: -0.45***
- Gang membership: -0.34***
- Victimization: -0.46***
- Depressive symptoms: -0.39***
- Sleep deprivation: -0.29**
- Illness: -0.19*
- Substance use: -0.31***
- Absences: 0.11
- GPA: 0.21*
- School climate: 0.74***
Schools that became less restorative saw declines in school climate and other measures.
How do we sustain implementation so students of all backgrounds benefit?

“It has to happen across the whole school. All the adults in the building have a responsibility to have a relationship with children and build the culture. Restorative practices are not just one person’s responsibility. Success requires staff commitment across all levels. You need continuous meetings and professional development days...”
Panel Discussion

Tatiana Chaterji
Restorative Justice Facilitator,
Oakland Unified School District
@OUSDNews

Sean Darling-Hammond
Assistant Professor of Community Health Sciences & Biostatistics, University of California, Los Angeles
@SeanDarlingHmnd
@UCLA

Pedro Noguera
Dean, University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education
@PedroANoguera
@USCRossier

Carolyne Quintana
Deputy Chancellor of Teaching and Learning, New York City Public Schools
@QCarolyneQ1
@NYCSchools
Thank You!