

Opportunity-Centered Teaching in the Struggle for Justice in the “New” Normal

Rich Milner, PhD

Professor of Education
Cornelius Vanderbilt Endowed Chair of Education
Editor-in-Chief, *Urban Education*
Department of Teaching and Learning

Rich.milner@Vanderbilt.edu
@MilnerHRich

PEABODY  VANDERBILT
PEABODY COLLEGE

Twitter – Tweet at Least Twice

[@MilnerHRich](#)

#startwhereyouare

The New Normal?

What happens when students don't turn in assignments on time (in person and/or virtually)?

What happens when they do not/cannot log on virtually on time?

- Some of us are scared to death to see what happens when young students are cited as being out of dress code for not having their masks on!

Mindset Imperative #1

We must be intentional in our language in the
"New" Normal.

Our Talk Makes a Difference

BLACK LIVES MATTER

ANTI-BLACK RACISM

Problematizing Language

- At Risk
- Poor Children
- Unmotivated Students
- Disengaged Parents
- Culture of Poverty

- Others?

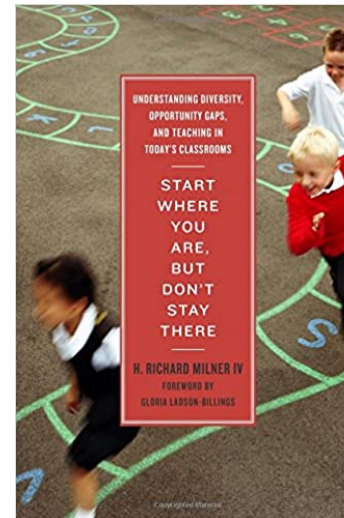
Power in How You Talk with, about and to Young People

Reimagining our Language

Irvine, Ladson-Billings, Milner

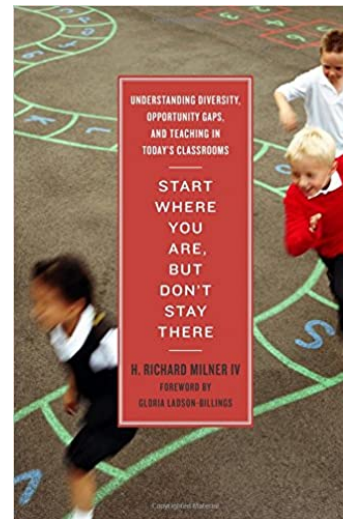
There is NOT an Achievement Gap

- A Caring Gap
- A Grace Gap
- A Vulnerability Gap
- An Belief Gap
- A School Counseling Gap
- An Assessment Gap
- A Housing Quality Gap
- A Funding and Resource Gap



Beyond Achievement Gap Talk Irvine, Ladson-Billings, Milner

- Geography of Opportunity Gap
- An Early Childhood Education Gap
- A School/District Leadership Gap
- A Community-Schools Connection Gap
- A Pop Culture/Hip-Hop Gap
- A Research Gap
- An Opportunity Gap



Mindset Imperative #2

**We must address all forms of Racism and
Anti-Black Racism!**

**Why is it so difficult to have conversations about race, especially in
“mixed” company?**

Race has nothing to do with it?

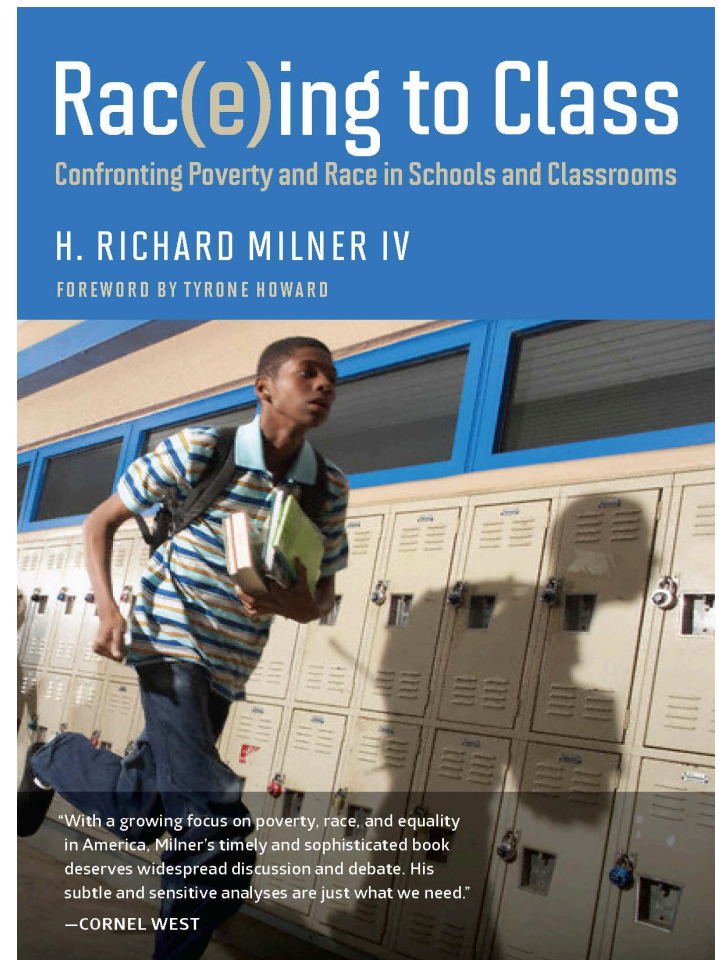
“Our principal invited you here to talk to us about specific strategies to teach our poor children. I was devouring what you had to say — you were right on target — until you got to this race stuff.

Race has nothing to do with how to teach my kids living in poverty. What does it matter? Really!”

(Rac(e)ing to Class, p. 4)

Defining Race

- Socially (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1994)
- Legally (Harris, 1993)
 - Plessy v. Ferguson (1896)
 - Rowles v. Board (1907)
 - Mendez v. Westminster (1947)
 - Brown v. Board (1954)
 - Milliken v. Bradley (1974)
- Historically (Anderson, 1988)
- Physically—not Biologically (Monroe, 2013)
- Contextually (Tate, 1997)

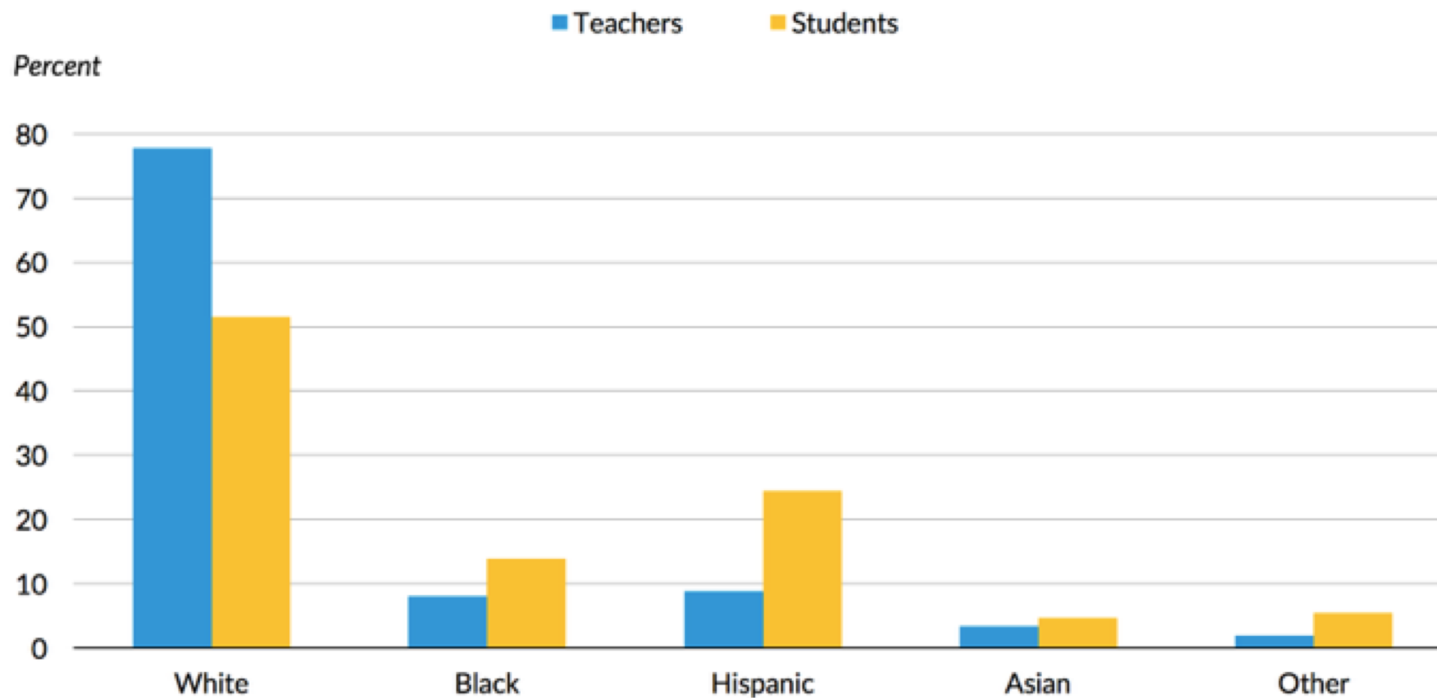


Defining Racism

“The transformation of racial prejudice into...racism through the use of power directed against racial group(s) and their members, who are defined as inferior by individuals, institutional members, and leaders, which is reflected in policy and procedures with the intentional and unintentional support and participation...”

(Carter, 2007, p. 24)

How Does Teacher Diversity Compare with Student Diversity?



Source: American Community Survey, 2015.

Notes: Students are defined as all individuals ages 5 to 17; teachers are defined as individuals ages 25 to 34, with a bachelor's degree, who are teachers at the prekindergarten through high school level.

URBAN INSTITUTE

(Urban Institute, 2017)

Colorblindness

People sometimes claim that they were raised to “just see people,” and to not think about race.

This thinking carries over into their conceptions of their work:

- Mindset 1: If I acknowledge the racial or ethnic background of my students or myself, then I may be considered racist.
- Mindset 2: If I admit that people experience and see the world differently, I may be seen as politically incorrect. I may offend others (students, colleagues) if I express my beliefs and reservations about race.
- Mindset 3: I should treat all my students the same, regardless of who they are, what their home situations are, or what their experiences related to race happen to be.

Why Focus on Race?

- Adoption of color-blind ideologies make it difficult to recognize systemic/broader disparities and dilemmas such as
- An over-representation of students of color in special education
- An under-representation of students of color in gifted education
- An over-referral of Black students to the office
- An overwhelming number of Black and Brown students expelled or suspended.



Building Community Knowledge to the Emic and Etic (Page 237)

- **COMMUNITY IMMERSION-** Live in your community of students and schools for community learning.
- **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT-** Engage yourself in community affairs such as education councils and board meetings to support schools and classrooms.
- **COMMUNITY ATTENDANCE-** Consistently attend student events in their communities.
- **COMMUNITY INVESTMENT-** Intentionally spend and offer your financial support and other resources within the community to your students and school.



Mindset Imperative #3

Disrupt Deficit Beliefs about Minoritized Students!

Help students Build Beliefs in Themselves Self-Efficacy (Bandura, 1997)

- Mastery Experiences
- Vicarious Experiences
- Verbal Persuasion

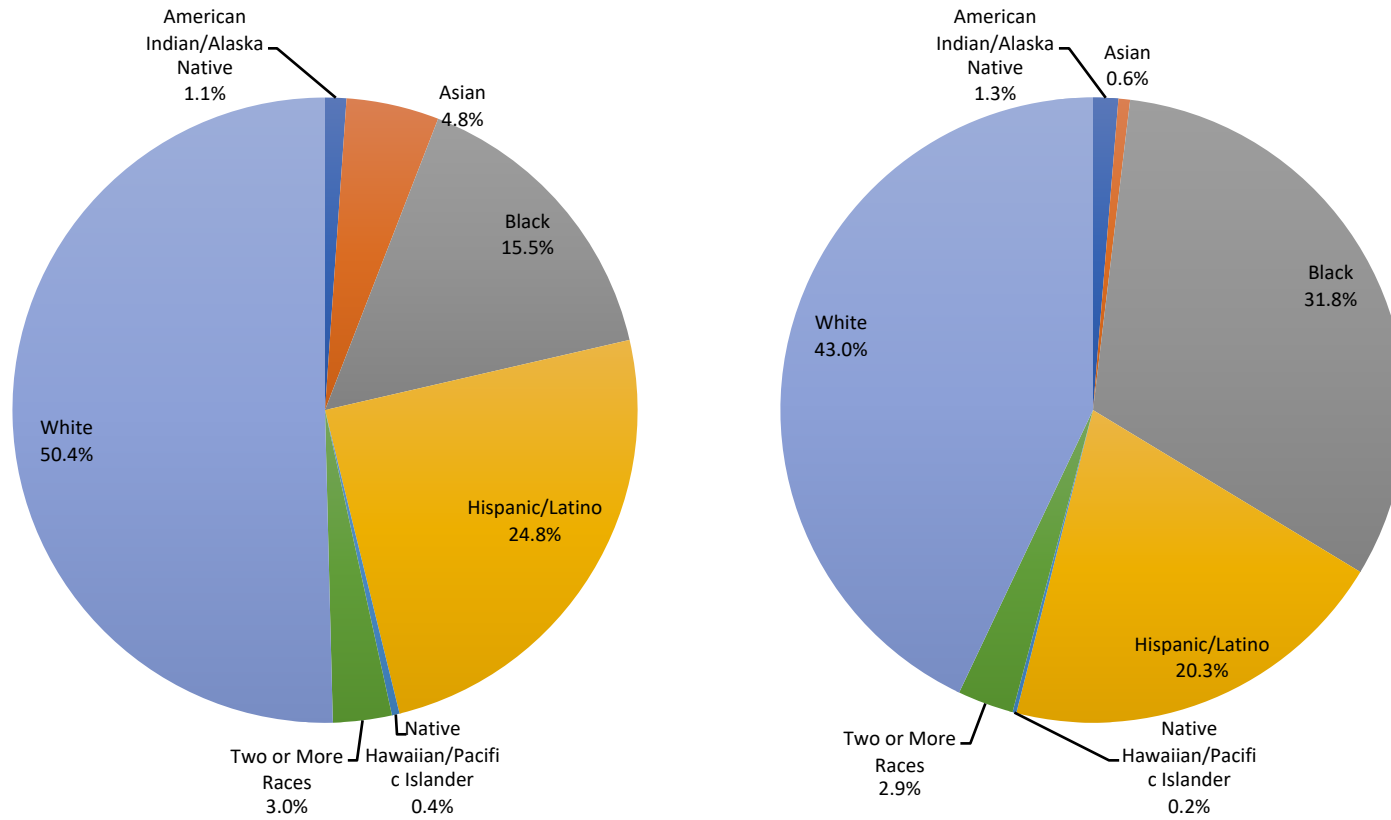
Asset- Tracking and Mapping

- **Identify a Group that has been grossly underrepresented and marginalized.**
- **Disrupt it through photos of assets**

Mindset Imperative #4

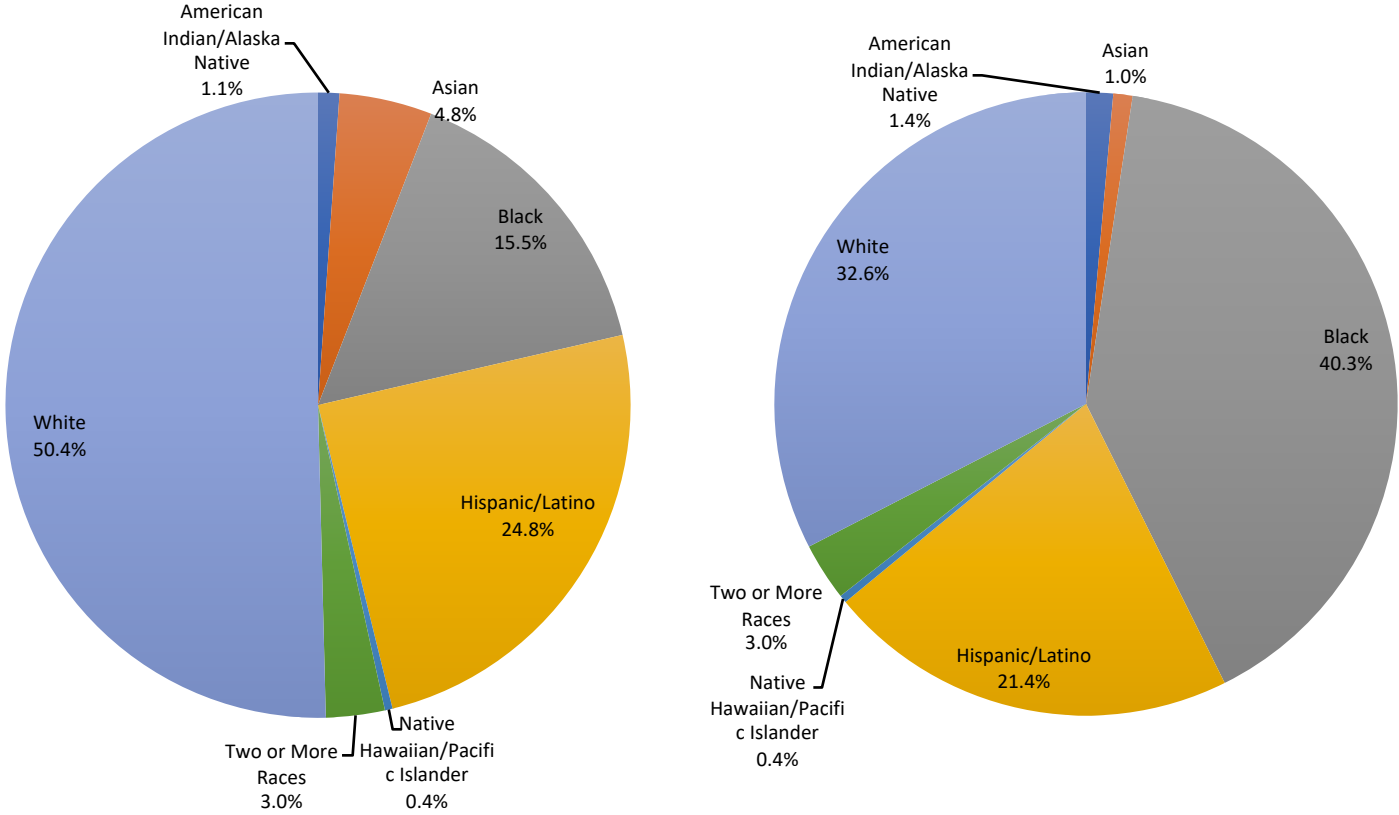
We Must Radically Reimagine Pushout and Exclusion in the “New” Normal.

National K-12 in-school suspensions by race and ethnicity



SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), 2013-2014

National K-12 out-of-school suspensions by race and ethnicity

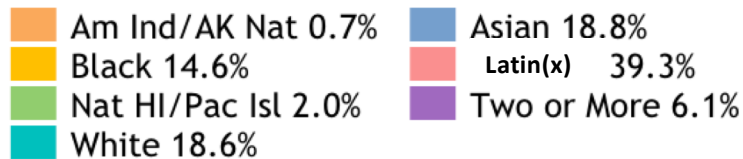
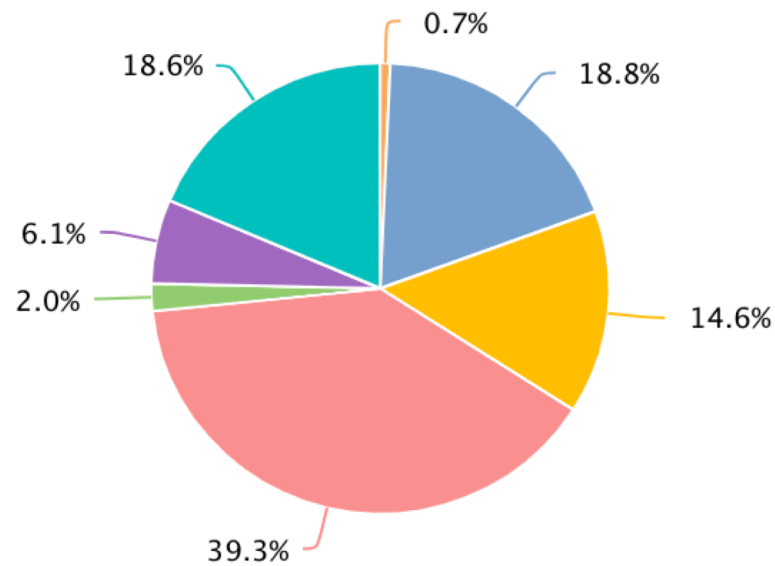


SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), 2013-2014

Sacramento City Unified School District, CA

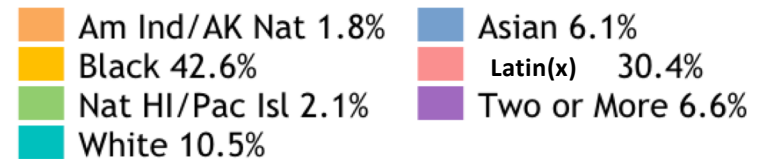
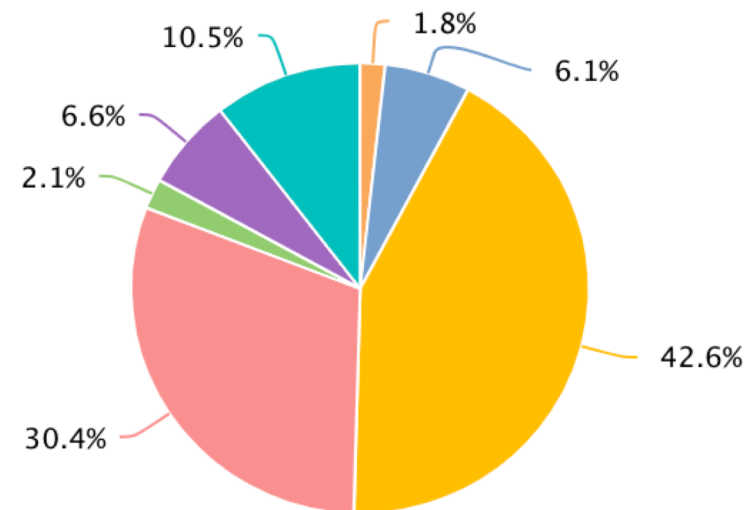
District Enrollment

n=42,755



In-School Suspensions

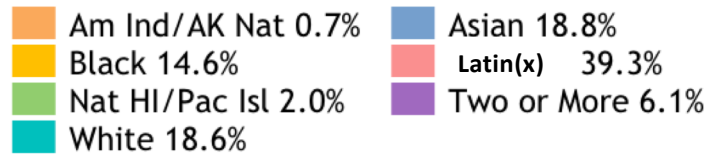
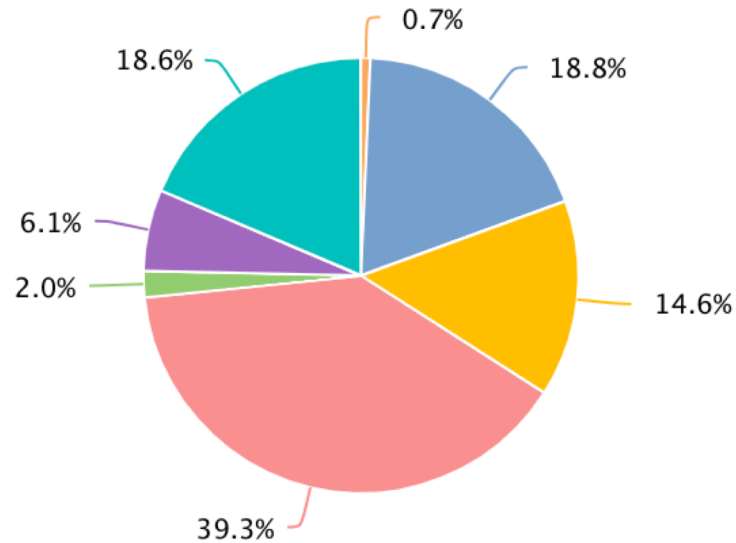
n=793



Sacramento City Unified School District, CA

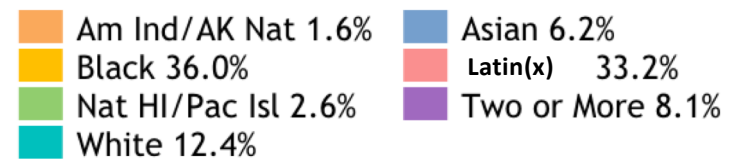
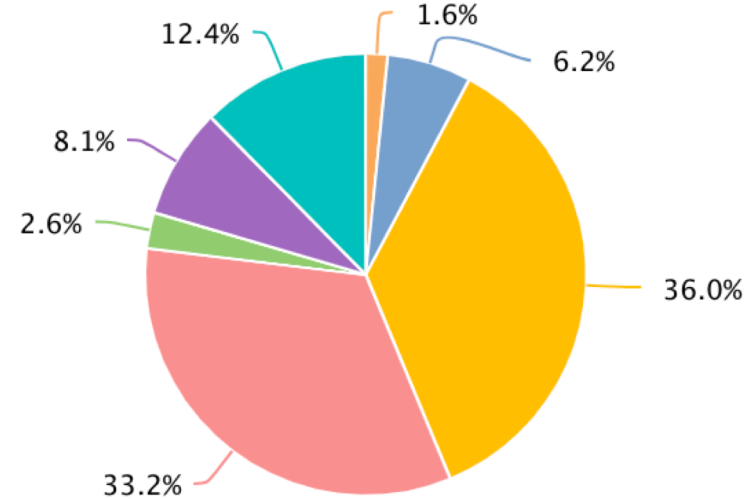
District Enrollment

n=42,755



Out-of-School Suspensions

n=2,366



Big Themes Covered

- Time on Task – Missed Instructional Time and Test Score Results (Woolfolk Hoy, 2015)
- Punishment Versus Discipline (Duncan-Andrade, 2017; Foucault, 1975; Noguera, 2003; Skinner, 1938)
- Black and Brown students referred for Subjective Infractions.
- White students referred for Objective ones (Skiba, 2004; Skiba, 2011)
- Infractions tend to originate on the classroom level.
- Most of office referrals are for non-compliance.

Tenets of Discipline versus Punishment

Discipline	Punishment
Provide Multiple Opportunities for Students to "Excel"	Exclude, Office Refer, Suspend, and Expel
Focus on Cognitively Rich and Rigorous Curriculum Practices	Teach to the Test
Communicate and Collaborate with Families on ways to Support Student Learning and Development	Ostracize and Marginalize Families, Parents and Communities
Model Tenacity, Persistence and Care	Give up on Students
Cultivate and Envision Students as Knowledgeable	Act as the Arbiter of Knowledge and Knowing

Tenets of Discipline versus Punishment (Continued)

Discipline	Punishment
Invest in the Individual to Impact the Community	Advance an Individualistic Ethos of Success
Build and Sustain Relationships with Students	Create Unnecessary Distance Between Students
Engage in Real Talk about Social Realities and Expectations in Society	Engage in Irrelevant Talk or No Talk at All Society
Expand Racially-Centered Textual Curriculum Opportunities	Develop and Enact Curriculum as White, Mainstream, and Traditional

Discipline Vs Punishment

- What will you do to help build “discipline” over punishment?
- What will you do to help end push out?

Mindset Imperative #5

We must center and respond to our students' reality through the curriculum.

Opportunity-Centered Teaching

- Opportunity-Centered teaching is about relationships.
- Opportunity-Centered teaching is about building community knowledge to inform practice.
- **Opportunity-Centered teaching is about curriculum convergence.**
- Opportunity-Centered teaching is about psychological and mental health.



What Converges in Curriculum Convergence through OCT?

Identity

Society/Community



Common Language: Three Forms of Curriculum

Explicit

Implicit

Null

E. Eisner (1994)

Identity Significance and the Null

Mindset Imperative #6

We must push to the highest form of curriculum – social action.

Keep in Touch!

Rich.milner@Vanderbilt.edu
@MilnerHRich

PEABODY  VANDERBILT
PEABODY COLLEGE