

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



Carolyn 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

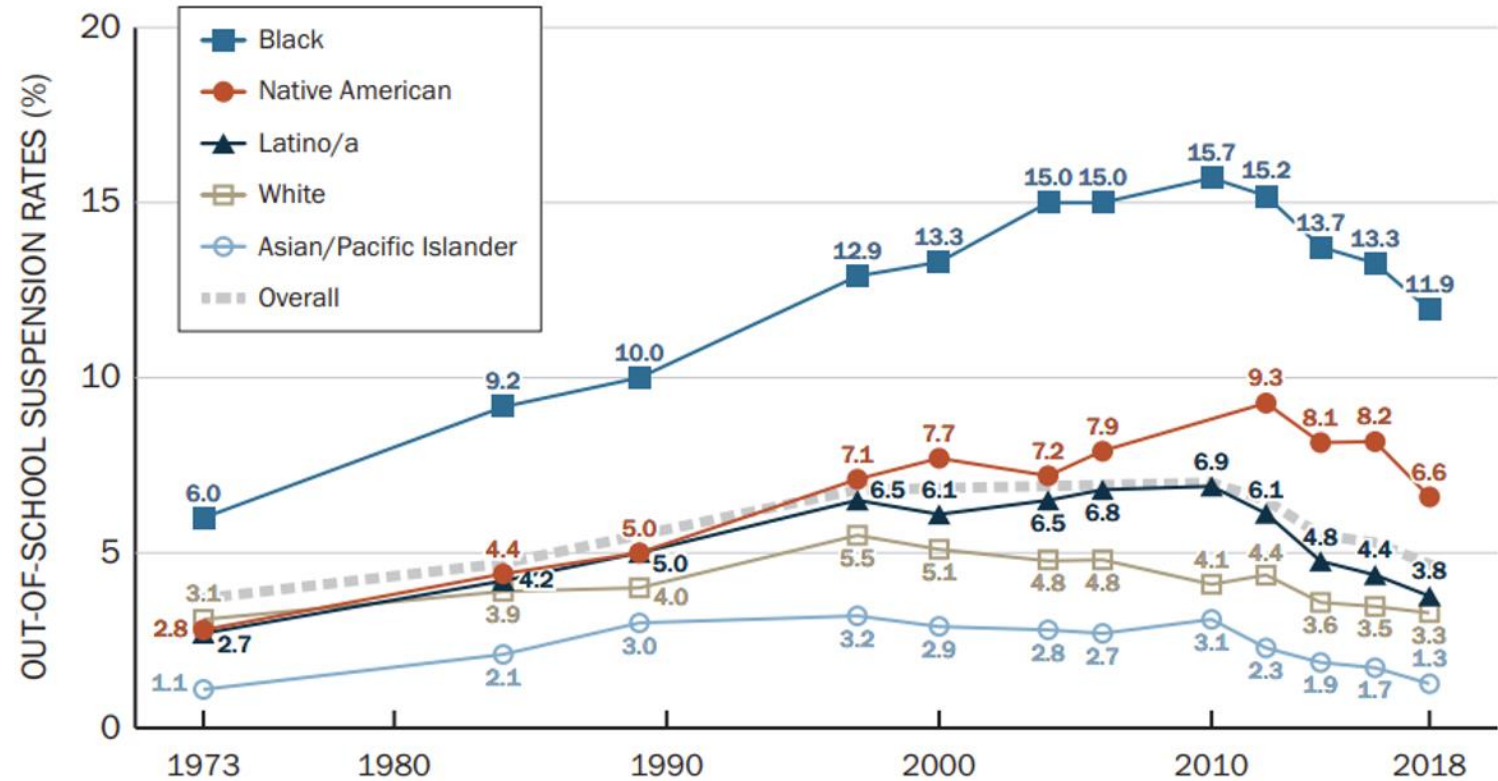
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Effects of Exclusionary Discipline

- ▶ 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

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



Leung-Gagné, M., McCombs, J., Scott, C., & Losen, D. J. (2022). Pushed out: Trends and disparities in out-of-school suspension. Learning Policy Institute.

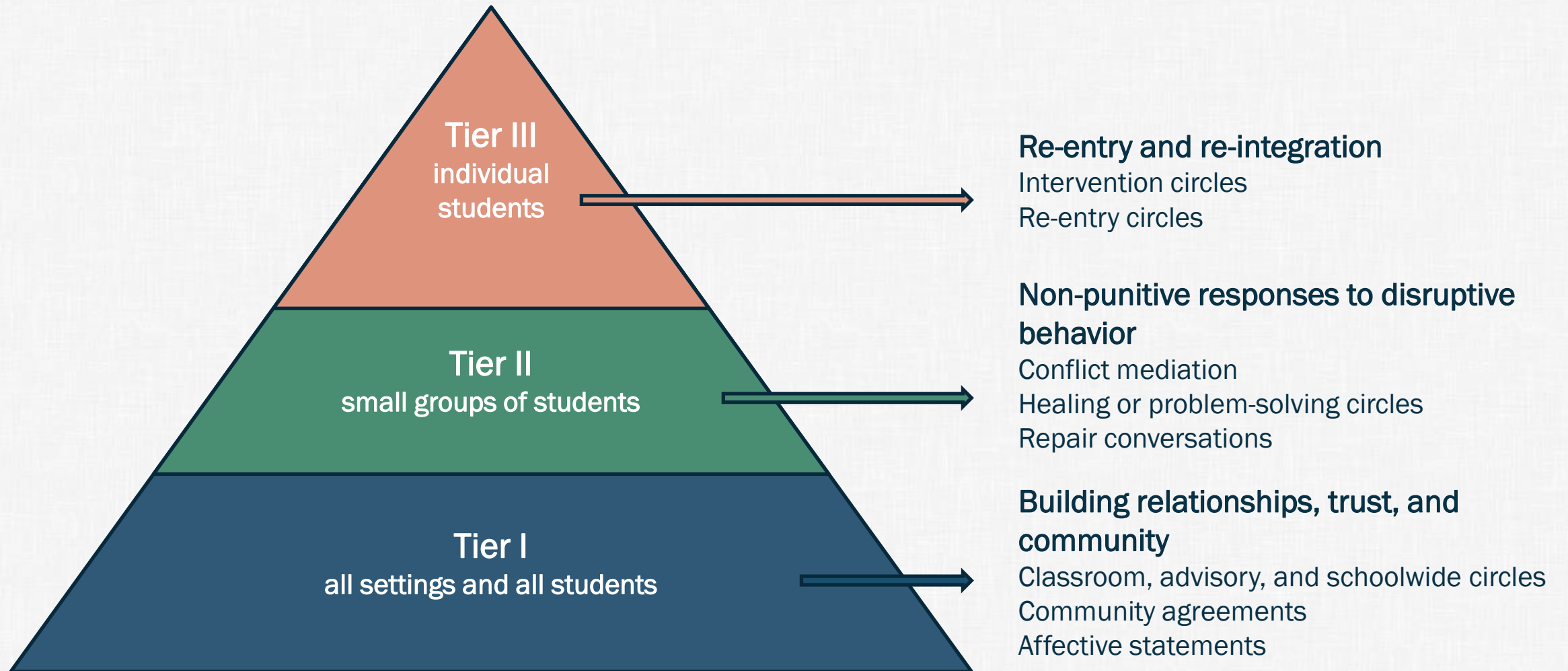


What Are Restorative Practices?

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



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

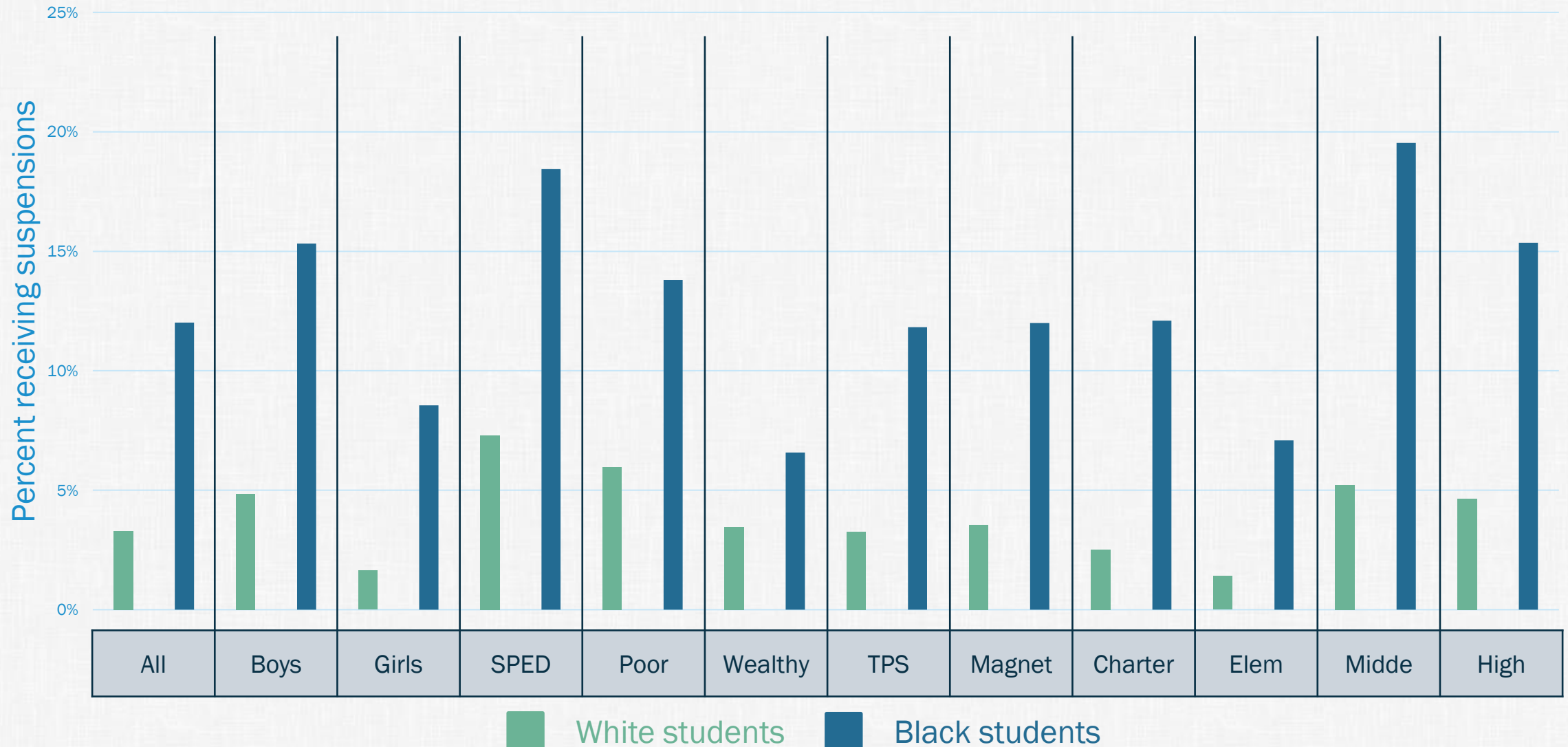
Experience	➔	Orientation
Legal advocate in juvenile courts	➔	The status quo is harmful.
Co-director of a HS restorative justice program	➔	Restorative practices can be transformative.
Education law and policy attorney	➔	There are better and worse ways to implement change.
Assistant professor in education and health	➔	We can identify broad impacts via causal research.





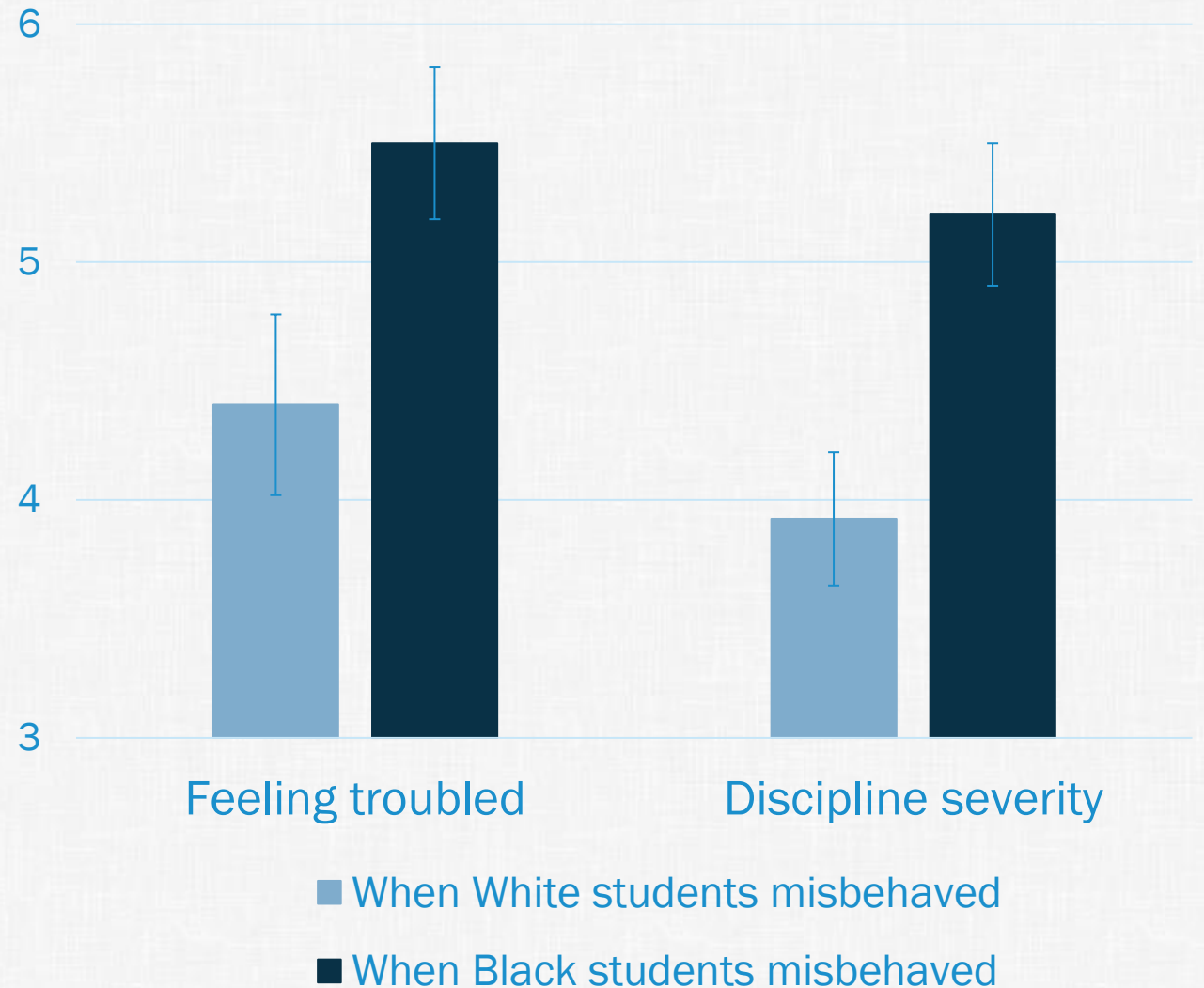
The Context: The Disciplinary Status Quo

Disparities are potent, persistent, and pervasive



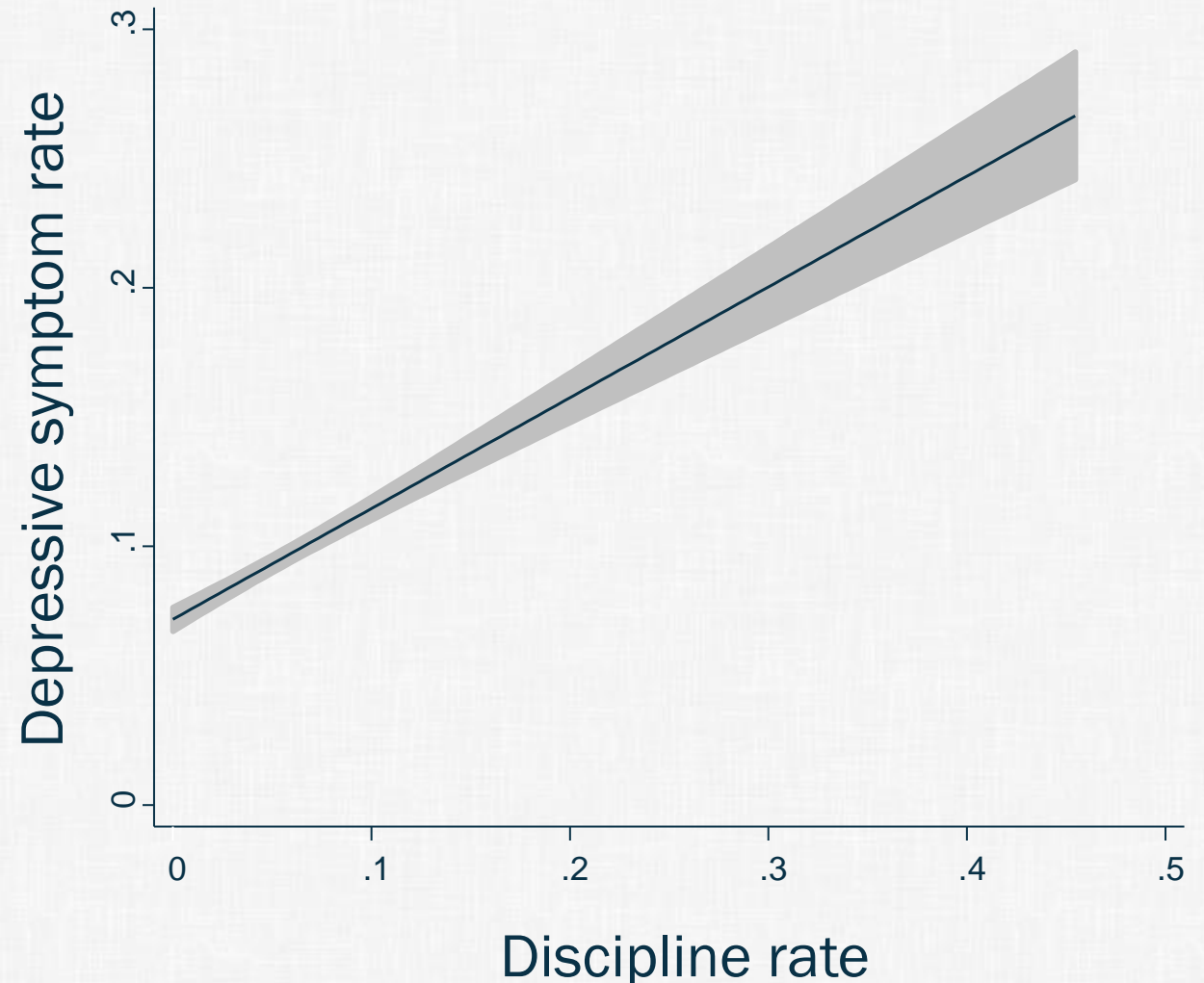
School practices drive racial disparities

- ▶ 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 carceral involvement
- ▶ For Black students, exposure to discipline is related to depression, disconnection, and suicidal ideation



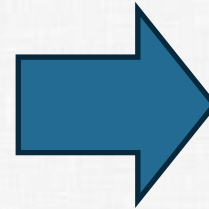


A Solution?

*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

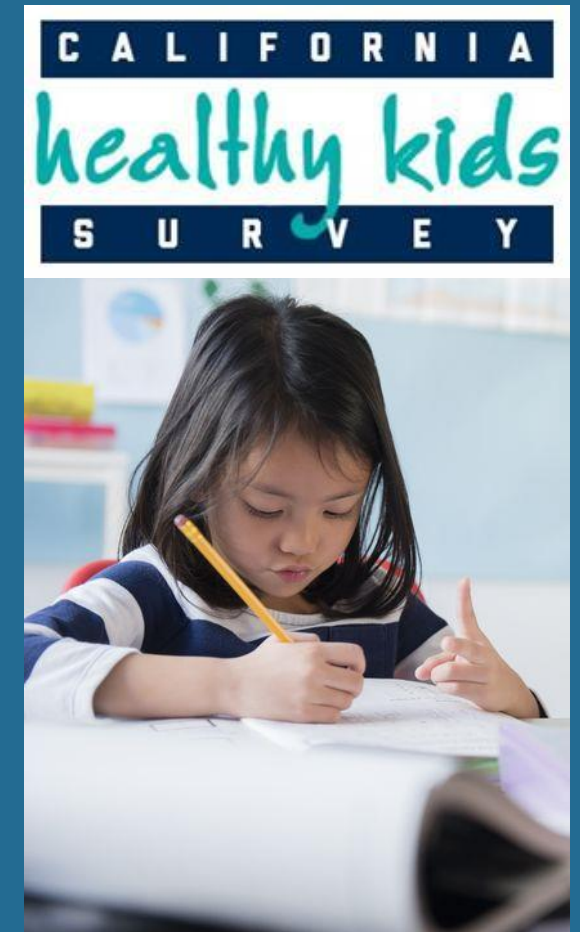
1. This school helps students solve conflicts with one another
2. If I tell a teacher that someone is bullying me, the teacher will do something

Community building practices

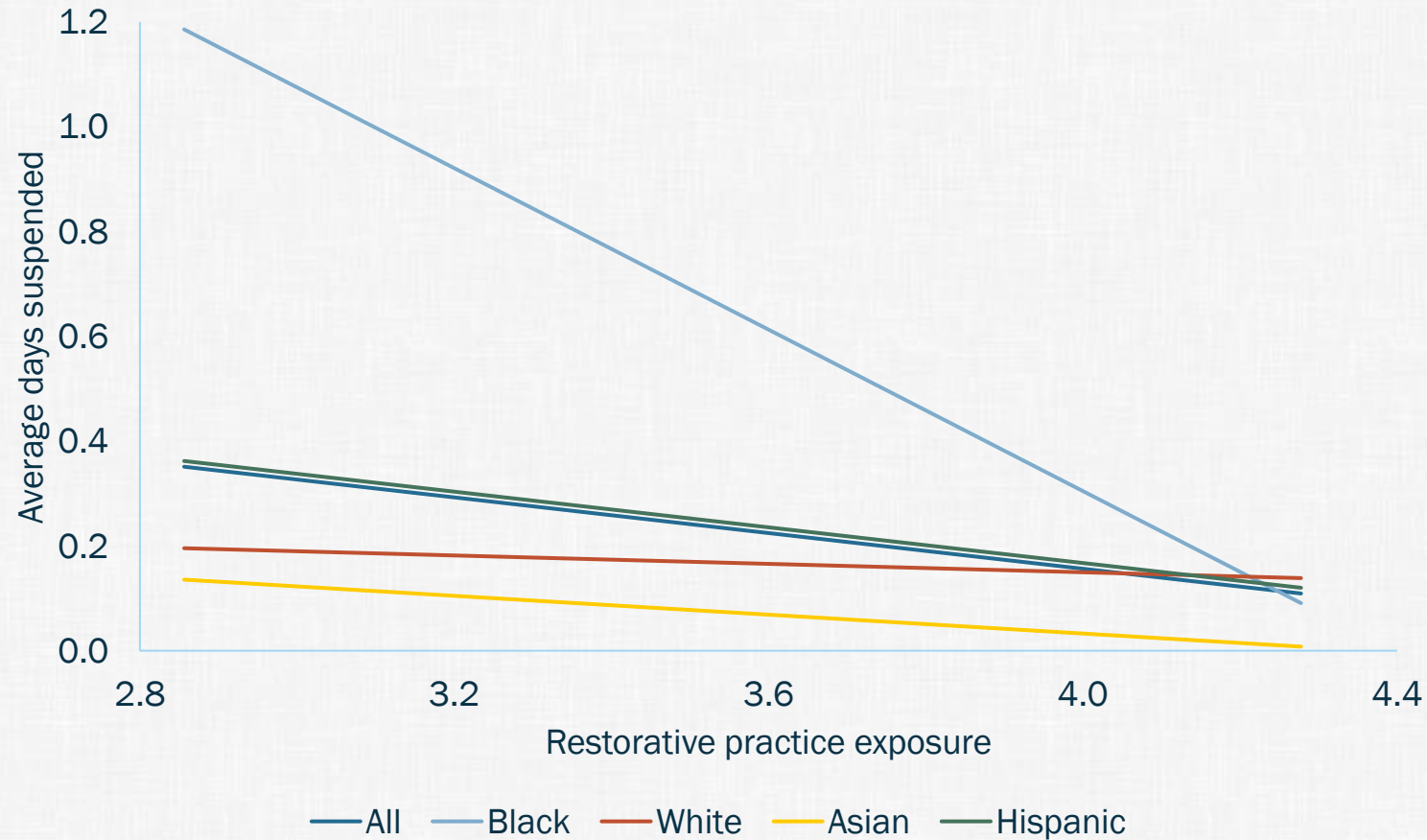
3. This school encourages students to feel responsible for how they act
4. This school encourages students to understand how others think and feel
5. This school encourages students to care about how others feel
6. Students are taught that they can control their own behavior

Breadth measures

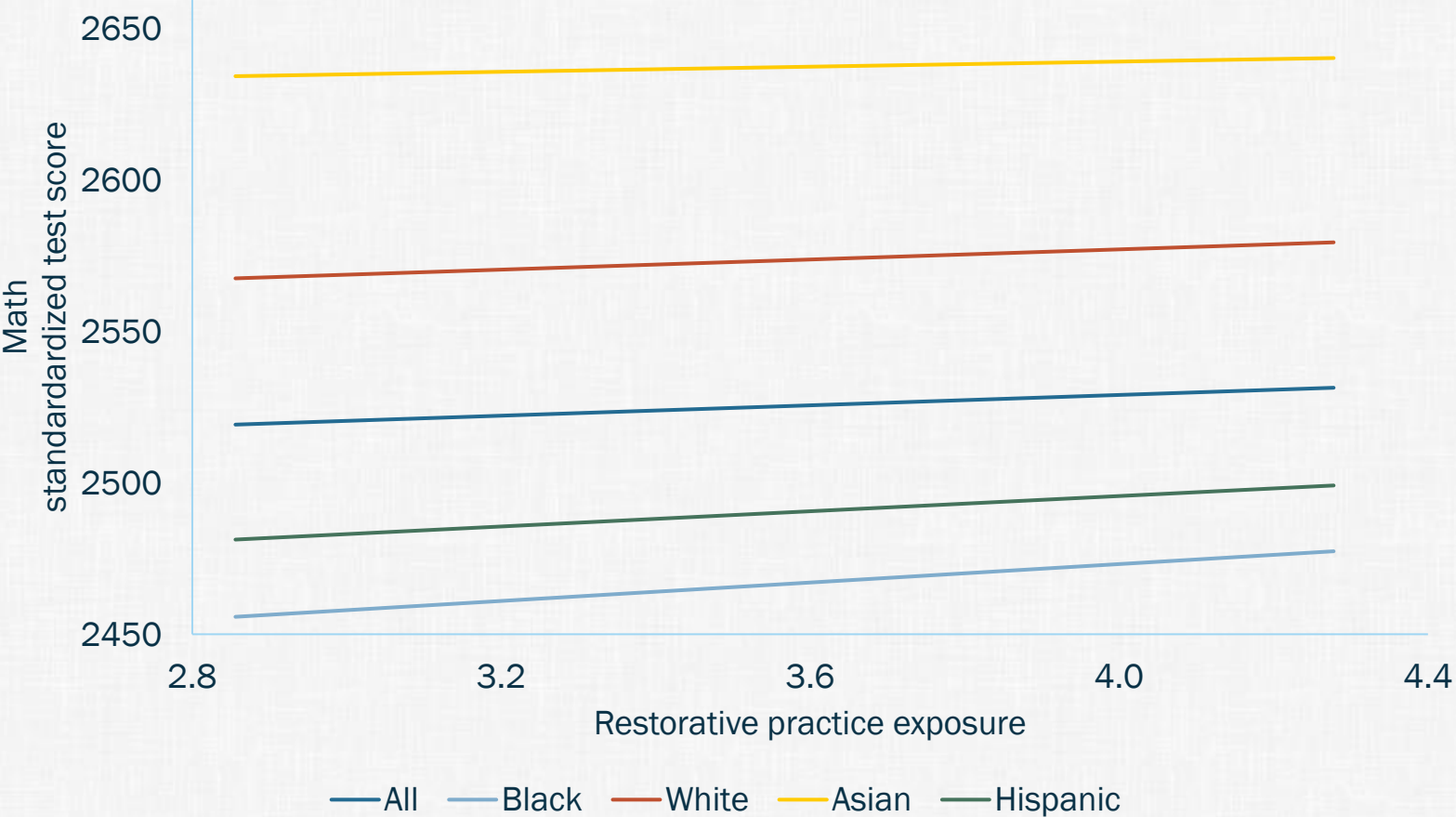
7. Teachers show it is important for students of different races to get along
8. The adults in this school respect differences in students



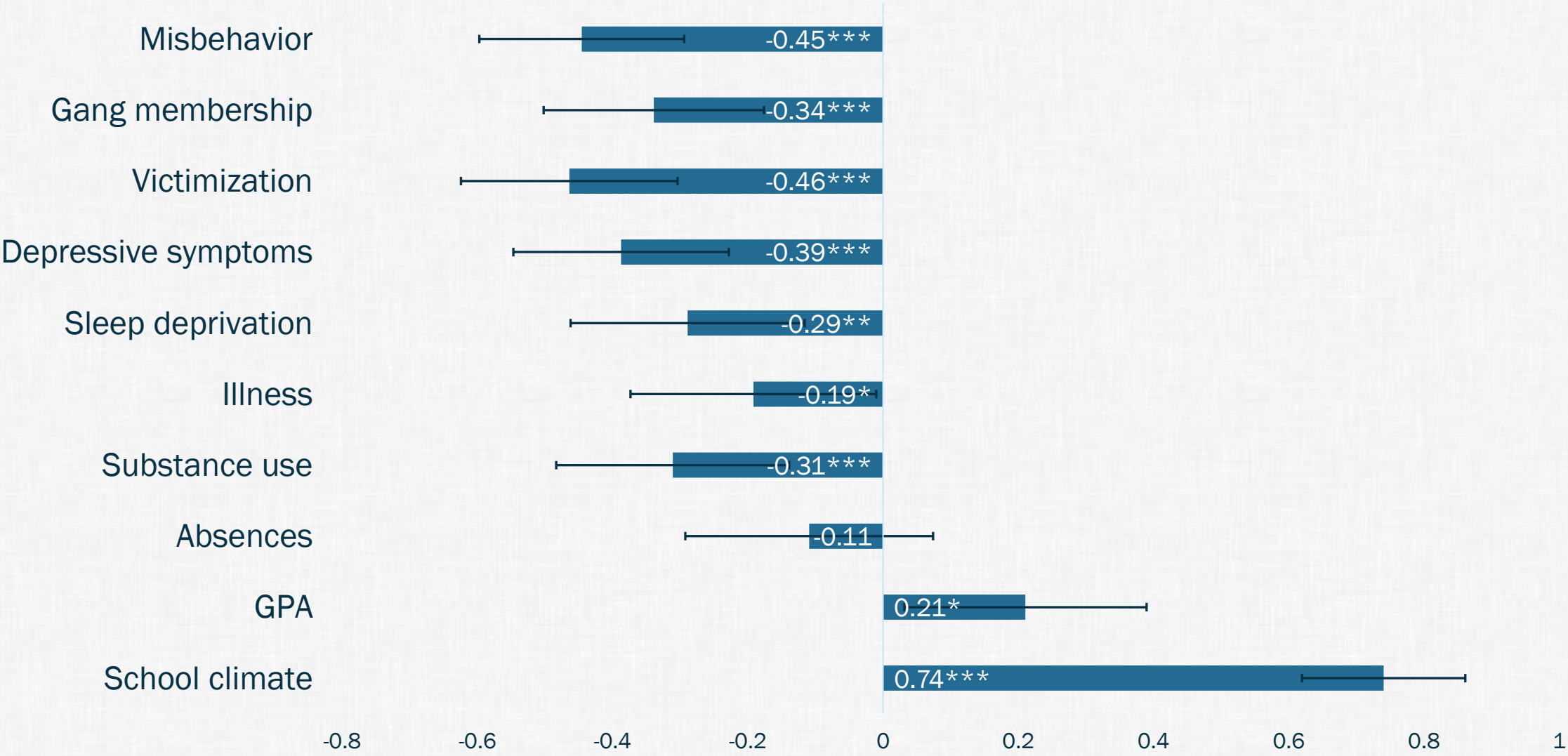
RP exposure predicted less suspension and fewer days suspended for all groups, and smaller disparities



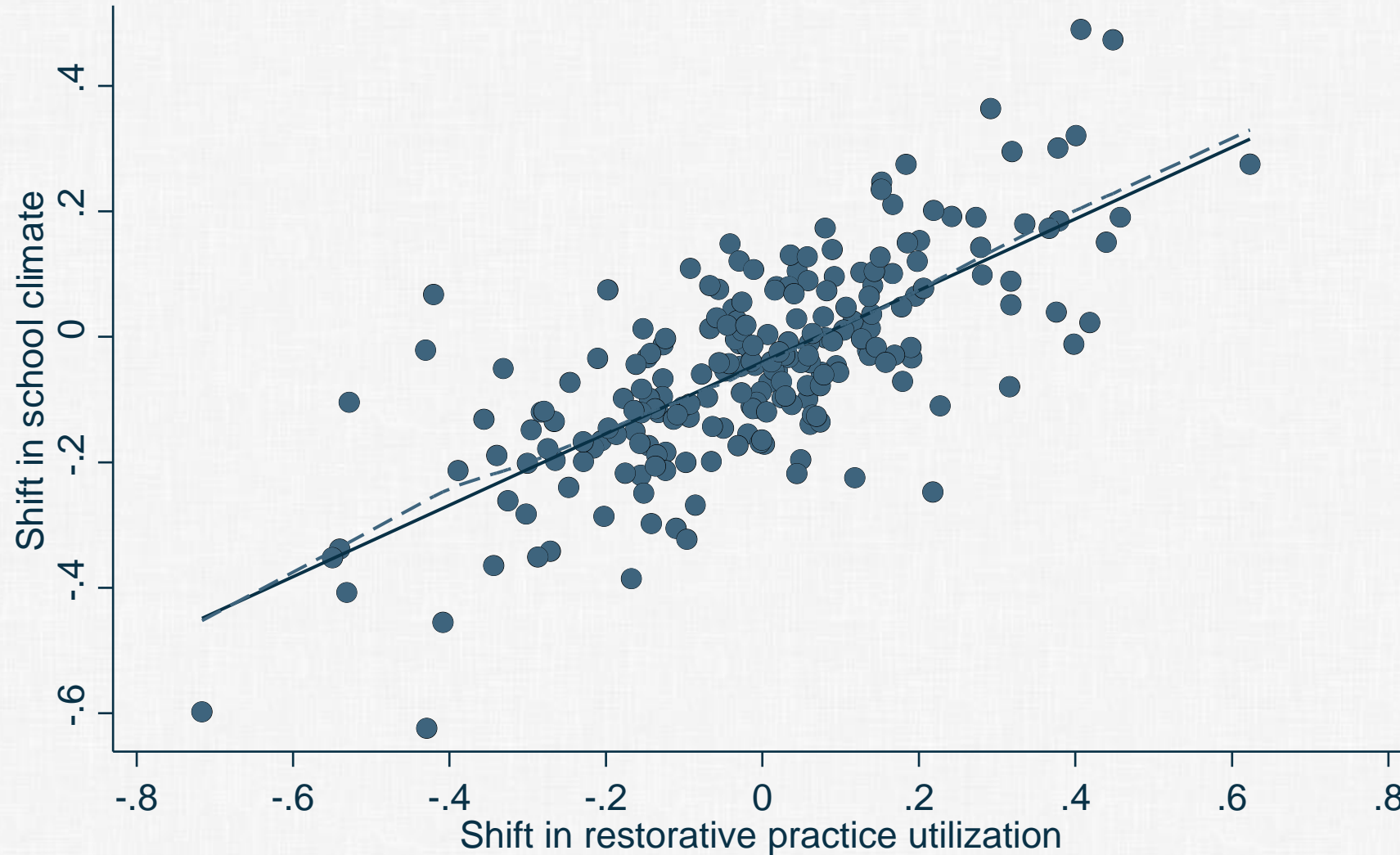
RP exposure predicted improved ELA and math achievement for all groups and smaller disparities



Schools that became *more* restorative saw *myriad* benefits



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](#)



Carolyn Quintana
Deputy Chancellor of
Teaching and Learning,
New York City Public
Schools
[@QCarolynQ1](#)
[@NYCSchools](#)



Thank You!