

Resolution: Eradicating the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Rationale: By routing a disproportionate number of students of color, students with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ students into the criminal justice system, school districts deprive these students of the chance to pursue a full range of post-secondary educational and vocational options, and hence limit their success in life. Practices (such as the overuse of suspensions and expulsions) and policies (such as “zero-tolerance”) push children into the “school-to-prison pipeline” and inhibit their ability to reach their full potential. Too often, policymakers and administrators favor strict enforcement over restorative, de-escalating, and culturally-sensitive interventions, and attempt to address disciplinary issues by swelling the ranks of school resource officers rather than those of counselors, psychologists, and social workers.

It is imperative that all stakeholders participate in the reform of school disciplinary policies and practices so that all students receive adequate support. It is equally imperative that families, school boards, school districts, policymakers, faith-based organizations, and community-based associations work together to guarantee that all those interacting with students in the school setting are properly trained regarding cultural competence, implicit bias awareness, and research-based interventions. Both the diversity of the teaching personnel and the use of culturally and racially inclusive teaching materials impact students’ discipline. Thus, it is necessary to hire diverse teaching staff and to use instructional materials free of racial and cultural partiality. With this comprehensive approach, we can work together to eliminate the school-to-prison pipeline.

WHEREAS, Attendance and high school graduation are linked to student lifetime success, and suspension from school vastly increases a student’s likelihood of dropping out and becoming involved in the criminal justice system; and ^{[1], [2], [3]}

WHEREAS, Black students are suspended at three times the rate of White students, Latino students at nearly 1.5 times the rate of White students, students with disabilities at twice the rate of non-disabled peers, LGBTQ-identifying students at 1.4 times the rate of their straight peers ; and ^{[3], [4], [5]}

WHEREAS, Black students are subject to school-based arrest at 3 to 8 times the rate of their White peers (depending on the state) and are subject to school-based arrest in proportions above their representation in the total student population, Latinx students at 1.3 times that of white students, Pacific Island/Native Hawaiian and Native American students at twice the rate of White students, and students with disabilities at nearly three times the rate of students without disabilities; and ^{[6], [7], [8]}

WHEREAS, Research-based programs and policies such as school-based restorative justice practices, the use of civil citations or diversion programs in lieu of arrest, and the implementation of positive behavioral interventions and supports and social-emotional learning can lessen a student’s chance of involvement in the school-to-prison pipeline; and ^{[9], [10], [11], [12],[13],[14]}

WHEREAS, When school personnel engage in training focusing on research-based interventions to address cultural competence and bias (such as empathetic discipline, wise-feedback, and social belonging) and when families and communities are involved in the development and implementation of disciplinary policies and practices, there is a reduction of exclusionary discipline (e.g., discipline where the student is excluded from the class or school activity); and ^{[15], [14], [16]}

WHEREAS, Student disciplinary incidents decrease through the hiring of a diverse teaching force and the use of racially and culturally inclusive instructional materials, now therefore be it ^{[17], [18], [19]}

RESOLVED, Florida PTA and its constituent associations will work to raise awareness of the harmful effects of the school-to-prison pipeline, to advocate for effective research-based programs and policies to reduce and eliminate the pipeline, and to strengthen relationships between students, school and district personnel, families, and communities that will support students' successes and equitable access to education and career opportunities; and be it further

RESOLVED, Florida PTA and its constituent associations in partnership with school boards, school districts, faith-based organizations, and community-based associations will work to eliminate discipline disparities by reviewing school board disciplinary policies and monitoring their outcomes to ensure that fairness and equity; and be it further

RESOLVED, Florida PTA and its constituent associations will advocate for training and regular professional development in effective research-based interventions to address cultural competence, bias, and trauma-informed practices for all school personnel; for the recruitment of a diverse school workforce; and for the adoption of racially and culturally non-discriminatory instructional materials; and be it further

RESOLVED, Florida PTA and its constituent associations will support fully sustainable state and federal funding to underwrite the implementation of alternatives to exclusionary disciplinary measures.

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