



created by

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# Busting the Pipeline:

## Preventing the School-to-Prison Phenomenon



### "Breaking the School to Prison Pipeline"

Christle, C.A., Jolivette, K., & Nelson, M. (2005). Breaking the school to prison pipeline: Identifying school risk and protective factors for youth delinquency. *Exceptionality*, 13(2), 69-88.

#### AWARENESS

01

- This study examined three characteristics that commonly lead to student involvement in the criminal justice system: **academic failure**, **suspension**, and **dropout**.
- Students from low socioeconomic households are more likely to struggle academically, which can lead to behavior problems, which results in disciplinary practices and removal from academic instruction, which spirals back into a bigger academic deficit.
- The study also examined what protective factors schools can implement to help disadvantaged students succeed and be less likely to experience the characteristics.

#### FINDINGS

02

- Across all three studies in this report, the following were found to be statistically significant in preventing/reducing the three characteristics:
  - High attendance rate
  - Low retention rate
  - Better school climate
  - Higher family involvement
  - Better physical condition of schools
  - Higher behavioral expectations for students
  - More positive/frequent adult-student interactions
  - More engaging instructional strategies

▶▶ Something CAN be done

#### ACTION

03

##### School Social Workers can...

- Provide behavior management training for staff to reduce the use of ineffective strategies in dealing with student conflicts
- Advocate for elimination of zero-tolerance behavior policies
- Advocate for elimination of retention practices
- Increase student belonging through exciting extra-curricular activities
- Increase family involvement through parent dinners or positive phone calls or postcards sent home

04

#### OTHER ACTIONS

- Admin and teachers need to set high behavioral expectations and challenge students academically
- Teachers should make academic instruction relevant to students to increase active engagement with learning
- Update the physical appearance of the building, including brighter and relaxed decors
- Implement a school-wide incentive program to reward positive academic and social behaviors
- Develop alternatives to out-of-school suspension

▶▶ One step at a time

05

#### IMPORTANCE

- "Dropouts compos[e] 82% of the adult prison population" (Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2001)
- "Repeaters in Grade K to 4 were 5 times more likely to drop out than nonrepeaters, and repeaters in Grade 5 to 8 were 11 times more likely to drop out" (Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple, 2002)
- "The fact that six elementary schools with high percentages of students from low socioeconomic families managed to produce high academic achievement scores demonstrates that poverty **need not** predict academic failure" (p. 83)