

## **Synopsis: Portland Public Schools**

Portland Public Schools (PPS), being the largest school district in the Pacific Northwest, is currently in its early stage of reducing the out-of-school suspension rate since the launch of moratorium by Portland Parent Union (PPU) last April. It has also been addressed that racial disparities continue to exist in exclusionary discipline, where statistics has shown highest rates in Black and Native students. In response, Superintendent Carole Smith has claimed to first “target only 10 to 20 schools for reducing discipline overall and for narrowing the gap” in 2015 and to “push all campuses to meet the goals” the following year, as reported in The Oregonian last September.

In January 2015, more specific measures to reach the goals regarding disciplinary exclusion have been delivered to the Portland City Council. The presented alternative approach that involves three collaborative programs focused on creating an inclusive school environment, which were namely Collaborative Action Research for Equity (CARE), Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS), and Restorative Justice; CARE strives to incorporate culturally-specific services to provide tailored support of racial groups that have been excluded historically, PBIS encourages inclusion of families to take part in creating a positive school climate, and Restorative Justice seeks to resolve behavioral issues by organizing mediations, talking circles, and family conferencing, instead of punitive measures. Since the preliminary step of intervention has only started taking place 2014-15 academic year, there is no data to prove the effects of the alternative approach. However, the theory is promising and we believe that Seattle Public Schools should

consider taking similar measures based on the regional climate regarding out-of-suspension policy.

#### Works Cited

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