


School Policies and Practices: Opening Doors or Slamming them Shut


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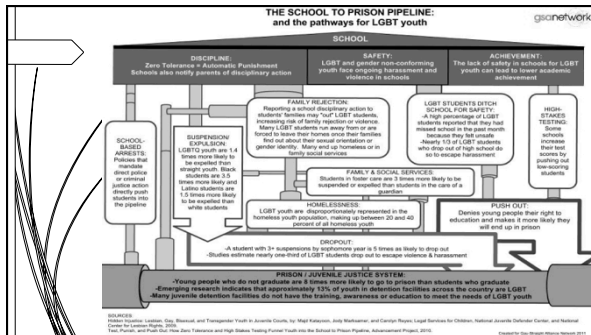
School to Prison Pipeline (STPP) Definition from Urban Youth Justice:

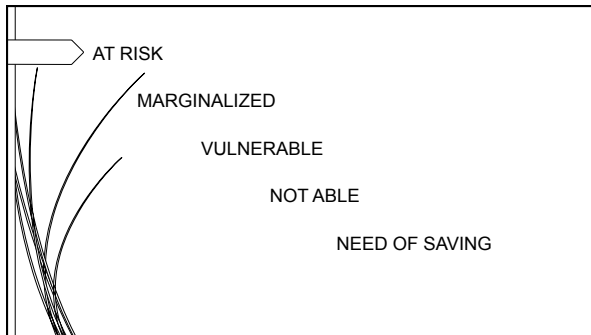
- The School-to-Prison Pipeline (STPP) summarizes the combined effect of school and juvenile justice systems, policies, and practices that push students out of school and into the criminal justice system.
- Zero tolerance school discipline results in harsh punishment for often minor (non-violent) student infractions that disproportionately subjects certain students of color to exclusionary discipline (out-of-school suspensions/expulsions) and referrals to the criminal justice system.



Vulnerable youth

- Racial minorities and children with disabilities are disproportionately represented in the School-to-Prison Pipeline
- Vast majority of arrests are for nonviolent offenses (most are disruptive in the classroom)
- Disciplinary problems likely linked to difficult home lives, history of poverty, exposure to violence, abuse and neglect, health issues, or learning disabilities
- Exclusionary discipline often begins as early as elementary school
- Zero tolerance policies tend to be utilized most in low income areas






From Deficit Models to Ancestral Strengths

We need to understand that young people are not 'at risk' all by ourselves. There are certain things in our lives like Intergenerational Trauma that may make the realities we experience less safe. Let's commit to naming the risk instead of blaming young people for the harm they experience.

SUPPORT VS SAVING

- What we do have control over: our language and approaches
- Meeting youth where they are at
- Using cultural strengths and resources




Avoiding the Pipeline

How can schools divert the school-to-prison pipeline?

- Increase the use of positive behavior interventions and supports.
- Compile annual reports on the total number of disciplinary actions that push students out of the classroom.
- Create agreements with police departments and court systems to limit arrests at school.
- Provide simple explanations of infractions and school's responses in the student code of conduct to ensure fairness.
- Create appropriate limits on the use of law enforcement in schools.
- Train teachers on the use of positive behavior supports.

Tolerance.org



Punishment has not been successful. The behavior that we often see is a cry for help. Teachers seem to understand that these students are dealing with so many issues from their homes and their lives that they bring to school. We should be thinking about how we best support the students and their families so they could become successful.

-Marietta English
President of Baltimore Teacher's Union since 2002

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