

Executive Summary

Legislation by the United States Congress in 2002 created the Commission on Disproportionality in Youth Services "to develop and provide an implementation plan to address and reduce disproportionate representation of youth of color in the use of youth services in juvenile justice, child welfare, education and mental health services." The Commission was to report to the Executive and Legislative branches originally by August 15, 2006, a deadline later extended to October 15. Thirty-two commissioners were appointed by the Governor, Speaker of the House, and President of the Senate of the state to carry out the legislation's charge.

The Commission approached its charge by first asking what is the extent of disproportionality in youth services in Indiana? And secondly, what evidence-based best practices are there to eliminate or significantly reduce disproportionate representation? Finally, why do disproportionate and disparate exist? The report

THE COMMISSION ON DISPROPORTIONALITY IN YOUTH SERVICES

Findings & Recommendations

Cowardice asks the question, is it safe?
 Expediency asks the question, is it polite?
 Vanity asks the question, is it popular?
 But conscience asks the question, is it right?
 And there comes a time when one must take a position that is
 Neither safe nor polite nor popular
 But one must take it, because it is right!

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

October 15, 2008

Executive Summary

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The Commission approached its charge by first asking what is the extent of disproportionality in youth services in Indiana? And secondly, what evidence-based, best/promising practices are there to eliminate or significantly reduce disproportionate representation? Finally, why do disproportionality and disparity occur? Any serious attempt to identify solutions will consider all three questions.

An analysis of the currently available data tells us that there is over- and under-representation of youth of color in Indiana's child welfare, education, juvenile justice, and mental health systems. This is manifested in the way decisions are being made about youth of color at initial contact points and throughout the different stages of cases in all systems. How decisions are made results in disparities in the dispositions of cases. Some examples of data demonstrating disproportionality and/or disparate outcomes in the four systems are:

- African Americans are over-represented in foster care, comprising approximately 28% of those in care in Indiana, even though they constitute 8.9% of the state's youth population. Latino youth are slightly over-represented, comprising 5% of the foster care population, compared with 4.3% of the general youth population. (Indiana Department of Child Services ICWIS Year End Reports, 2005)
- African American students are 3.4 times more likely than White students to be suspended out-of-school and over twice as likely to be expelled. Native American, Latino, and Multiracial students are also over-represented in statewide rates of out-of-school suspension (IDOE, Suspension/Expulsion Report 2006-07)
- African American youth are 2.64 times more likely to be arrested than other youth and .52 times less likely to be diverted to alternative programs than other youth. (Skiba, R., Rausch, K., Abbott, D., & Simmons, A. 2007).
- Youth with undiagnosed or misdiagnosed mental health challenges are more likely to experience school expulsions, juvenile detention, or placement in other settings that may be unresponsive to their needs. African Americans tend to be over-represented in each of the situations described above, yet are under-represented among those obtaining mental health services. (NAMI, 2007. African American Community Mental Health Fact Sheet).

The Commission sought input by listening to more than 500 individuals and organizations across the state, in addition to conducting research of the literature and analyzing state and national programs for best/promising practices. These recommendations reflect a process that was inclusive of a wide range of perspectives. Every effort was made to ensure that the views of those who participated at public forums and numerous stakeholder meetings received consideration in the final recommendations and plans of the Commission.

After months of intensive work, the Commission is making these recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly in order to create an environment in our state where every child will receive appropriate and culturally-competent services that are delivered in a timely manner, devoid of racial and cultural bias and respectful of the rights of all youth and parents who are in need of services and care.

The recommendations of the Commission address specific programs and practices in each system as they currently exist. They also present challenges for those systems to do things differently for the good of children. Extensive consideration was given to issues that applied across all disciplines, because disparate impact in one area can increase the risk of a child's contact with another. So, in addition to recommendations specific to each discipline, several overarching recommendations are included. The complete list of the Commission's recommendations can be summarized in these broad categories:

- Data-driven, objective decision making in a culturally competent manner at all decision points and interactions with youth.
- Standardized, disaggregated race-specific data collection that instills system accountability and responsiveness to youth of color.
- Cultural competency training and systemic responsiveness to the needs of youth.
- Diverse and bi-lingual workforce reflecting the youth populations being served.
- Provision of timely, evidence-based services to keep youth of color in home and in school, and prevent their contact with other more restrictive systems.
- Child-serving agencies using best/promising practices that eliminate disparities in treatment and provision of services for the youth they serve.
- Inter-agency, intra- and cross-system coordination and collaboration to implement recommendations.
- Provision of sufficient resources to implement and sustain programming.

Much work lies ahead to meet the challenges before us. The well-being of our children demands no less. This report constitutes a beginning toward achieving a state where children of color thrive.

Education

Racial and ethnic disparities that leave students of color behind remain ubiquitous in American education. Increasing attention has been paid to these disparities as they manifest themselves in the achievement gap (Ladson-Billings, 2006), disproportionality in special education ((Donovan & Cross, 2002), dropout and graduation rates (Wald & Losen, 2007), racial disparities in school suspension and expulsion (Skiba et al, 2002), and eligibility for gifted/talented programs (Milner & Fore, 2007).

Statistics describing disparities in the education of students of color in the state of Indiana present an alarming picture. In the state of Indiana:

- African American students are 2.6 times more likely than White students to be identified as Mentally Disabled, and 1.6 times more likely than White students to be identified with an Emotional Disability. (IDOE Center for Exceptional Learners—CODA Project , 2007-08)
- In a rapidly changing field in which inclusion is the norm, African American and Latino students are more likely than other students to be served in separate classes, and less likely to be served in general education classes, and more likely to be placed in alternative educational programs. (IDOE Center for Exceptional Learners—CODA Project , 2007-08)
- African American students are 3.4 times more likely than White students to be suspended out of school and over twice as likely to be expelled. Native American, Latino, and Multiracial students are also over-represented in statewide rates of out-of-school suspension. (IDOE Suspension/Expulsion Report , 2006-07)

These sources of disproportionality are related to substantial racial and ethnic disparities in Indiana in both achievement and dropout/graduation rates.

Researchers in the field of education attempting to describe the causes of this complex issue have identified several possible contributing factors, including:

- *Poverty:* Family and community poverty, affecting students of color to a disproportionate degree, clearly creates educational disadvantage. But poverty does not fully explain racial and ethnic disparities in education.
- *Deficit Thinking and Lowered Expectation:* Our history is replete with examples of deficit thinking about under-represented groups, resulting in lowered expectations for individuals from those groups (Valencia & Solorzano, 1997), that in turn impacts the school achievement of those students (Weinstein et al., 2004).
- *Educational Opportunity:* The educational opportunities of students of color are often limited by poor facilities and inadequate resources, under-representation of people of color in curriculum, and fewer highly qualified teachers.

- *Special Education Eligibility Process:* It is unclear to what extent special education decision making contributes to disproportionality, but the system is often geared to providing services only after children fail.
- *Testing Bias:* Although there is not extensive evidence of test bias, some studies have shown the possibility of bias due to administration or language issues.
- *Behavior and Discipline:* Although consistently disciplined at a higher rate, there is no evidence that students of color engage in higher rates of disruptive behavior.
- *Cultural Mismatch:* In schools that are becoming highly diverse, Indiana's teaching force, like most of the nation's, remains predominantly white, raising concerns that cultural mismatch may contribute to disparate outcomes.

Funding and Institutional Structures for Addressing Disproportionality

Federal and state regulations mandate that states monitor special education disproportionality, identify districts with significant disproportionality, and require those districts to re-allocate funds to reduce disproportionality. States, including Indiana, are currently identifying districts with disproportionality in special education and assisting those districts in addressing such disproportionality.

Federal education legislation, No Child Left Behind (NCLB), requires disaggregation of achievement data as part of school progress monitoring. Yet insufficient federal funds to assist schools that fail to make Adequate Yearly Progress means that NCLB sometimes simply penalizes communities with inadequate schools, rather than improving those schools to close the achievement gap. There appear to be no federal or state criteria or funding outside special education to address disproportionality in other areas, such as suspension/expulsion, alternative programs, or gifted/talented programs.

If there is a responsibility for educating Indiana's children, then there is also responsibility to ensure that education resources are fair and adequate for all children. The Education subcommittee believes that the accountability model currently used in special education must be generalized to other areas. That is, local data on disproportionality must become the basis for an accountability system, including minimum criteria and mandated corrective action plans for school corporations failing to reach those criteria. Such a system cannot be simply an unfunded mandate, however. Rather, schools and school districts must be supported in putting into place practices, policies, and procedures that hold promise for reducing racial and ethnic disparities.

Best Practices

Fortunately, there is a substantial knowledge base regarding best practices to address disproportionality, including:

- *Targeting Early Literacy Skills:* With early detection and intervention, the proportion of children with reading difficulties can be significantly reduced.
- *Implementing a Response to Intervention (RtI) Framework:* RtI is an emerging model in which students exhibiting academic or behavioral difficulties receive evidenced-based interventions at the first sign of difficulty.
- *Utilizing Cultural Responsive Pedagogy and Classroom Management:* Culturally responsive curriculum, instruction, and classroom management incorporate the knowledge and experiences of diverse learners, making learning more relevant and effective, enhancing instruction and promoting achievement.
- *Strengthening Family-School Partnerships:* Increased parent involvement is associated with improved achievement and attendance, more positive behavior, and reduction in drop-out rates.
- *Designing a comprehensive educational program:* Emphasizing the origin of prejudice against racial, religious and ethnic groups in the state of Indiana, in accordance with Indiana Code 22-9-1-7, Section 7, as amended by PL-1984.

Education Recommendations

Key:

- *Legislative (Legislative action is required).*
- *Training*
- *Other: (Programs, organizations or agencies needed to implement practices are indicated).*

Immediate Action Required

Recommendation # 25 Legislative

Re-establish an Office of Educational Equity in the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) headed by a new position at the Associate Superintendent level, to coordinate and monitor issues of disproportionality across achievement, discipline, special education, alternative programs, dropout and graduation, and gifted and talented programs.

The Associate Superintendent for Educational Equity will:

A.) Establish a framework to assist the state and school corporations to recognize and respond to disproportionality in education by:

- Ensuring a data system is in place that can provide statewide and corporation level data on the extent of disproportionality in:
 - i.) Achievement,
 - ii.) Discipline,
 - iii.) Special education,
 - iv.) Alternative programs,
 - v.) Dropout and graduation and
 - vi.) Gifted and talented programs.
- Establishing a statewide advisory board to advise IDOE on issues relevant to addressing disproportionality and achieving equity.
- Working with the relevant departments at the IDOE to establish regulatory mechanisms to ensure accountability.

B.) Work with other departments at the IDOE to develop, within two years, a mechanism for monitoring and program development that will include at a minimum:

- A yearly report on the extent of racial and ethnic disparities in all areas, and a process for disseminating those data statewide, especially to the Governor's Office and Indiana General Assembly.
- Criteria for determination of disproportionality at the state and school corporation level in each area of disproportionality.
- A notification process for school corporations that are found to have disproportionate representation.
- A process for the development of an improvement plan for school corporations that are out of compliance with respect to criteria for disproportionate representation.
- A process to provide technical assistance for helping school corporations meet targets to reduce disproportionality.

C.) Disseminate information including:

- Easily accessible information regarding how to determine disproportionate patterns of assignment.
- Information on factors that may contribute to disproportionality, including a) the influence, or lack of influence, of poverty on disproportionality, b) inadequate resources to create educational opportunity, c) decision making processes resulting in disparate outcomes, and d.) cultural mismatch and cultural representation.
- Internet links to organizations that are committed to eliminating disproportionality.

D.) Work with Indiana's Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) and other research institutions in the state to fund ongoing research that can improve methods of describing disparity, improve our understanding of why disparities exist, and identify and improve the implementation of effective and evidence-based procedures for reducing disproportionality.

Recommendation #26 Legislative

Pass legislation that mandates cultural competency standards for education that includes the following components:

A.) The Indiana Department of Education and state level teacher certification bodies shall establish standards for use by accredited teacher education institutions and departments in preparing individuals to successfully teach in a manner that serves the diverse needs of all students, including:

- a. Racial minority students.
- b. Students of all socioeconomic levels.
- c. Students of various ethnic groups.

B.) These standards must include courses and methods that assist individuals in developing cultural competency (as defined in IC 20-31-2-5).

Each teacher training institution shall put forth a plan for training in cultural competence by developing standards for use by all of its teacher training programs and departments in preparing individuals to successfully teach in a manner that serves the diverse needs of all students, including those identified as a member of one (1) or more of the following classifications:

- a. Racial minority students.
- b. Students of all socioeconomic levels.
- c. Students of various ethnic groups.

These standards must provide for multicultural courses and culturally responsive methods that assist individuals in developing cultural competency.

C.) Ensure that all schools, as a part of the Public Law 221 school improvement plan, implement a process that addresses training in cultural competence. In developing a school's plan, the school's committee shall consider methods, resources, and evaluation instruments to improve the cultural competency of the school's teachers, administrators, staff, parents, and students. The school improvement committee shall:

- a. Identify the racial, ethnic, language-minority, cultural, exceptional learning, and socioeconomic groups that are included in the school's student population.
- b. Monitor school data on disproportionality and use those data to guide improvement planning.
- c. Incorporate or adopt culturally appropriate teaching strategies for increasing educational opportunities and educational performance for each group in the school's plan.

- d. Recommend professional development to increase cultural competency in the school's educational environment.
 - e. Ensure that the school completes a self-assessment for cultural competence in the following areas: School Governance; Organization and Policy; Family Involvement; Curriculum and Instruction; Organization for Learning; Special Education Pre-Referral and Referral Processes and Programs; School Discipline and School Climate/Culture.
 - f. Update the school's plan annually for all information identified above.
- D.) All public school teachers shall participate in multicultural training. The training must directly correlate with the school's improvement plan and accreditation process described in section C.
- E.) Each governing body shall ensure cultural competency accountability by developing a policy that includes procedures for determining whether a school is making progress toward improving the cultural competency of the school's teachers, administrators, and staff, and whether such progress is impacting students.

Recommendation # 27 Legislative

The State of Indiana must ensure that its school funding formula guarantees adequacy of resources across school corporations for addressing racial/ethnic disparities, English Language Learners, and children living in poverty. All schools should be comparable in the provision of facilities, technology, and instructional resources, providing all students in Indiana with access to smaller class sizes; higher paid and more experienced teachers; highly qualified teachers; educational specialists; high-quality instructional resources, such as textbooks; up-to-date tests, libraries, computers, and equipment; and high-quality upper level courses.

Recommendation # 28 Legislative

Increase the availability of quality early childhood opportunities in order to improve school readiness for students who may be at-risk for school failure. In particular, require and fund Pre-K and full day kindergarten in Indiana's public schools.

Recommendation # 29 Legislative

Provide funding for grants and technical assistance to school corporations to use best and promising practices to increase the number of students from racial and ethnic groups who have been under-represented in gifted and talented programs.

Recommendation # 30 Legislative

Expand statutory language regarding school discipline to allow and encourage a broader range of disciplinary options so that schools have a greater variety of resources at their disposal for addressing student discipline.

The following changes to the current disciplinary code, IC 20-33-8 are recommended:

- The language of Indiana Code (IC) 20-33-8-25 should be rewritten to better reflect the intent of the law. From "Sec. 25 (b) An individual may take disciplinary action in

addition to suspension and expulsion ..." to read "Sec. 25 (b) An individual may take an alternative disciplinary action instead of or in addition to suspension and expulsion ..."

- A requirement that, in addition to defining infractions and possible consequences, disciplinary codes also list the preventive strategies that proactively maintain an orderly and effective learning environment. These may include, but are not limited to:
 - Bullying prevention
 - Conflict resolution
 - Positive Behavior Supports
 - Anger management
 - Mentoring
 - Life skills
 - Functional behavioral assessment
 - Social skills training
- A requirement that school corporations define a graduated code of discipline that defines a set of interventions and consequences proportionately in relation to the seriousness of the disciplinary infraction.

Recommendation # 31 *Legislative*

Indiana should immediately make a statewide commitment to reduce Indiana's dropout rate, and in particular address disproportionality in dropout through an initiative that requires and provides a dropout prevention fund available to school corporations for:

A) The establishment of an "early warning system" at the local school level to identify students who may be at-risk for dropping out, in order to provide early intervention to prevent dropout including a data and tracking system that:

- Tracks individual student attendance, grades, promotion status, and engagement indicators, such as behavioral marks, as early as fourth grade.
- Establishes criteria for identifying students who may be off-track for graduation and a continuum of appropriate interventions for those students.
- Identifies ninth grade students who miss 10 days or more of school in the first 30 days (Neild & Balfanz, 2006).
- Monitors first quarter freshman grades, paying particular attention to failures in core academic subjects.
- Monitors end-of-year grades.
- Tracks students who have failed too many core subjects to be promoted to tenth grade.

B.) A variety of evidence-based practices designed to address the educational needs of students identified as at-risk for dropping out. These may include:

- Mentoring/Tutoring
- Service Learning
- Alternative Schooling
- After School Opportunities
- Early Childhood Education
- Family Engagement
- Early Literacy Development
- Professional Development
- Active Learning
- Educational Technology
- Individualized Instruction
- Systemic Renewal
- School-Community Collaboration
- Career and Technical Education
- Safe Schools

Recommendation # 32 Training

School corporations should appoint and train diverse teams of teachers, administrators, parents, and students to assess disproportionality by utilizing data from local assessments, rubrics, and state data banks, and to use that information to improve corporation practices and inform professional development.

- Identify areas of specific concern for disproportionality including over- and under-representation in educational programs.
- Minimize disproportionate and inappropriate identification and referral.
- Ensure availability of appropriate special education referral processes.
- Ensure collaboration between general education and special education staff on instructional practices and alignment of grade-level curriculum.

Recommendation # 33 Training

In order to better ensure the cultural responsiveness of all school personnel in Indiana's schools, Indiana's colleges and universities should:

- Provide increased teacher training and practicum experiences for preservice teachers (freshman through senior year) in urban environments.
- Ensure that students graduating from Indiana's teacher training programs have the knowledge, skills, and disposition to be responsive to Indiana's increasingly diverse student population.

Recommendation # 34 *Other: Indiana DOE*

The Indiana Department of Education should collect and monitor educational data on disproportionality from every school and school corporation. This data should be accurate, use uniform definitions and calculations and be current. This data should be made easily accessible to and understandable by the general public.

Recommendation # 35 *Other: Indiana DOE*

The Indiana Department of Education should adopt methods, for use at the local level, that provide guidelines on how educators and the community can evaluate the cultural bias in instructional materials, and use such guidelines as part of each school corporation's textbook adoption procedure.

Recommendation # 36 *Other: Indiana DOE*

For over 30 years, the issue of due process rights with respect to exclusion from school for disciplinary reasons through suspension and expulsion has been a source of controversy in the State of Indiana. In order to resolve this controversy, the Indiana Department of Education should convene a task force of school leadership associations, parents and parent advocates, youth, the legal community, and other key stakeholders in order to find a solution to the issue of due process in a way that both preserves the right and responsibility of school administrators to maintain a safe and orderly school environment, and protects federally and state-guaranteed rights of parents and students to due process in cases of school exclusion.

Recommendation # 37 *Training*

As part of a planning process to improve cultural responsiveness, school corporations, local schools and their communities, should be encouraged to directly address issues of race and ethnicity, and engage in a continuing dialogue about the reality of racial disparities. Issues to examine include:

- The reality of disproportionality at national, state and local levels, and the acknowledgment that not all racial/ethnic disparities have been resolved.
- Recognition that people from various racial and ethnic backgrounds may view identical situations from different perspectives.
- Discussion of racial stereotyping and generalizations often made about children of color.
- Exploring the extent of, and where necessary addressing, inaccurate or biased perceptions at the individual or systemic level about students of color or students and/or economically disadvantaged families.
- Learning and practicing more effective patterns of communication with parents and students from all cultures.
- Moving beyond simplistic understandings of culture based on single-day or even single-month appreciations of diversity, to an understanding of cultural

responsiveness as a school-wide value to be integrated continuously across all instructional, classroom management and institutional practices.

- Engagement in in-depth efforts to help teachers and administrators understand the ways in which race, ethnicity, culture, social class, gender bias, and language influence learning and student achievement, while recognizing these elements should not serve as an excuse for low student expectations.

Recommendation # 38

The State of Indiana should address the critical shortages of teachers of color in Indiana's public schools by:

Legislative

A.) Increasing the availability of scholarship opportunities for minority students to enter the teaching profession:

- Increase the annual allocation for the Minority Teacher/Special Services Scholarship fund.
- Allow students to apply for the Minority Teacher/Special Services Scholarship prior to enrolling in a higher education institution.
- Provide information about Minority Teacher/Special Services Scholarship to minority students during recruitment, application and financial aid process.

Training

B.) Representatives of teacher training institutions in the state of Indiana should: Meet annually to consider the status of and develop creative strategies for minority recruitment, enhancing diversity climate, and teacher preparation and support in the area of cultural competence.

- Monitor the intended and unintended consequences of using the PRAXIS I exam on minority populations in teacher training programs, and develop methods to provide support for students to pass such entrance exams. Provide increased teacher training practicum experiences for preservice teachers (freshman through senior year) in urban environments.

Recommendation # 39 *Other: Indiana DOE, other agencies, local school corporations*
School corporations and local schools in collaboration with parent associations/groups, students, parent training organizations and the Indiana Department of Education, should improve parent involvement in the educational process.

A.) Increase parents' understanding of their rights and responsibilities within the educational system, and empower them to advocate and work together effectively with

schools for their children when educational issues arise. In particular, increase parent/school communication regarding student discipline issues by:

- Supporting agencies, initiatives and partnerships that can provide support and training to parents.
- Ensuring that parents, students, and community members are represented in the development of student handbooks.
- Establishing channels of communication with parents regarding discipline concerns involving school staff.
- Providing immediate notification of parents/guardians concerning serious misconduct.
- Disseminating the manual developed by the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) and the Indiana Youth Law Team advising parents on their legal rights in understandable terms.

B.) Increase the presence and active involvement of parent and community volunteers at every school. Towards that end the IDOE and the Parent Information and Resource Center should:

- Explore promising strategies to increase the presence and active participation of parents and community members in schools.
- Provide technical assistance to school corporations to increase meaningful involvement of parent and community members.
- Ensure monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to provide a standard of accountability at the local level for meaningful involvement of parents and community members in schools.

C.) Increase collaboration with parents and students as partners in the educational process. The state should monitor the extent to which parents and students are provided with adequate training in order to be able to be effective participants in the decision making process of Site-Based Management Teams (Public Law 221). Possible parent involvement activities might include:

- Parent participation in developing curriculum.
- Parent recognition programs each school year.
- Volunteer child advocacy corps at every school.
- Open community forums discussing educational issues.

- Supporting parental initiatives that target meeting the needs of under-achieving students.

Education Long Term Recommendations

Recommendation #40 Legislative

The General Assembly should pass legislation, provide resources, and advise the Indiana Department of Education to provide guidance to shift the focus of instruction and intervention from a “wait-to-fail” approach to proactive intervention and instructional strategies that prevent school failure:

- Require and fund evidence-based, early interventions (including Pre-K settings), e.g., Title I, Reading Recovery, that are implemented at the local level and target students of color who may be at risk for disproportionate representation without such services. These interventions should also assist parents in developing literacy strategies in the home.
- Ensure that best practice instructional approaches (e.g., Response to Intervention), providing proactive interventions are available to prevent academic failure for all students and create a full range of remediation opportunities for students needing support to achieve academic success.
- The Indiana Department of Education and Indiana’s colleges/universities should be directed to provide training to pre-service and veteran teachers on early literacy strategies and interventions to help under-achieving students recognize that focusing on reading and writing skills is the foundation for effective learning in all subjects.

Recommendation # 41 Other: DOE

In order to address disproportionality in the availability of highly qualified teachers in the state of Indiana, the Indiana Department of Education should develop, gather, analyze, and disseminate data in that area.

- An annual report should be disseminated on the status of highly qualified teachers in Indiana, current enrollment and graduation rates of students from under-represented groups in teacher training institutions, and current figures on the numbers and percentage of minority teachers in Indiana's schools. This report should include the numbers and locations (e.g., school corporation and school) of non-qualified teachers and the percentage of time that students spend with them.
- This data should be used to develop standards concerning the appropriate ratio of highly qualified teachers and to monitor the availability of highly qualified teachers across Indiana's school corporations, especially in high poverty urban and rural settings.

Recommendation # 42

School corporations, local schools, community- and faith-based organizations, civic groups, businesses, and labor unions should work to improve the collaboration of education and other youth-serving agencies to better meet the needs of children and youth.

A.) School social workers or other school professionals should assess the status of culturally responsive wrap-around services in the local community and the extent of educational involvement with those services. If there is no formal collaboration process, school social workers should begin meetings with other social service agencies to establish such a process.

B.) Local and state commissions on the status of Black and Latino males should work to create more school/community partnerships that target children of color ages one through five.

C.) Increase collaboration of schools with community- and faith-based organizations.

- Make connections with the church community to promote educational goals.
- Disseminate information about and partner with faith-based organizations in promoting literacy centers in local churches.

Recommendation # 43 *Other: Indiana DOE*

School corporations and local schools should be provided expanded resources and guidance regarding issues of problem or disruptive behavior in order to reduce disproportionality in school discipline and expand the options of schools for maintaining safe and orderly learning environments.

- Technical assistance to help schools establish an orderly and effective learning environment and when necessary to address problem or disruptive behavior, and provide systems of support for students who exhibit such behavior.
- Clear guidelines for and examples of alternatives to suspension and expulsion.
- Technical assistance for schools in establishing proactive and comprehensive school disciplinary systems, such as positive behavior supports.
- Workshops on effective classroom management and positive discipline for all educators and staff.
- Statewide forums on a wide variety of positive discipline approaches so that successful strategies used by schools and school corporations to reduce rates of school exclusion and racial disparities in discipline can be more widely shared with other schools and school corporations seeking to learn more effective methods of school discipline.

- Offer programs on conflict resolution skills for all students, especially those most at-risk for suspension and expulsion.

Recommendation # 44 Other: Indiana DOE

School corporations, local schools, community- and faith-based organizations, in conjunction with the Indiana Department of Education, should develop programs that can ensure that students of color have the resources needed in order to be able to meet high academic and behavioral expectations and become more engaged in their educational program:

- Develop programs to provide and support role models/mentors targeting preschool children of color, ages one through five.
- Create a pilot program through the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) that provides grants and technical assistance to school corporations to utilize proven screening tools to identify more students of color to participate in gifted and talented programs.
- Develop networks created and driven by students in order to increase meaningful communication between students and staff.
- Increase the involvement of students in school-related decision making.
- Explore models for increasing the democratic participation of students in their education.
- Offer after-school programs promoting self-awareness through socially acceptable behaviors.
- Develop programs for unattended, or latchkey, children and youth of color.
- IDOE will review a variety of behavioral and cognitive models of discipline.

Recommendation # 45 Other: Local School Corporations

School corporations and local schools should ensure that there are multiple forms of authentic, culturally responsive assessments (see e.g., NEA, AFDC, Wiggins) that go beyond current ISTEP testing, e.g., formative assessments, quarterly assessments, benchmarks, to measure student academic success and identify students at risk and in need of intervention.

Recommendation # 46 Legislative

The state of Indiana should address the critical shortages of teachers of color in Indiana's public schools by:

- A.) Providing full funding from the public and private sector for both the planning phase and implementation of the TEACH INDIANA CENTER, a result of collaborative efforts by multiple educational and civil rights groups in the state of Indiana to create a

specific initiative focusing on the recruitment and retention of highly qualified educators from under-represented populations. The mission of the Center is to achieve a demographically proportional number of educators in the state of Indiana from under-represented groups. Activities of the Center would include:

- Development of a recruitment plan for under-represented groups.
- Production of a website as a communication tool that provides resource information and scholarship opportunities about careers in education.
- Development of a strong support system at each university to remove barriers and challenges and use best practices to recruit, retain and graduate under-represented students.
- Development of a research agenda and a network of Indiana higher learning institutions to increase support for under-represented groups of students.

Recommendation # 47 Legislative

Provide an expanded range of effective alternative options and vocational programs for those students who are at risk for failure in mainstream settings:

- A.) Provide funding to sustain a range of traditional and non-traditional educational settings, including alternative schools and vocational training programs, to ensure all students achieve academic success and have sufficient skill readiness to enter Indiana's workforce. These education settings could include vocational programs, courses for college credit, community-based learning, evening classes, flexible scheduling, and alternative settings that satisfy different learning styles or provide an alternative to suspension and expulsion.
- B.) The Indiana General Assembly should fund a comprehensive review, to be conducted by the Indiana Department of Education, of community and school-based alternative programs, in order to identify those programs that are most effective in increasing graduation rates and improving educational achievement for all students, with the goal of replicating effective programs in other corporations.
- C.) The Indiana General Assembly should amend its statute to allow school corporations to establish proactive ("Type 5") learning alternatives for students, teachers, and families within their corporation.
- D.) Since students of color are typically disproportionately represented in placement in alternative programs, the Office of Educational Equity at the Indiana Department of Education should monitor disaggregated enrollment data in all such alternative programs in order to monitor the extent of disproportionality and, where necessary, make recommendations to address disproportionality.

Recommendation # 48 Legislative

Ensure the cultural responsiveness of school disciplinary systems through:

- The inclusion, in School Improvement Plans, Public Law 221, of a section on culturally responsive proactive discipline plans to reduce suspension and expulsion rates and racial and ethnic disproportionality in discipline.
- Regulations to ensure that culturally responsive proactive systems (e.g., culturally responsive Positive Behavior Supports, Response- to-Intervention, evidence-based early intervention services) are implemented with professional development and technical supports.

Recommendation # 49 Legislative

In order to better ensure the cultural responsiveness of all school personnel in Indiana's schools, Indiana's colleges and universities should:

- Develop and present curriculum for administrators that provides training concerning causes of disproportionality and strategies for identifying and eliminating it.
- Provide training for school administrators and other relevant school personnel in developing school improvement plans that include assessments, audits, staff surveys, and continuous professional development to address racial and ethnic disparities.

Recommendation # 50

Ensure the availability of personnel support in school to better meet the needs of students who are at-risk of failure through:

Legislative

A.) Expanding funding for related Student Services professionals (e.g., guidance counselors, school psychologists, school social workers) so that Indiana meets or exceeds the national standards of professional-to-student ratios in all K-12 schools.

Recommended ratios are:

- School Counselor Ratios: Maximum – 1 to 250 students
- School Psychologist Ratios: Maximum – 1 to 1,000 students
- School Social Worker Ratio: Maximum – 1 to 400 students

Other: Indiana DOE and local school corporations

B.) Increasing the capability of student support personnel to provide preventive and early intervening services by:

- Redefining and expanding the duties of the counselor to include counseling time not directed toward scheduling and attendance.

- Redefining and expanding the role of the school psychologist away from a solely psychometric assessment role to an expanded role in supporting other education professionals in meeting student needs (e.g., functional behavioral assessment, positive behavior interventions and supports, behavioral consultation, school violence prevention, and conflict resolution).