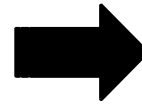


# Intro to Restorative Practices



Power U Center for Social Change

# ZERO TOLERANCE



Mistrust  
Strained Relationships  
Tense School Environments  
Racial Injustice



Zero Tolerance policies and practices have been the dominant framework for school discipline over the last few decades. This hard-line approach to misbehavior utilizes harsh punishments for even small infractions. These policies have contributed to tense environments within schools where relationships are strained between students and adults and trust is hard to maintain. And research has consistently shown that these policies have resulted in disproportionate suspension, expulsion, and arrest rates for Black and Latino students around the country leading to the development of a “school to prison pipeline.”

# Who's getting Pushed Out Across the Country

## *Students of color*

Black students expulsion rates 3.5 times higher than whites

Latino students 2 times higher

American Indian students 1.5 times higher

***Students with disabilities*** – 2 times more likely to be suspended and expelled

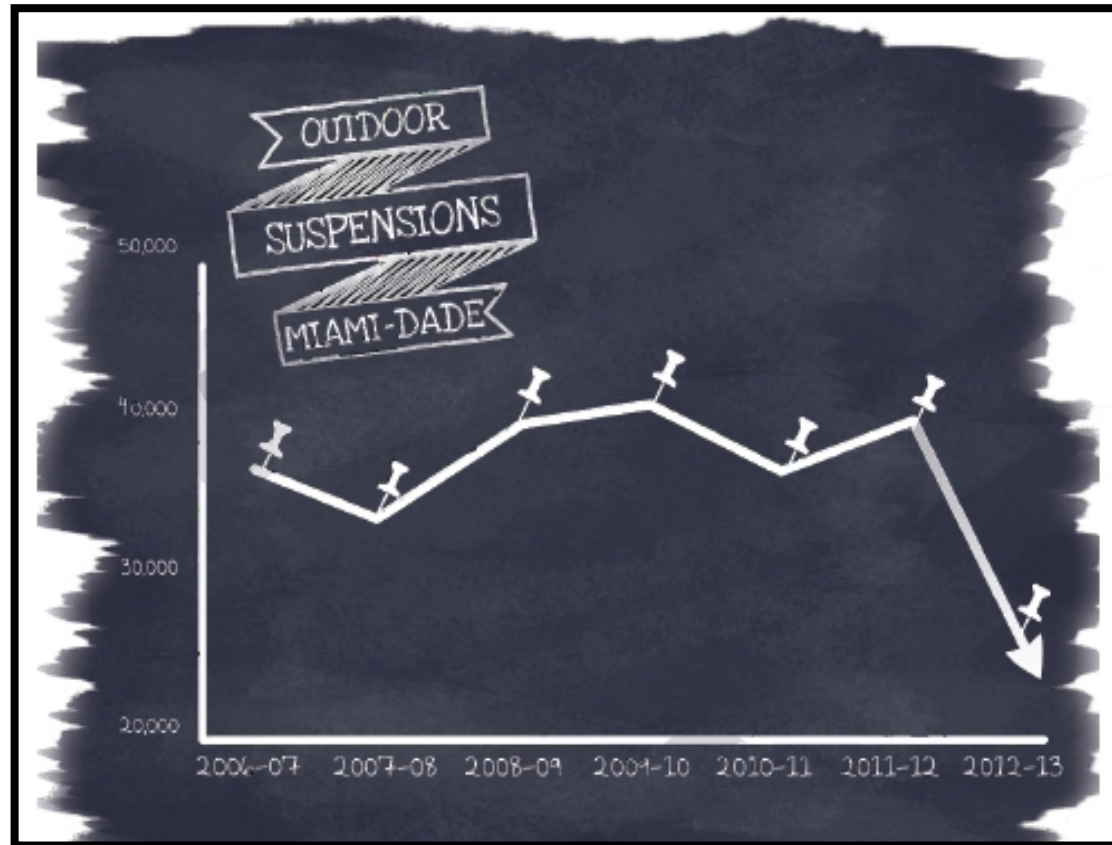
***Students in foster care*** – 3 times more likely to be suspended or expelled

***LGBTQ students*** – 1.4 times more likely to be expelled



The data clearly shows that that Zero Tolerance Policies target students of color, students with disabilities, students in foster care, and LGBTQ youth. Youth from these marginalized groups are more likely to be punished severely than youth from dominant groups who exhibit the same levels of misbehavior. After years of research and advocacy from groups around the country, in 2014 the Department of Education (DOE) affirmed that not only are Zero Tolerance Policies ineffective for addressing misbehavior, they contribute to racial and economic disparities. The DOE has issued new guidelines calling on school districts to discontinue the implementation of Zero Tolerance policies and enact new positive behavioral methods.

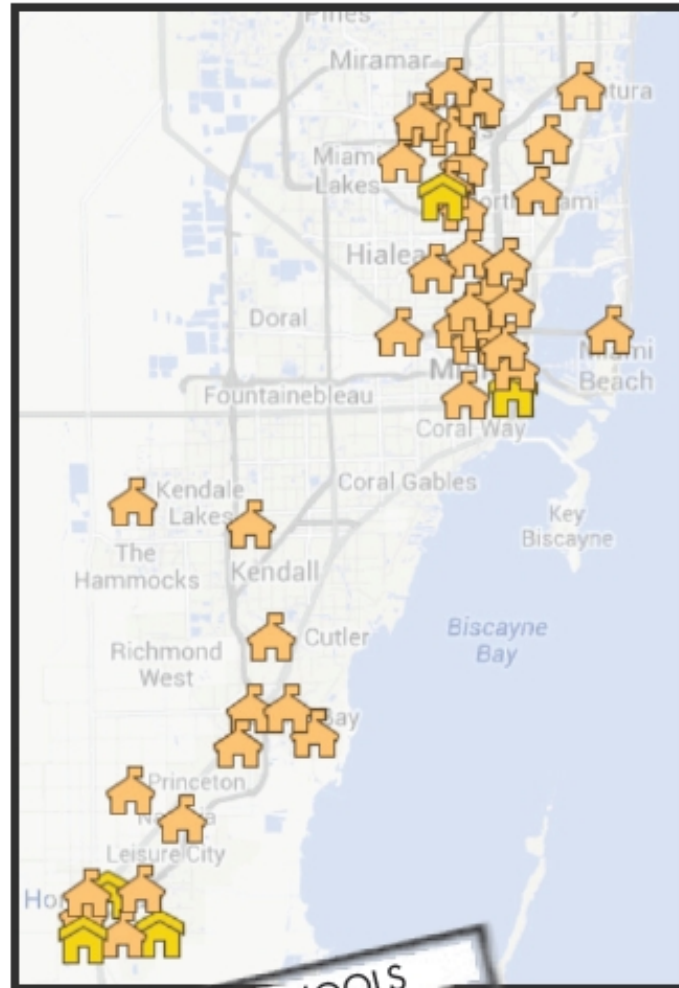
# Miami



## So how does Miami fare in all of this?

The good news is that when it comes to policy, Miami-Dade is already on the right track as set by the new DOE guidelines. Re-writes to the student code of conduct removed Zero Tolerance language and schools have been instructed to stop suspending students for minor infractions. As a result suspension rates in the county have dropped dramatically since 2012. Furthermore, at the start of the 2015/16 school year, the District announced that it was ending out of school suspensions. While this is good, the data shows us that overall drops in suspensions have not addressed the racial disparities in discipline practices. Changing policy does not solve the problem unless an alternative put in place.

Despite overall drops in suspension rates across the district, there continues to be a sharp racial and economic disparity. In 2014, 50 schools, representing only 12% of the student population, accounted for half of all suspensions in Miami Dade. As you can see from this graphic, these schools are concentrated in Black and Latino communities that are predominately low to moderate income. This points to the fact that changing the policy on suspensions does not by itself solve the problem. We need to implement an **alternative** to punitive discipline practices.



50 SCHOOLS  
HALF OF ALL SUSPENSIONS  
12% OF STUDENTS

This graphic demonstrates how this disparity played out in 2014. Across the entire district, the suspension rate dropped to 5%. But at Carol City Middle School, the suspension rate remained high at 37%.





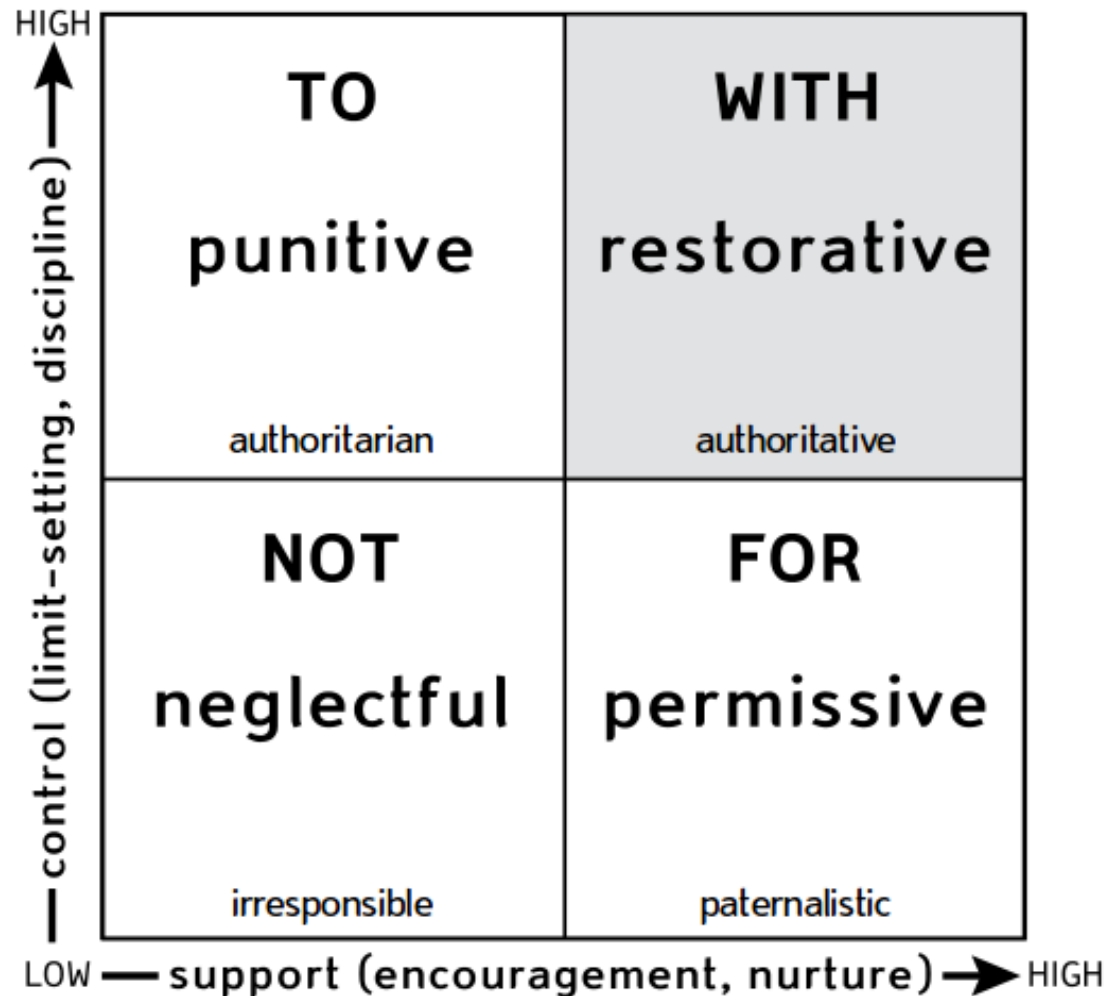
Black students in particular continue to be hit the hardest by severe punishment. For every white student suspended in Miami-Dade, 3.5 Black students are suspended. In the 2014/2015 school year, Black students were only one quarter of all students in Miami-Dade schools, but accounted for half of all suspensions. After so many years of Zero Tolerance dominating our approaches to discipline, it will take fundamental changes of practice and culture within our schools to address structural inequality.



Schools around the country have experienced transformation through the implementation of restorative practices. The goal of restorative practices is to build stronger school communities by:

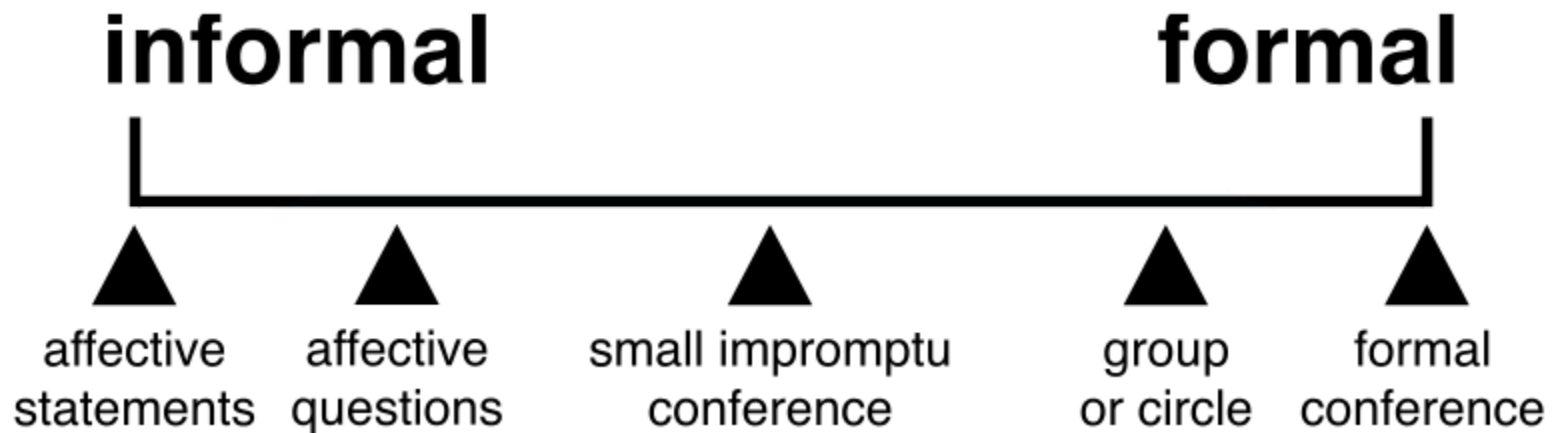
- a) Developing effective leadership;
- b) Building trust, interconnection, and deeper relationships between the students, teachers, and staff;
- c) Providing methods to address misbehavior in a way that gets to the root cause of conflicts and holds individuals accountable;
- d) Repairing harm in a way that maintains the integrity of the community and doesn't further isolate offenders.





Restorative practices function from the belief that human beings respond best to decision making processes and authority when their voices are heard and they've had meaningful input. This is true for both youth and adults. The restorative model combines high levels of control with high levels of support, engaging people in processes that are done *with* them rather than *for* them or *to* them. The goal is to have participants exercise their own agency and make good choices for themselves, not simply punish them or take action for them.

Source: *Defining Restorative* (link to resource <http://www.iirp.edu/pdf/Defining-Restorative.pdf>) by Ted Wachtel, International Institute for Restorative Practices



*Is this just about sitting around talking in a circle?*

**NO! There is a spectrum of restorative practices from informal to formal.**

At the informal end are practices such as making **affective statements** such as “When you disrupted class, it impacted me in this way...” and asking **affective questions** “What was your intention when you did that?” Affective questions and statements can be used on a day to day basis to develop more open lines of communication and deeper understandings.

At the more formal end are restorative circles and conferences, which are typically used when some infraction has occurred. Circles bring together offenders, victims, and other people that have been impacted to discuss what happened, identify underlying issues, and develop solutions that repair harm and hold people accountable.

Circles can also be used more informally and in impromptu circumstances as a way to discuss a topic in class, get people’s input on issues in school, or just check in with how people are doing.

Source: *Defining Restorative*

“Instead of suspending and arresting us, we want to be given the opportunity to work with our peers and trusted adults to find meaningful solutions to the issues we face.”

-Claudia Augustine, Power U Youth Member



**Join Power U to dismantle the School to Prison Pipeline and transform the climate in our public schools!**