

Increasing Student Engagement through Culturally-Responsive Classroom Management

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Abstract : Worldwide, ethnically and culturally diverse students are at increased risk for school failure, discipline problems, and dropout. Despite decades of concern about this issue of disparities in education and other fields (e.g., 'school to prison pipeline'), there has been limited empirical examination of models that can actually reduce these gaps in schools. Moreover, few studies have examined the effectiveness of in-service teacher interventions and supports specifically designed to reduce discipline disparities and improve student engagement. This session provides an overview of the evidence-based Double Check model which serves as a framework for teachers to use culturally-responsive strategies to engage ethnically and culturally diverse students in the classroom and reduce discipline problems. Specifically, Double Check is a school-based prevention program which includes three core components: (a) enhancements to the school-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) tier-1 level of support; (b) five one-hour professional development training sessions, each of which addresses five domains of cultural competence (i.e., connection to the curriculum, authentic relationships, reflective thinking, effective communication, and sensitivity to students' culture); and (c) coaching of classroom teachers using an adapted version of the Classroom Check-Up, which intends to increase teachers' use of effective classroom management and culturally-responsive strategies using research-based motivational interviewing and data-informed problem-solving approaches. This paper presents findings from a randomized controlled trial (RCT) testing the impact of Double Check, on office discipline referrals (disaggregated by race) and independently observed and self-reported culturally-responsive practices and classroom behavior management. The RCT included 12 elementary and middle schools; 159 classroom teachers were randomized either to receive coaching or serve as comparisons. Specifically, multilevel analyses indicated that teacher self-reported culturally responsive behavior management improved over the course of the school year for teachers who received the coaching and professional development. However, the average annual office discipline referrals issued to black students were reduced among teachers who were randomly assigned to receive coaching relative to comparison teachers. Similarly, observations conducted by trained external raters indicated significantly more teacher proactive behavior management and anticipation of student problems, higher student compliance, less student non-compliance, and less socially disruptive behaviors in classrooms led by coached teachers than classrooms led teachers randomly assigned to the non-coached condition. These findings indicated promising effects of the Double Check model on a range of teacher and student outcomes, including disproportionality in office discipline referrals among Black students. These results also suggest that the Double Check model is one of only a few systematic approaches to promoting culturally-responsive behavior management which has been rigorously tested and shown to be associated with improvements in either student or staff outcomes indicated significant reductions in discipline problems and improvements in behavior management. Implications of these findings are considered within the broader context of globalization and demographic shifts, and their impacts on schools. These issues are particularly timely, given growing concerns about immigration policies in the U.S. and abroad.

Keywords : ethnically and culturally diverse students, student engagement, school-based prevention, academic achievement

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