



# Student-Teacher Relationships and Classroom Quality: Implications for Children of Color

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# Presentation Overview

Introduction



Research Design



Findings



Implications for School Psychologists

# Introduction



# Teacher-Child Relationships

- Close and secure relationships with teachers are associated with better social-emotional and academic outcomes for children (Allen et al., 2011)
- Close relationships are protective for students who experience learning and behavior problems (Baker, 2006)
- Conflictual teacher-child relationships are associated with declines in prosocial behaviors and achievement (Hamre & Pianta, 2001)

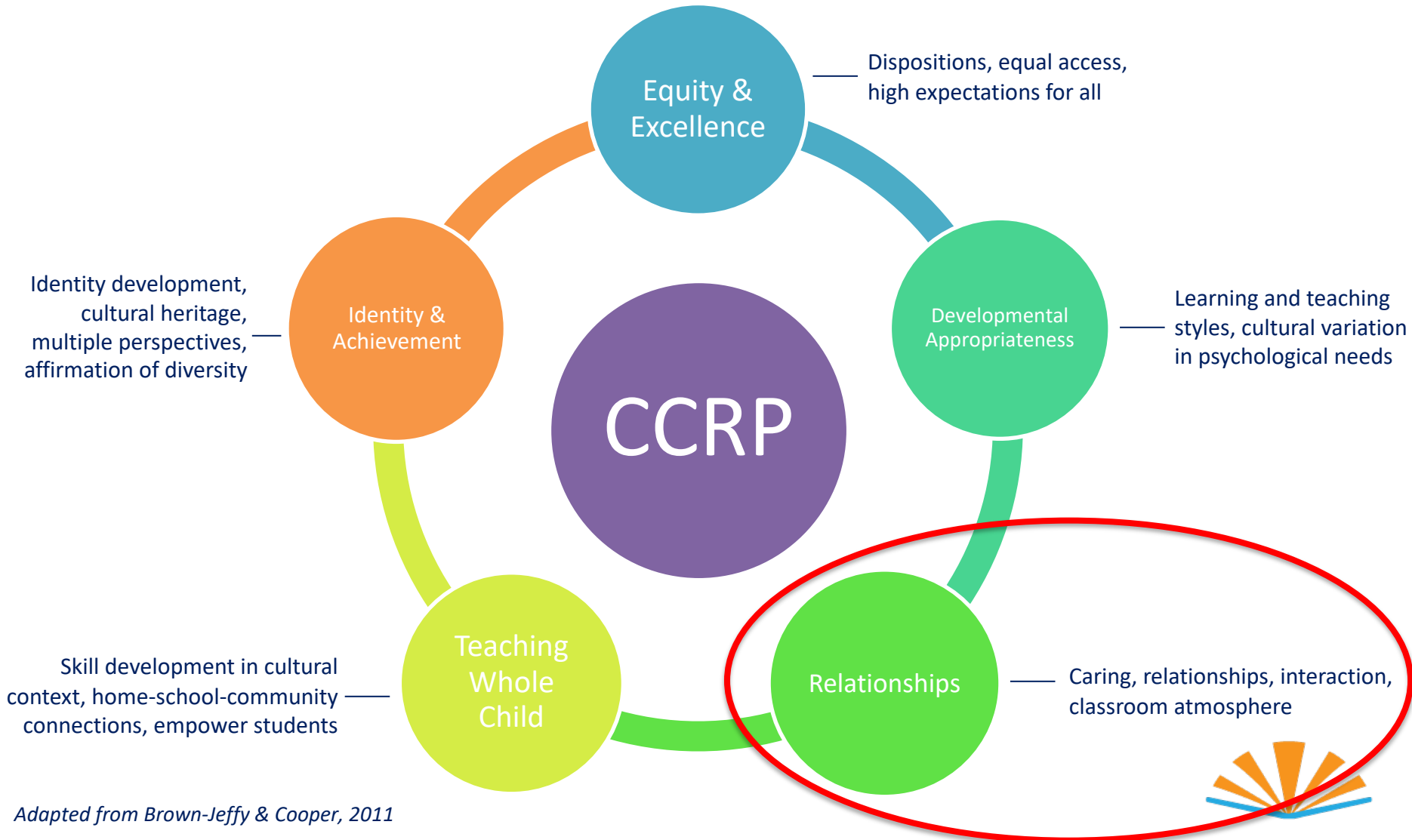
# Classroom Quality

- High-quality classrooms promote children's learning and development through providing foundations for autonomy, exploration, engagement, and responsibility (Cadima et al., 2016)
- There are established associations between classroom climate and children's social competence and achievement (Schmitt et al., 2018)
- High quality classrooms may provide more benefits for children with learning and behavioral difficulties (Cadima et al., 2016)

# Classroom Experiences of Children of Color

- Evidence suggests that children of color
  - are more likely to have less close and more conflictual relationships with teachers (Gilliam et al., 2016; Split & Hughes, 2015)
  - endorse a significantly lower sense of belonging and more negative interactions with their teachers (Bradshaw et al., 2010)
  - are less likely to be in high-quality classroom environments (Early et al., 2010)
- The extent to which these inequities in learning experiences influence children's early achievement and social development has been underexplored

# Critical Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CCRP) Framework



# Our Purpose

*To examine how teacher-child relationships and classroom quality in kindergarten function across racial/ethnic groups*





# Research Questions

1

What is the nature of teacher-child relationships and classroom quality experienced during the kindergarten year across racial/ethnic groups?

2

What is the relationship between teacher-child relationships, classroom quality, and children's achievement and social outcomes during kindergarten?

2a

Does race/ethnicity moderate this relationship?

# Research Design



# Setting

<b>Kindergarten Classrooms</b>	161 Total 107 Urban 54 Rural
<b>Schools</b>	82 Total 56 Urban 26 Rural
<b>Districts</b>	22 Total 9 Urban 13 Rural



# Participants

n = 241 (139 urban; 102 rural)

<b>Age (M, SD)</b>	6.11 (0.29)
<b>Gender</b>	50.6% male
<b>Race</b>	
White, non-Hispanic	52.2%
Black, non-Hispanic	12.7%
Hispanic/Latinx	24.6%
<b>Parent Education</b>	
< HS degree	14.6%
HS Diploma/GED	23.3%
Some college	39.2%
4 year degree+	22.9%
<b>Family Income</b>	
At or below 150% PL and/or receive government support	71.1%
<b>Home Language</b>	
English	79.6%
Other language	20.4%



# Teacher Participants

n = 161 (107 urban; 54 rural)

<b>Age (<i>M, SD</i>)</b>	39.74 (11.52)
<b>Gender</b>	99.4% Female
<b>Race</b>	
White, non-Hispanic	92.4%
Black, non-Hispanic	0.6%
Hispanic/Latinx	4.5%
Other, non-Hispanic	2.5%
<b>Teacher Education</b>	
Bachelor's Degree	53.5%
Master's Degree or Higher	46.5%
<b>Teacher Experience (<i>M, SD</i>)</b>	
# years as a teacher (including part-time)	14.19 (9.60)



# Measures

Predictors	
<b>Student-Teacher Relationships</b>	Student-Teacher Relationship Scale (STRS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Closeness</li><li>• Conflict</li></ul>
<b>Classroom Quality</b>	Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Emotional Support</li><li>• Classroom Organization</li><li>• Instructional Support</li></ul>

Outcomes	
<b>Children's Achievement</b>	Woodcock Johnson Tests of Achievement (WJ-III) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Broad Reading</li><li>• Broad Math</li></ul>
<b>Children's Social Skills</b>	Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Social Skills</li><li>• Problem Behaviors</li></ul>

*All collected in spring of Kindergarten year*

# Analysis

- Univariate stepwise regression models
  - Predictors were added in a block-wise selection method
  - Standardized regression coefficients were used to compare the relative importance among predictors in the model
- To address clustering effect, maximum likelihood estimation method with Huber-White “sandwich” estimator was used
- Covariates: child gender, preschool attendance, parent education, income level, home language

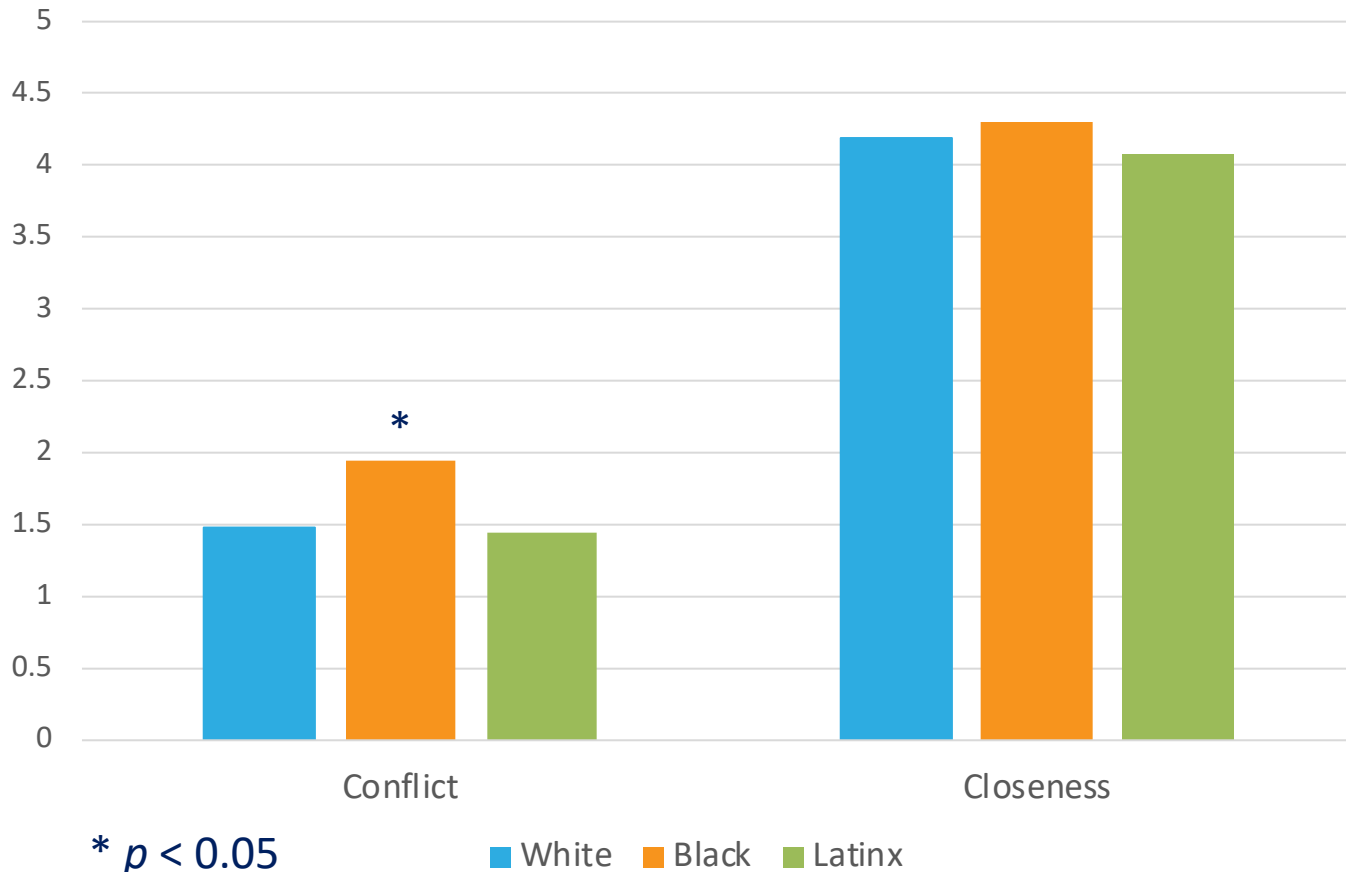
# Findings





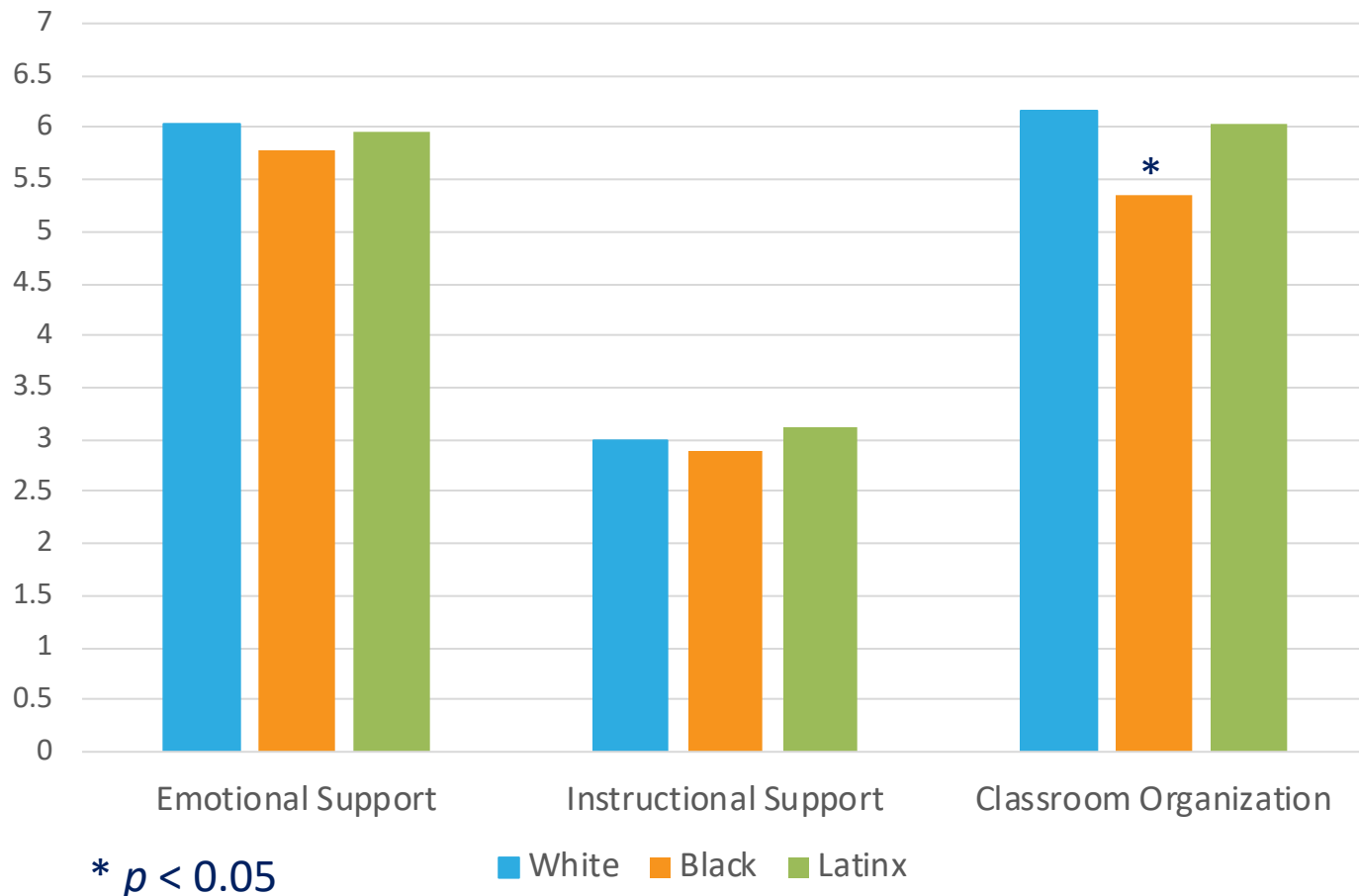
# Research Question #1

What is the nature of *teacher-child relationships* and classroom quality experienced during the kindergarten year across race/ethnic groups?



# Research Question #1 cont.

*What is the nature of teacher-child relationships and **classroom quality** experienced during the kindergarten year across race/ethnic groups?*



# Research Question #2

What is the link between *teacher-child relationship*, classroom quality, and children's achievement and social skills during Kindergarten?

Higher levels of *closeness in teacher-child relationship*



More social skills <sup>T,P</sup>  
Higher math scores



Fewer problem behaviors <sup>T,P</sup>

Higher levels of *conflict in teacher-child relationship*



More problem behaviors <sup>T,P</sup>



Fewer social skills <sup>T,P</sup>

- No relationship between teacher-child relationship and reading scores

<sup>T</sup> = teacher-report; <sup>P</sup> = parent-report



# Research Question #2

What is the link between teacher-child relationship, *classroom quality*, and children's achievement and social skills during Kindergarten?



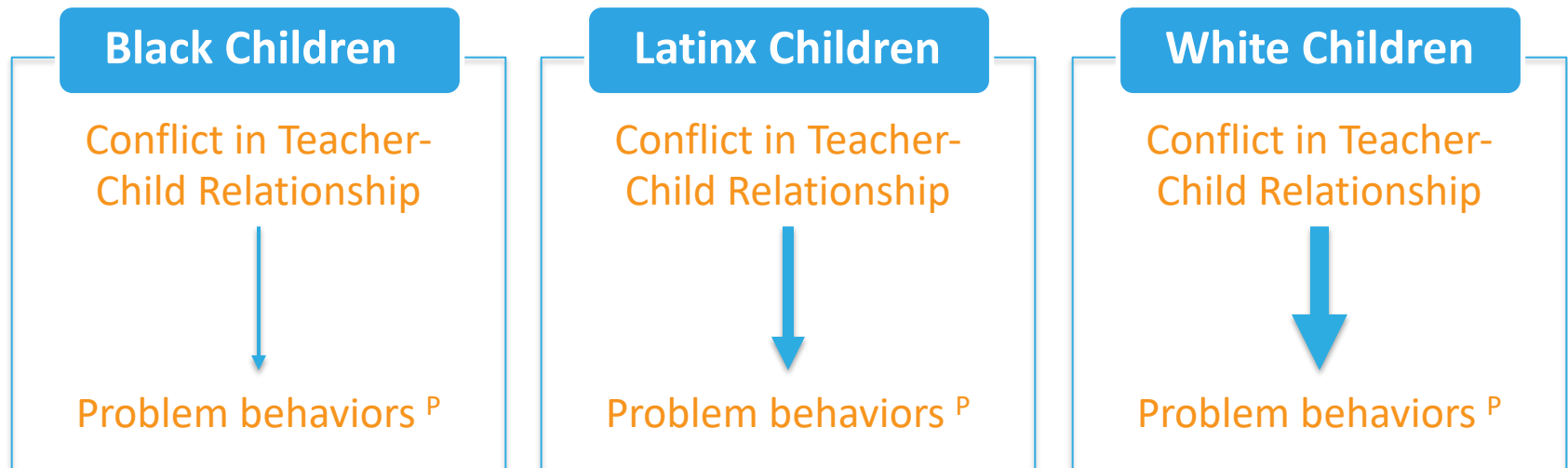
- No relationship between emotional support or classroom organization and academic or social-emotional outcomes

<sup>T</sup> = teacher-report; <sup>P</sup> = parent-report

# Research Question #2a

*Is the relationship between **teacher-child relationship** and outcomes moderated by race/ethnicity?*

- The relationship between conflict in the teacher-child relationship and parent-reported problem behaviors is strongest for White children, followed by Latinx children, followed by Black children



Thicker arrows denote stronger relationships

<sup>P</sup> = parent-report

# Research Question #2a

*Is the relationship between **classroom quality** and outcomes moderated by race/ethnicity (**Latinx**)?*

- With race as a moderator, the relationship between instructional support and social skills<sup>T</sup> becomes positive for Latinx children only
- Negative relationship between instructional support and problem behaviors<sup>T</sup> is stronger for Latinx children compared to White and Black children
- There is a significant positive relationship between instructional support and reading scores for Latinx children only

<sup>T</sup> = teacher-report; <sup>P</sup> = parent-report

# Research Question #2a

*Is the relationship between **classroom quality** and outcomes moderated by race/ethnicity (**Black**)?*

- The relationship between instructional support and problem behaviors<sup>P</sup> is positive for Black children, but negative for White and Latinx children
- There is a significant positive relationship between classroom organization and problem behaviors<sup>T</sup> for Black children only
- There is a significant positive relationship between emotional support and reading scores for Black children only

<sup>T</sup> = teacher-report; <sup>P</sup> = parent-report

# Implications for School Psychologists





# Recap of Findings

- Black children had significantly more conflictual relationships with teachers when compared to White and Latinx children
- Black children were more likely to be in classrooms with less classroom organization than White and Latinx children
- Teacher-child relationship quality was related to children's social skills, problem behaviors, and math scores regardless of race

# Recap of Findings

- Instructional support had stronger effects on Latinx children's social development and reading scores than White and Black children's
- Instructional support had a positive relationship with problem behaviors for Black children, but a negative relationship for White or Latinx children
- Classroom organization had a positive relationship with problem behaviors for Black children only
- Emotional support had stronger effects on Black children's reading scores than White and Latinx children's

# Take Home Point

- Classroom processes and relationships at school are important
- But they function differently depending on child race/ethnicity and developmental domain
- One size does *not* fit all

# Study Limitations

- Limited generalizability
  - Small sample of Black children
  - Entire sample of Black children were from urban areas
  - One Midwestern state
- Large statistical model; Type I error inflation not considered

# Why is this important for school psychologists?

- School psychologists...
  - advocate for creating schools, classrooms, and systems that ensure equity and fairness for *all* children
  - play a critical role in leading important conversations and actions necessary to achieve equity for all students
  - use their expertise in consultation to address patterns of conflictual relationships and unsupportive classroom environments
- Relationships and classroom environments are *malleable – we can affect change!*

# Reflection Questions

- *What do these findings mean for practice in your setting?*
- *How might these findings apply to your work with teachers in diverse classrooms?*



# Strategies for Fostering Positive Teacher-Child Relationships

- Provide opportunities for more personal connections between teachers and students of color
- Encourage teachers to schedule individual time with students
- Promote a 5-to-1 ratio of positive to negative interactions
- Explicitly repair conflict in teacher-child relationships by using effective communication techniques (Cook et al., 2018):
  - Take personal ownership for the negative interaction, Let go of the previous incident and start fresh, Communicate your care for the student, Engage in mutual problem solving and determine collaborative solution

# Culturally Relevant Practices

*Culturally relevant practices teach “to and through the strengths of ethnically diverse students” (Gay, 2000, p. 29)*

- Starts with self-awareness of own culture and biases
- Build awareness of different cultural backgrounds, and acknowledge and affirm differences
- Use curriculum inclusive of all cultures
- Maintain high expectations for all students
- Continuous professional development for educators (including school psychs!) in cultural competency and humility





We Have To  
Embrace Our  
Differences To  
Create Freedom  
& Acceptance  
For All

-Janz Jennings

swell

Thank you!

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