



## **Morningside Center** for Teaching Social Responsibility

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### **Morningside Center selected to receive an i3 award to advance equity in schools**

Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility has been selected to receive a federal Investing in Innovation (i3) development grant to develop and test a model for 1) boosting students' social and emotional skills, 2) building school communities based on collaboration, caring, fair treatment, and mutual respect, and 3) eliminating the disproportional targeting of Black, Latino, and LGBTQ students, and students with disabilities, for punitive discipline. Our proposal for a "Whole School Restorative Practices Project" was one of 15 selected from the 385 applications received by the federal Department of Education.

#### **The Problem**

Study after study has shown that Black students are two to three times more likely to be issued school suspensions than other students, and there is no evidence that this gap is due to higher rates of misbehavior. Racial inequality in discipline fuels racial disparities in long-term outcomes for young people, including low graduation rates and disproportionate contact with the criminal justice system.

#### **Our solution**

Our model is distinctive in fully integrating two powerful approaches:

- **Social and emotional learning (SEL)** to build community, create a positive school climate, reduce disciplinary incidents, and boost adults' and students' social and emotional competence, with emphasis on respecting people of other cultures and standing up to discrimination
- **Restorative practices (RP)** to foster student voice and belonging and provide a powerful and effective educational alternative to punitive approaches when harmful behavior does occur

By strengthening relationships, developing social and emotional skills, and using restorative interventions instead of punitive measures when harm is done, we create a positive climate for learning and address the root causes of suspensions and discipline disparities.

The project will support 12 high-needs public schools (four elementary, four middle, and four high) in New York City, the nation's largest school district. The four-year project includes two phases.

In Phase One, we will introduce our RP/SEL model to three schools and work intensively with them to improve the model, identify best practices, and create tools to support schools in using these best practices to create school cultures based on restorative approaches rather than punitive ones.

In Phase Two, we will roll out the improved model to nine more high-needs New York City schools.

**Dr. Anne Gregory** of Rutgers University, a leading researcher in the field of restorative practices, will conduct a rigorous scientific evaluation that will assess the impact of the project on these nine schools relative to nine comparison schools.

In addition to substantially improving outcomes for students in the 12 participating schools, we anticipate that the Whole School RP Project will make a significant contribution to the growing body of research documenting the promise of restorative practices, and will produce practical tools to help schools throughout NYC and beyond implement restorative practices effectively.

“We are deeply humbled by this acknowledgment of our work,” says Tala Manassah, Morningside Center’s Deputy Executive Director. “Now more than ever, we’re dedicated to helping create schools that are joyful, rigorous, and equitable for all children. The i3 grant will enable us to create a powerful and practical set of tools and strategies educators can use to honor and elevate the humanity and dignity of each child, every day. We are grateful to the NoVo Foundation, New York Community Trust, Trinity Wall Street, and the Jean and Louis Dreyfus Foundation for helping us develop the model we’ll be building on in this project.”

The Whole School RP model draws on Morningside Center’s three-decade collaboration with the NYC Department of Education to develop and implement two of the nation’s leading evidence-based SEL programs, and on our five-year collaboration to introduce our restorative practices program (Restore360) to hundreds of schools and thousands of educators.

Schools participating in Restore360 have seen a sharp drop in discipline incidents and suspensions. Participating schools report improved school climate and student social and emotional competency – outcomes that have been correlated with higher graduation rates and improved academic achievement.

For more information, please contact:

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