DON’T JUDGE THE STUDENTS

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A LITTLE ABOUT ME

• I served as the County Judge of Adams County for 31 years.
• Hence I was the youth court judge all those years
• Chaired Council of Youth Court Judges for 8 years
• Every day I learned something new
• The last two decades were marked by substantial scientific research which required a culture change of how we approach at risk children and families
SILLY SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS

• Clothes related
  • Color
  • Type of coat
  • Sagging

• Disrespect

• Minor altercations

• Truancy
CULTURE DRIVEN BY ZERO TOLERANCE

• Bad kids disrupts education
• Education for those who want to learn
• Suspend them so education can continue
• We owe them no duty
• We ask them “What is wrong with you”
ZERO TOLERANCE = ZERO INTELLIGENCE

- Destroys the myth that education is the great equalizer
- Allows us to avoid asking the key question
- Why are you behaving this way?
- Why are you not coming to school?
- Children living in poverty and racial minorities are overrepresented in suspended and expelled students.
- Must change the culture
ACES—ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES

• Research in the late 1990’s
• This population has numerous ACES usually 3 or more
• Those experiences negatively impact
  • Educational achievement
  • General behavior
  • Socialization
  • Health disorders
  • Depression
  • Addictive behaviors
CHANGE THE CULTURE

• Accept the responsibility to ensure that we do everything to educate all children, even the difficult ones.

• We change the question…
  • We asked in past “What’s wrong with you?”
  • Now we ask “What happened to you?”

❖ We must address the underlying trauma experienced by these young people and addressed early and often.
STATISTICS TELL THE STORY

Compared with children with no ACES, children with 3 or more ACES were:

- Almost 3x more likely to experience academic failure,
- Nearly 5x more likely to have severe attendance problems,
- 6x more likely to have severe school behavior problems, and
- Almost 4x more likely to report frequent poor health.
CHANGE THE CULTURE

- Some Schools are properly addressing this population
  - Rather than approaching as willful behavior, they address behaviors as symptoms of exposure to ACES
- We must creatively respond with approaches that
  - Provides safety and safe place for the child at school
  - Foster connections with the child with staff and peers in school
  - Manage emotions

Schools are in unique position to be the change agent

Exciting that schools are now developing trauma informed strategies
BORROW FROM CHILD WELFARE

- Child Protection Services (CPS), in the foster care arena is required to demonstrate that they performed all reasonable efforts to prevent removal of a child from home. This is the federal standard.

- School administrators, before exercising a suspension or expulsion, ask have I done all reasonable efforts to prevent the suspension/expulsion.

- Then only those which are a public safety risk are suspended. We must find another way for all others addressing their needs.
THANK YOU

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