

Just Discipline Project (JDP):

Reducing Racial Disparities and Promoting Positive School Climate

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A. Significance

A1. Project Overview. In partnership with the Cleveland Metropolitan School District (CMSD) and American Institute of Research (AIR), the University of Pittsburgh is applying for the Early-Phase Education Innovation and Research grant program under ***Absolute Priorities 1 and 4*** with ***Competitive Preference Priorities 2 and 3***. With this funding, we will implement, evaluate, and refine the Just Discipline Project (JDP) model in CMSD schools. JDP is a school-wide restorative practice program designed to improve students' academic achievement by reducing the use of exclusionary discipline, narrowing racial disparities in school disciplinary practices, fostering socioemotional competencies, and creating a fair, inclusive school climate. JDP's innovative approach situates restorative practices (RPs) in socioemotional learning (SEL) and relational climate frameworks with an explicit focus on addressing issues of equity, culture, and bias in the school community.

School-wide buy-in, SEL, and a focus on relational climate are foundational to the model, while structural elements of JDP policies, on-site Restorative Practice Coordinators, and student leaders drive day-to-day program activities focused on community building and conflict resolution. In addition, JDP sustainably attends to inequitable practices by adopting data-driven, culturally responsive evaluation tools to assess racial and social justice in the school community, identify struggling students, and provide individualized intensive interventions (e.g., trauma counseling and individualized supports) when necessary. By strengthening interpersonal relationships, emphasizing SEL, raising cultural competency, and using RPs instead of punitive measures, JDP aims to (a) create a more positive, equitable school climate for students and staff, (b) reduce exclusionary disciplinary practices and racial disparities in the use of these practices, and (c) establish the efficacy of RPs in fostering equity, inclusion, and SEL in schools.

In a small-scale pilot study, JDP achieved program goals over the course of two years in a Title I urban public school (75% economically disadvantaged; 82% Black students, 31% eligible for special education). The participating school experienced a 28% decrease in the number of individual students suspended, a 30% drop in total office referrals, a 19% increase in students' socioemotional competency and positive school climate perceptions, and two consecutive years of increased student proficiency in math and ELA (reversing previously downward trends in both cases). These promising results warrant scaling-up implementation and evaluation efforts to develop rigorous evidence of JDP's effectiveness across school contexts and student populations, especially among racial minorities and youth from low-income families who have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated economic fallout.

We propose implementing JDP in sixth- through eighth-grade classrooms in 32 CMSD schools. CMSD is an under-resourced urban district serving significant numbers of minority (65% Black, 20% Latinx) and economically disadvantaged (90% eligible for free lunch) students (see **Appendix A1 Table** for demographics). As compared to state and national averages, CMSD has been plagued by high suspension rates, low ELA and math scores, and chronic absenteeism. On top of these suboptimal characteristics, the COVID-19 pandemic grossly affected students' school experiences in this district. According to school records, students lost 70% of in-person instruction time as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, and 29% of students did not consistently participate in remote instruction during school closures. Through a rigorous randomized control trial (RCT), we aim to implement JDP in an under-resourced district, evaluate its efficacy and develop tools to support high-quality dissemination and ongoing program fidelity.

A2. National Significance. School discipline reform is a pressing concern in the United States, as racially biased policies and practices have resulted in Black students being suspended

at four times the rate of their White counterparts (de Brey et al., 2019; Gregory et al., 2010). Exclusionary discipline is more common in under-resourced urban schools, where Black students tend to be overrepresented due to racial and socioeconomic subordination (Carter et al., 2014). In addition, a large body of research has demonstrated that exclusionary discipline is associated with adverse academic, social, and criminal justice outcomes for suspended students (Lacoe & Steinberg, 2019; Morris & Perry, 2016) as well as negative spillover effects on non-suspended students (Lacoe & Steinberg, 2019; Perry & Morris, 2014). This combination of racial disparities and developmentally maladaptive outcomes underscore the practical and moral imperatives fueling discipline reforms in American schools.

A3. Program Innovation and Demonstration of New Strategies. Practitioners and policymakers have increasingly viewed restorative practice (RP) as a potential solution to school discipline reform (Morgan et al., 2014). RPs have been tied to lower suspension and expulsion rates (Augustine et al., 2018; Gregory et al., 2016b). For example, two correlational studies with statistical controls indicated that discipline-referred students who participated in RPs were less likely to get referred for future suspensions (Anyon et al., 2014, 2016). However, demonstrated effects of RPs on academic outcomes have been elusive outside of small-scale descriptive and correlational studies (Huguley et al., 2020; Jain et al., 2017). In fact, the only school-level RCT examining causal links between RPs and academic outcomes found no discernable boons to student academic performance (Augustine et al., 2018).

Scholars have attributed this tepid association between RPs and achievement outcomes to pitfalls in program design and execution, including a lack of on-site expertise, a shortage of human resources, and socioemotional skill deficits within school community members (Adams, 2017). Researchers have consistently shown that a lack of adequate staffing hinders program

implementation and sustainability, leading some to recommend that RP programs begin incorporating specialized employees responsible for coaching teachers, managing school implementation, and ensuring fidelity (Augustine et al., 2018). While the few RP programs taking this approach have achieved positive academic outcomes (Huguley et al., 2020; Jain et al., 2017; McMorris et al., 2013), there has been a dearth of RCTs examining the effectiveness of RP specialist models due to the scarcity of such programs.

Moreover, students and school-based adults often lack the socioemotional skills (e.g., active listening, empathy, perspective-taking) necessary for RP-based interventions to prevent misunderstandings and deescalate conflicts (Brackett et al., 2009; Durlak et al., 2015). Indeed, schools as developmental contexts frequently fail to create opportunities for school-based adults to forge the type of deep connections with students that can reduce distrust, implicit bias, and cultural misunderstandings (Gregory et al., 2016a; Okonofua & Eberhardt, 2015).

Just as limited literature has linked RPs to academic benefits, scant evidence exists pertaining to RP's role in reducing the racial discipline gap. Extant literature indicates that this effect hinges on whether an RP program's design and implementation is culturally responsive to the racial and relational climate of the school (Augustine et al., 2018; Jain et al., 2017). Because these studies are so few, little is known about how equity-oriented RPs affect racial disparities in achievement and discipline, leaving educators with a persistent challenge that calls for novel solutions. We answer this call with the Just Discipline Project (JDP), a program designed to develop and implement evidence-based innovations to improve academic achievement and attainment among high-need students, including those affected by racial subordination and poverty.

The innovative JDP model features three RP implementation components essential to program success: (a) on-site RP program specialists, (b) the explicit cultivation of student leaders

as transformative agents in the implementation process, and (c) engaging students and school-based adults in SEL. First, the JDP model recognizes that the work of RP implementation cannot be overlaid onto the existing duties of teachers or administrators, as this double-duty approach has proved ineffective in prior work (Adams, 2017). Whereas many RP programs rely on teacher-driven efforts without programmatic support beyond initial training, the JDP model uses specialized, school-based Restorative Practice Coordinators (RPCs) whose sole focus within the school milieu is to execute program components. With support from RP-trained student leaders, RPCs lead programming and provide ongoing training and coaching to staff as a means of effectively implementing and sustaining the JDP (Huguley et al., 2020).

By integrating student leaders into the implementation process, the JDP takes a proven strengths-based, ecologically valid, youth empowerment approach to RP. Students play a fundamental role in RP program success, especially in urban school districts (Huguley et al., 2020; Wadhwa, 2016). The presence of RP-trained student leaders increases the number of school community members available to build positive relationships and resolve conflicts peaceably (Wadhwa, 2016). Furthermore, these student leaders have the power to influence school climate and relational dynamics among their peers and address conflicts before they escalate to the attention of teachers and administrators.

Finally, the integration of SEL into the JDP is based on evidence showing that building community and fostering socioemotional growth creates a foundation for effective school-based RPs (Durlak et al., 2015). SEL promotes supportive school communities, prevents conflicts, and reduces bias by helping people develop skills in areas such as emotional coping, perspective taking, empathy, bias awareness, and conflict de-escalation. Recent scholarship has indicated

that fostering SEL promotes a positive school climate (Wang et al., 2020). Taken together, these three key JDP innovations present transformative opportunities for school discipline reform.

A4. Program Dissemination. The project team has a notable history of using diverse outlets to reach a wide spectrum of target audiences (see resumes of key personnel in **Appendix B** and **Appendix J2** for detailed dissemination history and plan). We will draw upon a range of dissemination mechanisms and partnership strategies to maximize its impact and provide evidence-based recommendations to practitioners and policymakers about which RP approaches are effective in what contexts for which students. Project milestones and findings will be shared broadly over the course of the grant period, with the final six months being devoted exclusively to dissemination and sustainability activities. During the project period, we will codify the newly developed JDP components—including manuals, videos, policy briefs, and hands-on guidance regarding leadership strategies, circle-keeping, RPs, and SEL—so that they can be replicated with fidelity. A restorative practitioner handbook will also be developed in accordance with the Just Discipline model and the validated program parameters from this project. We will share these resources as well as insights gleaned during the implementation process through an online resource center that includes blogs, how-to guides, articles, and other resources. We will immediately apply lessons learned during implementation by directly communicating with principals and teachers in participating schools. Finally, we will collaborate with AIR evaluators to share our results and the JDP model in peer-reviewed journals, on social media, and at professional conferences, webinars, and institutes for principals and educators interested in RPs.

B. Quality of the Project Design

B1. Conceptual Framework and Logic Model. The JDP applies Legal Socialization Theory and Critical Race Theory to reject unjust disciplinary approaches via restorative practices

while also embracing Relational Culture Theory through an emphasis on connectedness and equity in the school community. Rather than taking instrumental or deterrence-oriented responses to unwanted behaviors, RPs aim to increase connectedness between students and school-based adults through tools that repair and strengthen these relationships (Fronius et al., 2019; Winn, 2018). For example, JDP staff use mediated conversations among invested school community members to determine fair resolutions to misunderstandings and disciplinary issues.

Moreover, RP has its roots in proactive communal approaches that provide the safety, motivation, and opportunity for struggling students to make amends and rebuild relationships (Karp & Breslin, 2001; Weitekamp & Parmentier, 2016). By emphasizing relationships as a fundamental value, the JDP model catalyzes empathy, communication, and belonging in ways that reduce the need for disciplinary responses in the first place. This relational culture in turn serves as the backdrop to more restorative and less punitive responses when conflicts arise. As such, RPs have the potential to eliminate racially disparate school discipline, particularly in contexts where practitioners have (a) identified structural racism as a point of restoration (Wadhwa, 2016) and (b) made explicit commitments to reforming inequitable practices (Huguley et al., 2018; Jain et al., 2017).

Collectively, these frameworks have informed the theory of change displayed in our Logic Model (see **Appendix G**). This model illustrates how RPs catalyze a more just, supportive school climate that directly improves school community members' engagement, socioemotional skills, and perceptions of the school community. These improvements in turn promote positive student academic and behavioral outcomes. Specifically, we expect that the core proactive, community-building elements of JDP (i.e., classroom circles, school-wide events) will impact the quality of peer and student-teacher relationships at the student level such that increased

engagement begets improved academic performance. We also expect that the intervention elements of JDP (i.e., healing circles, one-to-one mentoring) will increase students' school connectedness, reduce disciplinary misunderstandings and repeat offenses, raise engagement, and enhance classroom learning time. At the teacher level, we expect JDP training and RPC support will foster increased teacher SEL, greater cultural competency, effective classroom circles, better teacher-student relationships, and proactive classroom management in ways that reduce the use of punitive discipline and facilitate student engagement and achievement.

B2. Project Goals, Objectives, and Outcomes. This project aims to enhance academic achievement outcomes for students in under-resourced schools by reducing the use of exclusionary discipline and eliminating racial disparities in school discipline. Simultaneously, we aim to improve the JDP model through conducting a learning pilot, promoting effective scaling of the model, disseminating tools for replication, and creating vehicles for sharing best practices. **Table 1** presents a full description of goals, objectives, and outcomes.

TABLE 1. PROJECT GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND OUTCOME MEASURES	
GOAL 1: Build the capacity of CMSD schools to implement the JDP model and foster community buy-in.	
Objectives	Outcomes (<i>Measures</i>)
1.1 Train each participating school's administrators, staff, teachers, & student leaders in JDP approaches. 1.2 Provide coaching to school community members throughout the project period. 1.3 Use an active feedback loop to attain community buy-in & ensure teachers, administrators, & students remain engaged in all JDP program activities and training.	1.A Superintendent identifies alternatives to policies that impede progress for creating an equitable & inclusive school environment (<i>as measured by Surveys, Interviews</i>). 1.B 100% of principals engage in JDP workshops (e.g., RP, SEL, & Rethinking Discipline processes), organize JDP planning teams to improve discipline policy, & support staff & students in implementing the circles-based advisory program & RP interventions (<i>as measured by Attendance records, Interviews</i>). 1.C 90% of teachers and staff participate in JDP training, coaching, planning teams, debriefing activities, discussions on equity, & RPs in response to student infractions (<i>as measured by Attendance rates, Work Satisfaction Survey</i>). 1.D 90% of students participate in SEL and community-building activities (<i>as measured by Focus groups</i>). 1.E 100% of selected student volunteers/leaders serve as circle co-facilitators, peer mediators, or on the JDP advisory committee (<i>as measured by Focus groups</i>). 1.F 90% of administrators, teachers, and students maintain high engagement in the JDP program activities (<i>as measured by Survey, Interviews, and Focus Groups</i>)
GOAL 2: Improve and reduce racial disparities in student academic, behavioral, and SEL outcomes.	

<p>2.1 Improve student engagement and achievement in core content areas (i.e., ELA, math, science).</p> <p>2.2 Reduce racial achievement disparities in core content areas.</p> <p>2.3 Reduce the number of disciplinary referrals, suspensions, & emergency placements at the student level.</p> <p>2.4 Reduce racial disparities in disciplinary referrals, suspensions, school-based arrests, & emergency placements.</p> <p>2.5 Improve students' socioemotional skills & communication with adults & peers.</p>	<p>2.A Increase achievement & proficiency by 15% annual increase in ELA & social study & 10% in math & science (<i>Course grades, State standardized test scores</i>).</p> <p>2.B Increase student engagement in core content areas by 15% annually (<i>Student School Engagement Survey</i>).</p> <p>2.C Decrease racial achievement gaps in core content areas by 15% annually (<i>Course grades, State standardized test scores</i>).</p> <p>2.D Lower exclusionary & punitive disciplinary practices by 20% annually (<i>School disciplinary records</i>).</p> <p>2.E Decrease racial gaps in exclusionary & punitive disciplinary practices by 15% annually (<i>School disciplinary records</i>).</p> <p>2.F Increase students' socioemotional skills by 15% annually (<i>WCSD Socioemotional Competency Survey</i>).</p>
GOAL 3: Improve and reduce racial disparities in student, teacher, and staff perceptions of school climate	
<p>3.1 Increase students' positive school climate perceptions (e.g., teacher-student relationship, safety, school belonging, peer relationship, fairness of discipline).</p> <p>3.2 Reduce racial disparities in students' school climate perceptions.</p> <p>3.3 Increase teacher and staff positive school climate perceptions.</p>	<p>3.A Increase the percentage of students who report positive school climate experiences by 20% annually (<i>Conditions of Learning Survey</i>).</p> <p>3.B Decrease racial gaps in students' school climate perceptions by 15% annually (<i>Conditions of Learning Survey</i>).</p> <p>3.C Increase the percentage of teachers/staff who report positive school climate experiences by 20% annually (<i>ED School Climate Survey</i>).</p>
GOAL 4: Improve teachers' ecological understanding of student behaviors, socioemotional and cultural competence, and ability to implement RPs in response to disciplinary infractions.	
<p>4.1 Improve teachers' socioemotional skills and ability to engage in respectful communication with students.</p> <p>4.2 Provide teachers training in managing student misbehaviors, promoting positive behaviors, and building positive teacher-student relationships.</p> <p>4.3 Promote teachers' cultural competence and bias awareness.</p>	<p>4.A Increase teachers' socioemotional & communication skills by 20% annually (<i>Socioemotional Competence Rating Scale</i>).</p> <p>4.B Increase teachers' efficacy in managing student behaviors, promoting positive behaviors, & building student-teacher relationships by 20% annually (<i>Teacher Efficacy & Classroom Management and Discipline Survey</i>).</p> <p>4.C Increase teachers' cultural competence, racial attitudes, & bias awareness by 20% annually (<i>Survey on Perspectives on Culture and Race</i>).</p>
GOAL 5: Further develop, refine, and evaluate the implementation and effectiveness of JDP components.	
<p>5.1 Examine how well JDP program components are implemented as intended.</p> <p>5.2 Examine the extent to which implementation fidelity (e.g., adherence, quality, context), mediating and moderating factors (e.g., school climate, race), and dosage influence outcomes.</p> <p>5.3 Finalize JDP model program components.</p>	<p>5.A Complete mixed-method implementation study (<i>as measured by fidelity monitoring logs, participant feedback, rating forms, & interviews or focus groups</i>).</p> <p>5.B Full articulation of the JDP model (<i>updated model with detailed descriptions</i>).</p> <p>5.C Field-test training and coaching resources and manuals developed for school principals, staff, teachers, & student leaders (<i>materials, RP handbook, and manuals</i>).</p>

The project includes two phases. In Phase 1, we will implement and iteratively improve our JDP model by conducting pilot studies in two schools. We will enhance the current JDP model by (a) designing and testing additional strategies for sharing cultural backgrounds, confronting bias, and working together as a school community and (b) preparing student leaders to be circle keepers. In Phase 2, we will engage 30 schools in a RCT. The improved JDP model will be implemented in 15 CMSD schools, while the remaining 15 schools will be used as a control

group. During the final six months of both phases, we will foster sustainability through providing auxiliary resources about novel RP approaches and assistance to RPCs regarding JDP fidelity.

After data collection is complete, we will implement the JDP in the 15 control schools at no cost.

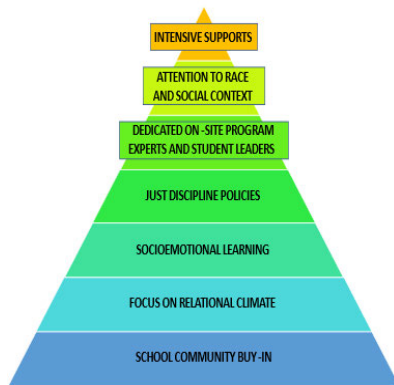


Figure 1. JDP Hierarchical Priorities

Annually, the project will leverage psychometrically reliable, valid measures to assess student and staff perceptions of school climate as well as school members' acquisition of RP and SEL competencies. The project will also assess shifts in teachers' practices through examining school record data on referrals for exclusionary discipline.

B3. Project Design to Address Needs of Target

Population. The JDP model asserts that effective school climate reforms require whole-school change, attention to racial and cultural contexts, and shifts in structural elements (e.g., disciplinary policies and procedures). Specific program activities fall into seven hierarchical programmatic priorities (Huguley et al., 2020; see **Figure 1**). These activities can be further organized into a tiered primary/secondary/tertiary intervention framework (see **Appendix J3, Table A2**).

School Community Buy-In. Sustainable discipline reform starts with shared buy-in from school administrators, teachers, students, and parents. To obtain buy-in, vigorous efforts must be made to communicate the urgent need to jettison exclusionary, inequitable discipline practices, and stakeholders must agree on the need to co-construct a new approach.

Relational Climate Focus. Traditional disciplinary reform efforts have exclusively focused on how school adults respond to misbehaviors. According to JDP, these programs frequently fail because long-standing cultural change is unlikely without first establishing

strong relational bonds amongst community members. JDP operationalizes the school's relational climate to address inequity through community circles. In these weekly circles, teachers hold classroom-based discussions that encourage personal sharing, strengthen community bonds, and help students process community events. In turn, school community members can then leverage these relational ties and empathetic understandings when conflicts arise. Furthermore, JDP's relational approach includes school-wide celebrations and events (e.g., pizza parties) that support a positive climate. These central components of JDP are facilitated by RPCs and student leaders trained in RPs. Thus, JDP stands to increase students' engagement by making them feel more connected to and understood by their teachers.

Socioemotional Learning. By integrating core components of SEL, JDP focuses on developing personal and interpersonal skills essential to emotional and relational health for both teachers and students. JDP recognizes socioemotional skills (e.g., perspective-taking) as a conduit by which to promote a positive school climate that supports students' academic and social engagement (Wang et al., 2020). When school community members are well-versed in socioemotional skills, students and teachers have the potential to prevent misunderstandings and deescalate conflicts before they reach a level warranting disciplinary action. Teachers' own socioemotional competence is also paramount to JDP program fidelity and sustainability because of their role in modelling socioemotional skills. Through biweekly SEL activities and professional development on best practices in related topics (e.g., trauma, adverse childhood experiences), JDP provides the tools for decreasing punitive disciplinary practices and creating a sustainable model for equity within the school community.

Just Discipline Policies. The overuse of suspensions has been connected to educators' discretionary responses to minor or ambiguous offenses (Amemiya et al., 2020). According to

Legal Socialization Theory (Fagan & Tyler, 2005), disciplinary norms perceived by students as overly harsh or unfair can adversely affect interpersonal dynamics and increase maladaptive behaviors. Hence, the superintendent and school principals will engage in *Rethinking Discipline*, a process for incorporating RPs into individualized restitution plans and reducing exclusionary discipline practices in response to minor offenses. This shift in reactive policy must be accompanied by corresponding proactive investments in on-site specialists (i.e., RPCs) to support teachers in implementing more relational and restorative approaches.

On-Site RP Experts and Student Leaders. Research has shown that schools who employ specially trained staff to lead relational and restorative efforts tend to transition from punitive discipline to RPs more successfully (Jain et al., 2017; Wadhwa, 2016). The JDP acts upon this information by involving dedicated, site-based RPCs who design and implement school-wide activities, provide ongoing professional development to faculty, respond to acute behavioral episodes, and mentor students experiencing persistent challenges and adverse experiences. In the current model, RPCs are tasked with implementation and fidelity monitoring in a maximum of two schools concurrently, thereby ensuring they have the time to supply intensive support to both programs. The involvement of RPCs in two settings may also increase program efficacy, as it allows for lessons learned in one school to be translated into proactive approaches in another. In addition, RPCs train and oversee volunteer student leaders in circle facilitation. Working with adult circle keepers, these student ambassadors then facilitate circles amongst their peers. Students can also voice their thoughts and concerns on school culture and discipline through and RPC-guided Student Advisory Committee. Finally, RPCs remove the burden of reform efforts from teachers and administration so that they can focus on engaging in SEL and forming stronger relationships with students.

Attention to Race and Sociocultural Context. The JDP explicitly targets reductions in racially disparate school discipline through addressing the pervasive effects of systemic racism, discrimination, and implicit biases. Specifically, the JDP provides professional development focused on race and culture in schooling. These sessions alert teachers to the presence of implicit biases, the historical roots of these biases, and the structural oppression that perpetuate both biases and disparate exposure to adversity in schools and home communities. Moreover, the JDP model helps schools develop a respectful climate in which students and adults can address issues related to race, identity, and equity using culturally responsive and ecologically valid approaches. Through book groups, adult circles, and problem-solving sessions, participants share their cultural backgrounds, explore experiences of prejudice and stereotypes, analyze oppression and its impact, and consider how to work toward a more equitable society. These activities set the stage for discussions about disproportionality and implicit educator bias. Furthermore, attention to racialized patterns in disaggregated disciplinary data can help administrators identify points where targeted responses might be warranted, such as classroom supports for individual students, additional training for individual teachers, and reviews of structural or administrative contributors. Together, these equity approaches represent a multifaceted commitment to racial justice and the reduction of racialized disparities in discipline and academic outcomes.

Intensive Supports. Although school personnel are optimistic about the potential benefits associated with relational approaches, many acknowledge that a significant number of students have unmet health (e.g., physical, mental), interpersonal, or environmental needs. When these needs are left unmet, they inhibit children's potential in ways that exceed what traditional RPs can address. Unmet challenges among a small group of students can have major consequences for the overall school climate (Gregory et al., 2016a). The JDP proactively addresses these

challenges by integrating intensive mentoring for students facing trauma and chronic adversity as well as re-entry planning for students returning to school from suspensions or expulsions.

C. Adequacy of Resources and Quality of the Management Plan

C1. Team Qualifications and Roles. The University of Pittsburgh (UPitt) in partnership with CMSD (see letter of support in **Appendix C**) will oversee all aspects of the project, including recruiting and retaining school partners; hiring RPCs (see job description in **Appendix J4**); supervising, training, and coaching school staff and student leaders; monitoring project fidelity; overseeing the continuous improvement process; and working with the independent evaluation team from American Institutes for Research (AIR), one of the largest social science research institutes in the world. The research team's expertise (see resumes in **Appendix B**), history of collaborative relationships, and experience working with urban school districts to improve school climate and student achievement will contribute to the project's success.

TABLE 2. KEY PERSONNEL AND RESPONSIBILITIES		
SENIOR LEADERSHIP TEAM		
[REDACTED], EdD, Project Director	[REDACTED]	Provide overall leadership for the project; Meet regularly with project management & evaluation teams; Act as liaison with department of Ed
[REDACTED], EdD, Co-Director	[REDACTED]	Lead the assembly & iterative refinement of JDP intervention components; Update implementation, training, & coaching materials.
[REDACTED], EdD, Implementation Lead	[REDACTED]	Oversee the program implementation design with a particular focus on the intensive support for students experiencing trauma and adversity.
[REDACTED], MSW	[REDACTED]	Train and supervise the restorative practice coordinators across sites. Design program adaptations for specific school sites, as needed.
[REDACTED], MS, Project Manager	[REDACTED]	Manage project implementation; Monitor progress toward objectives.
[REDACTED], PhD	[REDACTED]	Serve as a district liaison; Coordinate all district activities, Coordinate data collection, and access to school record data.
EXTERNAL EVALUATION TEAM		
[REDACTED], PhD, Principal Investigator, Evaluation Lead at AIR	[REDACTED]	Execute pilot & impact evaluation; Provide formative & summative feedback on the project; Work with PD to disseminate study findings.
[REDACTED], PhD, Project Director Senior Researcher at AIR	[REDACTED]	Lead the evaluation design, data collection for impact evaluation & implementation fidelity; Select evaluation measures.
[REDACTED], PhD, Impact Lead	[REDACTED]	Provide guidance on quantitative data collection & analysis
[REDACTED], PhD, Implementation Lead	[REDACTED]	Provide guidance on implementation and qualitative data analysis

As outlined in **Table 2**, [REDACTED] (PD), a leading scholar in school-wide interventions and school climate reform, will serve as the DOE liaison and oversee the project.

[REDACTED] whose work addresses racial achievement gaps via RPs, will

oversee JDP program design and refinement. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have successfully conducted numerous federally funded intervention studies of similar scale that significantly improved student achievement and teachers' classroom practices. [REDACTED] (Co-Investigator), an expert in implementation science and the effects of trauma and adversity, will oversee JDP implementation design and the support of continuous learning. Program Director [REDACTED], who has extensive experience designing and leading RPs for urban youth, will train and supervise the RPCs and ensure program model fidelity. Project Manager [REDACTED], who has 15 years of experiences working with under-resourced school districts, will provide logistical and administrative support. CMSD will assist in recruitment, support the delivery of training and coaching, participate in a continuous improvement process, ensure sustainability of the project in participating schools, and facilitate evaluation and dissemination efforts. [REDACTED], CMSD Director of Research and Development, will coordinate all district activities.

The AIR evaluation team includes members with experience conducting EIR- and i3-funded RCTs and implementation fidelity analyses as well as methodological and content-based expertise regarding SEL and RP. [REDACTED] (Lead Evaluator), brings demonstrated experience in RP intervention research and will conduct two independent studies: a pilot study during Phase 1 and a RCT during Phase 2. [REDACTED] (Senior Researcher) will oversee data collection processes and provide statistical expertise. The evaluation team will also recruit schools/participants, finalize and administer surveys, collect and analyze data, inform iterative model improvement, submit progress reports, and collaborate with UPitt to disseminate findings.

C2. Management Plan. Ongoing progress will be tracked against our management plan using a cloud-based project monitoring tool. [REDACTED] will meet monthly with the project team to develop and implement effective strategies related to program implementation, evaluation,

TABLE 3. MANAGEMENT PLAN, TIMELINE, AND MILESTONES		
Key Milestone	Timeline	Who
Recruit 2 Pilot Schools; Review plans with School District & DOE staff.	Jan 2022	UPitt, AIR
Hire RPCs; confirm measurement section; Get permission to conduct implementation study at 2 schools; Complete IRBs.	Jan-Jun 2022	UPitt, AIR
Establish & train project planning teams through coaching & support.	Jan-Jun 2022	UPitt, CMSD
Train teachers, staff, & student leaders in facilitating circles & RPs.	Jun-Jul 2022	UPitt
Revise the JDP Implementation Guide to incorporate lessons learned during the project's first 6 months.	Jul-Aug 2022	UPitt
Conduct pilot implementation study in 2 schools.	Jul 2022-May 2023	UPitt
Collect data on acceptability, feasibility, & implementation fidelity.	Jul 2022-May 2023	AIR
Plan the randomized control trial study (RCTs) & school recruitment; Write research protocols; Obtain consent/assent from participants.	Jul-Dec 2022	UPitt, AIR
Conduct professional development for principals & JDP planning teams.	Sep 2022	UPitt
Facilitate monthly meetings in which principals & staff share experiences & troubleshoot challenges.	Sep 2022-Jun 2023	UPitt, CMSD
Organize staff & student book groups/circles about race, culture, & bias.	Sep 2022-May 2023	UPitt, CMSD
Facilitate faculty workshops & action steps to address implicit bias.	Nov 2022	UPitt
Begin recruiting 30 schools for Phase 2 impact study.	Jan-Mar 2023	UPitt, AIR
Conduct focus groups/interviews in pilot schools; Analyze acceptability, feasibility, & fidelity data; Use findings to improve the JDP model.	Jan-Jun 2023	AIR
Finalize arrangements with the 30 schools involved in the RCTs; Adapt research protocols; Prepare consent/assent forms.	Apr-Jun 2023	AIR
Incorporate lessons learned during the pilot study into JDP's Implementation Guide & training design.	Jul-Aug 2023	UPitt
Begin RCTs by collecting baseline surveys in all 30 schools; Implement the revised JDP model in 15 treatment schools.	Aug 2023 - May 2025	UPitt, AIR
Collect end-of-year surveys on school climate, SEL, RP, program training, & fidelity data.	Apr-Jun 2024, 2025	AIR
Analyze survey, interview, & school record data on consented students.	Jul-Aug 2024, 2025	AIR
Introduce the JDP model to the 15 control schools at no cost.	Jul-Dec 2025	UPitt
Disseminate findings through diverse outlets and mechanisms.	Jul-Dec 2025	UPitt, AIR

Note. The project includes two phases: A “learning pilot” in 2 schools in 2022-23 and the RCT with 30 schools in 2023-2025.

networking and publicity, and sustainability, while [REDACTED] (program director) will provide monthly progress reports to the team. The team will articulate a common vision, define partners’ roles/responsibilities, monitor implementation, respond to challenges, manage financial and other resources, support data collection and analysis, and promote the sustainability of JDP in each school. The project team will meet monthly with (a) school-based stakeholders to address aspects of program implementation (e.g., technical assistance, on-site coaching) and (b) the evaluation team to address aspects of program evaluation (e.g., fidelity monitoring, dissemination).

Table 3 illustrates our management plan, timelines, and milestones. The project team will review and update this plan yearly based on educator development, student progress, and school

climates. We anticipate a start date of January 1, 2022, using the first several months to finalize evaluation instruments, hire key staff, and begin professional development. JDP will roll out in participating schools at the start of school year (SY) 2022-23.

C3. Reasonability of Costs. JDP's cost is reasonable relative to its significant contribution to the health, achievement, and well-being of school community members. Taking into account all of the students the program will reach during the project period, we have estimated the cost of this project to be approximately \$208 per student, excluding evaluation costs. These costs are in line with other funded RP, SEL, and professional development programs being implemented in under-resourced urban school environments. Although we focus on costs in relation to immediate impacts on teacher and student outcomes, prior research suggests that academic and socioemotional benefits will extend beyond the life of the grant through improved educational and occupational attainment (Durlak et al., 2011), especially considering that strong academic and SEL skills can be a gateway to college or better paying careers (Wang et al., 2020). For example, 2 years of improved academic achievement and socioemotional outcomes can mean the difference between a college degree and non-college degree, which translates into almost \$1 million of additional median lifetime earnings per student for a bachelor's degree and \$400,000 for an associate's degree (Carnevale et al., 2011). The project also provides benefits to future cohorts of students through training teachers to be more effective at managing student behaviors, better at establishing positive teacher-student relationships, and well-versed in RPs and SEL. Lastly, the project will improve the JDP model's efficiency and productivity through implementation monitoring and AIR's independent evaluation. To help us further consider program costs when refining the program, AIR will provide a cost/benefit analyses using the

Resource Cost Model, which models the ingredients of services as actually provided by the intervention (Levin et al., 2020).

C4. Continuous Feedback & Data-Driven Improvement. Our feedback process follows Anthony Bryk’s improvement science approach (Bryk et al., 2016). To ensure results-based performance, the logic model and drafted objectives will be used to guide planning, implementation, communication, and evaluation. These tools will assist in timely feedback, authentic assessment, and charting progress toward goals, thereby allowing the evaluation team and stakeholders to make informed decisions related to program delivery as the project unfolds. Quantitative and qualitative data will be collected on an ongoing basis to provide performance feedback, assess implementation fidelity, determine how to scale up the intervention, and explore how well JDP meets programmatic goals. Evaluators will iteratively upgrade implementation procedures by conducting formative assessments for all sites, adapting practices based on site performance, and sharing formative evaluation data at every phase of the project. These insights will be used to continuously improve JDP models, implementation, and training materials.

Furthermore, participating principals and stakeholders will engage in continuous learning through monthly professional development opportunities. In these monthly meetings, team members will discuss best practices, identify challenges, analyze root causes of conflict, propose hypotheses about drivers for positive change, and test these hypotheses through ongoing examination of data, especially regarding the when, where, and who of behavioral infractions and their associated disciplinary interventions. We will then use the team’s feedback and data to continually adjust JDP approaches. In addition, RPCs will receive advanced training in improvement science processes as a part of a commitment to continuous learning. The team will meet monthly to set goals and objectives, review data, discuss challenges, make adjustments to

the model, test new materials, and report back on results. The model and materials will be revised based on RPC's experiences and data, and these revisions will be incorporated into training for additional program staff and student leaders.

D. Quality of Project Evaluation

Overview of Evaluation Plan. AIR will conduct rigorous external formative and summative evaluations about JDP's implementation and impact. The implementation evaluation will assess whether JDP's key components were implemented as planned, determine barriers to implementation, and provide JDP partners with ongoing feedback to inform future iterations of the program and its delivery. The impact evaluation will use a cluster randomized control trial (RCT) to assess the effectiveness of JDP on teacher and student outcomes and produce empirical evidence that meets **What Works Clearinghouse Standards (i.e., WWC, 2020, 2021) without reservations**. The evaluation will focus on students in Grades 6–8 in 32 CMSD schools. Two schools will participate in a pilot study in 2022–23 (Phase 1), and the remaining 30 schools will participate in a RCT in 2023–24 and 2024–25 (Phase 2; see **Table 4**). **Table 5** outlines the key research questions (RQs) and data sources for addressing each question.

D.1. Evidence to Meet the WWC Evidence Standards

Research Design. The impact evaluation will use a cluster RCT design to estimate JDP's effects on teacher and student outcomes. The impact evaluation will follow 30 schools. These schools will be randomly assigned to the treatment group (15 schools receiving JDP) or control group (15 schools not receiving JDP) for 2 years (2023–24 and 2024–25; see **Table 4**).

TABLE 4. PROGRAM ROLLOUT AND EVALUATION TIMELINE						
Study	Sample	Jan.–Jun. 2022	SY 2022-23	SY 2023-24	SY 2024-25	Jul.-Dec. 2025
Phase 1: Pilot	2 schools	Recruitment	T1 (no control group)			
Phase 2: RCT	30 schools		Recruitment and random assignment	T1 (n = 15 schools)	T2	
				C1 (n = 15 schools)	C2	
Evaluation Timeline		Planning	Data Collection and Analysis			Reporting

Note. The gray shaded cells indicate groups and years included in the impact evaluation. T1 and T2 represent intervention Years 1 and 2; C1 and C2 represent comparison/control Years 1 and 2.

TABLE 5. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND DATA SOURCES						
Research Questions (RQs)	Program Records	Teacher Survey	Teacher, Principal, & RPC Interviews	School Records	Student Survey	Student Focus Groups
Impact Evaluation (Treatment and Control Schools)						
1. What is the JDP's impact on teacher self-efficacy for managing student behavior, SEL, cultural competence, & school climate perceptions?		x				
2. What is the impact of JDP on student engagement, SEL, & school climate perceptions?					x	
3. What is the impact of JDP on disciplinary referrals, suspensions, expulsions?				x		
4. What is the impact of JDP on students' academic achievement in core content areas?				x		
5. Does the impact of JDP on student outcomes vary by student characteristic (e.g., race)?				x	x	
6. Is the impact of JDP on student disciplinary and academic outcomes mediated by teacher and intermediate student outcomes (e.g., student engagement, SEL, perceptions of climate)?		x		x	x	
Formative Evaluation (Treatment Schools Only)						
7. To what extent are the key components of JDP implemented with fidelity?	x	x	x		x	x
8. To what extent and in what respects do participants perceive JDP as feasible and useable? How can the JDP be improved?			x			x
9. What do participants perceive are facilitators and barriers to the implementation of JDP?			x			x

Note. RPC = Restorative practice coordinator; SEL = Social-emotional learning and competency.

Randomization will ensure that the treatment and control groups are equivalent on baseline characteristics, thus allowing for unbiased estimates of the JDP's causal effects. The impact evaluation will examine survey and school record data outcomes at the end of the second year of implementation as primary outcomes. Outcomes at the end of the first year of implementation will be examined as interim outcomes.

Outcome Measures and Data Sources. The impact evaluation will examine teacher and student outcomes using valid, reliable measures that are directly related to the intended program outcomes and meet the WWC's requirements (WWC, 2020). **Appendix J5** provides more details about the survey measures.

Teacher Outcomes. Teacher survey data (**RQ1**) will be captured using an online survey. AIR

will administer the survey in Fall 2023 (baseline), Spring 2024, and Spring 2025 (posttest). The survey will assess teachers' efficacy in managing student behaviors using the Self-Efficacy Scale for Classroom Management and Discipline ($\alpha=.81$; Emmer & Hickman, 1991). Teacher SEL will be measured by the Social-Emotional Competence Teacher Rating Scale ($\alpha=.79-.81$; Tom, 2012). Teachers' racial attitudes, bias awareness, and cultural competence will be measured by subscales from the Survey on Perspectives on Culture and Race ($\alpha=.78-.84$; Fergus, 2015). Work satisfaction will be measured using the Teacher Satisfaction Scale ($\alpha=.77$; Ho & Au, 2006). Perceptions of school climate will be measured using subscales from the ED School Climate Surveys questionnaires for instructional staff ($\alpha=.81-.87$; U.S. Department of Education, 2018).

Student Outcomes. Student survey data (**RQ2&3**) will be collected using CMSD school survey and AIR-administered online surveys in Fall 2023 (baseline), Spring 2024, and Spring 2025 (posttest). For **RQ2**, behavioral, emotional, cognitive, and social student engagement will be measured using the well-validated Multidimensional School Engagement Scale ($\alpha=.84-.91$; Wang et al., 2019), and students' SEL will be measured using the short form of the Washoe County School District Social and Emotional Competency Assessments ($\alpha=.88$; Davidson et al., 2018). Furthermore, AIR will review students' school climate perceptions (e.g., teacher-student relationship, emotionally supportive climate, school belonging, safe, inclusive, and respectful climate, discipline fairness; $\alpha=.74-.83$) using extant data from the Conditions of Learning Survey (Godfrey et al., 2012; Osher, 2011) administered by CMSD each year.

Student behavioral and discipline outcomes (**RQ3**) will be measured using CMSD's administrative records on attendance, office referrals, suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests. Specifically, we will consult these records to see whether and how frequently a student experienced disciplinary intervention. Student academic achievement (**RQ4**) will be measured

using course grades and standardized test scores from Ohio's state tests. The same student and teacher outcome measures will be included in the differential impact (moderator) analysis for **RQ5** and the mediator analysis for **RQ6**.

Sample, Attrition, and Statistical Power. All Grades 6–8 teachers (including staff serving students in these grades) and students—that is, an estimate of 12 teachers and 150 students per school—will be eligible for inclusion in the impact analysis.¹ For the proposed RCT, the main threat to internal validity is potential selection bias resulting from sample attrition during the study. Given that data collection will leverage CMSD school records, we will still have access to student disciplinary and achievement data even if schools are unable to complete the study; hence, our power analysis assumes no school-level attrition for the disciplinary and achievement outcomes. For survey-based student and teacher outcomes, AIR assumed an annual attrition rate of 5% at the school level. For all outcomes (including student achievement and disciplinary outcomes), AIR assumed an attrition rate of 20% at the individual (teacher or student) level due to missing administrative data or nonresponse to surveys. To reduce survey nonresponse, AIR will consider multiple strategies, such as incentives for completing surveys, phasing data collection to reduce burden, early and ongoing communication about participation, and frequent and targeted follow-up with nonrespondents. AIR's goal is to achieve an 80% survey response rate, which they have achieved in many other similar projects (e.g., a 93% survey response rate in a 2-year New York City Department of Education Single Shepherd evaluation).

Based on a power analysis conducted using the assumptions above, AIR anticipates that the analytic samples for the main analysis of outcomes after 2 years of implementation will yield a

¹ This includes joiners (students and teachers who enter the study schools after the time of random assignment). Because the unit of random assignment is school, the WWC typically will assume no joiners pose a risk of bias (WWC, 2021). To address concerns about the intervention influencing the composition of the analytic sample, AIR will conduct additional analysis excluding joiners from the sample to limit the risk of bias due to joiners.

minimum detectable effect size (MDES) of 0.24 SD for student disciplinary outcomes, 0.22 SD for student achievement outcomes, 0.26 SD for student survey outcomes, and 0.44 SD for teacher survey outcomes. These estimated MDESs are generally consistent with the effect sizes reported in prior RP and SEL intervention studies (Wigelsworth et al., 2016), indicating that our study is sufficiently powered to detect statistical and practical significance. **Appendix J6 and Table A4** provide more information on design parameters, assumptions used in power calculation, estimated sample sizes, and MDESs for all outcomes.

Impact Analysis. To address **RQs 1–4**, AIR will estimate the program impacts, defined as differences in mean outcomes between treatment and control group students and teachers, using multilevel modeling to account for nesting of students and teachers within schools. For student achievement, AIR will estimate the treatment effect for each academic outcome separately while controlling for student demographics, prior achievement, and school-level characteristics. AIR will use a similar analytic approach to estimate impacts on other outcomes, controlling for available student-, teacher-, and school-level characteristics. We will adapt the models developed in response to **RQs 1-4** to assess the differential impact of the JDP by incorporating a treatment-by-moderator interaction term (**RQ5**), where the moderator is a characteristic of the student (e.g., race, economic background). To address **RQ6**, we will conduct an exploratory mediation analysis to assess whether the impact of JDP on student disciplinary and achievement outcomes is mediated by intermediate student and teacher outcomes (aggregated at the school level).

Appendix J7 outlines all analytic models with statistical equations and detailed information.

D2. Performance Feedback and Periodic Assessment of Progress

AIR will conduct a formative evaluation to examine JDP implementation, assess progress towards goals, and provide iterative feedback for continuous improvement. In Phase 1, the

formative evaluation will examine the acceptability and feasibility of key components of JDP to inform program refinement. In Phase 2, the formative evaluation will examine the fidelity of implementation, explore participants' experiences, and generate feedback to continuously improve JDP for future replication or testing of the program. AIR will analyze data at the end of each year of implementation, provide interim briefs (including available impact findings), and work with JDP personnel to support continuous improvement processes (see **Appendix J8 and Table A5** for the evaluation timeline, feedback cycle, and major milestones).

The formative evaluation will use data from four sources: program documents (e.g., training attendance records, activities schedules); student focus groups; surveys of teachers; and interviews with teachers, principals, and RPCs. To answer **RQ7**, AIR will systematically measure implementation fidelity using observable and quantifiable indicators aligned to JDP's logic model. AIR will work with JDP program staff to identify indicators for each key program component and criteria for adequate implementation for each indicator. AIR will then use program records and survey/logs data to describe the level of implementation for each indicator at the school level.

To answer **RQ8**, AIR will analyze data from student focus groups and interviews to assess participants' perceptions of the feasibility and usefulness of key JDP components and identify areas for improvement. AIR will randomly select students to participate in two 45-minute focus groups in Phase 1 and four focus groups in each implementation year in Phase 2. AIR will also conduct interviews with a purposive sample of teachers, principals, and RPCs each year. In Phase 1, AIR will conduct 40-minute interviews with 2 teachers, 2 RPCs, and the principal from each school. In Phase 2, AIR will conduct interviews with 15 teachers, 15 principals, and 8 RPCs in each year of implementation. Data from focus groups and interviews will also be used to identify common themes about successes, challenges, and opportunities for improving the program

model and its implementation (RQ9).

D3. Contribution to Increased Knowledge, Understanding, and Effective Strategies

The proposed evaluation will increase our understanding of how the JDP model can address the vexing problem of sustainable discipline reform in American education and improve teacher and student outcomes by generating rigorous evidence on the implementation, effectiveness, scaling, and fidelity of an innovative RP program. First, the evaluation will examine the outcomes and impact of the JDP across different time periods, samples, and outcome measures, thereby enhancing the reliability of the study's findings and understanding of where and how the JDP program is beneficial to students. We will also conduct a differential impact analysis to assess the extent to which JDP's impact is moderated by student background characteristics, with a special focus on reducing racial disparities. These results will be crucial in guiding efforts to improve, replicate, and scale-up the JDP model; identifying for whom and under what circumstances the program works; and supporting other education leaders in determining if JDP will work in their school context.

Second, the evaluation team will collect and analyze implementation data from multiple sources. In addition to quantitative implementation data, AIR will collect qualitative data through student focus groups and interviews with participant teachers, school leaders, and RPCs. Triangulating multiple data sources enhances the reliability of our findings and will help program staff identify and share successful approaches, thus providing guidance for the future replication or testing of JDP in other settings. Lastly, to support the project's continuous improvement process, AIR will open a channel for communication between JDP program personnel and the evaluators. AIR will seek input from program personnel on the evaluation, engage stakeholders in understanding and interpreting the findings, and share key information with the public. Evaluation activities and findings will be hosted on the UPitt website, and AIR will work to advance the findings in respected academic outlets.