

Black parents can help bridge cultural divide between students and white teachers

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Bringing black parents into school settings can work toward shifting and closing the cultural disconnects between black families and predominantly white school personnel, according to new research from Binghamton University, State University of New York.

Black students in pre-kindergarten through grade 12 experience persistent educational disparities involving disproportionate disciplinary practices. To address this, Denise Yull and Marguerite Wilson, assistant professors of human development at Binghamton University, analyzed the impact of the Parent Mentor Program, which brings together black parents, community members, [school](#) district personnel and University researchers to implement a race-conscious parent engagement project to transform the experiences of black parents and [black children](#) in school.

"We worked with black parents, teachers, administrators, social workers and [community members](#) to create a vision for a parent engagement program that would allow black parents a presence in the schools to advocate for their children and improve the quality of their schooling experiences," wrote the researchers. "The purpose of the program is to introduce a more race-conscious parent engagement model to the school district, which differs from the conventional parent engagement models that privilege white, middle-class behavior norms."

The researchers found that black parents in the school district were continually marginalized and dismissed as they attempted to engage school personnel in conversations about the discipline of their children.

Despite this, parent mentors' use of race-conscious and culturally relevant practices have kept some black [children](#) "pushed in" instead of "pushed out" of classrooms, which often results in disciplinary proceedings and suspension.

"They were not just passive observers, but actively involved in encouraging [student](#) engagement and positive communication between the teacher and students, as well as their parents," wrote the researchers. "The [parents](#) were able to observe which students needed help, to anticipate disciplinary or behavioral challenges, and to interact one-on-one with students who may have needed extra help."

The paper, "Keeping Black Children Pushed Into, Not Pushed Out of, Classrooms: Developing a Race-Conscious Parent Engagement Project," was published in the *Journal of Black Psychology*.

More information: Denise Yull et al, Keeping Black Children Pushed Into, Not Pushed Out of, Classrooms: Developing a Race-Conscious Parent Engagement Project, *Journal of Black Psychology* (2018). [DOI: 10.1177/0095798417753519](#)

Provided by Binghamton University

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