



Teachers threatened, student violence increases in districts paying for ‘white privilege’ training

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Public schools in struggling districts are giving millions to the consulting firm known as Pacific Education Group in return for “restorative justice” training for school staff. This new discipline program for troubled students is part of the Obama Administration’s federal guidelines that were unleashed on American public schools last year. Former Attorney General Eric Holder and Education Secretary Arne Duncan celebrated the guidelines as a way to end racial disparities among disciplined students.

According to the guidelines, schools “violate Federal law when they even-handedly implement facially neutral policies” that were adopted with no intent to discriminate “but nonetheless have an unjustified effect of discriminating against students on the basis of race.”

The cities forking over the most money and receiving federal grants for their schools are New York City, Baltimore and Pittsburgh.

On average, only 16 students attend Baltimore’s classrooms, making the ratio of staff to pupils 8.3 for every 1 student. They are currently spending \$15,483 per student.

New York City spends \$19,770 per student.

The New York Post reports:

Convinced traditional discipline is racist because blacks are suspended at higher rates than whites, New York City’s Department of Education has in all but the most serious and dangerous offenses replaced out-of-school suspensions with a touchy-feely alternative punishment called “restorative justice,” which isn’t really punishment at all. It’s therapy.

“Every reasonable effort must be made to correct student behavior through...restorative practices,” advises the city’s new 32-page discipline code.

Except everywhere it’s been tried, this softer approach has backfired.

Yes, other large urban school districts are reporting fewer suspensions since adopting the non-punitive approach. But that doesn't necessarily mean fewer infractions.

In fact, many districts are seeing more classroom disruptions and violence — a national trend that ought to set off warning bells for New York school officials.

In Syracuse,

...teachers complain student behavior has worsened since the school district collapsed discipline structures in favor of restorative justice practices. They say teens are more apt to fight, mouth off to teachers and roam the halls under the more lenient policy. They're even seeing increasingly violent behavior among elementary school children.

While the approach may be "laudable," Syracuse Teachers Association President Kevin Ahern said in a recent letter to the Syracuse Post-Standard, it has created a "systemic inability to administer and enforce consistent consequences for violent and highly disruptive student behaviors" that "put students and staff at risk and make quality instruction impossible."

The Post goes on to report similar instances of increased violence and misbehavior in Los Angeles, Santa Ana, Philadelphia, and San Diego.

Syracuse and Chicago teachers have been vocal about the lack of structure in place to fulfill the "restorative justice" guidelines and how behavior has worsened since its implementation.

Others in Minneapolis with the structure in place have to deal with a bureaucratic nightmare that appears to be aimed at maintaining quotas. Breitbart News reported in November that suspensions of non-white students must receive the approval of the superintendent of schools.

Of course, the unintended incentive of such a program is that schools will tolerate disruptive behavior to avoid having too many students of one race on record as disciplined.

And while the intention of getting rid of zero-tolerance policies in schools is well-intentioned, creating an environment hostile to any serious consistent system of consequences for misbehavior is not ideal.

The New York Post also reported how students took notice of the new overly lax policies in Los Angeles:

"I was terrified and bullied by a fourth-grade student," a teacher at a Los Angeles Unified School District school recently noted on the Los Angeles Times website. "The black student told me to 'Back off, b—h.' I told him to go to the office and he said, 'No, b—h, and no one can make me.' "

And in Philly:

A former Philly middle-school teacher complains minority students act out and then dare teachers to kick them out of class, knowing full well their hands are now tied.

“I’m going to torture you,” Allen Zollman says one student told him. “I’m doing this because I can’t be removed.”

Knowing there won’t be consequences, bullies control the classroom and disrupt lessons for all kids who want to learn.

“The less we are willing or able to respond, the more they will control the classroom, the hallways and the school,” Zollman added in testimony before the US Commission on Civil Rights.

Andrew J. Coulson of the Cato Institute observed in a detailed study done by professor Joshua Kinsler that while data shows that black students have been suspended and expelled at higher rates than whites for decades, digging deeper into the numbers shows that this disparity is because black students are more likely to attend very strict schools. University of Rochester professor Joshua Kinsler has researched the phenomenon for several years and came to this conclusion, as well as the fact that within any given school, black and white students are generally treated similarly. White students at majority-black schools face the same zero-tolerance policies as their black classmates. Moreover, black students are punished just as leniently on average as their white peers in majority-white schools.

According to Kinsler, even the race of teachers and administrators does not explain racial gaps in kids sent to the principal’s office or their resulting punishments.

Instead of the federal government forcing schools to scold teachers about their ‘white privilege,’ zero-tolerance schools should assess their individual environment and determine the best way to consistently punish students for truly disruptive and bad behavior.

And by “truly disruptive” I don’t mean eating a Pop-Tart into the shape of a gun.