"Doing well in spite of the school": How African American Students Perceive Achievement, Engagement, and School Climate in the Aftermath of California's Local Control Funding Formula

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Abstract

The purpose of this mixed methods study was to explore urban African American students' school experiences based on the aftermath of California's Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), focusing on achievement, engagement, and school climate. Survey data and focus groups of 62 participants were analyzed using chi-square, multiple regression, and an iterative process. Findings suggest that students desire information regarding honors courses, stronger teacher/student relationships, and fairer discipline treatment. Effective strategies and practices are recommended including the LCFF's revisions to have specific goals for African American students.

Keywords

African American students, Local Control Funding Formula, Local Control and Accountability Plan, Achievement, Engagement, School Climate

Author Statement

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Cover Page Footnote

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by

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Introduction

In 2013, the California legislature passed AB 97, or the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF), a sweeping bill designed to reform its school funding system. Though the language of the bill rightly emphasizes improving outcomes for and collecting data on foster youth, students with disabilities, English learners, and low-income students, the text makes no specific mention of African American student outcomes. This is despite a rather significant corpus of evidence demonstrating the persistent struggles of this population, in the state, and nationally, with respect to academic achievement (Aronson & Laughter, 2015; Jeynes, 2015), school engagement (Lleras, 2008), and school climate (Gregory, Cornell, & Fan, 2011; Skiba, R. J., Horner, R. H., Chung, C., Rausch, M. K., May, S. L., & Tobin, T. 2011).

With the adjustment to LCFF, California is facing challenges like no other state. To comply with the LCFF, "each school district must engage parents, educators, employees and the community" to adopt a Local Control and Accountability Plan, or LCAP (CalPTA, n.d., p. 1). LCAPs must address eight state priority areas: (a) student achievement, (b) student engagement, (c) school climate, (d) parental involvement, (e) course access, (f) implementation of the Common Core Standards, (g) basic services, and (h) other student outcomes. In studying the perceptions of urban African American students regarding three of the state's priority areas, student achievement, student engagement, and school climate, the objectives of this study are: 1) to examine urban African American high school students' school experiences regarding the early impact of the LCFF and; 2) to identify effective strategies and practices that contribute to their positive school experiences.

The purpose of this mixed methods (survey and phenomenological) study was to explore urban African American students' school experiences and identify effective strategies and practices. The research questions that guide this study are: 1) How do African American students perceive their achievement experiences? 2) How do African American students perceive their school engagement experiences? 3) How do African American students perceive their safety/climate experiences? 4) What do African American students identify as best practices to support them in their quest for success in the areas of achievement, engagement, and school climate? According to the *Black Minds Matter* :*Supporting the educational success of Black children in California* report published by The Education Trust-West (2015), African American students' school experiences begin and end with disparate educational, economic, and institutional experiences compared with their White counterparts. African American students represent approximately 15% of students in public schools in the United States (Harper & Davis III, 2012). In California, African American students represent 6% of the

student population (Education Trust West, 2015), yet 22% of foster youth are African American. According to the report, beginning with their early school experiences, Black students are less likely to have equal access to quality preschool and less likely to be read to, which is an important predictor of early school success (Hart & Risley, 2003). Also, in California, over 50% of Black students "live in low-income households" (p. 8) that have financial concerns. For high school, African American students are less likely to be placed in college-prep courses, complete Advanced Placement (AP) courses, and graduate in four years. Throughout their educational careers, Black students are most likely to be suspended, be identified for special education, and be taught by ineffective teachers. Quite simply, public education must address the historic need for Black students to succeed in this complex system. More importantly, funding dedicated to the charge should be intentional and deliberate. California is cutting edge in the legislative attempt through LCFF (or AB 97) and the LCAP to meet the inequitable challenges faced by Black families. But the question remains, has the effort made a difference for Black children?

This study is important because it brings to the forefront the voices of students for whom the LCAP was supposedly designed. These high school students' voices are critical to implementing and evaluating programs and plans that are written to help them, thus, student voice and collaboration with families is considered to be a critical feature in education. Providing Black families with increased opportunities to collaborate and practice engagement, in ways that are meaningful to them, will lead to an increased sense of community and increase their confidence in advocating for their children and the

community (Louque & Latunde, 2014). Additionally, this study is important because the content and results can influence local and state accountability policy regarding achievement, engagement, and school climate for African American students.

Literature Review

Historical Context

To better understand the significance of LCFF, an historical context, along with a critical lens on funding, achievement, engagement, and climate, will help frame this paper's context. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 significantly changed the landscape of the federal government's role in K-12 financing and education. Not only did the programs help disadvantaged students, but by 1968, the programs expanded to include migrant and bilingual students, students with disabilities, and English learners. Accountability of schools became the new wave in 1988 with the expansion of testing as a means of examining student progress. By 1994, the federal government asked that state tests be aligned with new standards and any school that did not meet the "adequate yearly progress" (AYP) be singled out for improvement. Four years later, a federal-state partnership was developed regarding accountability and standards.

By 2002, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act required all teachers to be "highly qualified." Later, the reauthorizing of ESEA with Race to the Top was implemented and focused on school turnarounds, standards, and state data systems. By 2011, the Obama administration offered waivers to states that began thwarting the NCLB law. Although these waivers expired on August 1, 2016, states are still required to support schools with large achievement gaps (Klein, 2016).

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), signed December 10, 2015, is the most recent ESEA authorization. This law allows states to take the leadership in their education policy plans and goals, and allows spending for low-income schools to be changed by giving schools and districts more flexibility and freedom in creating their own plans and funding formulas (Klein, 2015, Ujifusa, 2016). Despite these efforts, quality education remained, in general, inferior in the urban schools, when compared to quality in suburban schools (Grant, 2014; Taines, 2012; Watson & Wiggin, 2016).

Hence, the LCFF and LCAP emerged. Currently, California's school districts are required to create and annually update a three-year LCAP. The LCAP's purpose is to budget more transparently with the required involvement of the parent and business community (Jindra, 2016). Basically, it is designed to demonstrate how districts plan to meet goals for students, given the state and local priorities (Clark-Louque, Greer, Clay, &, Balogun, 2017).

Achievement

Disparities in educational outcomes and inequitable treatment have plagued school systems when it comes to African American student achievement. It has been well documented that African American students lag behind their peers on major academic indices (Delpit, 2012; Kunjufu, 2012) such as test scores, and college and career readiness. Factors related to the school, teachers, and students all contribute to achievement gaps (National Education Association, 2015). A lack of rigor in the curriculum, and a lack of culturally proficient educators contribute to achievement disparities in schools (Lindsey, Robins, & Terrell, 2003). As stated earlier, African American students continue to be over-identified for special education and under-

identified for gifted and talented and advanced placement programs (Boone & King-Berry, 2006). At the teacher level, unqualified and inexperienced teachers are more likely to teach less rigorous courses in high-needs schools (Ingersoll, 2005). According to Smith (2005), low expectations from teachers strongly contribute to the underachievement of students of color, which eventually transforms into low self-esteem, low academic competence, and low achievement. Student-related factors include their level of effort, along with their interest in learning, and a lack of connection with curriculum (National Education Association, 2015; Steele, 1992). With this as the backdrop, African American students are constantly being measured, while trying to achieve.

With AB 97, student achievement has been placed at the forefront for this bill and the state of California, addressing the needs and the challenges in equity through monetary measures. The intangibles like community feedback, "voices" of the stakeholders were the tools of choice for this policy to be implemented. Since African American students were not thriving in San Bernardino County, the researchers set out to understand the perceptions of the very people the bill was intended to address while realizing that the obstacles are more than just psychological.

Engagement

Engagement occurs when students are actively participating in classroom and school activities (Fletcher, 2015). This could mean attending classes, interacting with the teacher, following teachers' directions in class, and participating in routine school activities. It is inclusive of attendance, dropout, and graduation rates. Ed Trust-West's *Black Minds Matter: Supporting the educational success of Black children in California* (2015*)* reported that

"African American students are far more likely to be chronically absent, meaning that they miss 10 percent or more of school days" (p. 13). Twenty percent (20%) of California's African American high school students drop out, which is the largest rate than for other groups of students, and graduation rates are lower for African American students (68%) than for any other group of students, particularly Whites at 88%. Obviously, with these percentages, much needs to be done to increase African American students' participation in learning.

School Climate

School climate measurements include suspension and expulsion rates, as well as school safety. Cohen and Geier (2010) describe school climate as including the learning environment, and feeling connected with the school. African American students continue to experience harsher punishments, more suspensions and expulsions at three times the rate of their peers who engage in similar behaviors. UCLA's Civil Rights Project (2013), "*Our Segregated Capital: An Increasingly Diverse City with Racially Polarized Schools*" reported that African American students account for 19% of suspensions, although African American students account for only 6.5% of the student population in the Los Angeles Unified School District. The report further notes that Black students miss more instruction because of non-drug- related suspensions and minor school infractions (Losen & Whitaker, 2017). Not only are these actions taken against them inequitably, these students are more than likely to have peers, teachers, and other school authority figures interact negatively (Byrd & Chavous, 2011; Rosenbloom & Way, 2004; Solarzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). With those kinds of interactions occurring

daily where learning is supposed to take place, the chances to have an equal opportunity in schools is at best, challenging.

Not only are disciplinary actions a school climate issue, but safety is as well. In a huge study of over 400,000 New York City middle school students, Black students reported feeling more unsafe than their Latino, Asian, and White peers (Lacoe, 2015). Similar results are in California, which are that "Black students are twice as likely as White students to feel unsafe at school" (Ed Trust-West, 2015, p. 13). These situations, coupled with the fact that the LCAP requires addressing student engagement, and student achievement, became the impetus for this study.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual frameworks for this study are grounded in work based on the theoretical models of Claude Steele's (1992) academic "disidentification" and Weick's (1976) "loose coupling" of schools. Steele's work posits that African Americans' low school achievement is intricately tied with a school system that causes African American students to disidentify with the academics of school. In earlier work (as cited in Osborne, 1997), Newman (1971) explains that in order for learning to take place, a connection has to occur. In other words, it is necessary for learners to identify with the academics or curriculum. This concept of disidentification is further underlined with the second theoretical concept of "loose coupling," meaning that not only does the learner need to have a connection with the academics, but with the schools, teachers, and administrators as well.

The theory of loose coupling depicts schools as bureaucratic organizations with sets of routinized functions and activities (Johnson & Chrispeels, 2010; Weick,

1976). A loosely coupled educational system means that there are connections within which the system must operate (coupled), but that those connections are weak or loose. Examples of schools' connections are teachers-classrooms, teacher-students, teachers-curriculum, administrators-teachers, and even school administrators-school boards. This theory indicates that although these educational levels are coupled, they are not intricately woven together, and are not strongly tied to one another because they seem to "operate rather autonomously" (Deal & Celotti, 1977). Given this kind of linkage, one of the results of loose coupling in a school is having weak relationships between teachers and students (Bakar, n.d.).

Methods

Participants

For purposes of method and data triangulation, this IRB approved study utilized a mixed methods design (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This mixed methods approach used a survey (quantitative) and focus groups (qualitative) to capture not only numbers and demographic data, but to also include words, phrases, and narrative. It is considered a suitable method to use when collecting various forms of data to demonstrate a more comprehensive picture of the responses, reflections, and results of the students' perceptions regarding their achievement, engagement, and school climate. It also seemed vital to the researchers to include authentic student voices to present clarity.

A purposive sample of 62 participants attended five different high schools from three districts in Southern California. Although N=62 (1 missing data where the student did not complete the survey) is small for this type of quantitative data, they provide a start for preliminary analysis with 62 focus group participants. Table 1 identifies information regarding the African American students. Of the 62 respondents, 50% are female, 50% male; 49 (79%) identify as African American or Black, while 13 (21%) identify as Mixed or "Other." Fifty (80%) students reported that they plan to attend a university as an educational goal and 10 (16%) reported that they plan to attend community college. The students' grade point averages (g.p.a.) varied with 13 (22%) earning above a 4.0, 18 (31%) earning a 3.1-4.0 grade point average, and 17 (29%) earning a 3.0 or less. The participants reported that their parents had some college (47%) and almost half (45%) earn between $30,000-$59,999.

Table 1. Student demographics

	n	Valid %		n	Valid %
Gender			**Parents' annual income**		
Male	31	50	0-$29,999	13	28
Female	31	50	$30,000-$59,999	21	45
			$60,000-$89,999	7	17
			$90,000-$119,999	2	4
			$120,000-more	3	6
Racially identify			**GPA**		
African American	34	55	Below 1.0	0	0

Black	15	24	1.1-2.0		3	5
Mixed	12	19	2.1-3.0		14	24
Other	1	2	3.1-4.0		18	31
			Above a 4.0		13	22
			Unsure		10	17
Educational Goals			**Parent Education**			
Community College	10	16	HS or some K-12 schooling		16	26
University	50	80	Some college		29	47
Other	2	4	BA /MA		12	19
			Professional degree		3	5
			Unsure		2	3
N = 62, except for Parents' annual income, *n* = 46; GPA, *n* = 58.						

Instrumentation

Two methods were used to collect data: a survey and focus groups. The Student Achievement, Engagement, and Safety Survey (SAESS), contains 41 items, 31 of which are five-choice Likert items ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Eight are demographic items, and two are open-ended response items. The surveys took approximately 15-20 minutes for students to complete. Items for the survey were created based on three main sources: 1) The Harvard Graduate School of Education's Parent and School Survey (2014), which has been found to be reliable for ascertaining various types of parental involvement; 2) a previous survey developed by the primary researcher; and 3) the primary areas of student engagement (11 items), student achievement (10 items), and school climate (eight items) of the Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP) requirements for California.

To ensure that the SAESS met the standard benchmarks of good surveys, the researchers adhered to many of the dictums established by Dillman, Smyth, and Christian (2009). Specifically, double-barreled items were largely avoided, difficult words and technical jargon were minimized, *check all that apply* items were avoided to reduce primacy effects, there were no overlapping categories, most demographic items were placed at the end, and respondents were not asked to make any unnecessary calculations. Moreover, most items were shortened to fifteen words or less, similar questions were clustered together, and the survey itself was designed after the authors had become familiar with the LCFF and the literature.

Items that appeared to be strong representations of the constructs were drafted in an effort to reduce measurement error (Campburn, Huff, Goldring, & May, 2010). The survey was provided in both a paper format and online through Google Forms. The questions asked about teachers' instructional strategies, classroom assessments, course requirements, absenteeism, preparation for college, discipline practices, and safety.

In addition to the SAESS, we drafted twelve focus group questions—four for each of the three domains. These

questions were designed to supplement the survey, allow for elaboration, and enable us to capture students' voices. Students were asked, for example:

- Describe your best teacher. How does she/he help you learn? (Achievement)
- Who supports you on campus? (Engagement)
- What helps you avoid discipline problems at school? (School Climate)

Procedures

For six months, data was collected with a survey on paper or on Google Forms. The Student Achievement, Engagement, and Safety Survey (SAESS) took approximately 10-15 minutes for students to complete. The researchers worked with school personnel to conduct the focus groups at a time that was convenient to the school and that maximized student participation. Focus group meetings were held in groups of 10-15 students and lasted from 45-60 minutes after the completion of the survey.

Survey data was analyzed using appropriate statistical analysis in SPSS 21 such as chi-square, multiple regression and Pearson's r, while qualitative data from the focus group was analyzed using an iterative process where main quotes or words were highlighted, coded, and transformed into themes (Boyatzis, 1998).

Results

Achievement

The results are presented beginning with quantitative data analysis, followed by content analysis of the data gathered from the focus groups. Over 90% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with statement #1, "I am doing well academically," (M=3.63, S = 0.707; N = 62). Multiple regressions evaluating the relationship between question #1 and question #5 "If I struggle on an assignment, my teachers will give me feedback that helps me improve," showed a relationship. In comparison to the responses for "I am doing well academically" both means are 3.63, but there is slightly more variance in the responses to "If I struggle on an assignment my teachers will give me feedback that helps me improve." The median for both statements is 4.0. There was not enough data in this pilot study for significance between most items, because we are exploring predictive reliability of $a = 0.10$, but the statement, "We are usually given rubrics that clarify what we need to do to get low, mid, or top scores on assignments" significantly influences students' self-assessment of doing well; p=0.003. Just over 80% of the students are confident about graduating on time (M=4.25, sd = 1.027). Additionally, more than half but not two-thirds of the students in this pilot study (60.65%) think that high school has prepared them for college or a career after high school. Although this could cause question as to whether gender, ethnicity, and grade influences their opinion, three chi-square tests were conducted and in all three, gender, ethnicity, and grade are independent from student's feelings of preparedness. In summary, when results for chi-square tests for independent and Pearson's r are assessed together, the suggestion from the chi-square test that, "I am taking, or plan to take advanced courses (for example, Chemistry, Physics, Trigonometry, Calculus, Honors, or AP)" and "Adults at our school strongly encourage us to take advanced courses" are related ($X^2 = 23.623$, p=0.098, 16df) and is additionally substantiated by Pearson's r = 0.458, p<0.01.

The main themes regarding achievement were "ethic of care" and "help." Students reported that teachers demonstrated various levels of effective instruction through their demonstration

of care. One student reported, "Honestly, if you go into any classroom, they don't interact with the students. There are a few teachers that go above and beyond," while another student said, "A lot of teachers mainly just talk; they lecture. If you have a question, they'll help you."

When students were asked to describe their best teacher, one responded, "She twisted everything around and made us have fun. Some was writing, some was shooting videos, some was doing stand-up comedy." Another student reported, "My freshman year, I didn't have my dad with me; he was in jail. Mr. B was my father figure at the time," and another stated, "She's very patient even with the bad kids." Over and over again, students spoke of teachers showing care and concern for them learning and staying interested in schools.

In regards to the number of students in AP/Honors courses, many reported that they didn't know the benefits of taking those courses. One female student stated:

Maybe their family… or they just don't know about it. Because I didn't know about them until my friends started taking them…the purpose of AP and honors is to prepare you for the work that colleges give you… so AP classes may feel like it's a lot of work…it's worth it, because it prepares you…that studying and all that extra work it may seem useless…But, I think that they should let people know about them… I would rather someone choose not to take it….at least you will know why you are going to take it…The counselors should talk to students in the CP classes.

Other responses were, "I wasn't really fully taught that you should take AP classes," and, "let us know the benefit….have a rally and let us all know." One student implied that African American students don't take AP/Honors courses, "Cause they don't think they are

smart enough" and "they are scared of extra work."

Engagement

Almost 70% of participants agreed that they were engaged/interested in school as opposed to 4.84% who stated they were not engaged/interested. In describing their relationships with teachers, approximately 43% of the students provided non-positive-neutral responses, while 57% of students responded positively. The chi-square tests for independence revealed a dependent relationship between, "I have very good relationships with my teachers," and, "My teachers have no problem explaining things to us several times until we understand" (X^2= 23.62, p=0.023, df=12); however, the chi-square test for independence indicates that, "I have very good relationships with my teachers," and, "My teachers are not very patient or caring," are independent of each other (X^2= 12.049, p>0.10).

For student engagement, the main themes were "counseling concerns," "not supported on campus," and "extracurricular activities." Here's what one student said about his teacher,

My favorite teacher is Mr. Hall… he had a lot of funny stories… he would make a connection (to real life)… he would just always be there to help you out… so you could talk to him about anything and he would help you out.

Another student though said this about their teacher: "A lot of teachers just try to assassinate us." Students repeatedly stated that they wanted to graduate and get into college, yet there was conflicting information regarding how they perceived their teachers' effectiveness.

School Climate

Of the 61 students, approximately 18% indicated that they did not feel safe at school, 23% were neutral, and

approximately 59% felt safe (M=3.61, 1>1.100). Regarding if students perceived African American students as being treated differently by some adults at school, approximately 44% disagreed or strongly disagreed, which is nearly twice as many students who either agreed or strongly agreed (27%). To evaluate whether students had heard racist or biased comments at school and if students of different races get along well are independent, a chi-square test was performed ($X^2 = 26.391$, p = 0.049) and it appears that the two variables are influenced by each other.

The campus climate themes were "calling security," "racially biased discipline," and "microaggressions." When asked about Black students and discipline, one student's response was:

> There are two sides, Black students (are) targeted for stereotypes but then (some) students think they will be targeted so they make what they are doing ok and justify that it doesn't matter what they do because they are doing to get in trouble anyway.

And yet another student stated:

> I think that most teachers expect for just, you know Black students, to act up… I don't know…they treat us a little different… I can't explain it…they either tippy toe around the Black students or they discipline them unfairly…I don't think some teachers treat Black students… I think they just don't know how to approach us… that's just the way it is… Students reported that they stay "under the radar" and "bite their tongue" in order to not have security called on them.

One African American male described his experience in a classroom. "Once I got up to get a tissue…and she sent me to the office…I didn't need to be pulled out of the class. I just want to learn."

Discussion

From the LCAP, three priorities are discussed in this paper. In the achievement priority, students expressed that the programs accessible to them were AVID, tutoring, Saturday school and Summer school. Teachers who have the most impact on students are the teachers who "make learning fun" and teachers who care about the students. For engagement, students expressed that their schooling experiences should be encouraging and supported. It was a common thread that being actively involved in activities on campus keeps students engaged and out of trouble. The third priority that was examined was climate and safety as it pertains to student's daily interactions in the school system. Students consistently reported that they did not understand the inequity in discipline, yet they constantly were victims of it. In a study by Mattison & Aber (2007), interestingly, while just 8% of African Americans said they were, "treated badly or experienced racism in schools," only 31% believed that, "students were treated and disciplined fairly regardless of race" (p. 5). In other words, while nearly 7 out of 10 s thought they were unfairly disciplined, less than 1 out of 10 said they had been mistreated, perhaps suggesting a general acceptance of systematic racial mistreatment as normative.

Implications and Conclusion

Despite the historic needs of and challenges faced by African American students, they are not directly addressed or mentioned in the LCFF law. This "absence" continues to contribute to the chronic underachievement and disproportionately negative school disciplining of African American students. In short, not providing a clear LCFF policy remedy seems to leave administrators and parents ill-equipped to address the critical needs of African

American children. Several steps can be taken to increase academic achievement based on what the students reported. Educating students and increasing awareness of various levels of courses offered, and explaining the benefits of taking those courses would be helpful. This would help decrease the "disidentification" with academics that Steele (1992) discusses. The more students and parents know about the impact and connection courses have on students' future academic life, the more they can make better informed decisions. Not only would this minimize disidentification, it would tighten the linkages between schools and parents, as well as teachers and students.

Engagement has shown to increase when teachers give specific, achievement-focused feedback (Wallace & Chhuon, 2014). In a study of 28 high school students of color from Pennsylvania and Minnesota, engagement was most felt when students asked for help and were responded to, and when teachers gave the students their all. In other words, when teachers were perceived as "going all in," higher engagement was exhibited by the students than when teachers only minimally gave of themselves. Teachers who were perceived as less engaging, valued the instructional content more so than they did student learning. To engage students, teachers must be willing to slow down, ask students to assess where they are in their learning experiences, and respond positively to students' different learning styles (Thompson, 2007; Watson, & Wiggan, 2016). Again, helping the students identify with the academics by better explaining the content builds stronger connections and relationships (Steele, 1992). As we think of engagement in educational settings outside of the classroom, it would be of great benefit to strategically include African American students in other aspects of the campus to garner their engagement. On an educational platform such as this, relationships with parents and students are key to the non-negotiable success afforded to these students (Latunde & Clark-Louque, 2016). Instructional leaders and teachers are instrumental in this puzzle because they understand their role in this equity equation.

Insofar as school climate is concerned, the researchers loudly and clearly heard the voices of the students. The students reported that having more than one purpose to attend school directly impacts their connection to their school positively and increases their overall sense of feeling safe and wanted. Additionally, students' responses demonstrated that they are keenly aware of inequitable disciplinary actions taken against them. Implementing research-based programs such as Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), building stronger connections with parents, and creating culturally proficient administrators and school leaders can help to build trust and strengthen "loosely coupled" relationships in the classroom and within school systems (Louque & Latunde, 2014).

The output from this study is expected to assist districts as well as participating schools in the formulation of effective educational policies and design of services to address issues pertinent to the education of African American students. The inclusion of student voices via focus groups will not only provide students with an opportunity to have their voices heard, but may tip the scales in a manner that measurably impacts practices for children. Furthermore, it aligns with prior calls to more strongly engage students in LCFF decision-making and in research. Results on a larger scale may influence local and state accountability policy on achievement, engagement, and positive school experiences of African American students. State policies such as the LCFF

should help design and implement appropriate and effective discipline policies and practices at the district levels for all students. We are hopeful that this study's findings will have an influence on classroom practice, school culture, and

local and state policy, thus, leading to better outcomes for African American students.

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