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A Framework for Behavior Support by Dr. Katherine Hilson & Dr. Sivoahn Woolum

CENTERING BLACK GIRLS IN SPECIAL EDUCATION



Statewide Leadership. Community Impact.

In 2025, we partnered with the **Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction** to address racial disparities in special education and school discipline across the state.

At the DPI Disproportionality Summit, we worked with administrators and school leaders to:

- Examine discipline and referral data
- Identify patterns affecting Black girls
- Address disproportionate identification in Emotional/Behavioral Disability (EBD)
- Strengthen systems to reduce exclusion and support student growth

We believe transforming systems begins with transforming how we interpret behavior.



DPI Preferred Vendor

A Framework for Behavior Support



Reflect

- What assumptions do I make about Black girls and behavior?
- How do race and gender shape the way I interpret classroom “disruptions” or needs?



Assess

Data Equity Starter Checklist:

- Disaggregate referral and placement data by race, gender, and disability category.
- Review who initiates referrals—and who is missing from those conversations.
- Examine discipline data in relation to IEP/504 status.
- Survey students and families about their experiences.



Act

Support and advocate for Black girls by:

- Building classroom cultures of belonging
- Offering trauma-informed and culturally responsive supports
- Advocating for nonpunitive discipline alternatives
- Elevating student voice in IEP processes and school decisions

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