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EDUCATION POLICY SPEAKER SERIES

A Scalable Empathic-Mindset Intervention Reduces Group Disparities in School Suspensions

Thursday, October 28th, 2021, 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm EST
133F Erickson Hall & <https://msu.zoom.us/j/97173291378>



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Suspensions remove students from the learning environment at high rates throughout the United States. Policy and theory highlight social groups that face disproportionately high suspension rates—racial-minoritized students, students with a prior suspension, and students with disabilities. We used an active placebo-controlled, longitudinal field-experiment (Nteachers=66, Nstudents=5,822) to test a scalable “empathic-

mindset” intervention, a 70-minute online exercise to refocus middle-school teachers on understanding and valuing the perspectives of students and on sustaining positive relationships even when students misbehave. In pre-registered analyses, this exercise reduced suspension rates especially for Black and Hispanic students, cutting the racial disparity over the school year by 45%. Significant reductions were also observed for other groups of concern. Moreover, reductions persisted through the next year when students interacted with new teachers, suggesting that empathic treatment with even one teacher in a critical period can improve students’ trajectories.

Dr. Lindsay earned a doctorate in human development and social policy from Northwestern University, where she was an Institute of Education Sciences’ predoctoral fellow. Lindsay’s areas of expertise include teacher quality and diversity, analyzing and closing racial achievement gaps, and adolescent development.



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