

Discussion Guide for *Marcel*

Marcel Parks, 8, struggles with mental health challenges that have led to fits of violence. This film looks at a Missouri elementary school's struggle to include Marcel in general education classes. The film also highlights the district's efforts to address racial disparities in how African American boys are disciplined and educated, as well as the importance of family engagement and cultural responsiveness.

INITIAL REACTIONS TO THE FILM

1. What aspects of this film resonated with you?
2. In what ways does watching this film make you feel uncomfortable?
3. To what extent have you observed cultural bias influence perceptions of children and youth, especially as it relates to perceptions of challenging behavior?
4. How similar or different is this from your experiences with students who pose significant behavioral challenges?
5. To what extent do you observe staff struggle with trying not to take behaviors personally? In what ways does this dynamic influence how we regard children and youth who engage in problem behaviors?
6. The United States Department of Education recently released a resource document on restraint and seclusion (see link at bottom of this guide). The DOE recommends that: "Physical restraint or seclusion should not be used except in situations where the child's behavior poses imminent danger of serious physical harm to self or others." Do you feel the restraint shown in the film *Marcel* met this threshold? Why or why not?



Scenes from *Marcel*, top to bottom: Tara Schillhahn, a guidance counselor at Armstrong Elementary School, speaks with Marcel Parks; students eat lunch together at school; Marcel is led to the office after trying to punch the principal.

7. What can schools do to prevent behavior from escalating to the point where restraint is used as a last resort?



Stacey Parks, mother of Marcel Parks, cries and discusses how alone she feels as a parent of a child with complex emotional/behavioral disabilities.

REFLECTIONS ON PARENT PARTNERSHIPS

1. In what ways does Marcel's mom's discussion of her experience resonate with you?
2. In what ways did Marcel's mom make you reflect on your own practices and interactions with parents?
3. How would you describe the general tone or attitude toward parents and parent involvement at your school?
4. To what extent do you think that staff at your school are aware of or empathic towards the personal and family struggles that often accompany having children with significant disabilities and behavior issues?
5. In what ways do we make it difficult for parents to participate in the process? How might coming to the school be intimidating or frustrating?

PROCESS ORIENTED QUESTIONS

(Note: See the Functional Behavioral Assessment PDF in the "What Works" section of these educational materials for more background on these questions.)

1. What process is your school using to reflect on education patterns for students by race? By disability?
2. Is data looked at and shared with staff?
 - a. If a process is not in place, in what ways would you see data as being a helpful vehicle for opening up discussions?
3. What process does your school use to address the needs of students with significant behavioral challenges?
 - a. How is your school using function-based planning to develop behavior intervention plans?
 - b. Do all staff use a consistent and constructive process to map out and reflect on behavior incidents (setting events-antecedent triggers-consequences/responses)?

4. How would you assess the effectiveness of your school's process for behavior intervention planning and what would you like to see work better? Identify what you think are your top 3-5 challenges and consider what would need to change or happen in order to get past those challenges. Use the following chart to map out the changes you would like to see:

What would you like to see work better in your process?	Is there something your administrator(s) can do to support this change?	Is there specific professional development that would enhance staff's capacity to implement?	Are there systemic changes that would enhance your ability to plan and implement solutions?

- The United States Department of Education recently released a resource document on restraint and seclusion. It can be downloaded at: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/seclusion/restraints-and-seclusion-resources.pdf>. For more information and links, please see the Restraint and Seclusion PDF in the "Issues Facing Schools" section of these educational materials.

- Sharon Lohrmann, PhD, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics and Director, NJ Positive Behavior Support in Schools (www.njpbs.org) was a key contributor to this discussion guide. Lohrmann is co-author of *Working Together: A Guide to Positive Behavior Support for Families and Professionals*, available at TASH.org.