

**Consistent Removal: Contributions of School Discipline  
to the School-Prison Pipeline**

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## **Consistent Removal: Contributions of School Discipline to the School-Prison Pipeline**

Since the 1980's, fear of school violence has driven American public education toward increasingly punitive and exclusionary methods of school discipline (Noguera, 1995). Despite the lack of a clear definition of zero tolerance (Skiba & Knesting, 2002), adherence to a philosophy that schools can be made safer through school removal has increased dramatically; the National Center on Educational Statistics reported that between 79% and 94% of schools nationally implement zero tolerance for at least one serious infraction (Heaviside, Rowand, Williams, & Farris, 1998). Going beyond the mandate of the Gun Free Schools Act of a one calendar year expulsion for weapons, some local schools and school districts have expanded the scope of zero tolerance disciplinary removal to include fights, threats and threatening behavior, and alcohol abuse off campus (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). As a result, the last decade has seen continued and often dramatic increases in school suspensions and expulsions (Browne, Losen, & Wald, 2002).

The disciplinary strategy that has come to be known as zero tolerance is predicated on the belief that the removal of disruptive students is not only effective but to a certain extent necessary to preserve the integrity of the learning environment (Ewing, 2000). Thus, school personnel more inclined to use suspension and expulsion as a disciplinary tool believe that their role is in part to remove troublemakers in order to preserve the learning climate for other students (Bowditch, 1993). Zero tolerance is also viewed by its proponents as to some extent a teaching tool, sending a clear message to other students that disruption, whether minor or serious, will not be tolerated in school (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Even if the goal of zero tolerance is primarily symbolic, to maintain and enforce the authority of schools (Noguera,

1995), it is still presumed to have a deterrent value, as students witness the severe consequences others have received. Finally, it has been argued that, by removing discretion and mandating certain punishments for certain behaviors, zero tolerance should eliminate racial disparities in discipline.

Thus, zero tolerance makes a number of predictions regarding the effects of school exclusion as a disciplinary strategy. In an era defined by accountability, it is not unreasonable to expect that such predictions be tested through measurable student and school outcomes. Learning theory would predict that the appropriate application of consequences should reduce the future likelihood of misbehavior (CEC, 1991; Skinner, 1953). Indeed, the U.S. Surgeon General, synthesizing recent reviews of interventions for youth violence, has concluded that it is possible to identify, under rigorous experimental conditions interventions that can reduce the likelihood of delinquency (Elliott, Hatot, Sirovatka, & Potter, 2001). Similarly, in the face of extensive body of research documenting a clear relationship between opportunity to learn and improved academic achievement (Guiton & Oakes, 1995; Wang, 1998), one would expect that increasing the general level of opportunity for student academic engagement by removing individuals who disrupt the learning climate would lead to concomitant increases in schoolwide academic achievement.

As yet, however, there is little or no documentation that the increased use of school exclusion as a disciplinary tool leads to improved student behavior or school climate (Skiba & Knesting, 2002). Reports on zero tolerance programs have cited both increases and decreases in weapons confiscation and expulsion as evidence of effectiveness (Barzewski, 1997; Crosby, 1994; Sinclair, 1999). To this point there have been no direct studies about the way in which zero tolerance, suspension and expulsion relate either to other important educational outcomes

such as achievement, or to outcomes in the juvenile justice system, particularly for students of color. This paper describes two descriptive studies using both school level and national data to gain a clearer understanding of both the outcomes of school discipline, and the factors that contribute to school removal in schools.

In the first study, we explored the relationship between the use of school suspension and outcome variables in the areas of school achievement and incarceration. Examination of national data bases indicated a strong relationship between state rates of out-of-school suspension and juvenile incarceration, as well as a correlation between racial disparities in school discipline and juvenile incarceration. In addition, rates of school suspension were found to be negatively associated with academic achievement scores. The correlational results preclude strong statements about direction of causality; nevertheless, like most research on zero tolerance, these findings provide no evidence that disciplinary removal in any way contributes to safer or more productive learning environments.

Our second study focused on the use of suspension, expulsion, and alternatives at the school level. Through a principal survey sent to all school principals in a single midwestern state, we explored principal attitudes toward school discipline, and the extent to which those attitudes predicted out-of-school suspension and the use of prevention programs. Six clear factors emerged describing differences in principal attitudes toward the purpose and function of school discipline. Significant differences emerged between male and female principals, and between elementary and secondary school principals, especially in their support for suspension and their perspectives on preventive activities. Differences in principal attitudes were also associated with both out-of-school suspension rates and the use of preventive strategies. Thus, removal of students through suspension and expulsion is not simply an inevitable result of

disruptive behavior. Rather disciplinary removal appears to be to some extent a choice connected with principal attitudes towards discipline, students and parents. Prior to describing the findings in detail, previous findings on the use and effects of disciplinary removal and its relationship to juvenile corrections outcomes are reviewed.

### **What Contributes to Discipline and Disciplinary Disparities?**

*Individual and contextual factors in disciplinary removal.* Teacher and administrators tend to blame school suspension and expulsion solely on specific student misbehavior, while downplaying or ignoring the contributions schools or school staff may make to the disciplinary process (Sheets, 1996). Since the process is viewed as driven by student behavior, suspension and expulsion are thus perceived as direct indicators of the extent of school disruption.

Yet the data on school suspension suggests that any decision to suspend a student is the end point of tremendously complex process that cannot be described as a straight line leading from student misbehavior to an invariant consequence delivered by the school administration (Morrison & Skiba, 2001; Vavrus & Cole, 2002). For a student to be referred to the central office by a teacher, there must first be a judgment made by the teacher that a behavior is too severe to be handled at the classroom level. Such judgments are influenced by a host of factors: previous history with that particular student (Bowditch, 1993), the immediate context of the behavior (Vavrus & Cole, 2002), the teacher's general tolerance level (Gerber & Semmel, 1984), and the resources available to the teacher for managing disruptive behavior (Skiba et al., 1993). Once a behavioral sequence has been initiated and perceived to be disruptive by a teacher, that sequence may also be escalated or de-escalated, depending upon that teacher's skills in managing student behavior (Alberto & Troutman, 2003). Vavrus and Cole (2002) reported that the majority of disciplinary removals they observed in an urban setting were not solely due to dangerous or

serious infractions of the school's disciplinary codes, but often represented the culmination of student behavioral sequences that threatened teacher authority. The students removed during such sequences were rarely the most egregious offender, but rather seemed to be "in the wrong place at the wrong time." Such classroom complexity has led Morrison et al. (2002) to describe school exclusion as a *process* rather than an event.

The complexity of the disciplinary process does not end once a student has been referred to the office. In a field study of disciplinary outcomes at the office level, Bowditch (1993) found that an administrator's choice of mild or more severe consequences was influenced by a host of contextual factors, including the student's behavioral and academic history, their understanding of the student's family, and the "track record" of the referring teacher. In many schools, principals are well aware that only a quarter of classroom teachers may be responsible for two thirds or more of office referrals (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997).

Finally, the choice of whether to employ suspension in response to a given office referral appears to be related to school and principal disciplinary philosophy. Morrison, Morrison, & Minjarez (1999) reported two different orientations among principals toward the process of disciplining students: the *get tough* philosophy, a relatively strict adherence to rules regardless of the context, and the *student support* orientation, characterized by a greater willingness to understand the context of student behavior and work with parents to find solutions to improve school climate. In general, schools with principals adhering to the first philosophy tended to have a higher rate of suspension than schools with the latter philosophy. Similarly, in the report *Opportunities Suspended* (Advancement Project/Civil Rights Project, 2000), field investigators found that the use of school suspension to be aligned almost exactly with the extent of support expressed by the principal for zero tolerance policies and procedures.

In sum then, there are multiple sources of student, classroom, and school variance that enter into any disciplinary removal. In an extensive multivariate analysis, Wu, Pink, Crain, and Moles (1982) found that student attitude and behavior do make a significant contribution to a student's probability of being suspended from school. Yet contextual variables such as school governance, teacher attitudes and overall school suspension rate were also highly significant in predicting one's chances of being suspended from school. Indeed, classroom and school characteristics were more predictive of an individual's probability of being suspended than were student attitudes and behavior.

*Contributions to disciplinary disparity.* Disproportionate minority representation in school discipline data has been documented consistently for over 25 years. The Children's Defense Fund (1975), examining national school discipline figures from the U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (OCR), found suspension rates for black students that were two to three times higher than suspension rates for white students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. More recent investigations, some of them using subsequent OCR data collections, have found consistent evidence of significant minority overrepresentation in office referrals (Lietz & Gregory, 1978; Skiba et al., 1997), suspension (Costenbader & Markson, 1998), expulsion (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, in press) and corporal punishment (Gregory, 1996; Shaw & Braden, 1990).

Given the perspective that school exclusion is driven primarily by student misbehavior, it is not surprising that there has been a concomitant tendency to look for the causes of such disparities in the individual characteristics of the minority students who are over-represented in discipline. Thus, one might look for overrepresentation to increase as minority enrollment increases. One might also ask whether disproportionate discipline is due to the lower

socioeconomic status of minority students, or whether minority students engage in disproportionately higher rates of misbehavior that create higher rates of school suspension and expulsion.

Extant data, however, tend not to support hypotheses stressing the contribution of student characteristics to racial disparities in discipline. African American overrepresentation in school exclusion does not seem to be related to overall enrollment of African American students (Larkin, 1979). Furthermore, although low SES has been consistently found to be a risk factor for school suspension (Brantlinger, 1991; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997; Wu et al., 1982), investigations that have controlled for SES statistically have still found a significant difference in office referrals, suspension, and expulsion due to race (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, 2002; Wu et al., 1982). Finally, there is no evidence that disparate rates of suspension for African American students are due to disparate rates of misbehavior. If anything, students of color appear to be disciplined more severely for less serious infractions (McFadden et al., 1992; Shaw & Braden, 1990), or be referred for disciplinary action for less objective, more judgmental reasons (Skiba et al., 2002).

As is the case for the use of suspension in general, data concerning racial disparities suggest that system-level variables make a significant contribution to racial disparities in school exclusion. Schools with higher rates of suspension in general also appear to have higher rates of overrepresentation of African American students in suspension (Advancement Project/Civil Rights Project, 2000; Massachusetts Advocacy Center, 1986). There appear to be significant relationships in urban schools among high rates of suspension, minority dropout rate, and student perceptions of racial discrimination (Felice, 1981). A number of authors have argued that racial disparities in school discipline are associated with inadequate training of teachers in urban

settings in classroom behavior management (Brophy & McCaslin, 1992; Bullara, 1993; Skiba et al., 2002). Problems of cultural mismatch may also contribute to disciplinary disparities: that is, misinterpretation by classroom teachers of the meaning of African American students' behavior (Hosp & Hosp, 2002; Townsend, 2000) may contribute to a higher probability of office referral and school punishment.

**Summary.** These data argue that increasing rates of exclusion and punishment in schools and society, and in particular disproportionate rates of punishment for African Americans, are not due solely to the characteristics of children and youth. Rather, variations at the classroom, school and administrative level strongly appear to predict both the overall tendency to exclude more children from school, and the likelihood that a disproportionate number of those excluded will be students of color. It cannot be doubted that there are wide individual variations in the degree to which students conform to school rules, and some students who pose a serious challenge to any disciplinary system. Yet the complexity and inconsistency inherent in the disciplinary process also strongly suggests that any particular student behavior is only the starting point of a process that includes a good deal of discretion based on institutional and individual preferences and constraints. What is of course particularly troubling about such a realization is that, if institutional preferences and constraints contribute to the disciplinary process, then it must be admitted that they are also contributing to consistent racial disparity in both disciplinary treatment and outcomes.

### **Racial Disparities in Juvenile Justice Data**

Racial disparities have also been commonly reported in the juvenile justice system; the pattern of such similarities is strikingly similar to disproportionality in school discipline. The most comprehensive national descriptive analysis of the disparate impact the juvenile justice

system on youth of color (Poe-Yamagata & Jones, 2000), suggests that African-American youth are treated differently at every step of processing through the juvenile system. African-American youth were overrepresented in 26 of 29 offense categories, were more likely to be detained, expedited for formal processing, waived to adult court, given an out of home placement, and incarcerated in both juvenile and adult prisons. Similar results have been found in comprehensive state level analyses (Hamparian & Leiber, 1997).

As in the field of school discipline, it is difficult to make a case that such disparities are due simply to higher rates of criminal behavior among African American youth. Although black youth represent 13% of the drug users in America (SAMHSA, 1999), they represent 29% of the total juvenile arrests for drug abuse violations (U. S. Department of Justice, 2000). According to a report published by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999), minority youth were confined approximately twice as often as their white peers and were imprisoned significantly longer in all offense categories. Minority youth are also more likely to be referred to an adult court (Snyder & Sickmund, 1999) and once there are treated more severely (Males & Macallair, 2000). Indeed, youth of color are more likely to receive harsher punishments and be processed further through the juvenile justice system in every step of the judicial process in every offense category--person, property, drug and public order--again suggesting that they are treated more severely than their white counterparts for similar offenses (Kennedy, 2001; Poe-Yamagata & Jones, 2000).

### **Outcomes of School Exclusion**

The use of school suspension and expulsion is predicated upon the notion that removal of certain students for certain types of infractions is necessary to maintain the quality of the learning environment for all students. Yet there is a striking absence of outcome data to support

that assumption, and in fact a number of findings that appear to contradict it. At the individual level, high levels of repeat offending (Costenbader & Markson, 1998) for school suspension suggest that disciplinary removal is not a particularly effective method for changing student behavior. Indeed, early suspension appears to predict later *increases* in school misbehavior (Tobin, Sugai, & Colvin, 1996). In the long term, the use of school suspension is correlated with school dropout (Ekstrom et al., 1986; Felice, 1982). These negative outcomes at the school level might suggest that there would be a relationship between school exclusion and juvenile justice outcomes, such as incarceration. To date, however, we are unaware of previously published findings exploring that relationship.

### **Purpose and Research Questions.**

Thus, the use of school exclusion as a disciplinary tool relies upon two fundamental assumptions. First, suspension and expulsion can improve student behavior by sending a clear message of behavior, and improve the school learning environment by removing those who disrupt that environment. Second, school discipline is primarily a response to student misbehavior and that, in the face of increasing disruption and violence, schools may have few choices but to rely to some extent on disciplinary removal to maintain the safety of schools. This paper represents an attempt to provide data relevant to those assumptions.

We analyzed survey data and descriptive information at the school and state level regarding patterns of school exclusion and racial disparity in school exclusion and incarceration.

The analyses were intended to address two questions:

- To what extent does disciplinary removal predict positive educational outcomes; that is, what is the relationship between school exclusion and long term outcomes such as juvenile incarceration and academic achievement?

- To what extent are there definable principal perspectives on school discipline that may vary on dimensions (e.g., school level, principal gender) that are independent of student behavior, and in turn affect school practice in violence prevention and school discipline?

Ultimately, these questions assess whether school discipline is more than simply a response to “bad behavior”. They address the extent to which institutional forces help shape the process of school discipline, and whether that process as it is currently employed in schools constitutes a positive or negative factor in the lives of students.

### **Study 1: School Exclusion, Achievement, and Incarceration**

To what extent is the use of school suspension and expulsion associated with important outcomes--measures of school achievement and juvenile incarceration? School suspension and expulsion appear to be intended to improve school climate and improve student behavior. If removing students improves the learning climate, one would expect to see improvements in average levels of achievement as schools exclude a higher rate of troublemakers. If removing students in some way teaches students appropriate social skills, one would expect to see lower rates of juvenile incarceration in states with high rates of disciplinary removal. On the other hand, if the use of suspension and expulsion can be characterized as a component of a school-to-prison pipeline, one would expect to see increases in incarceration, and lower levels of achievement, as the level of school exclusion increases.

Thus, Study I situates disciplinary removal in the state and national context. This section examines the relationships between overall use of discipline and disproportionality in discipline, the overall use of juvenile incarceration and disproportionality in juvenile incarceration at the state level, and state averages for measures of school achievement.

### **Sources of Data**

**Disciplinary data.** Discipline data were drawn from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights 2000 Elementary and Secondary School Survey (for the 2000-2001 school year). This survey provides data, by race, on the total number of children attending school in each state, number of children expelled, and number of children suspended. Data were aggregated to the state level.

**Juvenile incarceration rates.** Data used to calculate juvenile incarceration statistics came from the National Corrections Reporting Program (NCRP) of the United States Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics. The NCRP collects incarceration data from the official prison records of each participating state provided to the Department of Justice annually. State participation in the NCRP is voluntary and not every state participates each year. The data in this reporting year provide information on all persons incarcerated, released, and discharged from parole in state prisons, the federal prison system and the California Youth Authority<sup>1</sup> in 38 states. Variables in this dataset include incarceration history, current offenses and total time served disaggregated by year of birth, sex, age, race, Hispanic origin and educational attainment. Data extracted from the NCRP used in these analyses were data on rate of incarceration by state and rate of incarceration of African American youth by state. Data were only drawn from children and youth aged 10-17. Data on total numbers of children and youth in each state aged 10-17 by race were drawn from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Program's EZ-Pop statistics. All data are for the year 2000. Data across the data bases were merged based on the Federal Information Processing Standards Codes (FIPS) for each state.

Incomplete data across states, especially in the NCRP data, prevented the use of all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Thus, thirty-seven states comprise the sample for this section of the project (see Table 1).

**Achievement data.** Student achievement variables were taken from the National Center for Education Statistics' *National Assessment of Educational Progress* (NAEP). Also known as The Nation's Report Card, the NAEP is an achievement assessment in mathematics, science, reading, writing, U.S. history, civics, geography and the arts. Data collected for the NAEP consist of standard scores from a representative sampling of students at the national and state level. For the current analysis, each state's average scaled score for public schools was downloaded from the NCES website (<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>) for the following subjects and years: 8<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics in 2000, 8<sup>th</sup> grade science in 2000, 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading in 1998, and 8<sup>th</sup> grade writing in 1998. State participation in each subject and grade was voluntary.<sup>2</sup>

**Measures of rate and disproportionality.** Overall state rates for school suspension and expulsion were calculated by dividing the number of youth in a given outcome category (e.g., number of children suspended), by the total number of school-aged children and youth in the state. Similar state rates of incarceration were calculated by dividing the total number of juveniles incarcerated by the total number of youths aged 10-17 in each state. In order to assess the disproportionality of African American students in these measures, Risk and Relative Risk indices were calculated for incarceration (INCAR), suspension (SUSPEND), and expulsion (EXP) for each state. The Risk Index (RI) refers to the percentage of a given group in a certain category (e.g., incarceration) and was in this case calculated by dividing the number of African Americans in a given category by the total number of African Americans. The Relative Risk Index (RRI) is a ratio used to compare the Risk Index of a given group with some criteria, as a measure of disproportionality. In this study, the Relative Risk Index is the ratio of the RI for African Americans to the RI for white students.

### **Is Increased School Exclusion Associated with Increased Risk of Incarceration?**

Table 1a summarizes rate and disproportionality measures of out-of school suspension, incarceration, and school expulsion for the 37 states with complete data. Rate is defined as the percent of all individuals subject to that outcome, calculated by dividing the number of individuals who received the consequence by the number of students or juveniles in the state. Rates of school suspension varied from 2.4% in North Dakota, to 14.7% in South Carolina. Rates of juvenile incarceration ranged from 0.4% in Nebraska, to 14.1% in Louisiana. Rates of expulsion across states were below 1%. In general, both rates of out-of-school suspension and incarceration were highest in the southeastern states (South Carolina, Louisiana, Mississippi, and North Carolina).

Measures of disproportionality are presented in Table 1b. The second column, the Risk Index (RI), represents the percentage of African Americans in a given state who received that outcome. The first column under each category, Relative Risk Index (RRI), is a ratio comparing the RI for African Americans in comparison to the RI for Whites.

Inspection of Table 1b shows that rates of African American incarceration, school suspension, and school expulsion exceed rates for the population as a whole in almost every state examined, often to a dramatic extent. For example, while 6% of all students were suspended in the 2000 school year in Minnesota, 34% of African American students were suspended in the same year. Examining the RRI for suspension, African Americans ranged from 1.25 times (Maine) to 9.00 times (Minnesota) more likely to be suspended from school compared to white students. In terms of school expulsions, African American students were between 1.04 (New Hampshire) and 8.97 (New Jersey) times as likely to be expelled from school as White students. With the exception of two states (Hawaii: RRI = 0.72 and Alaska: RRI=.94), African American

juveniles are consistently more likely than White juveniles to be incarcerated, with RRI's indicating that African Americans range from 1.58 times (Mississippi) to 11.53 (Louisiana) times more likely to be incarcerated in the juvenile justice system than White juveniles. In general, the highest degree of disproportionality in both school suspension and juvenile incarceration appears to occur in the Midwest states. In Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin, African Americans are over six times more likely to be incarcerated than White children and between five and nine times as likely to be suspended from school.

We assessed the relationship between discipline and incarceration using Kendall's Tau rank order correlations among these variables at the state level.<sup>3</sup> Rank order correlations were tested among rates of suspension, expulsion and incarceration and among the relative risk indices for suspension, expulsion, and incarceration (see Table 2). Those correlations indicated that states with higher rates of school suspension were also more likely to have higher rates of juvenile incarceration (Kendall's tau-b=.26,  $p < .05$ ). The rank order correlation between the relative risk index for suspension and the relative risk order for incarceration was also significant (Kendall's tau-b= .24,  $p < .05$ ), indicating that those states with higher rates of African American disproportionality in school suspension also have higher rates of disproportionality in juvenile incarceration. In contrast, no significant relationships emerged between either rate of, or disproportionality in, school expulsion and similar measures of juvenile incarceration.

### **Relationships between Disciplinary Removal and Achievement**

Rank order correlations were also tested between the disciplinary and incarceration measures (relative risk ratios and rates) and the four measures of school achievement: mathematics, science, reading, and writing. Results, presented in Table 3, show significant rank order correlations between three out of four measures of school achievement at the eighth grade

level and rates of school suspension. There is a significant and negative rank order relationship between state rates of school suspension and eighth grade NAEP math achievement (Kendall's tau-b =  $-.27$ ,  $p < .05$ ), eighth grade reading (Kendall's tau-b =  $-.34$ ,  $p < .02$ ), and eighth grade writing scores (Kendall's tau-b =  $-.30$ ,  $p < .04$ ). There is also evidence of significant negative rank order relationships between incarceration and measures of achievement. Eighth grade math (Kendall's tau-b =  $-.46$ ,  $p < .01$ ), eighth grade science (Kendall's tau-b =  $-.51$ ,  $p < .01$ ), eighth grade writing (Kendall's tau-b =  $-.31$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and eighth grade reading (Kendall's tau-b =  $-.44$ ,  $p < .01$ ) are all related with juvenile incarceration. No significant relationships were found between expulsion rates and measures of achievement.

### **Summary**

Across the 37 states with available data for suspension, expulsion and incarceration, African American children and youth were overrepresented in virtually every state across all three outcomes. As one progresses further along the pipeline from school to corrections, the size of racial disparities increases dramatically. African American disproportionality appears to be especially pronounced in the Midwestern states. There is evidence of a clear relationship between school suspension and juvenile incarceration; both rate of suspension and black disproportionality in suspension predict rate and disproportionality in juvenile incarceration, respectively. As the statewide rate of school suspension increases, average achievement scores decline. These relationships were not found for school expulsion.

### **Study 2: Principal Perspectives on School Discipline**

These correlations, however, are not to be confused with causation. Theoretically state rates of school discipline and juvenile incarceration could both be driven only by levels of student disruption. Study 2 thus explored the extent to which there are systems level

contributions to the process of school discipline. In particular, to what extent is the use of school exclusion influenced by principal as well as student behavior? Study 2 addressed the extent to which there are definable principal perspectives on school discipline that may vary on dimensions (e.g., school level, principal gender) that are independent of student behavior, and may in turn influence school disciplinary practice.

### *Measures & Procedures*

**Principal perspectives on discipline.** An online survey, the Disciplinary Practices Scale, was developed to collect data on principals' perceptions and practice related to school discipline.<sup>5</sup> Most previous surveys on school discipline have focused primarily on the extent of use of various school disciplinary options. Our purpose in contrast was to assess principal perspectives, in order to assess the generalizability of previous findings suggesting clear differences in principal perspectives on school discipline (Advancement Project/Civil Rights Project, 2000; Morrison et al, 1997). Thus, items included in the Disciplinary Practices Scale were chosen to reflect principal attitudes and beliefs about the purpose, process and outcomes of school discipline, rather than simply the frequency of disciplinary actions.

The 60 questions contained in the final survey are presented in Appendix A. Items identified in the review tended to fall in seven content areas: a) attitude toward discipline in general, b) awareness and enforcement of disciplinary procedures, c) beliefs concerning suspension/expulsion and zero tolerance, d) beliefs about responsibility for handling student misbehaviors, e) attitude toward differential discipline of disadvantaged students or students with disabilities, f) resources available for discipline, and g) attitude towards and availability of prevention strategies as an alternative to exclusion. Forty-nine of the questions assessed principal

opinion about one of these aspects of discipline, while eleven items asked principals to estimate how frequently they used certain disciplinary or preventive strategies.

Participants were contacted by email requesting their participation in the survey, accessed via a link to a secure web site. For each of the 60 questions, respondents were asked to indicate their response using a 5-point Likert scale.

**School suspension.** Data on out-of-school suspensions were drawn from the Indiana School Suspension Report for the 2001-02 school year. The report lists numbers of in- and out-of-school suspensions for each school in the state of Indiana, broken down by category of infraction (e.g., drugs, weapons, disruptive behavior, tobacco). Rates of out-of-school suspension were calculated by dividing the number of incidents of suspension by school enrollment figures. Four such measures were calculated at the school level: (a) overall school rate of out-of-school suspension (OSS), (b) rate of OSS for African American students, (c) rate of suspensions based on disruptive behavior, and (d) rate of suspensions due to serious or dangerous infractions (drug, alcohol, or weapons infractions).

## **Respondents**

All elementary, middle, and high school principals in the Indiana Department of Education data base were invited by email to participate in the completion of the Disciplinary Practices Survey. Participation was voluntary and no compensation was offered. A total of 1892 principals received an email requesting their participation. A total of 267 surveys were completed for a response rate of just over fourteen percent.

Of those completing the on-line survey, 65% were male and 35% were female. These proportions deviate slightly from reported state-wide distributions of principals of seventy-nine percent male and twenty-one percent female.<sup>6</sup> Fifty-three percent of respondents were administrators at elementary schools. Twenty-two percent of respondents were administrators at middle/junior high schools. Twenty-four percent of respondents were administrators at high schools, and one percent of administrators were administrators at alternative schools. The distribution of principals by school level closely mirrored the state distribution.

### **Are There Clearly Definable Perspectives on School Discipline?**

In order to assess the extent to which there are discrete and identifiable perspectives on school discipline among school principals, participants' responses to the 49 questions pertaining to principal attitude on the Disciplinary Practices Scale were factor analyzed.<sup>8</sup> The six factors that emerged and the items correlating with those factors are presented in Table 4, in the order of the relative importance of (amount of variance accounted for) by the factor.

The fact that six clear factors emerged, and the high association of the items with each factor, indicates that there are clearly identifiable and discrete attitudinal differences among principals concerning the purpose and function of school discipline. The first factor (SYSTEM) was comprised of items emphasizing the use of discipline as a tool to maintain system efficiency.

Those scoring high on this factor believed that special education disciplinary protections are a threat to effective discipline, that discipline consumes too much time at their school, that school disruption cannot be tolerated and that students who engage in such disruption must be removed to maintain the integrity of the learning environment for others. A number of items pertaining to a belief that violence was increasing and that the school lacks sufficient resources to handle disruption also loaded on this factor, suggesting that the use of school exclusion is predicated on a belief that there are simply no other resources available to handle violence and disruption. The second factor (ANTISUSP) contained ten variables suggesting an awareness of the negative effects of school exclusion. Those scoring high on this factor believe suspension gives students more time on the streets, does not solve discipline problems, hurts students by reducing their learning time, and is unfair to African American students. High scores on this factor also indicate a belief that suspension is not an important or effective disciplinary tool. Factor three (ADAPT) was comprised of items indicating a belief that school discipline should be adapted to meet the needs of various groups. Those scoring high on this factor believed that students with disabilities, disadvantaged students, and students of various ethnicities have different needs that require adaptation of disciplinary procedures. In addition, those who endorsed these items also tended to believe that a student's academic record should be taken into account in administering school discipline. The fourth factor (ZEROTOL) indicated support of zero tolerance policies. Those with high scores on this item stated that zero tolerance made a significant contribution to discipline at their school and sends a clear message regarding behavior. Factor five (PREVENT) reflected support for prevention activities and programs. High scores on this factor indicated a perspective that prevention is worthwhile and pays off in terms of fewer disciplinary problems. Those with high scores on this factor also tended to support the use of in-school suspension,

viewed suspension as a last resort, and endorsed the belief that schools have a responsibility to teach appropriate behavior. The final factor (TEACH) suggests a perspective that discipline is or should be a tool for teaching students appropriate skills and behavior. Those scoring high on this factor also tend to believe that it is important to have conversations with students as part of the discipline process, and that students should be rewarded and recognized for appropriate behavior.

**Summary.** Results of the factor analysis indicate that there are clear and identifiable differences in perspectives among school principals on certain dimensions of school discipline. Some principals clearly believe that zero tolerance makes an effective contribution to school discipline, that certain students (including those with disabilities) create a burden on the system and should be removed, and that home influences are responsible for student disruption. Others believe that there are clear negative effects of school exclusion, that prevention makes a positive contribution, that certain students need an individualized approach to discipline, and that discipline is a teaching tool. But are such differences in perspective held systematically? That is, do they appear to vary by school-related characteristics, such as gender or school level? To what extent do they influence school practice?

### **Attitudes Toward School Discipline: Gender and Level Differences**

To determine the degree to which attitudes toward school discipline varied systematically by gender and school type, a two factor analysis of variance was conducted. The dependent (outcome) measures were the factor scores on the seven factors identified for the Disciplinary Practices Scale. Independent variables (predictors) were gender and school type (elementary vs. secondary level).

Results of the analysis, summarized in Table 5, indicated significant differences by gender for three of the six factors. Female principals were more likely to oppose the use of

school suspension (ANTISUSP)  $F(1, 215)=7.29, p<.01$  and more in favor of the user of prevention strategies  $F(1, 215)=16.23, p<.001$ . Female principals were also more likely to emphasize the importance of school discipline in teaching appropriate behaviors (TEACH)  $F(1, 215)=4.34, p<.05$ .

There were also three significant differences by school level (elementary versus secondary level). Secondary school principals were more likely to endorse items stressing the importance of school discipline in maintaining system efficiency (SYSTEM)  $F(1, 215)= 8.47, p<.01$ . Elementary school principals were significantly more likely than secondary school principals to believe that school discipline should be adapted to meet the needs of disadvantaged or ethnically diverse students, or students with disabilities (ADAPT)  $F(1, 215)=6.38, p<.05$ . School type was also significant with respect to prevention (PREVENT)  $F(1, 215) = 4.33, p<.05$ ; elementary principals were more likely to be supportive of the use of prevention activities in school discipline. There were no differences by gender or school type for attitudes supportive of zero tolerance (ZEROTOL). One might expect attitudinal differences by gender and school level to be inter-related, since there were far fewer female principals in this sample at the secondary (25%) than elementary (46%) level. Yet the absence of interaction effects suggests that attitude differences based on level or gender are independent of each other.

### **Relationship of Principal Attitudes to Prevention and Out-of-School Suspension**

Clearly defined differences in principal perspective do not guarantee, however, that those perspectives will have an impact on actual school disciplinary practice. Thus the final question we sought to address was the extent to which principal attitudes towards discipline have an impact on school practice for addressing school disruption and violence prevention. To address this question we looked at the relationship between the factor scores on the six dimensions of principal disciplinary attitudes and (a) school use of a number of different prevention strategies and (b) rates of school suspension.

**Prevention activities.** To assess school use of a variety of violence prevention activities, principals were asked to rate the extent to which certain prevention programs were used in maintaining discipline and promoting safety in their school, on a five point scale ranging from “never used” (1) to “frequently used” (5). Significant bivariate correlations between the factor scores and the prevention items are presented in Table 6. Of the factors, the fourth factor, indicating a positive attitude towards the use and effectiveness of prevention approaches (PREVENT), was most highly related to the presence or absence of prevention activities, correlating significantly with all prevention items except metal detectors and security guards. Factor I, the belief that disruptive students and those with disabilities pose a threat to the integrity of the instructional climate and should be removed (SYSTEM), correlated negatively with the use of a variety of prevention activities. Those who hold a negative attitude towards the use of suspension (ANTI-SUSP) reported a greater use of counseling and bullying prevention programs in their schools, and less use of metal detectors or video technology. Finally, a perspective that the purpose of discipline is to teach appropriate skills (TEACH) was associated

with an increase in such activities, in particular counseling and teacher classroom management in-service activities.

**Out-of-school suspension.** The relationship between principal attitude and school suspension rates were assessed using partial correlations between principal ratings on items on the Disciplinary Practices Scale and that school's rates of out-of-school suspension. In order to control for differences in socioeconomic status across schools, correlations between principal ratings and rates of suspension were controlled for percent of students eligible for free lunch at the school level. As noted above, four school level measures of out-of-school suspension rate were constructed from available state data: overall rate of suspension, rate of suspensions for African Americans, rate of suspensions due to disruptive behavior, and rate of suspensions due to serious/dangerous offenses (drugs, alcohol, weapons).

Significant correlations between principal attitudes and school suspension rates, controlling for free lunch status, are presented in Table 7; of 60 items on the Disciplinary Practices Survey, 33 yielded significant correlations with some measure of school suspension. A number of clear differences emerged between the items associated with an increased rate of suspension (top half of Table 7) and those associated with a decreased rate of OSS (bottom half of Table 7). Schools with a higher rate of school suspension tended to have principals that believed that suspension and zero tolerance are effective and needed disciplinary tools, that special education disciplinary regulations interfere with a principal's ability to discipline, that the home situation is responsible for disciplinary problems, and that resources are insufficient and violence increasing. In contrast, schools with a lower rate of school suspension were associated with a principal who believes that suspension is a last resort that hurts student learning by providing less engaged time, that the school has a responsibility to teach appropriate behavior

and should adapt discipline to students with disabilities, that it is important to work with parents, and that prevention programs are a valuable addition that can reduce the need for suspension. In fact, principal reports of the presence of a number of preventive programs (anger management, bullying prevention, peer mediation, counseling, and in-class telephones) are associated with lower rates of school suspension. Principal reports of use of security guards, in contrast, were associated with higher rates of out of school suspension.

For the most part, these correlations were consistent across a number of measures of suspension, but several correlations with a single measure of suspension are worth noting. There were, for example, several attitudes that seemed to predict higher rates of suspension only for African American students: belief in the viability of in-school suspension and higher use of in-class telephones predicted lower rates of African American out-of-school suspension, while a belief that zero tolerance sends a clear message about behavior predicted a higher rate of African American school suspension. A principal attitude that students should receive rewards and recognition for appropriate behavior was significantly associated with a lower rate of suspensions for the most serious and dangerous offenses. Finally, it is interesting to note that principals who expressed firmer confidence that disciplinary policies are strictly enforced tended to have a *lower* rate of suspension for disruptive behaviors.

**Summary.** Together, these results suggest that principal perspectives on discipline (a) are not shaped only by student behavior, and (b) make a difference in terms of school programming. Certainly, it is not surprising that female principals would choose a more interactive, less punitive style than male principals. Yet it would be difficult to explain how differences in student behavior would shape differential attitudes among principals by gender. Further, principal beliefs clearly shape school disciplinary practice. Principals who are

supportive of the concepts surrounding prevention activities reported the presence of a broader range of such activities in their school, while those that stressed the efficiency of school discipline and believed they had too few resources reported fewer prevention strategies and programs in their schools. Beliefs about discipline were also significantly correlated with actual use of school suspension. Principal beliefs supportive of zero tolerance and suspension, and more negative towards special education, parents, and the prevalence of school violence, are associated with higher rates of suspension. In contrast, lower rates of school suspension are associated with principals who believe that out-of-school suspension should be used only as a last resort, that individualization in discipline is necessary, and that parents should be consulted prior to school suspension.

### **Discussion**

This report joins other recent research in demonstrating the lack of effectiveness of school exclusion as a disciplinary tool. In the first study, we found a positive association between state rates of out-of-school suspension and juvenile incarceration, and a negative relationship between rates of out-of-school suspension and measures of achievement. Analyses of principal survey data indicate that there are a clearly defined set of perspectives that principals bring with them to school discipline, and that those differences in perspective influence school disciplinary outcomes.

Correlations among state rates of discipline, incarceration, and achievement suggest that disciplinary removal, far from demonstrating beneficial for students and schools, is associated with a number of serious negatives. As our understanding of the developmental pathways toward anti-social behavior, juvenile delinquency, and incarceration has grown, it has become apparent that school-age risk factors such as school alienation (Hawkins et al., 1998) and time out of

school (Patterson, 1992) are strong predictors of increased risk for juvenile delinquency and incarceration. Students who are suspended or expelled from school are in effect provided increased time to spend with antisocial peers in the community (Skiba & Knesting, 2001), and are less likely to be attached or committed to school (Felice, 1981). Thus it is ultimately not surprising that increased rates of school disciplinary removal would be associated with increased rates of juvenile incarceration.

In the face of consistent and longstanding evidence that the strongest predictor of academic achievement is opportunity to learn, it should also come as no surprise that removing a child for disciplinary reasons in no way improves school achievement. Rate of school suspension was found to be negatively correlated with state achievement test averages in reading, writing, and mathematics at the eighth grade level. Previous investigations have found that school suspension is associated with higher rates of school dropout (Ekstrom et al, 1986; Wehlage & Rutter, 1986). Indeed, the most consistent effect of suspension for individual students reported in the literature is a higher probability of future discipline (Constenbader & Markson, 1998; Tobin, Sugai, & Colvin, 1996) and a less effective climate at the school level (Bickel & Qualls, 1980; Wu et al, 1982). As time spent in administering out of school suspension increases and quality of the school climate decreases, it is not surprising that the increased use of school suspension would yield concomitant decreases in school achievement and increases in school dropout rate.

These relationships are by no means race neutral. Previous research has been consistent in showing rates of African American overrepresentation in both school suspension and expulsion (Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Skiba et al., 2002) and in a variety of correctional outcomes (Harrison & Karberg, 2003; Poe-Yamagata & Jones, 2000). The current results suggest

that racial disparities in school discipline and corrections are in fact related. These correlational relationships at the state level should be seen as exploratory. Further research at the district or school level is necessary to assess the extent to which out-of-school suspension at the school level may cause either increases in juvenile incarceration or disproportionality in juvenile incarceration.

Yet it is also important to be clear on what the data do say: that, far from improving positive individual or school results, out-of-school suspension is associated with serious negative outcomes in both behavior and learning. Previous investigations have found school suspension to be associated with *increased* rates of office referral and further suspension (Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Tobin et al., 1996), higher rates of school dropout (Ekstrom et al., 1986), and a less effective school climate (Wu et al., 1982). Regardless of whether school disciplinary removal directly or indirectly causes increases in juvenile incarceration, it is clear that, almost 10 years after the national implementation of zero tolerance policy, increases in school removal have not had a positive impact on at least one serious measures of youth violence and delinquency. Further, it is difficult to make a case that disciplinary removal is necessary to preserve the learning climate for the majority of students when increased rates of school exclusion are correlated with lower achievement test scores. Indeed these data suggest that disciplinary removal is itself a risk factor for negative life outcomes. Like other such risk factors (e.g. poor parental behavior management, disorganized community) school suspension may contribute to a negative developmental pathway that eventually leads to decreased school achievement, increased risk of school alienation and delinquency, and ultimately an increased probability of incarceration, especially for students of color.

It is interesting to note that these relationships were clearly more pronounced for school suspension than for school expulsion. Since students who are expelled are more presumably more disruptive than those who are suspended, this finding seems counterintuitive. It may be that there is less variability in the use of school expulsion, that there will be less inconsistency in the use of expulsion for more serious incidents. Skiba and Peterson (1997) noted for instance that school suspension is more likely to be used for a wider range of both dangerous and non-dangerous behaviors. The reduced variance of expulsion will by definition attenuate correlational relationships. It is also important to note that the absence of a relationship at the state level does not preclude a strong relationship at the district or school level. Clearly, further exploration of these relationships is necessary at the local level.

### **School Discipline as an Administrative Choice**

Analyses of principal perspectives on school discipline suggests that there are two distinct perspectives through which to view the suspension/incarceration risk factor trajectory. According to the first perspective, the school exclusion trajectory is driven primarily by individual student behavior: advocates of zero tolerance thus see the serious and ever-increasing problem of school disruption and violence as necessitating a strong and unequivocal reaction by schools (Ewing, 2000). From this perspective, school disciplinary action is simply a direct response that is made necessary by student misbehavior (Sheets, 1996); thus, increases in school suspension and expulsion are caused by increases in student disruption. Disciplinary removal through suspension or expulsion serves two functions in this perspective. First, it sends a message to potential troublemakers, in effect teaching students that certain behaviors will simply not be tolerated in the school environment. Second, the removal of a certain proportion of the

most highly disruptive students is seen as making an important contribution to school climate, and preserving the quality of the instructional environment for the remaining students.

The extent to which available evidence fails to support these assumptions is remarkable. National reports on school disruption and violence have consistently found that rates of school violence and disruption are not increasing over time, but rather have remained stable or even decreased slightly (Elliott et al., 2001; Heaviside, Rowand, Williams, & Farris, 1998). Although rates of suspension and expulsion have increased indeed increased dramatically since the passage of the Gun Free Schools Act (Advancement Project/ Civil Rights Project, 2000), these increases appear to be unconnected with rates of school violence, since those have remained stable over the same time period (Justice Policy Institute, 2002). Further, rather than being a direct response to student behavior, punishment appears to be mediated by both teacher perceptions and classroom management skill (Vavrus & Cole, 2002), and a variety of school governance and climate factors (Wu et al., 1982).

An alternate perspective would suggest that school discipline is a product of both student behavior and system response choices. Although the process is typically (although not always) set in motion by student behavior, the course and outcome of school discipline is highly influenced by a variety of individual and system constraints and preferences. Teachers are more or less tolerant of, and more or less skilled in handling, classroom disruption. Schools rely to a greater or lesser extent on disciplinary removal as opposed to preventive measures designed to forestall or avoid the loss of instructional time. Finally, although school exclusion may seem effective in the short term by removing the perceived source of the immediate problem, in the long term it creates increased individual and community risk by removing students from

educational opportunity, allowing them more time to socialize with antisocial peers, and engage in delinquent acts in the community.

The current investigation shows that the use of both disciplinary removal and preventive alternatives are determined in part by principal attitude. Analysis of the Disciplinary Practices Scale resulted in a clearly delineated set of principal perspectives on discipline, students, and parents. These attitudinal factors vary depending on principal gender and school level (elementary vs. secondary); they were also associated with school use of preventive measures as a part of the disciplinary system. Such data suggest that school suspension and expulsion are not an invariant response determined only by changes in student behavior, but are to some extent a *choice* made by individual educators, based on their own attitudes concerning the purpose and function of the disciplinary process.

Limitations of both the survey approach and the correlational analyses should be noted. All survey responses are of course self-report. Principal estimates of the presence or absence of preventive activities do not necessarily reflect the actual implementation rates of prevention. Care should also be taken in interpreting the correlations among measures in both studies. In particular, the rank order correlations do not allow one to infer causation from school discipline to incarceration or low achievement, but simply indicate the extent to which states are rank ordered similarly on these variables. These data are thus to some extent exploratory, identifying the broad outlines of processes that may contribute to the school-to-prison pipeline.

Yet it should also be emphasized that these findings are highly consistent with a rapidly growing body of findings that has clearly documented a host of negative outcomes associated with the use of disciplinary removal. Regardless of the direction of causation attributed to these relationships—whether one prefers to believe that high rates of suspension contribute to

decreased achievement, or that low-achieving students are more likely to be suspended—it is difficult to justify the use of an educational intervention that is correlated negatively with academic achievement and positively with incarceration. As schools face increasingly strict standards of evidence-based intervention under the No Child Left Behind Act, one might expect to see increased pressure on schools to replace the use of such ineffective and discriminatory interventions with more proven strategies for reduced violence and improved instruction (see e.g. Gagnon & Leone, 2001). Given that principal attitudes appear to have an influence on the implementation of effective or ineffective disciplinary methods, one would hope to see increased training of school administrators in preventive methods that have been shown to be effective or promising in addressing school disruption and violence (Elliott et al., 2001).

It is also important to note that the local use of disciplinary removal occurs within a context of national policy that has supported the use of suspension and expulsion. The increasing exclusion of students for disciplinary reasons has been to a certain extent maintained and even mandated by state and federal policies such as the Gun Free Schools Act. It seems likely, however, that zero tolerance is on a collision course with educational accountability. As evidence of the deleterious effects of school removal continues to accumulate, policymakers may eventually be forced to decide whether they are more committed to the appealing but ultimately hollow rhetoric of punishment and exclusion, or to strategies that can guarantee America's children safe and effective schools.

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## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Prison is defined as a state or federal facility with custodial authority over persons sentenced to confinement.

<sup>2</sup> At the time of data collection, NAEP collected achievement scores by academic subject staggered every two years. For example, reading and writing achievement were collected in 1994 and 1998, while math and science were collected in 1992, 1996, and 2000. Further data was collected for 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students only in reading (1998), science (2000) and mathematics (2000), while it was collected only for 8<sup>th</sup> graders in writing (1998). Average participation rates for states and the District of Columbia are as follows: 2000 2000 8<sup>th</sup> grade math 80%; 2000 8<sup>th</sup> grade science 76%; 1998 8<sup>th</sup> grade writing 71%; 1998 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading 73%. Overall 76 percent of states and the District of Columbia participated in these assessed academic subjects in 1998 and 2000.

<sup>3</sup> Kendall's Tau-b rank order correlations are the preferred method to use when one has a small sample size ([www.stata.com](http://www.stata.com)). Use of Spearman's Rho rank order correlations did not yield significantly different results.

<sup>4</sup> Disproportionality in discipline and incarceration and the risk indices for discipline and incarceration were not found to be significantly related to measures of achievement. It should be noted however, that the appropriate comparison measure for disproportionate results in achievement—the gap between black and white achievement scores—were not readily available for these analyses.

<sup>5</sup> Previous surveys on school discipline reviewed in order to identify and develop items for the scale included: The National Study of Delinquency Prevention in School (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, Czeh, Cantor, & Hantman, 2000); Violence In America's Public Schools (Heaviside et al., 1998); Indicators of School Crime and Safety (Kauffman et al., 2001); Suspension, A Wake up Call: Rural Educators' Attitudes toward Suspension (Henderson & Friedland, 1996); Discipline in Secondary Schools: How Administrators Deal with Student Misconduct (Greene & Barnes, 1993); and Principal's Perceptions of Zero Tolerance Policies and School Discipline: A Report on Focus Group Discussion

<sup>6</sup> State-wide data comes from U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Schools and Staffing Survey: 1993-94 (Public School Principal Questionnaire). Since this is 1993-1994 data, we can expect some discrepancies from present distributions and this may account for the slightly wider discrepancy between male and female principals reported state-wide as opposed to our sample.

<sup>7</sup> According to NCES (1993-94), fifty-four percent of administrators in the state are at the elementary level, twenty-six percent are in middle schools, sixteen percent high school, and three percent at alternative schools.

<sup>8</sup> Factor analysis is a multivariate procedure allowing one to simplify the cognitive complexity of a number of variables through the empirical identification of a smaller number of dimensions or factors. The procedure chosen was a principal components analysis, with oblique rotation, since it was presumed that the underlying factors would not necessarily be statistically independent of each other. Among the 49 items assessing attitude, a number of variables elicited strong agreement from all principals in the state. Thus, 6 variables with a variance less than .40 were removed prior to the principal component analysis, leaving 43 variables. The initial factor analysis resulted in thirteen factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0. Based on the Cattell-Nelson-Gorsuch (CNG) scree test (Cattell, 1966; Gorsuch, 1983) and requiring at least three variables to load onto a factor, six factors were retained. A factor loading of .35 was set as the criteria for inclusion in a factor.

Table 1a. Rate of Juvenile Incarceration, Suspension, and Expulsion by State<sup>a</sup>

State	Suspension	Incarceration	Expulsion
	Rate	Rate	Rate
SC	14.7%	1.1%	0.6%
LA	10.9%	1.4%	0.8%
MS	10.4%	1.0%	0.3%
NC	9.8%	1.1%	0.2%
WV	9.6%	0.3%	0.1%
TN	9.1%	1.0%	0.4%
FL	8.6%	0.7%	0.0%
OH	8.0%	0.7%	0.4%
AL	7.9%	0.8%	0.1%
VA	7.8%	0.9%	0.2%
AR	7.6%	1.2%	0.1%
MI	7.5%	0.5%	0.2%
GA	7.4%	1.2%	0.2%
CA	7.0%	1.5%	0.3%
PA	6.7%	0.4%	0.1%
KY	6.6%	0.8%	0.1%
MO	6.5%	1.1%	0.1%
OK	6.4%	0.9%	0.2%
CO	6.3%	0.6%	0.3%
WA	6.3%	0.5%	0.4%
MN	6.2%	0.3%	0.1%
OR	6.1%	0.5%	0.4%
NJ	6.1%	0.8%	0.0%
MD	6.0%	1.0%	0.1%
NH	5.8%	0.4%	0.1%
AK	5.5%	2.5%	0.2%
WI	5.3%	0.7%	0.2%
ME	5.0%	0.3%	0.1%
NV	4.9%	0.8%	0.2%
TX	4.9%	0.7%	0.3%
IL	4.6%	0.9%	0.1%
NY	4.2%	0.6%	0.1%
HI	4.0%	0.9%	---
NE	4.0%	0.4%	0.2%
IA	3.8%	0.5%	0.0%
SD	2.9%	0.7%	0.1%
ND	2.4%	0.4%	0.1%

<sup>a</sup> Rate measures are the percentage of the total population subject to the category and were calculated by dividing the number of individuals who received a given consequence by the number of individuals in the respective population. States are ordered from most to least by rate of out-of-school suspension

Table 1b. Disproportionality of Juvenile Incarceration, Suspension, and Expulsion by State <sup>a</sup>

State	Suspension		Incarceration		Expulsion	
	RRI	RI-AA	RRI	RI-AA	RRI	RI-AA
MN	9.01	34.1%	9.55	2.9%	1.52	0.1%
IA	5.39	17.0%	6.40	4.2%	2.54	0.1%
WI	5.37	19.1%	7.04	4.1%	2.04	0.3%
NE	3.72	11.7%	3.64	1.9%	3.23	0.5%
PA	3.53	16.6%	4.73	1.7%	2.64	0.2%
NJ	3.53	14.1%	5.37	2.7%	8.97	0.1%
TX	3.46	10.3%	2.24	2.0%	1.67	0.4%
TN	3.30	19.2%	2.82	2.5%	3.03	0.8%
OK	3.25	16.7%	2.18	2.5%	1.64	0.3%
MO	2.80	13.9%	1.95	2.7%	4.16	0.2%
GA	2.74	12.2%	2.09	2.2%	2.31	0.3%
OH	2.72	16.9%	4.11	2.6%	2.62	0.9%
CO	2.68	13.6%	4.58	2.9%	1.87	0.4%
SD	2.66	5.8%	3.48	3.3%	3.63	0.4%
VA	2.66	14.6%	4.09	2.6%	1.90	0.2%
NC	2.65	17.2%	2.55	2.5%	3.00	0.3%
AL	2.53	13.0%	1.99	1.5%	2.37	0.2%
AR	2.48	14.2%	1.64	2.3%	1.96	0.2%
FL	2.45	15.6%	1.89	1.6%	1.65	0.1%
CA	2.39	14.9%	1.87	6.0%	1.64	0.4%
SC	2.33	22.1%	2.33	2.2%	2.19	0.9%
MS	2.28	14.4%	1.58	1.6%	1.87	0.4%
LA	2.25	15.5%	11.53	14.5%	3.06	1.2%
NY	2.24	7.6%	3.30	1.7%	1.48	0.1%
IL	2.07	7.7%	5.06	3.0%	2.16	0.2%
ND	1.93	3.1%	2.64	1.5%	6.10	0.1%
HI	1.91	6.6%	0.72	1.3%	---	---
KY	1.91	11.5%	3.21	3.2%	1.47	0.2%
NH	1.88	10.5%	4.98	2.6%	1.04	0.1%
WV	1.86	17.3%	3.55	1.5%	1.55	0.2%
MD	1.75	8.5%	4.24	2.4%	1.98	0.1%
NV	1.67	7.9%	2.01	2.5%	4.08	0.7%
MI	1.67	11.0%	3.20	1.5%	1.15	0.2%
WA	1.58	9.5%	3.81	2.5%	3.31	1.1%
AK	1.58	7.6%	0.94	3.4%	3.03	0.5%
OR	1.55	9.4%	3.35	2.4%	1.73	0.6%
ME	1.25	6.2%	4.07	1.4%	1.99	0.2%

-- Data not available

<sup>a</sup> RI-AA = Risk Index for African American individuals. Represents the percentage of African American students subject to the consequence. Calculated by dividing number of African American students subject to the punishment by the number of African American students in the population in that state. RRI = Relative Risk Index, a ratio of the Risk Index for African Americans compared to the Risk Index of White students in each state, and can be interpreted as an index of how many more times likely African American students are than White students to be subject to that consequence. States are rank ordered from most to least based on RRI.

**Table 2. Correlations For Measures of Exclusion at the State Level**

	Rate Incarceration	Disproportionality Incarceration
Rate Suspension	0.26*	---
Rate Expulsion	0.20	---
Disproportionality Suspension	---	0.24*
Disproportionality Expulsion	---	0.10

**Note:** \* =  $p < .05$ .

--- = relationship not tested.

**NOTE.** Correlations are Kendall's Tau-b rank order correlations. Rankings for rates are based on rate of use of discipline and incarceration. A rank of 1 was given to the highest use. Disproportionality is measured in terms of the Relative Risk Index for African Americans relative to Whites. Rankings of 1 correspond to the highest RRI.

**Table 3. Correlations Between State Rates of Discipline, Incarceration and Achievement<sup>a</sup>**

	Math <sup>b</sup>	Science <sup>c</sup>	Writing <sup>d</sup>	Reading <sup>e</sup>
Rate Suspension	-0.27*	-0.25	-0.30*	-0.34*
Rate Expulsion	-0.17	-0.21	-0.04	-0.12
Rate Incarceration	-0.46**	-0.51**	-0.31*	-0.44**

**Note:** \*= $p < .05$  \*\*= $p < .01$

<sup>a</sup> Coefficients are Kendall's Tau-b coefficients. Discipline and Incarceration were measured in terms of rate of use. Achievement was measured in terms of average NAEP scores. High ranks (1) corresponded to high achievement and high discipline and incarceration.

<sup>b</sup> Math scores were available for 28 states.

<sup>c</sup> Science scores were available for 28 states.

<sup>d</sup> Writing scores were available for 26 states.

<sup>e</sup> Reading scores were available for 26 states.

Table 4. Factor Loadings on the Disciplinary Practices Scale

Factors and Items	Loading <sup>1</sup>
<b>Factor 1: Discipline to Maintain System Efficiency (SYSTEM)</b>	
Disciplinary regulations for students with disabilities create a separate system of discipline that makes it more difficult to enforce discipline at this school.	.681
Disciplining disruptive students is time consuming and interferes with other important functions in the school.	.586
Although it would be nice to get to know students on an individual basis, especially those who need help, my duties as an administrator simply don't allow me the time.	.580
I need additional resources to increase my school's capacity to reduce and prevent troublesome behaviors.	.559
Certain students are not gaining anything from school and disrupt the learning environment for others. In such a case the use of suspension and expulsion is justified	.549
Regardless of whether it is effective, suspension is virtually our only option in disciplining disruptive students.	.533
Violence is getting worse in my school.	.499
It is sad but true that, in order to meet increasingly high standards of academic accountability, some students will probably have to be removed from school.	.463
Prevention programs would be a useful addition at our school, but there is simply not enough time in the day.	.462
The majority of this school's discipline problems could be solved if we could only remove the most persistent troublemakers	.457
Schools cannot afford to tolerate students who disrupt the learning environment.	.454
Students with disabilities account for a disproportionate amount of the time spent on discipline at this school.	.421
Most if not all discipline problems come from inadequacies in the student's home situation.	.374
<b>Factor 2 : Suspension as Ineffective and Unnecessary (ANTISUSP)</b>	
Students who are suspended or expelled are only getting more time on the streets that will enable them to get in more trouble	.708
Out of school suspension makes students less likely to misbehave in the future.	-.707
I believe suspension and expulsion allow students time away from school that encourages them to think about their behavior	-.705
Suspension and expulsion do not really solve discipline problems.	.704
I believe suspension is unnecessary if we provide a positive school climate and challenging instruction.	.569
Out-of-school suspension is a necessary tool for maintaining school order.	-.538
Suspensions and expulsions hurt students by removing them from academic learning time.	.510
Repeat offenders should receive more severe disciplinary consequences than first-time offenders.	-.456
Regardless of the severity of a student's behavior, my objective as a principal is to keep all students in school.	.431
Suspension and expulsion are unfair to minority students.	.364

Table 4. Factor Loadings on the Disciplinary Practices Scale (Continued)

Factors and Items	Loading <sup>2</sup>
<b>Factor 3 : Willingness to Make Adaptations in Discipline (ADAPT)</b>	
Disadvantaged students require a different approach to discipline than other students.	.708
Students with disabilities who engage in disruptive behavior need a different approach to discipline than students in general education	.572
Students from different ethnic backgrounds have different emotional and behavioral needs.	.517
A student's academic record should be taken into account in assigning disciplinary consequences.	.350
<b>Factor 4 : Support of Zero Tolerance Policies (ZT)</b>	
Zero tolerance sends a clear message to disruptive students about appropriate behaviors in school.	.757
Zero tolerance makes a significant contribution to maintaining order at my school.	.723
Disciplinary policies are strictly enforced in my school.	.584
Zero tolerance increases the number of students being suspended or expelled.	-.508
<b>Factor 5 : Support of Prevention Policies, Programs, and Strategies (PREVENT)</b>	
I have noticed that time spent in developing and implementing prevention programs pays off in terms of decreased disruption and disciplinary incidents	.732
I believe that putting in place prevention programs (e.g., bullying programs, conflict resolution) can reduce the need for suspension or expulsion	.708
Time spent on prevention programs or individualized behavior programming is wasted if students are not willing to take responsibility for their behavior	-.572
Out-of-school suspension is used at this school only as a last resort.	.445
In-school suspension is a viable alternative disciplinary practice to suspension and expulsion.	.442
I feel it is critical to work with parents before suspending a student from school.	.438
Schools must take responsibility for teaching students how to get along and behave appropriately in school.	.419
The primary responsibility for teaching children how to behave appropriately in school belongs to parents.	-.376
<b>Factor 6 : Discipline as a Tool to Teach Appropriate Behavior or Social Skills (TEACH)</b>	
The primary purpose of discipline is to teach appropriate skills to the disciplined student.	.649
Conversations with students referred to the office are important, and should be factored into most decisions about disciplinary consequences.	.585
Teachers at this school were for the most part adequately trained by their teacher-training program to handle problems of misbehavior and discipline	.390
Students should receive some recognition or reward for appropriate behavior.	.381

NOTE: Factor loadings represent the correlation between the individual item and the factor. A negative sign indicates that the item correlated negatively with factor.

Table 5. Analysis of Variance for Gender and School Type Effects on Disciplinary Attitudes

Dependent Variable	Source	df	F	Directionality
<u>SYSTEM</u>	School Type	1	8.47**	S>E
	Gender	1	NS	
	Gender*School Type	1	NS	
<u>ANTISUSP</u>	School Type	1	11.77***	E>S
	Gender	1	7.29**	F>M
	Gender*School Type	1	.14	
<u>ADAPT</u>	School Type	1	6.38*	E>S
	Gender	1	NS	
	Gender*School Type	1	NS	
<u>ZEROTOL</u>	School Type	1	NS	
	Gender	1	NS	
	Gender*School Type	1	NS	
<u>PREVENT</u>	School Type	1	4.33*	E>S
	Gender	1	16.23***	F>M
	Gender*School Type	1	NS	
<u>TEACH</u>	School Type	1	NS	
	Gender	1	4.34*	F>M
	Gender*School Type	1	NS	

Note. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; The dependent variables correspond to the seven factors presented in the factor analysis. E=Elementary, S=Secondary, F=female, M=male.

Table 6. Significant Correlations between Disciplinary Practices Survey Factor Scores and Prevention Items

Prevention Item	Factor			
	I. SYSTEM	II. ANTI-SUSP	III. PREVENT	IV. TEACH
Social Skills Training	-.221**		.536**	
Indiv. Behavior Plans	-.133*		.413**	
Counseling/Therapy		.147*	.261**	.234**
Peer Mediation	-.151*		.182**	
In-Class Telephone			.213**	
In-Service on Classroom Management	-.209**		.233**	.219**
Metal Detectors/Video Technology		-.164*		
Bullying Prevention		.141	.348**	.167*
Security Guard/ Resource Officer				
Anger Management	-.185*		.394**	

\*  $p < .05$  \*\*  $p < .01$

*Note:* SYSTEM: Emphasis on discipline to maintain efficiency of system; ANTI-SUSP: Beliefs indicating a negative attitude toward the use and outcomes of suspension and expulsion; PREVENT: Support for the use of prevention strategies and programs; TEACH: Attitudes that discipline should teach students appropriate skills and behaviors.

Table 7. Significant Partial Correlations between Discipline Practices Item Scores and Out-of-School Suspension Rates: Controlling for Free Lunch Status

Scale Item	School Suspension Rate			
	Overall	Afr. Am.	Disrupt. Behavior	Serious Offenses
<b>Positively Associated with School OSS Rate</b>				
	.361**	.228**	.263**	--
Security guard/resource officer/police presence used				
OSS is a necessary tool for maintaining school order	.287**	.204**	.164*	.276**
IDEAA discipline creates separate system that weakens discipline enforcement	.257**	.230**	.188*	.186*
Discipline is time consuming and interferes	.228**	.153*	.183*	.184*
I need additional resources	.208**	.200**	--	--
Violence is getting worse in my school	.194**	--	.259**	.261**
I don't have time to get to know students	.188*	.156*	.185*	--
Parents have primary responsibility for discipline	.185*	--	.162*	--
My school keeps detailed records	.167*	--	.150*	--
Most discipline problems from home situation	.154*	.217**	--	.199**
Students with disabilities account for disproportionate discipline	--	.142*	--	--
Zero tolerance sends clear message about school behavior	--	.141*	--	--
Repeat offenders should get more severe consequences	--	--	--	.170*
Susp./exp. justified to preserve learning environment	--	--	--	.238**
<b>Negatively Associated with OSS Suspension Rates</b>				
Social skills/conflict resolution used for all students	-.283**	-.191**	-.279**	-.210**
Social skill/problem-solving/violence prevention used	-.283**	-.191**	-.279**	-.210**
OSS is used at this school only as a last resort	-.266**	-.195**	-.156*	-.195**
Anger management training used	-.218**	-.141*	-.174*	--
Goal: Keep students in school, regardless of behavior	-.208**	--	-.194**	-.175*
School have responsibility to teach appropriate behavior	-.207**	-.171*	-.142*	-.252**
Bullying prevention programs used	-.190*	-.140*	-.180*	--
No susp. needed w/positive climate/challenging instruction.	-.176*	-.140*	--	-.251**
Students w/ disabilities need diff. approach	-.171*	--	--	--
Critical to work with parents before suspension	-.162*	-.141*	--	--
Peer mediation used	-.151*	-.235**	-.206**	-.189*
Counseling or therapy used	-.147*	--	--	--
Prevention programs pays off in decreased disruption	-.146*	-.216**	-.200**	--
Prevention programs reduce need for suspension and exp.	-.145*	-.140*	--	--
In-school suspension is a viable alternative	--	-.159*	etc	--
Susp/exp hurts students by removing them from learning	--	-.144*	--	--
In-class telephones used	--	-.138*	--	--
Disciplinary policies are strictly enforced in my school	--	--	-.162*	--
Students receive recognition/reward for appropriate behavior	--	--	--	-.187*

\* p < .05 \*\* p < .01

Note: Rate of suspensions for African American students expressed as a ratio of number of suspensions to the school enrollment total of African American students. All other rate measures (overall, disruptive behavior, and serious/dangerous behavior expressed as a ratio of the number of occurrences to the total school enrollment.

## **Appendix A**

### **Items Included in the Disciplinary Practices Scale**

#### **A. Attitude toward Discipline in General**

- I feel that getting to know students individually is an important part of discipline
- Although it would be nice to get to know students on an individual basis, especially those who need help, my duties as an administrator simply don't allow me the time.
- I feel it is critical to work with parents before suspending a student from school.
- Regardless of the severity of a student's behavior, my objective as a principal is to keep all students in school.
- The primary purpose of discipline is to teach appropriate skills to the disciplined student.
- Students should receive some recognition or reward for appropriate behavior
- It is sad but true that, in order to meet increasingly high standards of academic accountability, some students will probably have to be removed from school.
- The majority of this school's discipline problems could be solved if we could only remove the most persistent troublemakers.
- Schools cannot afford to tolerate students who disrupt the learning environment

#### **B. Awareness and Enforcement of Disciplinary Procedures**

- My school keeps detailed records regarding student suspension and expulsion
- Teachers at my school are aware of school disciplinary policies.
- I believe students at my school are aware of school disciplinary policies.
- Violence is getting worse in my school.
- Disciplinary policies are strictly enforced in my school.

#### **C. Beliefs concerning Suspension/Expulsion and Zero Tolerance**

- Out of school suspension makes students less likely to misbehave in the future.
- Zero tolerance makes a significant contribution to maintaining order at my school.
- I believe suspension and expulsion allow students time away from school that encourages them to think about their behavior.
- Suspension and expulsion do not really solve discipline problems.
- Out-of-school suspension is a necessary tool for maintaining school order.
- Zero tolerance sends a clear message to disruptive students about appropriate behaviors in school.
- Students who are suspended or expelled are only getting more time on the streets that will enable them to get in more trouble.
- I believe suspension is unnecessary if we provide a positive school climate and challenging instruction.
- Out-of-school suspension is used at this school only as a last resort.
- Regardless of whether it is effective, suspension is virtually our only option in disciplining disruptive students.

- Certain students are not gaining anything from school and disrupt the learning environment for others. In such a case, the use of suspension and expulsion is justified to preserve the learning environment for students who wish to learn.
- Zero tolerance increases the number of students being suspended or expelled.

#### **D. Beliefs about Responsibility for Handling Student Misbehaviors**

- The primary responsibility for teaching children how to behave appropriately in school belongs to parents.
- Teachers ought to be able to manage the majority of students' misbehavior in their classroom.
- Most if not all discipline problems come from inadequacies in the student's home situation.
- Schools must take responsibility for teaching students how to get along and behave appropriately in school.

#### **E. Attitude toward Differential Discipline of Disadvantaged Students or Students with Disabilities**

- Teachers at this school were for the most part adequately trained by their teacher-training program to handle problems of misbehavior and discipline.
- I need additional resources to increase my school's capacity to reduce and prevent troublesome behaviors.
- Disciplining disruptive students is time consuming and interferes with other important functions in the school.

#### **F. Resources Available for Discipline**

- Suspensions and expulsions hurt students by removing them from academic learning time.
- In-school suspension is a viable alternative disciplinary practice to suspension and expulsion.
- Please rate the extent to which the following programs are used in maintaining discipline and promoting safety in your school:
  - (a). Social skills and conflict resolution training for all students
  - (b). Individual behavior plans or programs for disruptive students
  - (c). Counseling or therapy
  - (d). Peer mediation
  - (e). In-class telephones for reporting behavior problems
  - (f). In-service training and workshops for teachers on classroom management
  - (g). Metal detector and/or video technology
  - (h). Bullying prevention programs
  - (i). Security guard, resource officer, or police presence
  - (j). Instruction in social skill, problem-solving, or violence prevention
  - (k). Anger management training

- I believe that putting in place prevention programs (e.g., bullying programs, conflict resolution, improved classroom management) can reduce the need for suspension and expulsion.
- Time spent on prevention programs or individualized behavior programming is wasted if students are not willing to take responsibility for their behavior.
- Prevention programs would be a useful addition at our school, but there is simply not enough time in the day.
- I have noticed that time spent in developing and implementing prevention programs pays off in terms of decreased disruption and disciplinary incidents.

#### **G. Attitude toward and Availability of Prevention Strategies as an Alternative to Exclusion**

- Students with disabilities who engage in disruptive behavior need a different approach to discipline than students in general education.
  - Repeat offenders should receive more severe disciplinary consequences than first-time offenders.
  - A student's academic record should be taken into account in assigning disciplinary consequences.
  - Students with disabilities account for a disproportionate amount of the time spent on discipline at this school.
  - Disciplinary regulations for students with disabilities create a separate system of discipline that makes it more difficult to enforce discipline at this school.
  - Disadvantaged students require a different approach to discipline than other students.
  - Students from different ethnic backgrounds have different emotional and behavioral needs.
  - Suspension and expulsion are unfair to minority students.
  - Disciplinary consequences should be scaled in proportion to the severity of the problem behavior.
  - Conversations with students referred to the office are important, and should be factored into most decisions about disciplinary consequences.
-