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SUPPLEMENTARY ANALYSIS 2-C

THE DISCIPLINARY PRACTICES SURVEY: HOW DO INDIANA'S
PRINCIPALS FEEL ABOUT DISCIPLINE

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The Disciplinary Practices Survey:
How Do Indiana Principals Feel About Discipline?

Since the 1980's, fear of school violence has driven American public education toward increasingly punitive and exclusionary methods of school discipline. [1] Yet recent research has begun to raise serious questions about the effectiveness and equity of suspension and expulsion.[2]

Despite such controversy concerning the use and effectiveness of suspension and expulsion, we know little about the actual perspectives of school principals; that is, to what extent do instructional leaders support the philosophy of zero tolerance in general, or the use of suspension and expulsion in particular? Previous research has suggested that there are distinctly different perspectives among principals towards school discipline and that these attitudes may be associated with differences in the use of suspension and expulsion. [3]

To address such questions, we surveyed Indiana's principals on their perspectives concerning school discipline and violence prevention strategies. Our goals were to a) gain a sense of attitudes of principals towards school discipline, and b) explore the extent to which principal attitudes and perspectives are related to disciplinary outcomes in Indiana's schools.

Method

To better understand principal attitudes towards school discipline, we developed an on-line survey, the Disciplinary Practices Survey, available to all principals in the state of Indiana. [4] Principals were asked to rate their agreement with statements reflecting various attitudes about the purpose, process and outcomes of school discipline; they also rated the usage of a number of preventive disciplinary strategies (e.g., bullying prevention, conflict resolution, metal detectors) in their school. Data were collected over the 2002-2003 school year. At the end of February, an email was sent to all the principals in the state requesting completion of the survey by the second week of March. A reminder email was sent out the beginning of March. A third email was sent at the end of March, requesting completion for the beginning of April. In all, data collection took place for five weeks during the 2002-2003 school year.

The Disciplinary Practices Survey was comprised of sixty questions organized into 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 students misbehaviors, e) attitude toward differential discipline of disadvantaged students or students with disabilities, f) resources available for discipline, and g) attitude toward 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, using a five-point Likert scale (1, Strongly Disagree to 5, Strongly Agree). The other eleven items asked principals to estimate how frequently they used certain disciplinary or preventive strategies with response anchors ranging from 1, Never Used, to 5, Frequently Used. Reliability for the scale was good for purposes of research, $\alpha = 0.67$.

The survey was completed by 325 principals across the state. Table 1 compares the demographics of responding principals with the demographics of the state. The demographics of

the respondents in our sample closely paralleled the demographics of the entire population of principals in the state of Indiana.

Results

How do Indiana principals feel about discipline? A number of survey items elicited high rates of agreement among the responding principals (see Table 2). For example, 98.8% of responding principals felt that "Getting to know students individually is an important part of discipline" and that "Disciplinary consequences should be scaled in proportion to the severity of the problem behavior." An overwhelming majority (98.5%) also agreed that "Teachers ought to be able to manage the majority of students' misbehavior in their classrooms." Over 92% of the principals agreed that conversations with students are important and should be factored in to disciplinary decisions.

There were other items, however, about which there was little consensus (see Table 3). Indiana's principals were evenly divided over whether zero tolerance "sends a clear message to disruptive students about appropriate behavior in schools." The relationship between discipline and academics was almost as controversial: while 44.9% agreed or strongly agreed that because of "high standards of academic accountability, some students will probably have to be removed from school," an almost equal percentage (41.7%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. Given the extremely high agreement that teachers should be able to manage the majority of misbehavior, it is interesting to note that only 29% of responding principals felt their teachers were adequately trained by their teacher training programs to handle problems of misbehavior and discipline.

Are there differences in perspective among Indiana principals? In order to summarize the similarities and differences in disciplinary perspectives that emerged in the principals' responses, we conducted a cluster analysis of the results. Cluster analysis identifies unique groupings of individuals who share common responses on some variables or measures. In this case, the cluster analysis revealed three distinct perspectives on school discipline among Indiana's principals. These differences in perspectives appeared to vary with the principal and the school's characteristics, and were found to be statistically related to student outcomes. Table 4 presents a listing of those items on the Disciplinary Practices Survey to which different groups of principals responded differently. The table is broken down into three subsections, representing the three groups that emerged in the analysis.

Results showed that about one third of the responding principals (n = 91) supported preventive approaches to school discipline (Group 1 in Table 4). These principals were also more likely to believe that it is critical to work with parents before suspension, that discipline should be adapted to meet the needs of disadvantaged students and students with disabilities, and that conversations with students are an important part of the disciplinary process. Finally, these principals were more likely than other principals to believe that suspension and expulsion are unnecessary given a positive climate, that the purpose of school discipline is to teach appropriate skills, and that regardless of the severity of behavior, their objective was to keep all students in school.

Other principals agreed that zero tolerance makes a significant contribution to maintaining order at their school (Group 2 in Table 4). Principals with this perspective (n=135) were also more likely to believe that discipline problems stem from an inadequate home situation, that special education disciplinary regulations creates a separate system that makes it more difficult to enforce discipline, and that they lack sufficient time get to know students on an individual basis. They were also more likely than other principals to believe that discipline problems at the school could be solved if it were possible to remove the most persistent troublemakers, that they did not have time in the day to implement prevention programs, and that suspension was virtually their only option.

Finally, about a third of the responding principals (n=99) could be characterized as a "pragmatic prevention" group (Group 3 in Table 4). On the one hand, these principals agreed that suspension makes students less likely to misbehave in the future. Yet these principals were least likely to believe that school violence was getting worse at their school, and most likely to believe that their teachers were adequately trained in classroom behavior management. Of the three groups, this group was most likely to report that disciplinary policies were strictly enforced that their schools and least likely to believe that "There is really nothing a school can do if students are not willing to take responsibility for their behavior."

Principal attitudes differed by both gender of the principal ($\chi^2 = 28.28$, $p < .001$), and school type (elementary vs. secondary, $\chi^2 = 25.48$, $p < .001$). Female principals were more likely than male principals to hold attitudes characteristic of the prevention group. Male principals were more likely to hold attitudes characteristic of the suspension/expulsion or pragmatic prevention orientation. Those holding prevention attitudes were more likely to be elementary school principals, while those holding attitudes consistent with a suspension/expulsion orientation were more likely to be principals at the secondary level. Those in the pragmatic prevention group were approximately equally divided between male and female principals and somewhat more likely to be at the secondary level. No significant differences were found by ethnicity of the principal.

The differing attitudes about discipline held by these three groups were related to both school rates of out-of-school suspension and to principals' reports of their use of preventive practices. Schools with principals with a preventive perspective showed a significantly lower rate of out-of-school suspension than schools at which principals supported suspension and expulsion ($F (2, 273) = 7.89$, $p < .001$). There was also a lower rate of suspension among principals with a prevention orientation for serious infractions (e.g., drugs, weapons, $F (2, 279) = 3.58$, $p = .029$). Finally, principals with a prevention orientation were significantly more likely to report having conflict resolution, individual behavior plans, and anger management programs in place. Principals more supportive of zero tolerance had higher rates of out-of-school suspensions, and had a lower self-reported use of preventive programs. Finally, despite inconsistent endorsement of prevention and suspension items, the pragmatic prevention group more closely resembled the prevention perspective in terms of outcomes. That group had a significantly lower rate of out-of school suspensions and a higher reported use of conflict resolution, individual behavior plans, and anger management programs than the principals supportive of suspension and expulsion. Interestingly, the pragmatic prevention group was also most likely of the three groups to report the presence of training in classroom behavior management for teachers at their school.

Conclusions

Analyses of principal perspectives on school discipline suggests that there appear to be important differences among Indiana's principals in their beliefs about the purpose and practice of school discipline. Some principals are more likely to support preventive strategies, while others are more likely to endorse the use of suspension and expulsion, and these differences in perspective extend to differences in attitudes towards working with parents, students, and the special education population. Together these results suggest that about 2/3's of responding principals supported a more preventive approach while the remaining 1/3 are more supportive of suspension and expulsion as disciplinary tools. These attitudinal factors vary depending on principal gender and school level. 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. Additionally, attitudes appear to predict action in school discipline: principals with a more preventive and collaborative orientation suspend fewer students and report a higher use of prevention programs in their school than those who support the use of suspension and expulsion.

The current data are consistent with other data from this project in providing encouraging news regarding the use of positive alternatives: a large majority of Indiana's schools are using a variety of preventive programs, and many believe that these alternatives help them reduce the need for suspension and expulsion. In particular, one area of prevention may have important implications for teacher training efforts: while the overwhelming majority of principals felt that teachers should be able to handle most disruptions at the classroom level, a large majority also felt that their teachers' pre-service programs did not provide them with sufficient training to handle disruption and misbehavior.

Increasingly, it is becoming apparent that school discipline is more than simply an event wherein schools apply invariant and unavoidable consequences to student behavior. Rather, discipline is a complex interaction. Schools need effective disciplinary systems to respond when student behavior is incompatible with a climate that is conducive to learning. But the form of the response different schools take to disruption and misbehavior seems to depend in part upon the attitudes that instructional leaders hold about school discipline and school safety.

Endnotes

[1] Noguera, P. A. (1995). Preventing and producing violence: A critical analysis of responses to school violence. *Harvard Educational Review, 65,* 189-212.

[2] Skiba, R. J., & Knesting, K. (2001). Zero tolerance, zero evidence: An analysis of school disciplinary practice. In R. J. Skiba & G. G. Noam (Eds.), *New directions for youth development (no. 92: Zero tolerance: Can suspension and expulsion keep schools safe?)* (pp. 17-43). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

[3] Morrison, G. M., Morrison, R. L., & Minjarez, M. E. (1999). *Student pathways through school discipline options: System and individual interactions*. Paper presented at the 23rd Annual Conference on Severe Behavior Disorders of Children and Youth, Scottsdale, AZ; Advancement Project/Civil Rights Project. (2000, February). *Opportunities suspended: The devastating consequences of zero tolerance and school discipline*. Cambridge, MA: Author.

[4] More details concerning development and piloting of the Disciplinary Practices Survey can be found in Skiba, R.J., Simmons, A.B, Staudinger, L.P., Rausch, M.K., Dow, G. & Feggins, L.R. (2003). *Consistent removal: Contributions of school discipline to the school-prison pipeline*. Paper Presented at the Harvard Civil Rights Conference School-to-Prison Pipeline Conference, Cambridge, MA.

Table 1
Sample data characteristics in comparison to statewide data of principal characteristics.

	Current Sample	Statewide Representation
Percentage of Minority Principals	9.6%	10.5%
Percentage of Male Principals	62.2%	79.0%
Percentage of Female Principals	37.8%	21.0%
Percentage of Elementary School Principals	55.0%	54.0%
Percentage of Middle School Principals	22.0%	26.0%
Percentage of High School Principals	23.0%	16.0%

Table 2
Percentage of agreement and disagreement among survey items along with means and SD of each scale item

Scale Item	% Agree[a]	%Disagree[b]	Mean[c]
I feel that getting to know students individually is an important part of discipline.	98.8	0.9	4.77
I believe that teachers at my school are aware of school disciplinary policies.	98.8	0.9	4.46
Disciplinary consequences should be scaled in proportion to the severity of the problem behavior.	98.8	0.6	4.34
I believe students at my school are aware of school disciplinary policies.	98.5	0.6	4.41
Teachers ought to be able to manage the majority of students' misbehavior in their classroom.	98.5	0.3	4.44
My school keeps detailed records regarding student suspension and expulsion.	97.5	0.9	4.65
Conversations with students referred to the office are important, and should be factored into most decisions about disciplinary consequences.	92.9	2.2	4.28
Repeat offenders should receive more severe disciplinary consequences than first-time offenders.	92.9	1.8	4.30
Out-of school suspension is used at this school only as a last resort.	92.0	6.5	4.32
Disciplinary policies are strictly enforced in my school.	87.3	3.1	4.06
I believe that putting in place prevention programs can reduce the need for suspension and expulsion.	86.1	3.1	4.15
Schools cannot afford to tolerate students who disrupt the learning environment.	85.7	7.7	4.08
Schools must take some responsibility for teaching students how to get along and behave appropriately in school.	85.5	5.2	4.02
In-school suspension is a viable alternative disciplinary practice to suspension and expulsion.	85.4	7.8	4.05
I feel it is critical to work with parents before suspending a student from school.	84.3	8.9	4.02
The primary purpose of discipline is to teach appropriate skills to the disciplined student.	78.6	10.5	3.89
Disciplining disruptive students is time consuming and interferes with other important functions in the school.	78.0	15.5	3.85
Out-of-school suspension is a necessary tool for maintaining school order.	76.2	11.8	3.87
Students should receive recognition or reward for appropriate behavior.	73.8	13.2	3.85
Suspensions and expulsions hurt students by removing them from academic learning time.	73.7	13.9	3.82
The primary responsibility for teaching students how to behave appropriately in school belongs to the parents.	70.8	18.4	3.77
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.	62.5	25.6	3.57
I have noticed that time spent in developing and implementing prevention programs pays off in terms of decreased disruption and disciplinary incidents.	62.4	3.70	3.76

[a] % Agree includes items that were rated by principals as Strongly Agree (5) and Agree (4)
[b] % Disagree includes items that were rated by principals as Strongly Disagree (1) and Disagree (2)
[c] Mean of all principals' rates 5=Strongly Agree, 1=Strongly Disagree

Table 2 continued

Scale Item	%Agree[a]	%Disagree[b]	Mean[c]
I need additional resources to increase my school's capacity to reduce and prevent troublesome behaviors.	61.4	25.3	3.54
Students with disabilities who engage in disruptive behavior need a different approach to discipline than students in general education.	61.2	26.8	3.39
There is really nothing a school can do if students are not willing to take responsibility for their behavior.	53.9	36.2	3.25
Disadvantaged students require a different approach to discipline than other students.	52.9	30.7	3.27
Most, if not all, discipline problems come from inadequacies in the student's home situation.	52.3	22.9	3.39
Suspension and expulsion do not really solve discipline problems.	51.2	32.6	3.26
Suspension makes students less likely to misbehave in the future.	50.6	34.0	3.14
Zero tolerance increases the number of students being suspended or expelled.	49.1	25.8	3.33
Regardless of the severity of a student's behavior, my objective as a principal is to keep all students in school.	48.9	41.5	3.18
Students who are suspended or expelled are only getting more time on the streets that will enable them to get in more trouble.	45.2	27.2	3.22
The majority of this school's discipline problems could be solved if we could only remove the most persistent troublemakers.	45.2	40.2	3.12
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.	44.9	41.7	3.02
Students from different ethnic backgrounds have different emotional and behavioral needs.	40.9	26.0	3.18
Zero tolerance sends a clear message to disruptive students about appropriate behaviors in school.	37.8	38.1	2.97
Prevention programs would be a useful addition at our school, but there is simply not enough time in the day.	38.1	41.5	2.97
I believe suspension and expulsion allow students time away from school that encourages them to think about their behavior.	30.6	43.2	2.79
Disciplinary regulations for students with disabilities create a separate system of discipline that makes it more difficult to enforce discipline at this school.	41.6	47.2	2.99
Teachers at this school were for the most part adequately trained by their teacher-training program to handle problems of misbehavior and discipline.	29.1	52.9	2.68
Students with disabilities account for a disproportionate amount of the time spent on discipline at this school.	33.2	53.1	2.81
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.	37.8	55.2	2.77
Zero tolerance makes a significant contribution to maintaining order at my school.	22.5	56.2	2.55

[a] % Agree includes items that were rated by principals as Strongly Agree (5) and Agree (4)
[b] % Disagree includes items that were rated by principals as Strongly Disagree (1) and Disagree (2)
[c] Mean of all principals' rates 5=Strongly Agree, 1=Strongly Disagree

Table 2 continued

Scale Item	%Agree[a]	%Disagree[b]	Mean[c]
I believe suspension is unnecessary if we provide a positive school climate and challenging instruction.	25.9	59.6	2.59
Regardless of whether it is effective, suspension is virtually our only option in disciplining disruptive students.	25.8	68.3	2.45
A student's academic record should be taken into account in assigning disciplinary consequences.	12.5	74.1	2.20
Violence is getting worse in my school.	14.6	76.4	2.19
Suspension and expulsion are unfair to minority students.	4.3	79.5	2.01

[a] % Agree includes items that were rated by principals as Strongly Agree (5) and Agree (4)
[b] % Disagree includes items that were rated by principals as Strongly Disagree (1) and Disagree (2)
[c] Mean of all principals' rates 5=Strongly Agree, 1=Strongly Disagree

Table 3
Scale Items with most disagreement between items.

Scale Item	%Agree[a]	%Disagree[b]	Mean[c]
Disciplinary regulations for students with disabilities create a separate system of discipline that makes it more difficult to enforce discipline at this school.	41.6	47.2	2.99
I believe suspension and expulsion allow students time away from school that encourages them to think about their behavior.	30.6	43.2	2.79
Prevention programs would be a useful addition at our school, but there is simply not enough time in the day.	38.1	41.5	2.97
Zero tolerance sends a clear message to disruptive students about appropriate behaviors in school.	37.8	38.1	2.97
Students from different ethnic backgrounds have different emotional and behavioral needs.	40.9	26.0	3.18
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.	44.9	41.7	3.02
The majority of this school's discipline problems could be solved if we could only remove the most persistent troublemakers.	45.2	40.2	3.12
Students who are suspended or expelled are only getting more time on the streets that will enable them to get in more trouble.	45.2	27.2	3.22
Regardless of the severity of a student's behavior, my objective as a principal is to keep all students in school.	48.9	41.5	3.18

[a] % Agree includes items that were rated by principals as Strongly Agree (5) and Agree (4)
[b] % Disagree includes items that were rated by principals as Strongly Disagree (1) and Disagree (2)
[c] Mean of all principals' rates 5=Strongly Agree, 1=Strongly Disagree

Table 4. Representative Items Endorsed More Frequently by Principals with Different Perspectives on School Discipline [a]

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Group 1: Prevention Orientation

- Suspension and expulsion do not really solve disciplinary problems
- Students who are suspended or expelled are only getting more time on the streets that will enable them to get in more trouble
- Developing and implementing prevention programs pays off in terms of decreased disruption and disciplinary incidents
- Suspension is unnecessary if we provide a positive school climate and challenging instruction
- Schools must take some responsibility for teaching students how to get along and behave appropriately in school
- Suspensions and expulsions hurt students by removing them from academic learning time
- Putting in place prevention programs can reduce the need for suspension and expulsion
- Students with disabilities who engage in disruptive behavior need a different approach to discipline than students in general education
- Out-of-school suspension is used at this school only as a last resort
- I feel it is critical to work with parents before suspending a student from school
- Zero tolerance increases the number of students being suspended or expelled
- Conversations with students referred to the office should be factored into most decisions about disciplinary consequences
- Suspension and expulsion are unfair to minority students
- In-school suspension is a viable alternative disciplinary practice to suspension and expulsion
- Regardless of the severity of a student's behavior, my objective as a principal is to keep all students in school
- Disadvantaged students require a different approach to discipline than other students
- The primary purpose of discipline is to teach appropriate skills to the disciplined student
- Getting to know students individually is an important part of discipline

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[a] Unless otherwise noted, items listed are those that the group in question on average rated the *highest* of the three groups, and significantly higher than at least one other group.

Table 4 Continued

Group2: Support for Suspension and Expulsion

- Disciplinary regulations for special education create a separate system that makes it more difficult to enforce discipline
- 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
- Out-of-school suspension is a necessary tool for maintaining school order
- Schools cannot afford to tolerate students who disrupt the learning environment
- Prevention programs would be a useful addition at our school, but there is simply not enough time in the day
- Regardless of whether it is effective, suspension is virtually our only option in disciplining disruptive students
- My duties as an administrator simply don't allow me the time to get to know students on an individual basis
- Zero tolerance sends a clear message to disruptive students about appropriate behaviors in school
- The majority of this school's discipline problems could be solved if we could remove the most persistent troublemakers
- There is really nothing a school can do if students are not willing to take responsibility for their behavior
- Zero tolerance makes a significant contribution to maintaining order at my school
- I need additional resources to increase my school's capacity to reduce and prevent troublesome behaviors
- 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
- Repeat offenders should receive more severe disciplinary consequences than first-time offenders
- Disciplining disruptive students is time consuming and interferes with other important functions in the school
- The primary responsibility for teaching students how to behave appropriately in school belongs to parents
- Most if not all discipline problems come from inadequacies in the student's home situation
- Students with disabilities account for a disproportionate amount of the time spent on discipline at this school
- Violence is getting worse at my school
- I believe students at my school are aware of school disciplinary policies [b]
- Students should receive recognition or reward for appropriate behavior
- Teachers ought to be able to manage the majority of students' misbehavior in their classroom
- Disciplinary consequences should be scaled in proportion to the severity of the problem behavior

Table 4 Continued

- A student's academic record should be taken into account in assigning disciplinary consequences
- Students from different ethnic backgrounds have different emotional and behavioral needs

Group 3: Pragmatic Prevention

- Suspension makes students less likely to misbehavior in the future
- Teachers at this school were adequately prepared to handle problems of misbehavior and discipline
- I believe students at my school are aware of school disciplinary policies [b]
- Disciplinary policies are strictly enforced in my school
- My school keeps detailed records regarding student suspension and expulsion
- Suspension and expulsion allow students time away from school that encourages them to think about their behavior
- I believe that teachers at my school are aware of school disciplinary policies
- *Least likely to believe that:* Regardless of whether it is effective, suspension is virtually our only option [c]
- *Least likely to believe that:* Violence is getting worse at my school[c]
- *Least likely to believe that:* Suspension and expulsion do not really solve disciplinary problems [d]
- *Least likely to believe that:* There is not enough time during the day for prevention programs [c]
- *Least likely to believe that:* There is really nothing a school can do if students are not willing to take responsibility for their behavior [d]

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[b] This item was rated the same across Group 2 and Group 3.
[c] This item rated significantly lower than Group 2, but not group 1.
[d] This item rated significantly lower than Group 1 and Group 2.