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Discipline in Context: Suspension, Climate, and PBIS in the School District of Philadelphia

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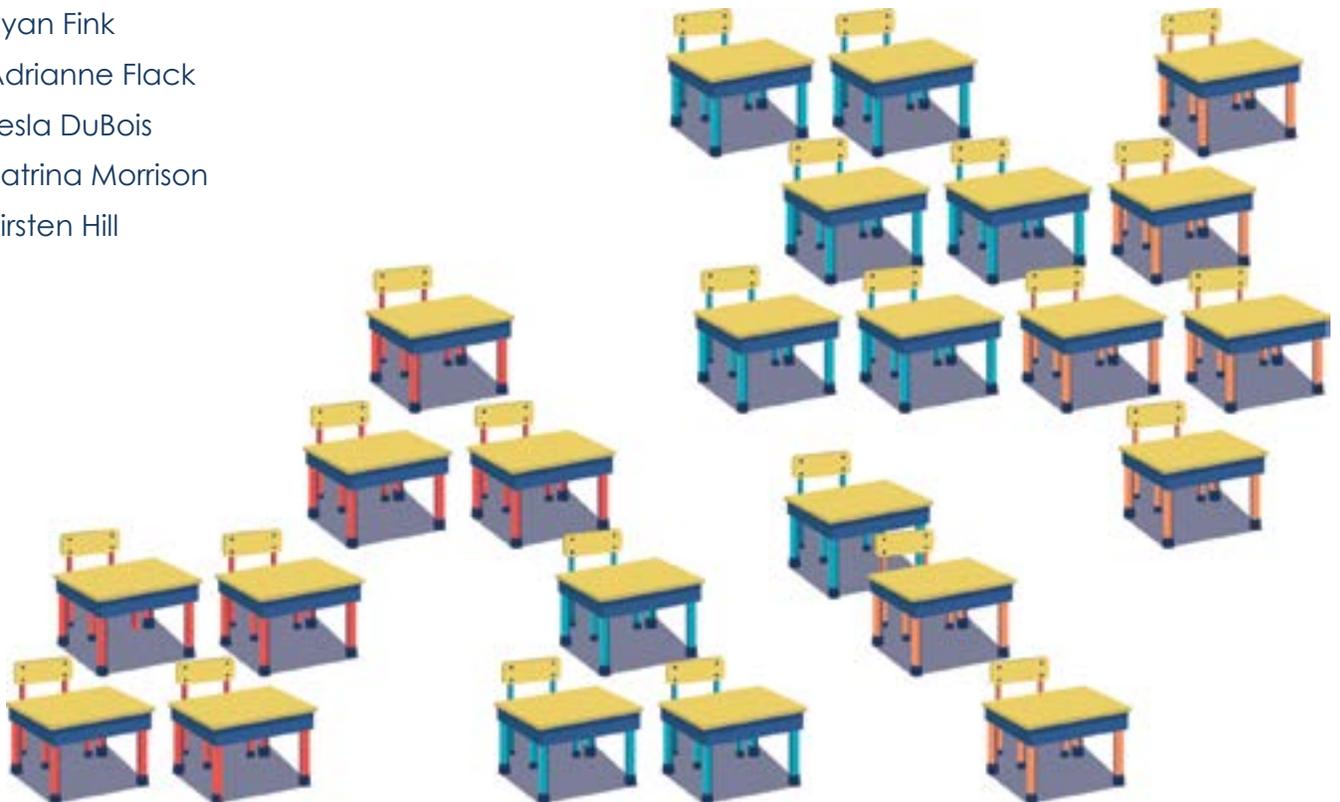
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Executive Summary

This report presents the results of an exploratory study of suspension, discipline, and climate in K-5 and K-8 schools in the School District of Philadelphia (SDP). The study was conducted between January 2016 and October 2017 by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) at the University of Pennsylvania, in close partnership with SDP and with research support from Research for Action, a Philadelphia-based research organization. The study was funded by a 2015 Comprehensive School Safety Initiative grant from the National Institute of Justice, a division of the U.S. Department of Justice.

Chapter 1 of the report describes the context and need for this study. The research was conducted in response to requests from SDP leadership for more information about how schools are managing student discipline in the wake of recent district-wide policy and programmatic changes. These changes were designed to improve school climate and reduce the use of out-of-school suspension (OSS), and they include the rollout of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in a growing number of SDP schools. The findings presented here are informed by data collected in 166 schools, representing 96.5% of the K-5 and K-8 schools managed by SDP, in order to answer the following research questions:

1. What disciplinary practices are used by SDP schools serving students in kindergarten through eighth grade?

2. What factors support or hinder schools' alignment with the district's climate and suspension-reduction goals?

3. What patterns are evident in SDP K–5 and K–8 schools' approaches to discipline and climate?

4. Are schools' approaches to discipline and climate related to suspension and academic outcomes?

5. How are different approaches to discipline and climate manifested in individual schools?

In **Chapter 2** we present the research methods and findings related to research questions 1 and 2. These questions were addressed via mixed-methods inquiry that included both surveys and in-depth qualitative research. The qualitative research was conducted between January 2016 and June 2017, and included a series of focus groups and one-on-one interviews with teachers, principals, and other school staff. Data were also collected through online surveys administered to teachers and school administrators in all SDP K-5 and K-8 schools during the spring of 2016.

Via these methods, we identified four key findings pertaining to the disciplinary practices SDP schools use, and the factors that impede and/or foster their shifts away from OSS and toward a focus on improving climate. First, we found that most schools are seeking alternatives to suspension in response to student misbehavior. The extent to which this is an explicit priority varies across schools generally, and between PBIS and non-PBIS schools. Second, we found that a subset of schools is taking steps to proactively address student behavior through programming that encourages positive choices and engagement. This subgroup includes a combination of PBIS and non-PBIS schools. Third, we found that administrators and teachers identify resource shortages in the areas of staffing, space, and supportive services as the biggest impediment to reducing the use of suspension. And finally, we conclude that administrators and teachers are often not aligned about how discipline should be managed and whether and when suspension should be used. This is the case in both PBIS and non-PBIS schools.

Chapter 3 details the statistical methods we used to address research questions 3 and 4, and presents the findings of these analyses. In response to question 3, we used latent class analysis to identify a typology of SDP K-5 and K-8 schools' approaches to discipline and climate. Data for these analyses were obtained from teacher and principal surveys. Ultimately, we identified three profiles of schools based on respondents' characterizations of climate and disciplinary practices. The three profiles are:

Profile 1. Reactive and autonomous. These schools rely on punitive and exclusionary disciplinary responses to maintain order. OSS is regarded as an important means of keeping control. Teachers perceive that they must fend for themselves with regard to discipline.

Profile 2. Under-resourced and non-cohesive. Schools in this profile experience staffing and resource shortages most profoundly, and are inconsistent in their use of both punitive and non-punitive practices. Staff report low morale. Teachers report little collaboration around discipline, and feel blamed by administrators for their students' misbehavior.

Profile 3. Collaborative and relational. These schools are characterized by collaborative approaches to discipline and the use of non-punitive practices. Morale is high; teachers feel supported. OSS is not viewed as an effective response to misbehavior.

Compared with schools in Profiles 1 and 2, those in Profile 3 were more likely to be located in communities with lower poverty, higher educational attainment, fewer households without English spoken in the home,

higher percentage of White non-Hispanic residents, and fewer minors living with one parent. In addition, schools implementing PBIS with SDP support were dispersed among all three profiles and were no more likely to be in Profile 3 than in the other two profiles. This suggests poor penetration of PBIS practices in many implementing schools.

In response to research question 4, we used event history analysis and 2015-2016 SDP data to examine the extent to which profile membership predicts student outcomes, including OSS and academic achievement. Controlling for student demographics and other factors, we observed that students in Profile 3 schools had a lower likelihood of out-of-school suspension, and scored significantly higher on state assessments in English, Math, and Science.

In response to research question 5, four case studies of individual schools are presented in **Chapter 4**. These schools were drawn from Profiles 1 and 3, occupy different parts of the city, and serve different student populations. Two of the schools are implementing PBIS with SDP support. Our analysis of these four cases together underscores the key findings of Chapter 2 about how schools address climate and discipline and the obstacles they face in doing so. In addition, this analysis highlights how individual schools' contexts shape their climate and discipline successes and challenges.

Chapter 5 highlights the implications of the study's overall findings. We conclude that climate-improvement efforts like PBIS hold great promise for improving student outcomes as well as the experience of school for staff, students, and families in SDP. In order to realize this potential, we recommend that SDP embrace a PBIS implementation approach that is tailored to the challenges of its context — more specifically, one that emphasizes differentiated training and intensive support for all adults, and pairs climate efforts with a focus on trauma-informed care.

Chapter One.
National Issues, Local Realities

This report presents the results of an 18-month exploratory study of disciplinary practices and climate in K-5 and K-8 schools in the School District of Philadelphia (SDP). The study was conducted by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE) at the University of Pennsylvania, in close partnership with the SDP and with support from Research for Action, a Philadelphia-based research organization. It was funded by a 2015 Comprehensive School Safety Initiative grant from the National Institute of Justice, a division of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The study was conducted in response to requests from SDP for more information about how schools are managing student discipline in the wake of recent district-wide policy and programmatic changes designed to improve school climate and reduce the use of out-of-school suspension (OSS). The research focused specifically on disciplinary practices in SDP elementary and middle schools. Because these schools were shown in recent research to suspend students at higher rates than high schools in the district (Engelman & Wolford, 2014), the impact of SDP's suspension-reduction efforts on the district's K-5 and K-8 schools was of particular interest.

In this report, we address both disciplinary approach—by which we mean the way a school prevents and/or responds to student misbehavior—and school climate. School climate refers, more generally, to the environment a school's students and staff experience, and encompasses disciplinary approach as well as norms, expectations, and relationships. As our research illustrates, these two issues are sometimes, but not always, addressed simultaneously.

The findings presented here are informed by data collected in 166 schools, representing 96.5% of the K-5 and K-8 schools managed by SDP. (A small number of schools were not included due to low survey response rates.) Because a central goal of the study was to inform SDP's policies and practices related to climate and discipline, it does not include charter schools.

Out-of-school suspension: A national and local problem

Serving some 130,000 students in 218 schools, SDP is the eighth largest public school district in the country and one of the most diverse. It is among the nation's most financially and academically challenged school districts (Steinberg & Quinn, 2014; Cornman, 2013; Wills, Karakus, & Wolford, 2017): Nearly 90% of SDP students qualify for free lunch, most are historically underserved racial minorities[1] (Wills, Karakus, & Wolford, 2017), and two-thirds have experienced traumatic events like poverty, violence, familial instability, or abuse (Hardy, 2014). District schools have been rocked by severe budget restrictions following the loss of millions in state funding; as recently as 2014-15, most K-5 and K-8 schools in the district lacked full-time nurses, counselors, and in some cases even receptionists. Amid these challenges, SDP is an example of an urban district that is working to change disciplinary practices and improve climate in its schools.

SDP's focus on school climate has emerged over the past several years, largely in response to alarming revelations about the detrimental impacts of exclusionary disciplinary practices—OSS in particular. Although OSS has been a widely used disciplinary

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1 SDP reports that in 2016-17 its student body was 50% black/African American; 20% Hispanic, 14% white, 8% Asian, and 7% multi-race.

intervention in elementary, middle, and high schools for decades, recent research demonstrates that the practice is not only ineffective as a means of improving behavior (Finn & Servoss, 2015; Fabelo et al., 2011; Skiba, Poloni-Saudinger, Gallini, Simmons, & Feggins-Azziz, 2006), but also overtly harmful to students. Multiple well-publicized studies have linked OSS with increased rates of academic failure, school dropout, misbehavior, criminal involvement, and incarceration (Anyon et al., 2016; Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2016; Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2015; Marchbanks et al., 2015). Furthermore, analysis of national disciplinary data reveals disproportionate use of OSS with Black, Latino, and special education students, and English language learners (Losen & Martinez, 2013; Losen, Ee, Hodson, & Martinez, 2015; Office of Civil Rights, 2016; Skiba, Arredondo, & Rausch, 2014). These national patterns of disproportionality are largely replicated in SDP's own analyses of district schools' suspension data (Wills, Karakus, & Wolford, 2017).

Growing numbers of state and local education agencies are responding to research on the negative impacts of OSS with policy changes designed to limit the use of exclusionary practices in schools. SDP has taken several steps in this direction, including penalizing schools that overuse OSS in the district's School Progress Report evaluation process, and prohibiting the suspension of kindergarten students altogether (School Reform Commission of the School District of Philadelphia, 2016). In addition, SDP revised its Code of Student Conduct (School Reform Commission of the School District of Philadelphia, 2013) in 2013 to raise the bar on OSS at all grade levels: Offenses once considered OSS-worthy—like uniform policy violations—now should result in less severe consequences like detentions or parent contacts.

SDP administrators identify these policy changes as primary mechanisms for communicating the district's priorities for climate and discipline to school leaders and staff. The key messages SDP leaders hope to convey, according to district-level administrators, are that OSS is not an effective way to change students' behavior and that schools need to identify alternative disciplinary interventions. More broadly, by discouraging the use of exclusionary practices, the district hopes to help facilitate a "culture shift" in the ways SDP schools teach, manage, and respond to student behavior.

The School District of Philadelphia's investment in climate

To achieve its goal of facilitating a shift in schools' disciplinary approaches and climate, SDP has taken steps not only to reduce the use of OSS, but also to promote the use of non-punitive disciplinary practices more generally. For purposes of this study, non-punitive practices include interventions designed to emphasize the learning opportunities that come with behavioral missteps. Examples of non-punitive responses to behavioral infractions include peer mediation, conflict resolution, teacher conferences, and community service. Non-punitive practices therefore stand in contrast with punitive practices, which are intended to punish negative behaviors, and more specifically exclusionary practices—like OSS and expulsion—which remove offending students from the school.

At the elementary and middle-school levels, SDP has worked to facilitate schools' shift toward non-punitive disciplinary practices in a variety of ways. SDP has incorporated new content into principal and teacher professional development and offered training on conflict resolution to school leaders and staff on a voluntary basis. The district has also supported the use of evidence-based climate programs, specifically Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and Restorative Practices (RP), and hired new staff at the district level to support these climate initiatives. In addition, SDP supports schools in identifying and hiring school-based climate staff—ranging from climate specialists who supervise lunch rooms and hallways to administrative-level climate managers. School leaders are quick to point out, however, that these positions must be funded by individual schools; there are no district funds to support them.

Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) in SDP

A focal point of recent climate programming in SDP is PBIS, a school-wide intervention designed to both improve overall climate by teaching and supporting appropriate behaviors for all students, and to provide more intensive supports to those students who need them (Horner & Sugai, 2015). The term PBIS is used broadly to refer to a set of principles and practices that can be applied at both the school-wide and the classroom levels. The model, which consists of three tiers of interventions, emphasizes consistent expectations, proactive encouragement of positive behaviors, and targeted supports. At Tier I, PBIS emphasizes explicit teaching and reinforcement of expectations for positive behavior. Tier I supports

are universal; that is, all students should experience consistent rules and rewards across all school settings. Students who require more support receive targeted assistance via small-group Tier II interventions. Tier III consists of individualized interventions for students with serious behavioral challenges (www.pbis.org/school). In schools with effective PBIS programs, theory asserts, most students will respond to Tier I activities, with only a relative few needing Tier II supports and a small subset of students progressing to Tier III (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010).

Multiple rigorous studies have demonstrated the potential of PBIS to improve school climate, reduce behavioral incidents, and improve students' socioemotional and academic outcomes (Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010; Sugai & Simonsen, 2012; Vincent, Sprague, Pavel, Tobin, & Gau, 2015; Madigan, Cross, Smolkowski, & Strycker, 2016; McIntosh et al., 2014; Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & Leaf, 2012; Bradshaw, Mitchell, & Leaf, 2010). In response, more than 20,000 schools nationally have adopted PBIS (Horner, Sugai, Fixsen, 2017).

Since 2013, SDP has leveraged private and federal funds to provide PBIS training in more than 30 K-5, K-8, and middle schools. The number of schools receiving this training grew to 40 in 2017-18, representing a significant investment of district resources for the foreseeable future. While funding is a barrier to providing all, or even most, district K-8 schools with PBIS training and support in the short term, SDP has made the dissemination of positive behavioral support practices an explicit goal.

Restorative Practices (RP) in SDP

A second, less widespread district-supported initiative, RP, builds on the principles of restorative justice programs targeted to criminal offenders. The central goal of the approach is to focus students on reflecting on and mending the damage caused by poor behavioral choices (Gregory et al., 2016; Balfanz, et al., 2015; Wachtel, Costello, & Wachtel, 2009; Cameron and Thorsborne 2001), with an emphasis on relationships and community. RP is used primarily in high schools in SDP; however, some elementary and middle schools are also working to adopt aspects of the model. Only a handful of SDP elementary/middle schools have participated in formal RP training.

In supporting schools' adoption of programs like PBIS and RP, an SDP administrator explained, the district hopes to see broad changes in the cultures of its schools: "[We want schools to move away

from] punishment without the learning and behavior change," she said. "We want to make kids feel their learning environment is safer ... to make school a safer and kinder place for students."

An exploratory study of discipline and climate in SDP schools

Prior research has established the potential of RP (Gregory et al., 2016; Gonzalez, 2015; Riestenberg, 2013; Lewis, 2009; Jain, Bassey, Brown, & Kalra, 2014; McCluskey et al., 2008; Schiff, 2013) and PBIS (Madigan, Cross, Smolkowski, & Strycker, 2016; McIntosh et al., 2014). However, as large, challenged urban districts like SDP look for solutions to the OSS problem, there is a pressing need for specific information about the difficulties these schools encounter and the supports they need to implement these programs well. There is still much to be learned about how these approaches can work—and what obstacles they face—in difficult contexts like SDP's. Urban districts nationwide can benefit from new insights about the implementation of climate programming in contexts where punitive practices—including OSS—are entrenched (Eliason, Horner, & May, 2013) and often regarded as the only realistic option.

In response to these gaps in the existing research, as well as SDP's specific requests for insights and recommendations regarding district-level disciplinary policy and practices, this study was designed to answer the following research questions:

1. What disciplinary practices are used by SDP schools serving students in kindergarten through eighth grade?

2. What factors support or hinder schools' alignment with the district's climate and suspension-reduction goals?

3. What patterns are evident in the approaches to discipline and climate of SDP K–5 and K–8 schools?

4. Are schools' approaches to discipline and climate related to student disciplinary and academic outcomes?

5. How are different approaches to discipline and climate manifested in individual schools?

The following chapters describe the methods we used to explore these questions, and our key findings in response to each.

Chapter Two.
The School District of Philadelphia's Disciplinary Landscape

The dearth of specific information about disciplinary practices in SDP schools is both documented in prior research (Steinberg & Lacoe, 2017) and acknowledged by district leaders. CPRE's study therefore explored the variety of disciplinary practices used by SDP K-5 and K-8 schools, and the beliefs that underlie them. Our goal with this work was two-fold: First, we aimed to develop a thorough understanding of the range of disciplinary practices schools are using in response to SDP's emphasis on improving climate and reducing suspensions. Second, we hoped to identify key barriers and facilitators of schools' alignment with SDP's climate and suspension-reduction goals. The research described in this chapter thus addresses our first two research questions:

> **Research Question 1**: What disciplinary practices are used by SDP schools serving students in kindergarten through eighth grade?
>
> **Research Question 2**: What factors support or hinder schools' alignment with the district's climate and suspension-reduction goals?

We addressed these questions via mixed-methods inquiry that included both surveys and in-depth qualitative research. This chapter describes our use of these methods and the major findings they produced.

Research methods

Qualitative research played an important role in our inquiry for research questions 1 and 2. The qualitative research was conducted over an 18-month period, between January 2016 and June 2017, and comprised three consecutive phases:

Phase 1: A series of focus groups to identify critical issues for additional exploration, and to inform the development of survey questions.

Phase 2: One-on-one interviews with the school-level staff who understand discipline in SDP schools most intimately.

Phase 3: Field-based case studies to further explore the findings presented in this chapter as well as those discussed in Chapter 3.

The methods and findings associated with Phase 3 of the qualitative research—the field-based case studies—warrant a separate discussion and are detailed in Chapter 4 of this report. Here, we focus on the insights gained during Phases 1 and 2, and on the survey findings that explore them at scale.

Qualitative research phase 1: Focus groups

In January and February of 2016, CPRE researchers conducted four focus groups and three interviews with a range of school-level stakeholders, including teachers, assistant principals, counselors, school police, and special education teachers. We invited school staff members to participate in the focus groups via email, offering them a small incentive for participating. The focus groups were held after school, most often in the SDP central office building. On three occasions, only one participant arrived for a focus group. In those instances, the participants agreed to talk one-on-one with a member of our research team. The four focus groups that were held included one with school police, one with a group of special education teachers, and two focus groups which contained a mixture of individuals who held different positions at their respective schools. Focus-group discussions, as well as the three that were conducted as individual interviews, were guided by semi-structured protocols designed to probe variations in:

- discipline processes used by schools, and the extent to which they are restorative or punitive in nature;
- roles played in the discipline process by different administrators and staff;
- culture around OSS, including perceptions of the utility of OSS;
- resources schools use to implement their discipline approach, or wish they had access to; and
- knowledge levels of school administrators and staff about school- and district-level discipline and suspension policies.

All focus groups were audio recorded and transcribed. In formal memos, researchers detailed the major

themes of each focus group and specified propositions related to the topics listed above (Miles & Huberman, 1994). These propositions were then organized across the set of researcher memos, yielding detailed information about the variations respondents described within these general topics. This overall understanding of how practices and approaches vary across school contexts informed the development of protocols for one-on-one interviews and items for teacher and principal surveys. In addition, the propositions and themes informed the findings detailed in this chapter.

Qualitative research phase 2: Interviews

Between February and June 2016, CPRE researchers conducted 81 one-on-one interviews with principals, climate staff, assistant principals, deans, and teachers in SDP K-8 schools. The interviews were conducted in person or by telephone using semi-structured, role-specific interview protocols. These protocols were designed to solicit in-depth reflections from participants in response to the following guiding questions:

1. Are school administrators, teachers, and other school staff receiving the district's message about the importance of reducing OSS and embracing non-punitive disciplinary practices? If so, by what means are they receiving this message?

2. How do school administrators, teachers, and other school staff understand and articulate the district's message?

3. To what extent are school administrators, teachers, and other school staff philosophically aligned with the district's message about the importance of reducing OSS? What are the beliefs and philosophies of those who are not aligned with the district's message?

4. What disciplinary practices are schools using?

5. What challenges do schools face in implementing non-punitive practices and reducing OSS?

Table 1 summarizes the focus-group and interview samples by role.

The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes and were audio-recorded and transcribed. Interview transcripts were coded for analysis by five members of the research team using Dedoose, a secure, cloud-based platform. Inter-rater reliability was established prior to coding; each researcher independently applied codes to the same transcript excerpts, and code applications were compared. Code definitions were refined to ensure clarity and the process repeated until all coders reached at least 80% reliability based on Dedoose's reliability metrics. Once reliability was established, each interview was coded by one member of the research team.

Broad codes derived from the guiding questions were applied to all interview transcripts initially. Examples of broad codes included: OSS philosophy and use; messaging about discipline; discipline/suspension process; disciplinary interventions; communication

Table 1.
Focus group and interview participants by role

	Focus Groups	Interviews
Principals	0	22
Administrator-level Climate Staff	0	11
Assistant Principals	1	2
Deans	0	10
Guidance Counselors	0	2
Regular Classroom Teachers	2	30
School Police	2	0
Special Education Teachers	8	0
Teachers of English as a Second Language	1	0
Climate Coordinator	1	1
Climate Support Staff	1	0
PBIS Leads	0	3

about discipline; and resources for discipline, among others. As the team applied these broad codes, more specific codes were developed inductively to address nuances in the data. For example, within data coded for schools' discipline and suspension processes, finer-grained data emerged relating specifically to the role of paperwork and the Code of Conduct, the extent to which individual student factors are considered in decisions about suspensions, how data is used to inform decisions, and the role played by teachers and parents in the process. Within the broad code of Interventions, sub-codes were added for specific interventions such as in school-suspension and detention, as well as codes for delineating non-punitive from punitive, and proactive from reactive interventions.

Once all transcripts were coded, each researcher was assigned to lead the analysis pertaining to one or more of the guiding questions by working to synthesize findings from the application of particular codes, across all transcripts. Researchers then wrote analytic memos distilling the content of codes in response to each of the guiding questions (Strauss & Corbin, 1997), and identifying categories and themes (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Categories and themes were shared and discussed among team members in weekly meetings. These dialogic engagement exercises led to a sharpening of themes (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). Themes identified in this process were then compared and contrasted with insights from the survey data (see below), to distill the key findings presented in response to our first two research questions.

Surveys

Data were collected via online surveys administered to teachers and school administrators in all SDP schools during the spring of 2016. SDP's Office of Research and Evaluation administers annual surveys to collect information about experiences and opinions of various stakeholders on a range of issues. To collect data for our analyses, CPRE researchers collaborated with SDP to embed items specifically developed for this study in the district's principal and teacher surveys. These additional items were developed by the CPRE research team, and drew on prior research as well as insights and themes developed through the qualitative research described above. CPRE also worked with the district to identify a sample of teachers to receive another survey administered independently by the CPRE research team, in exchange for an incentive. This follow-up survey included an additional set of items that probed the topics of interest in greater depth than the SDP survey instruments permitted. More detail about the survey instruments and samples is provided in Chapter 3.

SDP disciplinary landscape: Key findings

This study's first two research questions pertain to 1) the practices SDP schools use to address disciplinary issues and 2) the barriers they encounter in reducing suspension and improving climate. These questions arose directly from conversations with SDP leadership; having worked to address climate and OSS from policy and programmatic angles, district leaders sought answers to questions like: Are schools focused on reducing their reliance on OSS? If so, what are they doing instead of suspending misbehaving students? Are schools embracing non-punitive interventions? And if so, is this more true of some schools—those receiving district support for PBIS, for instance—than others? What do those approaches look like in practice? Similarly, they wondered, to the extent that schools may not be making these shifts, why are they not? What supports might help schools embrace climate-improvement initiatives? What barriers are in the way?

In the discussion below, we detail the responses to these questions that arose from our research, organizing them into four key findings. Table 2 represents these key findings as they pertain to the study's first two research questions.

Key finding #1: Seeking alternatives

Principals we interviewed overwhelmingly reported that they actively seek alternatives to suspension when responding to behavioral infractions on the part of their students. One principal explained:

> *Suspensions, in my opinion, are really the last resort, because obviously they're not effective in terms of long-term changes in behaviors and/or choices. To that end, we try to establish different types of consequences that we have a locus of control over in our school.*

Teacher survey responses corroborate principals' accounts of their efforts to avoid the use of suspension in their schools, to some extent. However, they also highlight variation in the consistency with which principals communicate this intention. Overall, 64% of teachers responding to the surveys agreed or strongly agreed that their principals convey the message that "OSS is a last resort."

Teachers in the schools that are implementing PBIS with support from the district were significantly more likely than those in non-PBIS schools to report that their school leaders communicate that reducing OSS is a school-wide priority (78 vs. 64%), and that adopting

Table 2.
Research questions 1 and 2, with key findings

Research Question	Key Findings
What disciplinary practices are used by SDP K-5 and K-8 schools?	Schools are seeking alternatives to suspension in response to student misbehavior. The extent to which this is an explicit priority varies across schools generally, and between PBIS and non-PBIS schools.
	A subset of schools is taking steps to proactively address student behavior through programming that encourages positive choices and engagement. This subgroup includes a combination of PBIS and non-PBIS schools.
What factors support or hinder schools' alignment with the district's climate and suspension-reduction goals?	Administrators and teachers identify resource shortages in the areas of staffing, space, and supportive services as the biggest impediment to reducing the use of suspension.
	Administrators and teachers are often not aligned about how discipline should be managed and whether and when suspension should be used. This is the case in PBIS and non-PBIS schools.

school-wide alternatives to OSS is a priority (61 vs. 50%). This suggests that, while a majority of principals overall are communicating the need to reduce suspensions, this message is penetrating more fully in the schools implementing PBIS with the district's support.

Asked about the strategies they use in their efforts to avoid suspension, nearly all principals described responding to misbehavior with a tiered system of increasingly severe interventions. Many reported trying to incorporate non-punitive responses as part of this progression of consequences.

The progressive system of disciplinary consequences principals and other school leaders described during interviews generally encompasses the full range of interventions available at a given school. The severity of the consequence for any particular infraction is determined based on two factors: the nature of the infraction and the extent to which it is a repeated offense by the same student. This approach is consistent with the tiered consequence system SDP advocates as part of its Code of Conduct, and is an outgrowth of the Response to Intervention and Instruction (RTII) and, more recently, the Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) processes required by SDP. Schools in SDP are required to use and document a progressive series of interventions in order to justify requests for special services for students, including behavioral health and special education services (http://webgui.phila.k12.pa.us/offices/c/curriculum/interventions/rtii2/offices/c/curriculum/interventions/

rtii/what-is-rtii3).

Teacher survey responses provide more detail on the specific disciplinary interventions their schools use. Table 3 displays the percentage of teachers reporting the use of particular interventions, and highlights the differences reported by teachers in PBIS and non-PBIS schools.

These results indicate that schools rely on parent conferences more than any other single intervention in response to disciplinary infractions. One principal explained:

> If the parents are willing to correct the situation, and work with us, and are willing to be a part of the solution, we would be less likely to suspend the child. That's what we want—the parents involved, the parents willing to help us change the behavior.

We observed that the principals we interviewed in SDP K-5 and K-8 schools conceptualized students' progressions through successively more intensive consequences in different ways. Some, for instance, describe the system as a series of strikes, with additional strikes accruing as students continue to act out. Others spoke more explicitly about the progressive system as designed to give students an opportunity to correct their behavior before receiving a suspension. However, leaders consistently characterized this progressive approach as a key tool in efforts to avoid suspending

Table 3.
Disciplinary responses reported by teachers in SDP K-5 and K-8 schools

Intervention	Percentage of teachers reporting use	Percentage of teachers in PBIS schools (n=125) reporting use	Percentage of teachers in non-PBIS (n=525) reporting use
Parent-teacher conferences	92	93	92
Sending students to another teacher's classroom	86	82	87
Daily report for behavior	84	82	84
Student-teacher conferences	80	70*	82
Individual behavior plans	80	75	81
Lunchtime detention	77	80*	67
Out-of-school suspension	75	74	79
School-wide system of incentives for good behavior	70	80*	67
In-school suspension	39	38	42
EH-42 (Students sent home until they return with a parent)	39	38	40
Activities to promote student reflection	36	42*	35
After-school detention	31	32	26
Peer mediation	22	23	21
Mentoring programs	19	26*	17
Community service	13	15	12
Before-school detention	7	7	8

* indicates statistically significant difference between responses from PBIS and non-PBIS schools

students. School leaders often described suspension as a "last resort" to be used only once the school has "exhausted other options." One dean said:

> *Suspension—we don't throw that word out there at our school. Suspensions are not a consequence that we really want to highlight or give out. It shouldn't be our first option. We want to take steps before we get to suspension.*

A notable result of this progressive system of discipline is that teachers are expected to use and document a series of interventions prior to referring a student to the administration. This represents a shift for many teachers, especially experienced teachers previously accustomed to "sending students to the office." Although this shift has been underway for some time, our findings show that many teachers in SDP continue to resist the expectation that they manage most behavioral issues in the classroom. For instance, in a result that was consistent across PBIS and non-PBIS schools, 42% of teachers responding to our surveys agreed with the statement "My administration blames me when my students misbehave."

As we discuss in more depth later in this chapter and in Chapter 4, we find that this resistance

leads to significant tension between teachers and administrators in some schools, and that this tension is a barrier to schools' shifts towards non-punitive discipline.

Key finding #2: An eye on climate

While we find that most SDP K-5 and K-8 schools are seeking alternatives to OSS when identifying consequences for students' misbehavior, a subset of school leaders we interviewed described efforts to reduce the need to suspend students by improving school climate overall. These administrators generally described their schools' use of one or some combination of three strategies:

- school-wide PBIS implementation as part of the SDP-supported PBIS initiative;

- implementation of PBIS-type programming—particularly school-wide token economy systems—without special training or district support; and

- implementation of other initiatives designed to build student engagement and investment in school.

School-wide PBIS implementation

PBIS represents the most concrete and coherent climate initiative among K-5 and K-8 schools across SDP. In 2015-16—the year our survey and interview data were collected—30 SDP schools implemented PBIS with support provided by the district. These schools received training and implementation coaching through collaborative relationships between SDP and several different providers, whose coaches assisted schools in establishing PBIS structures and procedures like school-wide behavioral expectations and incentive systems. In addition, coaches have supported school-level PBIS teams in the use of a data system that allows detailed behavior tracking and intervention planning. According to the program model, each school's PBIS team meets monthly to examine data and design action plans, with the goal of building strong processes for encouraging and rewarding good behavior. A principal explained:

> PBIS is a change of mindset. Its [goal is] to get students to actually understand what the expectations are. And where suspension is definitely consequence-based, PBIS is not necessarily consequence-based; it's more incentives and rewards. It is keeping things positive.

School leaders in the SDP-supported PBIS schools spoke positively about the program and expressed the view that it has changed their schools for the better. As one principal explained:

> Our general philosophy starts and ends with PBIS. We are a PBIS school. We have worked really hard to make that a part of our culture. We have four rules—four expectations. Be prompt. Be polite. Be prepared. And be productive. My philosophy is that we teach and we reteach those expectations. We recognize kids and provide them with incentives based on whether or not they are meeting the expectations. If they are not meeting expectations, then we restore them as a part of a consequence around the expectations. So, that is where we are.

Survey responses from teachers indicate some differences in the types of behavioral interventions used in district-supported PBIS schools, as compared with other SDP schools. As Table 3 illustrates, teachers in district-supported PBIS schools were significantly more likely than those in other schools to report the presence of a school-wide system of incentives for good behavior (80% of teachers in district-supported PBIS

schools vs. 67% in other schools); the use of activities designed to promote student reflection (42% vs. 35%); and the presence of mentoring programs (26% vs. 17%). Teachers in non-PBIS schools were significantly more likely to report the use of student-teacher conferences (82% vs. 70%).

Principals we interviewed in district-supported PBIS schools also emphasized the usefulness of the program for building collaboration and community among staff and students. One principal noted:

> [PBIS] works. It's really good. It helps to shape the school culture and what our expectations are so that everyone understands that these are our core values.

Similarly, responses from teachers in district-supported PBIS schools indicated an increased tendency for teachers to regard their schools as collaborative and cohesive. They were significantly more likely to report collaborating regularly with other staff about classroom management (64% vs. 51%), and to report that their principal communicates a clear mission for the school (50% vs. 38%).

Despite these positive findings, progress in the PBIS schools has been slow. SDP's own analysis reveals that, of the 20 schools found to implement Tier I with fidelity in 2015-16, only seven experienced decreases in their pre-PBIS suspension rates, and these decreases were small, ranging from .02 to .21 percentage points. Indeed, they were considerably smaller than the average annual decreases in suspension rates for all SDP schools from 2010 to 2015 (Wills, Karakus, & Wolford, 2017). In accordance with these findings, we observe that implementation of the model is quite inconsistent. School leaders report that attaining school-wide consistency in enforcement of expectations and use of rewards is a major challenge, and that it is difficult to bring some teachers on board. Without consistent and uniform use of PBIS strategies by teachers, they say, students do not buy in to the program and its effectiveness is significantly diminished.

For example, one principal reported that consistent implementation of PBIS by teachers was her school's biggest challenge, and that gaining teacher buy-in would be the key thing that would make their implementation stronger—even more so than financial resources. The issue, as she described it, is that many teachers don't believe in rewarding students simply for doing the right thing. She explained:

> When it came to the token economy, the teachers didn't buy into it. The conversation's happening [all the time], "Why I should I give the child a reward for doing the right thing?"

Additionally, a PBIS lead at one school also highlighted the impact that lack of teacher buy-in has on a school's ability to implement the program as intended. She said:

> *I feel that there is just too much inconsistency. So, it's not working the way it should. If we had consistency I think the system would have a chance to work better. But things aren't consistent so I feel it's kind-of like banging your head against the wall. So, all the things that I want to do are just not working.*

These challenges, too, are reflected in our survey data: For instance, teachers in district-supported PBIS schools were no more likely than those in other schools to agree that their schools do a good job of addressing disciplinary challenges proactively.

Several factors may explain the difficulty of consistent PBIS implementation in SDP. First, SDP's implementation of PBIS is phased. As a result, while some of the schools involved in our study had been working with the program for several years, others were in their first year of implementation and still struggling with PBIS fundamentals at the time of our data collection. Their schools' implementations may look very different in a few years' time. Second, the schools selected to implement PBIS were generally the most troubled in the district to begin with, serving neighborhoods with high levels of poverty and other challenges. As we discuss in more detail below, teachers and administrators in these schools report feeling overwhelmed by the needs of their students and the behavioral issues they exhibit. PBIS training and coaching alone, many report, are simply not enough.

PBIS-like programming and other climate initiatives

Schools that receive district-supported PBIS training are a distinct minority among SDP K-5 and K-8 schools overall. However, administrators of some other schools report adopting selected components of the PBIS model. In some cases, these administrators said they had learned about PBIS practices from schools that were part of the district initiative and wanted to use them as well. While they often lamented not having access to the resources provided to schools in the district initiative, these school leaders described doing their best to co-opt useful aspects of the PBIS approach—particularly, the token economy system and/or school-wide expectations—on their own. One principal explained:

> *We have a PBIS model in the building that is self-funded. It is building-funded, so it is not through a grant. But, we do have a PBIS model. So, we talk about "Have you focused on rewarding the positive behaviors?" instead of giving attention to the negative behavior.*

Both interviews and survey data revealed other climate interventions used in smaller, but still notable, numbers of schools. These include mentoring programs, efforts to foster parent involvement, activities that encourage teacher-student relationship-building, and sports or other extracurricular programs. For instance, to address issues that erupt or begin on the playground, some schools have partnered with organizations that help to structure recess time to avoid activities that tend to lead to conflict. One assistant principal described this approach along with a program operated in partnership with the neighborhood police station:

> *I think the fact that we're doing the socialized recess this year and giving kids the chance to get out there and be more actively involved, instead of sitting in a lunch room; I think that's helped greatly. Also, we do have a great program which does gang resistance, stuff like that, with the Philadelphia Police Department. I think that's been a big help.*

Additionally, some administrators said that they focus on climate and classroom management with teachers in staff meetings and grade group meetings. One dean recounted:

> *We do a lot of classroom management work in our small learning communities, and conversation about that. We have a school-wide behavior incentive program where kids get tickets for positive behavior. We have fun Fridays, where they have tickets, and you can buy a fun Friday activity. But, if you don't have enough tickets then there's a re-teaching period. So re-teaching is one way we teach our expectations.*

Finally, schools have also made efforts to connect with parents, to make them more a part of the school community, and to form a partnership with them to help both parties work more effectively with students. A Climate Manager described his school's approach and philosophy regarding working with parents:

> *History has shown the more parental involvement you have, the more information you will know about the child. In turn, we may be able to help the parents with things going on at home and they get a sense of what is going on throughout the school day. So, we have our parent gathering once a month.*

Key finding #3: Help wanted

The third finding that emerged from our inquiry into research questions 1 and 2 is that schools feel limited in their abilities to implement alternatives to suspension by resource constraints. Shortages in three areas in particular, respondents indicated, leave some schools with few alternatives to suspension for repeated infractions or offenses that might otherwise be handled within the school. These areas are: support staff for non-instructional areas of the school; space to accommodate students who need to leave the classroom; and mental and behavioral health services for students with issues the school is not equipped to manage.

Most of the respondents we interviewed described shortages in one or more of these three areas as serious obstacles to the reduction of suspension and the use of non-punitive practices in their schools. However, these themes arose most distinctly in conversations with school leaders and teachers whose schools serve the neediest students—those located in neighborhoods most impacted by poverty, crime, and familial instability. These school administrators were quick to mention the inadequacy of their schools' resources to address the range and intensity of experiences students bring to school, and the dire shortage of mental and behavioral health services for youth in the City. One principal stated:

> We have sick children who aren't getting the services that they need from provider health agencies, let's just say. There's a lot of neglect in the homes, and a lot of neglect even from [the Department of Human Services] not managing cases.

A teacher added:

> There are severe mental health issues. I have six students that could be eligible for the [student therapeutic support program], where they would have a one-on-one adult. But either due to lack of evaluations, or how long it takes—I'm not sure—but these kids aren't getting the help they need. That is for sure.

With limited access to services for large numbers of troubled students, teachers report struggling to manage behavior in the classroom. One teacher said:

> We have a lot of angry kids. Lot of angry kids. They're angry because their parents are angry.

> Sometimes, the life at home's bad, and I think we need more desensitizing. They come with a lot of anger, and I think it's getting worse.

Further compounding the challenges of behavior management in many Philadelphia schools, budget cuts have reduced most schools to a skeletal staff, and school closures have created space crunches in those that remain.[2] Schools' attempts to create reflection rooms or any space inside the school building to de-escalate conflicts or offer students respite are thwarted by a lack of staff and space. A principal noted:

> We don't have the ability to do an in-school suspension unfortunately. I don't have enough staff. I don't have somebody to staff it. I don't have a space for it.

Another added:

> Number one limitation here: staffing. I have one dean for 1,500 kids. Staffing is really a huge, huge issue. Staffing and space.

In the face of these challenges, school administrators shared that issuing an OSS can feel like the only option. With funds for more support staff, they report, accommodation or reflection rooms could be used to defuse conflicts without excluding students long-term. And, they noted "more eyes and ears" in hallways, in the lunchroom, and on the playground could be invaluable. One principal remarked:

> Just the presence [of support staff would be helpful], but also them watching. If they know that "I watch this group of children every day for recess and these six students play together every day," then if they see an outsider over there, that may be a problem. That may be something that's about ready to jump off. Or if you see a student who is usually playing football with Group A angrily walk away from football and go to the basketball court, that could mean that he and somebody in the football game have had a disagreement. Is this something that is going to resolve itself or is this something that needs somebody to intervene? Someone needs to be able to say, "Hey, Student A and Student B had a big argument outside in the yard. A walked away, but they were still mad at each other." [That support staff member] is your eyes and ears.

Key finding #4: Not on the same page

The last key finding from our research on SDP's disciplinary landscape pertains to our second research question, regarding the factors that support or hinder schools' reduction of suspension and improvements to climate. Here, we find that school leaders' and teachers' alignment over discipline and climate goals is a critical factor. More specifically, we observe that while most principals believe that suspension is detrimental and agree with SDP's goal of moving away from exclusionary practices, teachers are far less likely to express these views.

In interviews, we asked principals about their beliefs regarding suspension and its role in their schools' disciplinary approach. Most reported reticence to use OSS based, in part, on the recognition that suspensions often do not precipitate a change in behavior. As one principal explained:

> I'm just not a big fan of suspension. I understand according to our Code [of Student Conduct] some infractions warrant it. I just feel if you don't have other interventions in place, what is really going to change?

In addition to recognizing that a suspension on its own may not lead to behavior change in students, administrators said they work to avoid suspensions at their schools because students need to be in school to learn. Principals talked about "lost seat time" and remarked that students "can't learn if they're not here." An assistant principal described her school's progressive approach as collaborative, with the aim of not having students missing school because of a suspension:

> Progressive [discipline] requires communication between administration, teachers, parents—so that everyone's on the same page and we're all going in the same direction. Ultimately, I would like to see any child miss not one day of school because of a suspension.

Another assistant principal agreed, "My thought is the child needs to be in school. I'm really not for suspension."

Survey data from teachers paints a different picture. Overall—and in schools in the district's PBIS program as well as those that are not—teachers expressed the overwhelming view that suspension plays an important role in maintaining order and ensuring student learning. Table 4 summarizes responses from teachers.

In interviews, teachers and other non-administrative staff frequently described frustration with their administrators' refusal to suspend students for what

they regarded as serious or repeated offenses. One teacher articulated a common sentiment:

> We as teachers don't really have a say-so in whether or not a child can be recommended for suspension. That's an administrative decision that's made without our input. In some situations it's fine, but in other situations, it leaves teachers really frustrated.

Another teacher provided examples of behaviors that she believed should warrant suspension—or at the very least removal from the classroom:

> [There have been times when] I felt like that child needed to be out of the room. There were some things where children were being sexually inappropriate, and there were other situations where one child in particular was just non-stop cursing at the teacher, and harassing other students. I felt like it wasn't being handled the way it should have been.

Examples like this, in which teachers reported feeling isolated and unsupported, or even directly undermined by administrators, came up frequently in our interviews and focus groups. On the survey, nearly 40% of teachers—in PBIS schools as well as overall—disagreed with the statement that "my administration supports my decisions about discipline."

Non-administrative staff frequently attributed their principals' reticence to suspend students to a preference for non-punitive disciplinary strategies—a preference they characterized as overly soft or inappropriate to the student's infraction. A dean shared:

> I feel that there are times that [the principal] should put the suspension out there a little more. She's a little bit "Let's move it over, let's have mediations." Which, there's a role for that — but sometimes a message has to be sent. You cannot excuse certain behaviors.

For their part, principals expressed an awareness of these differences, and their own frustrations with the challenges of bringing teachers and other staff on board with their climate goals and disciplinary approach. One principal shared:

> I think one of the challenges is you have the teachers that often want total consistency. And so the differentiation of consequences has been a very difficult conversation with those stakeholders because they don't see the long-term effect.

As the Chapter 4 case studies in Chapter 4 explore in greater depth, we observe that these differences

Table 4.
Teacher views on out-of-school suspension

	Percentage of teachers in agreement (n=650)
OSS is useful for sending messages to parents about the seriousness of infractions	89%
OSS is useful for removing disruptive students so that others can learn	85%
OSS helps ensure a safe school environment	84%
OSS of misbehaving students encourages other students to follow the rules	81%
OSS is useful as a deterrent to the suspended student's future misbehavior	64%
The negative impacts of OSS outweigh any possible benefits	28%

between school leaders and teachers have serious consequences; indeed, they can perpetuate student misbehavior and undercut climate efforts.

Conclusions

The goal of our research on the disciplinary landscape was to develop specific information about the key activities and issues in SDP K-5 and K-8 schools, through the lens of the district's shift toward climate improvement and suspension reduction. We learned that schools are changing their thinking about appropriate and helpful responses to student misbehavior. Some schools are also working systematically to implement preventative interventions in order to reduce the need for suspension. Predictably, schools face challenges in changing their approaches to discipline—both reactive and proactive—by a lack of resources. A key obstacle, and one over which SDP may have more control, is that principals and teaching staff often disagree about the appropriate use of suspension and the goals of climate initiatives. In our view, building consensus and alignment among all adults in the school about discipline and climate goals and interventions should be a major focus at both the school and district levels.

This landscape view is informative, but limited in what it can tell us about future directions for policy and practice in SDP. For instance, the general information here cannot tell us how these practices and themes are manifested in the contexts of particular schools. Nor can it tell us how they relate to student outcomes like suspension and academic achievement. The following chapters address these issues: First, in Chapter 3, we present our work in identifying profiles of schools'

approaches to managing student behavior, and associations between school profiles and student outcomes. Then, in Chapter 4, we contextualize all our findings through four in-depth, field-based case studies.

Chapter Three.
Profiles of Discipline and Climate in SDP K–5 and K–8 Schools

Through the mixed-methods inquiry described in Chapter Two, we were able to develop specific findings in response to our first two research questions, which pertain to school disciplinary approaches and barriers to schools' embrace of non-punitive practices. In this chapter, we discuss our use of survey data from administrators and teachers in SDP K-5 and K-8 schools to conduct exploratory analyses in response to research questions 3 and 4:

> Research Question 3: What patterns are evident in SDP K–5 and K–8 schools' approaches to discipline and climate?
>
> Research Question 4: Are schools' approaches to discipline and climate related to student suspension and academic outcomes?

Research methods

To address research question 3, we conducted a statistical analysis to identify profiles of climate and disciplinary approaches in SDP K-5 and K-8 schools. In response to research question 4, we conducted separate analyses to examine the relationship between the school profiles and student disciplinary and academic outcomes. All analyses described in this chapter used survey data collected from SDP teachers and principals.

Data sources: Teacher and administrator surveys

Both research questions 3 and 4 were answered using data from two rounds of survey administration in Spring, 2016. For the first round, CPRE embedded questions about climate and discipline in SDP's principal and teacher surveys. These surveys are administered online annually to all principals and teachers in all SDP schools by SDP's Office of Research and Evaluation. Questions developed for these surveys by CPRE addressed three general topics: Disciplinary Culture and Climate; Disciplinary Practices and Interventions;

and Out-of-School Suspension. For each topic, items were developed to gather school-level information about disciplinary practices, communication and collaboration around discipline, and staff members' personal beliefs. A total of 12 items from the SDP surveys were used for the analysis of school disciplinary approaches. The response rate for the district teacher survey was 57%.

A second round of survey data collection was completed shortly after the initial round in order to probe the topics of interest in greater depth than the SDP survey instruments permitted. For this round, CPRE worked with the district to identify a stratified random sample of teachers who would receive another survey administered independently by the CPRE research team. We randomly selected one teacher per grade in each K-8 district school to receive the follow-up survey. Of 1,151 teachers in this subsample, 851 (74%) provided responses. A total of 21 of the items administered to teachers as part of this follow-up survey were used in the analyses described in this chapter.

The final sample included responses from a total of 3,776 teachers and 151 principals, representing 96.5% of SDP schools serving K–8 students. Forty-one items were used in the analyses described in this chapter. Table 5 illustrates the sources—whether SDP teacher or principal survey, or CPRE's follow-up teacher survey—and general topics of the survey items.

Identifying profiles

To answer research question 3, regarding patterns in SDP K-5 and K-8 schools' approaches to discipline and climate, we applied a statistical method called latent-class analysis (LCA) to the survey data described above. LCA is an analytic method that can identify patterns that reflect underlying classes, or groupings, in multivariate categorical data (Dayton, 1998). Our goal in selecting LCA was to understand the extent to which the schools in our study fall into types, or profiles, based on their stakeholder-reported climate and disciplinary characteristics. For more information on the LCA , see Appendix A.

School profiles and student outcomes

In response to research question 4, we used event history analysis to examine the relationship between schools' profile membership and their students' risk of being suspended. Much of the research base on suspension has examined suspension ratios for students enrolled during a particular school year (U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights,

Table 5.
Number of survey items by instrument and topic

	Climate	OSS	Practices	Total
SDP teacher survey items	10	2	0	12
SDP principal survey items	2	0	6	8
CPRE teacher survey items	8	7	6	21
Total	20	9	12	41

2016; Gregory, Cornell, & Fan, 2011; Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron, 2002). While not typically used in studies examining suspension, event history analysis is an ideal method for this type of study. Using longitudinal data on when specific, relevant events transpired—when students enrolled in or transferred out of a school, for instance, or when they were suspended or absent—this method is able to provide more precise information by answering questions about the conditional probability of a student receiving a suspension during the period of time when she/he was actually attending a given school. The event history analysis student-level suspension data provided by SDP for the school year in which survey data were collected, 2015-2016. More information on the event history analysis is provided in Appendix A.

Following the event history analysis of student OSS, we next explored the extent to which schools' disciplinary profile membership predicts differences in student academic achievement. This analysis used 2015-2016 data, provided by SDP, from the Pennsylvania state test, the Pennsylvania System of School Assessments (PSSA), for students in grades 3-8 in English, math and science (science is assessed in grades 4 and 8 only).

The findings that emerged from these analyses are detailed in the remainder of this chapter.

Key findings

Table 6 summarizes our key findings in response to research questions 3 and 4. These are described in detail below.

Key finding #1: Three profiles

Three profiles—or types— were identified among SDP K-5 and K-8 schools as the best-fit solution to the LCA. In our confirmatory testing, we observed that schools in each of the three identified profiles had 99% average probability of membership in the profile to which the model assigned them. Moreover, we found that the average probability that any school would better fit a profile to which it was not assigned was less than

0.01. There was no significant difference in average probability of class membership between the three groups (F $(2,163)$ =0.35, p=0.7081). Viewed together, these results indicate a high level of confidence that the three profiles identified in the best-fit LCA solution were good representations of their constituent schools. Figure 1 shows the distribution of the 166 schools in our sample among these three profiles.

Based on the magnitude and direction of the survey data in response to the 41 items that characterized each profile, we were able to develop descriptions for each. These are:

> **Profile 1. Reactive and autonomous**. Schools in this profile rely on punitive and exclusionary disciplinary responses to maintain order. Respondents tend to express the belief that OSS is an important means of keeping control in the school and protecting non-disruptive students from others' misbehavior. Teachers in these schools perceive that they must fend for themselves with regard to discipline; administrators, they believe, will not consistently support them.

> **Profile 2. Under-resourced and non-cohesive**. Schools in this profile experience staffing and resource shortages most profoundly, and are inconsistent in their use of both punitive and non-punitive practices. Staff report low morale. Teachers report little collaboration around discipline, and feel blamed by administrators for their students' misbehavior.

> **Profile 3. Collaborative and relational**. Schools in this profile are characterized by collaborative approaches to discipline, including frequent student-teacher conferences and the use of non-punitive practices. Morale is generally high; teachers feel supported by their administration. OSS is not viewed as an effective response to misbehavior.

Figure 1 shows the distribution of schools across the three profiles.

Survey respondents from schools in Profile 3 (collaborative and relational) were more likely than other respondents to report feeling supported by their administrations and adequately trained to handle

Table 6.
Research questions 3 and 4 with key findings

Research Question	Key Findings
What patterns are evident in SDP K–5 and K–8 schools' approaches to discipline and climate?	Survey data suggest the presence of three types, or profiles, of K-5 and K-8 schools in SDP based on their approaches to discipline and climate: 1) Reactive and autonomous; 2) Under-resourced and non-cohesive; 3) Collaborative and relational.
	Schools exhibiting a collaborative and relational approach to climate and discipline were located in communities that had lower poverty, higher educational attainment, fewer households without English spoken in the home, higher percentage of White non-Hispanic residents, and fewer minors living with one parent.
	Schools implementing PBIS with SDP support are found in all three profiles, suggesting poor penetration of PBIS practices in many implementing schools.
Are schools' approaches to discipline and climate related to student suspension and academic outcomes?	Controlling for demographics and other factors, students attending schools with collaborative and relational approaches (Profile 3) had the lowest risk of being suspended.
	Controlling for demographics and other factors, students attending schools with collaborative and relational approaches (Profile 3) had the highest academic achievement.

discipline. In addition, they were more likely to express the belief that their school handles discipline in a way that is collaborative, compassionate, and responsive to student needs. They more often reported the use of positive behavioral interventions (though, as noted below, they were no more likely than other respondents to teach in schools implementing PBIS with SDP support). These respondents were more likely than others to disagree with statements asserting the usefulness of OSS, and they reported that their schools used exclusionary practices less frequently than respondents in other profiles.

Respondents in schools in Profile 1 (reactive and autonomous) were more likely than others to report the use of exclusionary practices. They were also more likely than others to agree with statements asserting the usefulness of OSS for maintaining order and discouraging future misbehavior, and to disagree with statements like the following:

- My administration supports my decisions regarding school discipline.
- I know what is expected of me regarding student discipline.
- I have been adequately trained to manage student behavior effectively.

Finally, the data from respondents in schools in Profile 2 (under-resourced and non-cohesive) suggest that these schools' disciplinary approaches are neither consistently punitive nor consistently non-punitive. Respondents in these schools tended to report low morale at their schools, and a lack of administrative support for their disciplinary decisions. They reported infrequent use of proactive or non-punitive disciplinary approaches, and tended to disagree with assertions that their school handles discipline in a collaborative, compassionate, or effective manner. Interestingly,

Figure 1:
Distribution of SDP K–5 and K–8 schools among the three profiles
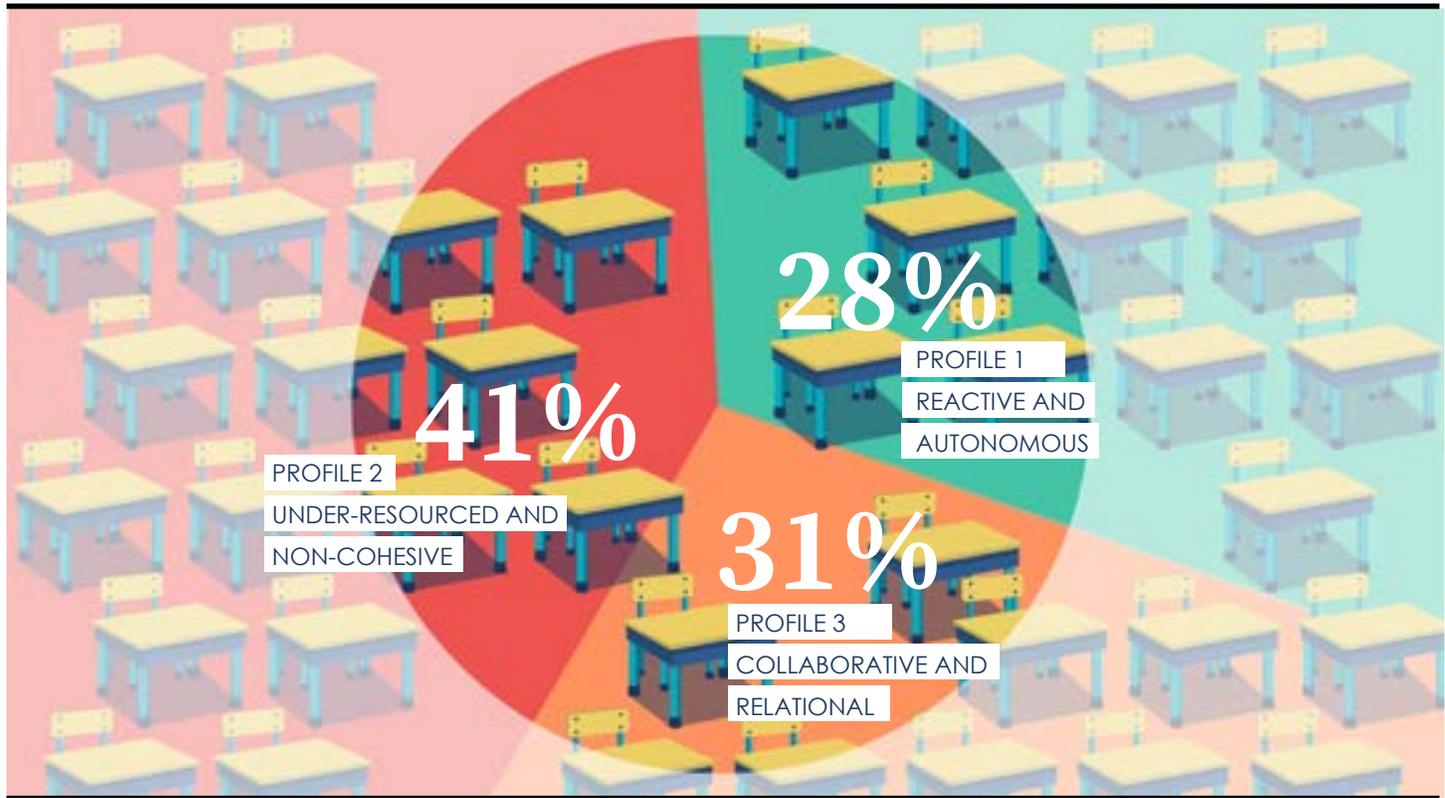
respondents in Profile 2 schools were less likely than others to report that their school has a guidance counselor.

It is important to note that, although the LCA model described here produced a solution with a good fit relative to alternatives, the findings of our tests of the LCA model's identification suggest that it is plausible that other profile solutions might fit the data nearly as well. One goal of this exploratory study is to test the suitability and utility of LCA for researching school climate and discipline. We do not regard the findings discussed here as confirmatory evidence of these profiles, but rather as one way of organizing complex data in a meaningful way within the broader mixed-methods study. We are interested in explicating the profiles based on the LCA of survey data in combination with case studies to better understand school discipline in context as it relates to student disciplinary and academic outcomes.

Key finding #2: Neighborhood matters

After identifying the three profiles, we explored differences between them on observable school and community characteristics. Table 7 presents aggregate statistics for student demographics in the three profiles. This is potentially important information, as differences in student outcomes across the three profiles could be solely, or in large part, attributable to differences in student population. Table 7 presents evidence that schools in Profile 2 most closely resembled the district overall. Schools in Profile 3 had the lowest percentages of students receiving lunch assistance and those identified as racial minorities, and fewer unexcused absences. These findings are statistically significant when comparing students in Profile 3 schools to the combined students in the other two profiles, and reveal the need to control for these differences in any analyses that compare student outcomes across the three profiles.

In the case of neighborhood schools like those in SDP, community attributes may be an important factor to consider in understanding the climate and disciplinary approaches of the school. To better understand schools' surrounding contexts and further investigate

Table 7.
Aggregate student attributes by school profile

	Profile 1 reactive & autonomous	Profile 2 under-resourced & non-cohesive	Profile 3 collaborative & relational	All SDP
Student demographics				
Students with ≥ 1 OSS	9.8%	9.9%	8.7%	9.45%
Limited English proficiency	11.0%	11.1%	10.5%	10.85%
Female	47.3%	47.6%	48.3%	47.75%
Free/reduced lunch eligibility	71.4%	68.4%	64.2%	67.74%
Hispanic	23.3%	21.2%	16.4%	20.08%
African American	53.0%	51.6%	48.5%	50.88%
Grade	3.4	3.56	3.9	3.63
School start to student entry (weeks)	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.14
Unexcused absences (weeks)	1.2	1.2	1.0	1.13
Community Attributes				
Minors in family up to 100 FPL	42.4%	34.8%	28.4%	34.4%
Minors living with one parent	66.5%	63.3%	54.2%	60.5%
Non-English-speaking home	27.2%	23.8%	19.2%	22.9%
BS or higher education	18.1%	18.3%	27.0%	21.8%
Hispanic	22.0%	16.0%	11.2%	15.8%
White non-Hispanic	26.3%	27.9%	40.9%	32.7%
Black non-Hispanic	43.5%	48.2%	38.6%	43.0%
Asian non-Hispanic	6.2%	5.6%	6.6%	6.2%
Other non-Hispanic	2.1%	2.3%	2.7%	2.4%

Note: Grade, school start, and absences are reports as averages

Table 8.
Schools by Profile and SDP Network

Network	Profile 1 Schools	Profile 2 Schools	Profile 3 Schools	Participating Schools perNetwork
1	6	5	8	19
2	7	9	7	23
3	7	2	12	21
4	8	6	6	20
5	6	2	5	13
6	2	6	11	19
7	2	9	7	18
8	6	5	6	17
9	4	6	5	15
Total	48	50	67	165

Table 9.
Estimates (with hazard ratio) for three event history models of OSS in SDP

	Model I			Model II			Model III		
Limited English proficiency	-0.30	**	(0.74)				-0.30	**	(0.74)
Female	-0.42	**	(0.66)				-0.42	**	(0.66)
School start to stud entry (weeks)	0.03	**	(1.03)				0.03	**	(1.03)
Unexcused absences (weeks)	0.11	**	(1.12)				0.11	**	(1.12)
Grade	0.12	**	(1.13)				0.12	**	(1.13)
Free/reduced lunch	0.29	**	(1.33)				0.28	**	(1.33)
Hispanic	0.56	**	(1.75)				0.55	**	(1.74)
African American	0.93	**	(2.53)				0.93	**	(2.52)
Prior OSS	1.68	**	(5.39)				1.68	**	(5.37)
Profile 1									
Profile 2				0.00	**	(1.00)	0.05	*	(1.06)
Profile 3				-0.16	**	(0.85)	-0.06	*	(0.95)

** p<.001 * p<.05

differences that may exist between the three school profiles, we conducted additional analyses that looked at the composition of the surrounding communities for the schools in each profile. The demographic data used in this study were provided by the United States Census Bureau in the form of the 2011-15 American Community Survey 5-year estimates for census tracts. School discipline profile data were joined to school buildings' census tract shapefiles by building identification codes using the Geographical Information System (GIS) package from ESRI called ArcMap, version 10.2.2. This allowed demographic data reflecting the community context within which the school is located to be linked using a spatial join to the school buildings file. Each school was thus linked to an associated set of community variables pertaining to the population in its census tract. [3]

Just as we observed relationships between student demographics and school profile, we find statistically significant differences in the makeup of the communities surrounding schools in different profiles. Specifically, schools in Profile 3 were located in communities that had lower poverty, higher educational attainment, fewer households without English spoken in the home, higher percentage of White non-Hispanic residents, and fewer minors living with one parent. Figures 2 and 3 show the prevalene of schools in each profile against a backdrop of poverty and race, respectively.[4]

Key finding #3: PBIS in every profile

Our third key finding is that schools implementing PBIS with SDP support are found in all three profiles, suggesting poor penetration of PBIS practices in many implementing schools. Because of PBIS's focus on communicating clear expectations and rewarding positive behavior, it would be expected that many schools implementing PBIS would be in the Profile 3 (collaborative and relational). However, PBIS schools are represented in all three profiles, with more than half falling into Profile 1 (reactive and autonomous). Chi-square tests indicate that SDP-supported PBIS schools are as likely to fall into Profiles 1 or 2 as they are to fall into Profile 3.

Figure 5 illustrates the geographic distribution of schools by profile. Our analyses indicate that there is no statistically significant geographic clustering; in other words, schools in all three profiles are dispersed throughout the city.

As these analyses indicate—and perhaps not surprisingly—schools that demonstrate collaborative and relational approaches to discipline and climate are more often located in relatively more advantaged neighborhoods. However, they also reveal that this is not always the case. In Chapter 4, we provide detailed descriptions of schools working to improve climate and embrace non-punitive discipline against different

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3   Future analysis may involve looking at these demographic data by school catchment area or by a predetermined radius around the school building (i.e. average distance a student travels to school). However, the information presented in Table 7 looks only at the demographics of the nearest census tract.

4   To protect the anonymity of individual schools, these figures cluster schools geographically, by SDP administrative network.

Figure 2:
Distribution of school profiles over racial makeup of Philadelphia neighborhoods

Percentage of residents identifying as Latino
- 0 – 19%
- 20 – 39%
- 40% – 59%
- 60% – 79%
- 80% – 92%
- < 500 People per tract

- **Profile 1:** Reactive and Autonomous
- **Profile 2:** Under-resourced and Non-cohesive
- **Profile 3:** Collaborative and Relational

Percentage of residents identifying as Black
- 0 – 19%
- 20 – 39%
- 40% – 59%
- 60% – 79%
- 80% – 100%
- < 500 People per tract

Overall Philadelphia's population is 43% Black, 37% White, 11% Hispanic/Latino, 7% Asian, and 2% mixed race.

Schools are clustered geographically within SDP administrative networks to protect individual schools' anonymity

Figure 2 *(continued)*:
Distribution of school profiles over racial makeup of Philadelphia neighborhoods

Percentage of residents
identifying as White

- 0 – 19%
- 20 – 39%
- 40% – 59%
- 60% – 79%
- 80% – 100%
- < 500 People per tract

● **Profile 1**: Reactive and Autonomous
● **Profile 2**: Under-resourced and Non-cohesive
● **Profile 3**: Collaborative and Relational

Percentage of residents
identifying as Asian

- 0 – 19%
- 20 – 39%
- 40% – 59%
- 60% – 64%
- < 500 People per tract

Overall Philadelphia's population is 43% Black, 37% White, 11% Hispanic/Latino, 7% Asian, and 2% mixed race.

Schools are clustered geographically within SDP administrative networks to protect individual schools' anonymity

Figure 3:
Distribution of school profiles and child poverty in Philadelphia

Rate of Children in Poverty

- Below Average for Philadelphia (0 – 20%)
- Average for Philadelphia (21 – 44%: 32% mean)
- Above Average for Philadelphia (45 – 67%)
- Far Above Average for Philadelphia (68 – 100%)
- < 50 minors/census tract

- **Profile 1:** Reactive and Autonomous
- **Profile 2:** Under-resourced and Non-cohesive
- **Profile 3:** Collaborative and Relational
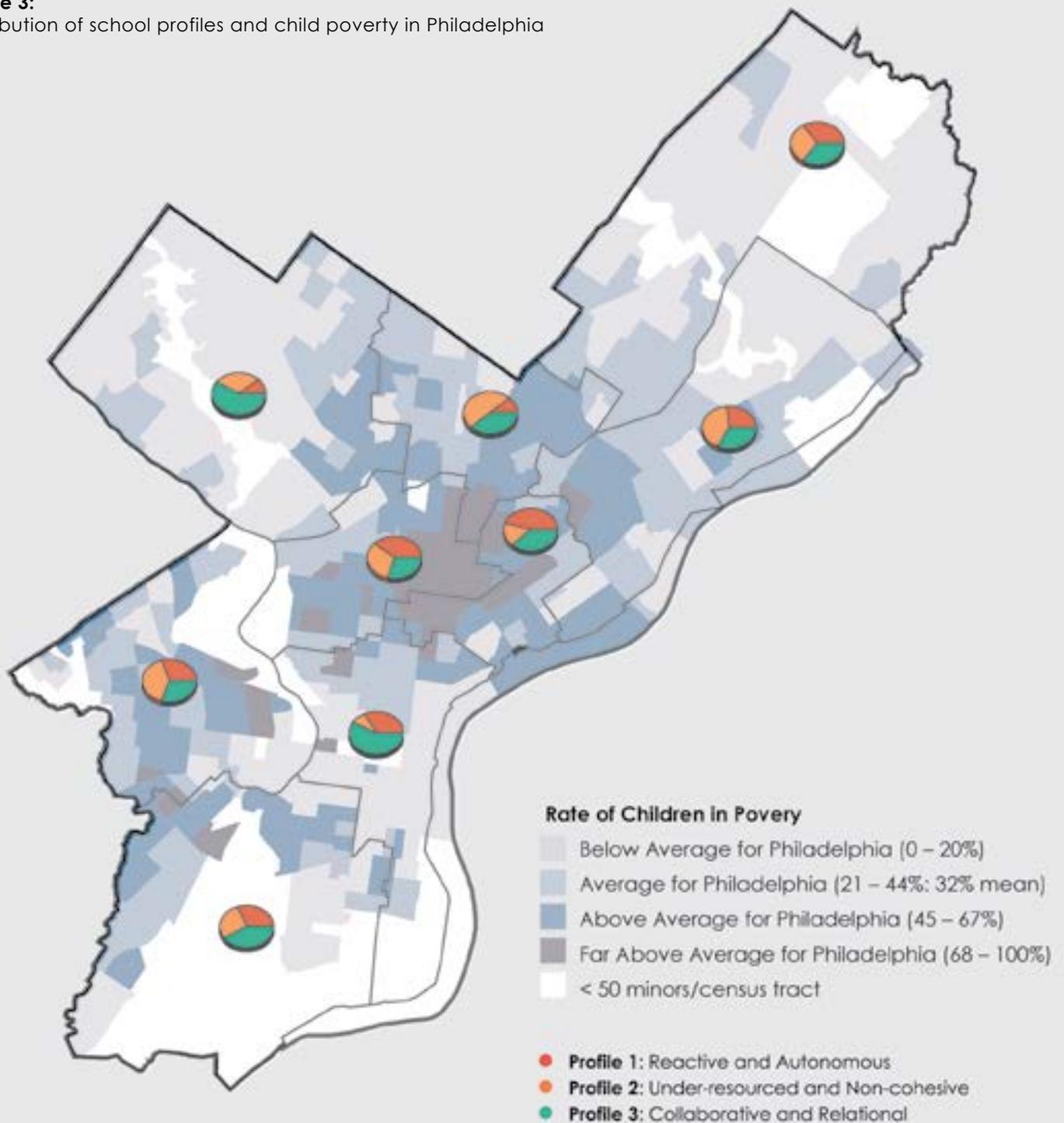
Source: 2011–15 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
Dataset: Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months – 2015 (lates)
Variable: Estimated Percentage of Children in Poverty by Census Tract

community backdrops, including those that are, based on these analyses, least likely to be home to Profile 3 schools.

Key finding #4: Profile and suspension

To address research question 4, pertaining to the relationship between the profiles and student outcomes, we conducted two separate analyses. First we examined whether a student's risk of being suspended is related to his or her school's disciplinary and climate profile.

We estimated a student's risk of receiving at least one OSS over the 2015-16 school year in three nested models, whose results are shown in Table 9. Model I represents the event likelihood of an OSS conditional on student demographic characteristics (see Table 7 for district rates for all covariates), without factoring in school profile. The hazard ratios in Model I therefore represent the estimated relationships between students' demographic attributes and the probability of an OSS in 2015-16, holding all other predictors constant.

Model II predicts OSS event likelihood, conditional on school profiles only. This model does not control for student characteristics. Results of this model therefore reflect the expected difference in a student's risk of receiving an OSS, without accounting for the significant student-demographic differences between school profiles.

Model III includes both school profile and student demographics. Model III is the preferred model because it controls for student risk factors, which are disproportionately represented in the three profiles of disciplinary approaches, when testing for differences in OSS event likelihood. Table 8 presents parameter estimates and hazard ratios for each of these three models.

A review of the results indicates that students attending schools in Profile 3 (collaborative and relational) have a significantly lower risk of being suspended than students attending schools in either of the other two profiles. This is the case when student characteristics are controlled for, and when they are not; when adjusting for student demographics, the difference between Profile 3 schools and the other two profiles is reduced but still statistically significant.

Figure 4.
Distributions of adjusted school-level OSS risk, by disciplinary profile
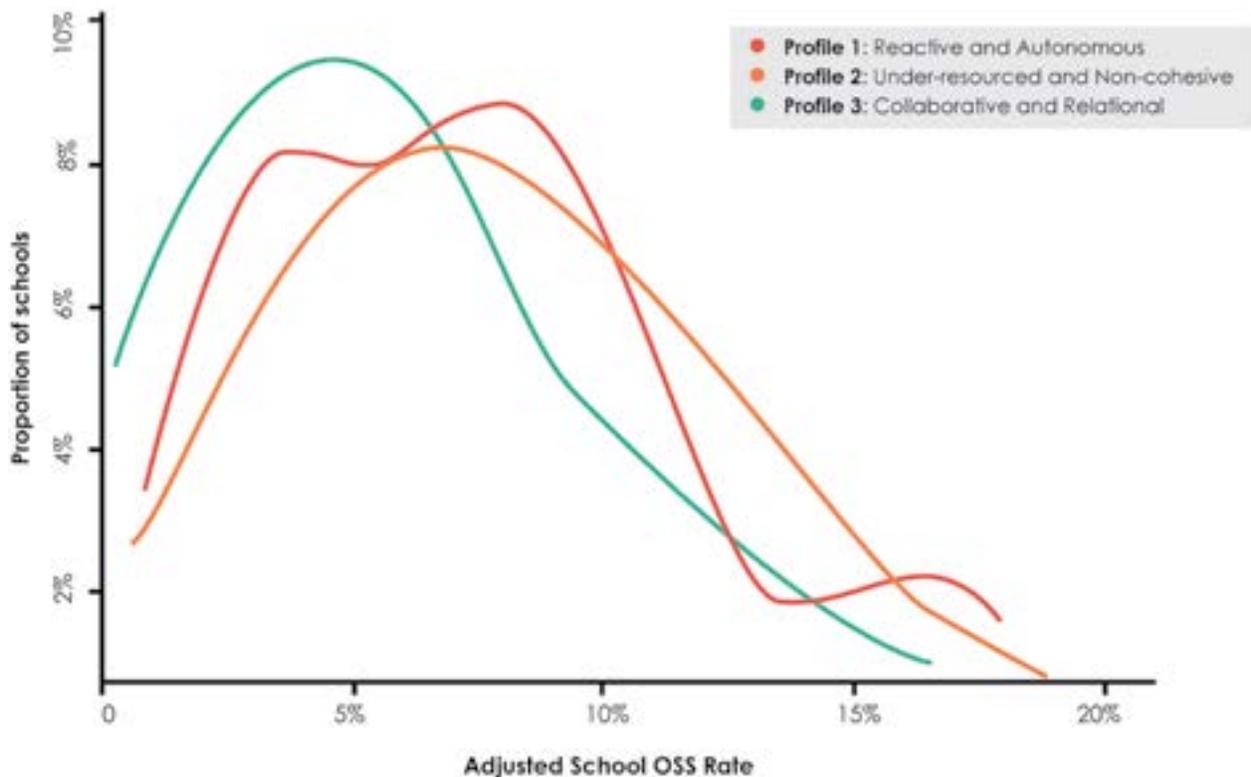
The differences between Profile 1 (reactive and autonomous) and Profile 2 (under-resourced and non-cohesive) schools in terms of students' OSS risk are less clear. In Model II, which excludes student-demographic control variables, the hazard ratios indicate no difference in students' OSS risk between Profile 1 and Profile 2 schools. Controlling for student demographics, however, we find that students in Profile 1 schools have a significantly lower expected likelihood of suspension than those in Profile 2. To illustrate the differences and variation in predicted suspension rates between profile groups once demographic controls are applied. Figure 4 overlays the distributions of the school-level model-adjusted probability that a student will receive an OSS during the 2015-16 school year for each disciplinary profile.

The variation observed in school-level OSS rates within the district is present within each of the profiles. Focusing on the peaks of the distributions, however, we see that the average adjusted school likelihood that a student will receive at least one OSS in the 2015-

16 school year is lower (i.e. to the left) for Profile 3 as compared to the other two profiles.

Key finding #5: Profile and academic achievement

To further explore research question 4, we also examined the relationship between school profile and student achievement, as measured by Pennsylvania state assessments administered in third grade and above. Student-level assessment data for 2015-16 in Math, English Language Arts, and Science were provided for this analysis by SDP.

Tables 10 and 11 provide a description of the data we used for this analysis. Table 10 shows the number of 2015-2016 student assessments included in the analysis, by grade and subject. Table 11 provides a raw breakdown of the percent of students scoring proficient and/or advanced, by grade level, in schools in each profile. (Science is assessed in grades 3 and 8 only.)

Table 10.
Total number of state assessments by grade and subject

Grade	English	Math	Science
3	10,503	10,696	
4	9,828	10,038	9,979
5	9,057	9,175	
6	7,842	7,919	
7	7,194	7,294	
8	6,883	6,989	6,931
Total	51,307	52,111	16,910

Table 11.
Sample size and raw percent proficient/advanced by subject, grade and profile

	English			Math			Science			English	Math	Science
Profile	1	2	3	1	2	3	1	2	3			
Grade												
3	28%	25%	35%	20%	16%	26%				10,503	10,696	
4	25%	24%	32%	15%	13%	20%	40%	37%	46%	9,828	10,038	9,979
5	25%	28%	36%	13%	12%	21%				9,057	9,175	
6	24%	27%	44%	9%	9%	24%				7,842	7,919	
7	23%	28%	43%	8%	12%	24%				7,194	7,294	
8	24%	30%	44%	8%	10%	20%	16%	22%	35%	6,883	6,989	6,931
	25%	27%	39%	13%	13%	23%	32%	31%	41%	51,307	52,111	16,910

Note: 2015-2016 PSSA scores for K-8 SDP schools

Table 12.

Estimates (with standard errors) for three regression models of PSSA scores in SDP

	Model 1	Model II	Model III
English			
Intercept	1001.31 (1.69)	974.49 (0.79)	1016.48 (1.77)
Grade	4.85 (0.25)		4.32 (0.25)
Female	26.48 (0.82)		26.42 (0.82)
Free/reduced lunch	-25.69 (0.90)		-25.37 (0.90)
Limited English proficiency	-87.84 (1.49)		-87.49 (1.49)
African American	-55.4 (1.02)		-54.77 (1.02)
Hispanic	-47.03 (1.23)		-45.28 (1.23)
Prior OSS	-33.43 (1.19)		-32.97 (1.19)
Unexcused absences (weeks)	-15.56 (0.34)		-15.2 (0.34)
2015-16 OSS	-27.79 (1.33)		-27.57 (1.32)
Profile 2		-37.86 (1.22)	-18.83 (1.05)
Profile 1		-36.28 (1.15)	-24.19 (0.99)
Math			
Intercept	1010.09 (1.69)	921.32 (0.80)	1025.43 (1.76)
Grade	-3.19 (0.25)		-3.66 (0.25)
Female	1.34 (0.82)		1.25 (0.82)
Free/reduced lunch	-23.19 (0.90)		-23.41 (0.90)
Limited English proficiency	-67.21 (1.43)		-66.71 (1.43)
African American	-71.21 (1.02)		-71.05 (1.02)
Hispanic	-55.49 (1.22)		-54.31 (1.22)
Prior OSS	-28.84 (1.20)		-28.76 (1.20)
Unexcused absences (weeks)	-16.54 (0.34)		-16.24 (0.34)
2015-16 OSS	-24.27 (1.33)		-23.88 (1.33)
Profile 2		-31.38 (1.23)	-14.74 (1.05)
Profile 1		-36.57 (1.16)	-26.15 (0.98)
Science			
Intercept	1504.01 (4.95)	1233.94 (2.48)	1526.44 (5.19)
Grade	-23.36 (0.66)		-24.1 (0.65)
Female	-0.66 (2.50)		-0.49 (2.51)
Free/reduced lunch	-41.11 (2.72)		-41.22 (2.72)
Limited English proficiency	-149.63 (4.32)		-148.25 (4.31)
African American	-119.26 (3.13)		-118.67 (3.12)
Hispanic	-87.04 (3.72)		-84.67 (3.72)
Prior OSS	-60.9 (3.57)		-59.97 (3.57)
Unexcused absences (weeks)	-24.81 (1.04)		-24.29 (1.04)
2015-16 OSS	-55.38 (4.06)		-55.12 (4.06)
Profile 2		-41.66 (3.83)	-25.45 (3.21)
Profile 1		-43.92 (3.57)	-36.24 (2.97)

Note: Profile 3 (collaborative & relational) is reference category

We compared group means separately for the three subjects using a model that regressed standard scores on school disciplinary profile, which was treated as a categorical fixed effect. To account for the clustering of student scores within school, a random effect was included in the model for school. In addition to the covariates used in the event history analysis, we included in this model an indicator for OSS. We included OSS as a control variable because we were interested in the effect of school disciplinary profile on achievement, above and beyond the effect on achievement of any suspensions students may have received. Differences between school profiles (i.e., post hoc multiple group comparisons between least squares means) were then estimated along with associated standard errors to test for statistical significance of group differences. Table 12 presents the results of this analysis.

To assist with interpretation, we include Table 14, which presents standardized effects rather than raw differences. These effects were calculated as quotient of difference between least square means and the standard deviation of the dependent variable. As Tables 13 and 14 illustrate, after controlling for student demographics and prior suspensions, students enrolled at schools in Profile 3 (collaborative and

Table 13.
PSSA differences between school profiles

	Raw Mean	Raw S.D	LS Mean	S.E.
English				
Profile 1	937.6	96.9	944.9	0.79
Profile 2	939.3	102.1	939.5	0.71
Profile 3	977.7	120.2	963.7	0.68
Math				
Profile 1	891.5	100.6	896.8	0.79
Profile 2	886.1	98.1	885.4	0.70
Profile 3	925.2	124.7	911.5	0.68
Science				
Profile 1	1193.7	182.5	1200.2	2.42
Profile 2	1193.3	187.1	1189.4	2.12
Profile 3	1240.0	209.4	1225.6	2.07

Note: In order to protect the anonymity of the participating schools, figures presented are approximate.

Table 14.
Standard effect sizes for estimated differences in PSSA scores by subject between school profiles

	Adjusted Group Mean Difference			Standardized Effect		
English						
Profile 1		5.4	-18.8		0.05	-0.17
Profile 2	-5.4		-24.2	-0.05		-0.22
Profile 3	18.8	24.2		0.17	0.22	
Math						
Profile 1		11.4	-14.7		0.10	-0.13
Profile 2	-11.4		-26.2	-0.10		-0.24
Profile 3	14.7	26.2		0.13	0.24	
Science						
Profile 1		10.8	-25.4		0.06	-0.13
Profile 2	-10.8		-36.2	-0.06		-0.18
Profile 3	25.4	36.2		0.13	0.18	

Note: All differences statistically significant p<.0001; English SD = 109.68; Math SD = 111.02; Science SD = 196.03.

relational) scored, on average, 24 points higher on the PSSA English, when compared to students at all other schools. This is equivalent to a standard effect size of 0.22 SD. Students in Profile 3 schools also scored an average of 26 points higher in Math and 36 points higher in Science, for standard effects of .24 and .18 SD, respectively. (The interpretation and implications of these effect sizes are discussed in Chapter 5.)

Results of this descriptive analysis offer evidence that schools' climate and disciplinary approaches are associated with differences in academic achievement. It is, however, plausible that student test scores could be a contributing factor in schools' decisions about how to respond to behavior issues. Further research is needed to explore this possibility and also to identify the extent to which additional explanatory factors not included in this study may contribute to both schools' disciplinary approaches and levels of student achievement.

Conclusions

Our work in developing the three climate and disciplinary profiles for SDP K-5 and K-8 schools is a centerpiece of our study, and one that reveals a number of useful insights. First, this research clearly suggests that there are meaningful differences between large groups of SDP schools that are relatively easily explained and understood. The teachers and school leaders we surveyed point out differences not only in the prevalence of punitive and non-punitive disciplinary approaches, but also in patterns of communication and collaboration, and in the support and morale of adults in the buildings. This is a promising finding, as it suggests that differentiating and tailoring supports for schools in each of the different profiles is both possible and potentially quite useful for improving approaches to managing behavior.

Second, the findings of our suspension and academic-achievement analyses yield evidence of a relationship between climate and student outcomes. Students in Profile 3 (collaborative and relational) schools, we see, are suspended less often and achieve at a higher level academically than those attending other SDP schools, even when controlling for student demographics. This underscores other research (Voight, Austin, & Hanson, 2013) and suggests that district leaders looking to reduce suspension and boost achievement should look for ways to replicate the successes that are evident among these schools. Of course, we also see that the schools in Profile 3 are, overall, located in neighborhoods with lower poverty, crime, and proportionally fewer Black and Hispanic residents. This, too, underscores our finding—discussed in Chapters 2, 4, and 5—that, in general, the schools

serving students with the most complex needs struggle most to effectively implement PBIS and non-punitive approaches to discipline.

It is important to keep in mind, when considering the findings presented in this chapter, that this work is explicitly exploratory in nature. In addition to exploring new questions about patterns of disciplinary approaches and how they present themselves in survey data, we applied methods—specifically LCA and event history analysis—that are not typically used in studies of school discipline and climate. Future research should further establish the use of these methods in this context.

An additional caveat to the findings discussed in this chapter is that, while evidence suggests that the three-profile solution has a good fit to the data, there are indications that it may not be the only reasonable way to define a disciplinary typology. This is important for two reasons: First, it invites more research to examine the applicability of these insights in other contexts. Second, it points to the need for a second perspective, one that looks more deeply at the profiles as they are manifested in actual schools. In the chapter that follows, which details our case study findings, we offer this additional view.

Chapter Four.
The Profiles in Depth

CPRE's research into climate and disciplinary practices in SDP K-5 and K-8 schools culminated in four field-based case studies completed in the spring of 2017. A central purpose of the case-study research was to examine in depth how discipline and climate policies and programs are implemented in varying school contexts throughout the city. This work addresses our fifth research question:

> **Research Question 5**: How are different approaches to discipline and climate manifested in individual schools?

The case-study research was intended to contextualize the results of the profile analysis described in Chapter 3. By exploring a small number of cases in depth, we were able to better understand how various factors interact to contribute to a school's profile membership. Finally, they offered a unique opportunity to explore how the district's messages about OSS and climate have been received and enacted by various individuals within a single school.

The four schools we selected for our case-study research occupy different Philadelphia neighborhoods with distinct socioeconomic profiles, and each contends with a unique set of challenges. For purposes of this research, we gave the four schools pseudonyms: Gannis Elementary/Middle; Downing Elementary; Stafford Elementary; and Clybourne Elementary/Middle. Two of these four schools receive support for

climate efforts through the district's PBIS initiative. In two of the four, a student's predicted likelihood of receiving at least one OSS during the 2015-16 school year was well below the district average. In one of the case study schools, a student's average likelihood of receiving an OSS roughly equaled the district average, and students at another faced more than double the average risk of receiving an OSS for that year. Table 12 displays additional information on each of the case-study schools.

Despite their differences, these four schools are all working to implement climate strategies that align with the district's goals, as compared with the population of K-5 and K-8 SDP schools overall. That is, each of the four schools is working to improve climate by adopting a relatively non-punitive orientation towards discipline. By focusing on four schools that purport to be generally aligned with SDP priorities, we were able to look closely at the strategies different schools use to achieve similar goals, as well as the specific challenges that arise in each context.

Because of these differences and similarities, the insights we gathered from the case-study research in these four schools both affirmed and challenged the results of our other research activities. In this chapter, we present a brief description of each school. Our key findings from this portion of the study are presented at the end of the chapter, where we discuss our analysis of the four cases together.

Research Methods

To conduct each of the case studies described in this chapter, a team of two researchers spent at least two school days conducting observations, interviews, and focus groups on site. Interviews and focus groups were designed to represent a broad range of stakeholders

Table 15.
The case study schools at a glance

	Gannis	Downing	Stafford	Clybourne
Climate & Discipline Profile	3 (collaborative and relational)	3 (collaborative and relational)	1 (reactive and autonomous)	3 (collaborative and relational)
School size	large	small	medium	medium
Grades served	K-8	K-5	K-5	K-8
SDP-supported PBIS	Yes	No	Yes	No
% of students receiving a suspension in 2015-16	~20%	<5%	<5%	~15%

Note: In order to protect the anonymity of the participating schools, figures presented are approximate.

and perspectives at each school. Observations focused on different settings within each school to help develop a clear sense of school-wide climate, and to better understand their individual contexts, strengths, and challenges.

The specific structure of the data-collection visits and research activities varied based on each school's circumstances and schedules. In each school, the principal and other administrators handling discipline issues were interviewed, along with classroom teachers. At two of the four, researchers also spoke with parents and students; for logistical reasons this was not possible in the other two schools. All interviews and focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed for analysis. Observations of both structured spaces, such as classrooms and disciplinary spaces, and less structured spaces like cafeterias and playgrounds were also conducted. In each of these spaces, researchers compiled field notes using tailored protocols.

The two researchers assigned to each school worked together to produce detailed memos highlighting key insights about the school's approach to climate, discipline, and suspensions. The guiding questions presented in Chapter 2's description of interview data collection were modified to focus on a single-school context; these questions gave structure to both the collection of case-study data and the development of the research memos:

1. Have people at this school received messages from the district about improving climate and reducing suspensions?

2. If so, how do people at this school understand the messages they have received? To what extent are they bought in to these messages?

3. Is this school responding to these messages? If so, how?

4. How does this school manage discipline? To what extent is its approach proactive vs. reactive? Punitive vs. non-punitive?

5. What barriers and facilitators exist to this school's enactment of the district's vision?

6. Are there signs of success in terms of positive climate and/or suspension reduction? If so, what are the signs and how do people in this school talk about them?

7. What role, if any, does PBIS play in this school's approach to climate and discipline?

The research team for each school reviewed drafts of the case-study memos while referring back to observation notes and transcripts. Summaries for each school were then shared with the entire qualitative

team to discuss and clarify the frames and propositions suggested by the team of researchers from each individual school (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through inter-team discourse, the propositions were sharpened into a set of findings particular to each case. As a final step, the team compared and contrasted the findings and insights of the four cases in light of the guiding questions listed above and research question #5.

Case study 1: A diamond in the rough

Floor-to-ceiling windows frame glass doorways on either side of Gannis Elementary & Middle School's[5] main corridor. The school's facility is relatively modern, with colorful student artwork filling glass cases on the walls. The feeling in the K-8 school's main artery is welcoming, belying Gannis' location in a particularly troubled area of Philadelphia. As a class passes through, a few students exchange greetings with a support staff member who is seated at the reception desk—a long-time Gannis employee with deep roots in the neighborhood.

Demographically, Gannis' surrounding neighborhood is predominately Hispanic; the school's principal, Ms. Rodriguez, reports that more than 80% of the students are Hispanic, and many are classified as English-language learners. African Americans constitute the second largest population of neighborhood residents, and Rodriguez noted a growing influx of Asian and white students to the school, although their numbers are still small.

Generally speaking, Gannis' leaders and staff expressed the belief that the school's commitment to cultivating positive relationships among students, families, and staff yields benefits in student cooperation, buy-in, and behavior. Parents acknowledged the school's open-door policy and receptiveness to their participation. Though Gannis receives support for PBIS implementation from the district and its student-centered climate philosophy is well aligned with the program, staff members characterize the school's climate as a natural outgrowth of staff's connection and commitment to the local community.

> *"We as a team try to just work on creating a family environment,"* Rodriguez explained. *"We are very receptive to families coming in."*

Over the course of three separate visits to Gannis during May, 2017, CPRE researchers conducted interviews and facilitated focus group discussions about the school's climate and disciplinary practices. All in all, we collected insights from the principal; assistant principal; dean; counselor; eight teachers; two support staff members; a bus driver; the school resource officer; five parents; and 12 students. We observed interactions among students, staff, and family members in instructional and non-instructional spaces throughout the school.

The portrait that emerged in the course of this research is of a school that faces serious challenges in terms of student needs and behavior—its student body is among the most challenging in our case study sample—but that is nonetheless held in high regard by its staff and the local community. Gannis highlights and celebrates its students' predominantly Hispanic heritage; the school's senior leadership team is almost entirely of Hispanic descent, and many staff members claim personal connections to the surrounding community. At least one teacher at each grade level is a native Spanish speaker. The school also has strong relationships with a number of community organizations that support Gannis' staff and bring extra resources.

Gannis also emerges from our case-study research as a school whose staff members appreciate its strong leadership and embrace a coherent climate vision—specifically, a student-centered and generally non-punitive approach that is tempered by zero tolerance for serious behavioral infractions. This finding is consistent with other data from the school: Survey respondents reported using predominantly proactive and non-punitive disciplinary practices. Yet, Gannis' OSS rate is more than double that of any other school in our case-study sample, and that of SDP K-8 schools overall, reflecting the serious challenges which the school continues to face.

High expectations as a foundation

Despite important assets—including deep local connections; strong community partners; and a shared vision for what the school can become—Gannis has faced and continues to face real and evolving challenges. Students grappling daily with serious issues like poverty,

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5   All names in this chapter are pseudonyms, and other identifying details have been omitted or changed.

homelessness, and crime bring significant behavioral challenges to school, and staff members feel underequipped to address their students' needs. Virtually all stakeholders we spoke with, including parents and students, stated that staff shortages made behavior management a challenge at Gannis. "We need definitely more eyes and ears in the hallway," a teacher reported.

The school's challenges were exacerbated when enrollment more than doubled following the closure of a nearby school several years ago. Staff members reported that the influx of new students led to an increase in problem behaviors and that, although the school received additional teaching staff, no additional administrative supports or services were provided to ease this transition. By many accounts, the closing of the nearby school and Gannis' absorption of its students represented a turning point after which the school's culture had to be recalibrated.

Rodriguez assumed a lead role in that recalibration. She reported demanding that teachers have high expectations of Gannis students, and that they be strong managers of student behavior in their classrooms rather than relying on administrators to address lower-level offenses. Thus, a significant component of Gannis' current strategy for improving climate is hiring individuals with a mindset that reflects the principal's "high expectations" mandate, a willingness to go above and beyond in their job, and a belief in relationship-building as a strategy to effectively manage student behavior. Teachers corroborated that success at Gannis requires a stance of personal accountability for classroom management, noting that some who fail to demonstrate commitment have been moved out of the school.

In part because of Rodriguez's emphasis on teachers managing behavior at the classroom level, behavior management is an area where many Gannis teachers feel they need more support. As one explained: "We need more support for [behavior management]. Especially … I'd say new teachers but even myself, and I've taught for [a number of] years."

Gannis teachers reported that while SDP offers

training and resources in this area, attending the sessions that are offered outside school hours can be inconvenient and the usefulness of the offerings is inconsistent. As a result, many Gannis teachers reported learning classroom management strategies from their colleagues or from training received during their tenures at charter schools.

Rodriguez' efforts to build a strong and committed teaching staff appear to be working: Teachers at Gannis were quick to praise the school's professional environment, and characterize the school as "a diamond in the rough"—a special place with the potential to be even better. Teachers' commitment to improving the school is evidenced not only through their descriptions of the school climate but through their active efforts to contribute to its future, such as writing grants to benefit the school's students and pursuing programs and additional resources.

Along with high expectations for her staff, Rodriguez used clear messaging early in her term to underscore behavioral expectations for students and families. Soon after her arrival, she tightened the school's uniform policy, a change she identifies as the start of the process of reshaping the culture and equating the school, in some parents' minds, with charter schools in the area. "We knew that for a lot of the parents it's all about perception and it's all about what [the school] looks like," she reported.

Staff members' comments suggest that the new administration took swift action to correct student behavior by instituting high expectations. Further, if the principal said she was going to deliver a particular consequence, she followed through, which teachers appreciated.

Gannis personnel report that the school exhausts a variety of other consequences prior to suspending a student when the infraction is less severe. Lunch detentions are common, and because the school cannot staff an in-school-suspension room, misbehaving students may be assigned to "shadow" the counselor or dean for a day. Suspension is not regarded by Gannis' staff as an effective strategy for impacting students' behavior. However, Gannis

contends with significant numbers of serious behavioral infractions, such as fights, and the school's administration does not hesitate to issue an OSS when they believe it is warranted. In those cases, the dean explained, staff are careful to maintain proper paper trails so that, if necessary, district-level support for suspensions or even disciplinary transfers can be assured. Rodriguez explains: "We have reduced suspensions, but in order to change our climate we had suspend more just to make a change, just to get the parents to understand we're zero tolerance and that's what we want to be. Then once parents started getting it, the kids started getting it."

Climate is relationships

Although Gannis is well along in its participation in the SDP PBIS program and staff emphasize their efforts to support students' positive behavior, most of those we spoke with characterized the school's approach to discipline as based in caring and relationships rather than one that is specifically aligned with PBIS. Indeed, Gannis is not immediately recognizable as a PBIS school. For instance, the token economy system popular with many PBIS schools is used only sporadically and by individual teachers at Gannis. Staff attributed the sparse use of PBIS-specific practices both to the lack of a PBIS point person at the school, and to leadership's more general emphasis on climate and relationships. Middle-school teachers generally reported that the incentives-based approach espoused by PBIS has not proven effective with their students. Instead, they focus on high expectations for student behavior, treating students as young adults, and developing mentoring relationships and personal connections with students. Staff described helping students develop intrinsic motivation for acting appropriately in school, as opposed to using the extrinsic motivators they associate with PBIS.

Gannis' principal asserted that staff members frequently give students options as part of making good decisions and provide opportunities for students to develop positive relationships with role models in the school. A younger student who struggles with lunch room behavior, for example, might be

paired with an older peer mentor during lunch. The assistant principal described using extracurricular opportunities as a way to build relationships between students and the adults in the building. He cited taking time out to play basketball with the boys as a way to build positive mentoring relationships with the students that would lead to better communication and cooperation at school. Gannis staff claimed that this relationship-building is at the heart of all the school's climate goals.

In sum, this "diamond in the rough" is led by a principal's evident commitment to behavior and climate, with or without PBIS. She said: "We never have our hands off climate. Climate is… that's like my baby. That's where my work is at. My heart is in the climate."

Case study 2: "We're a family"

According to staff, Downing Elementary has enjoyed a strong reputation in its community for decades. A small school serving pre-K through fifth-grade students, Downing occupies an old but well-maintained building that has been creatively embellished in recent years, in keeping with the increasingly artsy feel of the surrounding community. It is brightly decorated, with spotless floors and student work adorning the walls, and is relatively well-resourced, with a library, a computer room, and a well-equipped gymnasium. Other than teachers' and students' voices emanating from classrooms, the hallways are generally quiet.

Teachers and staff describe the climate at Downing as exceptionally positive, and grounded in the belief that all members of the school community are "family." This notion of family is reinforced through the active promotion of norms that emphasize respect. Contributing to this cohesiveness is the fact that many employees, including the principal, have roots in the local community. Many of the staff members grew up in the neighborhood, have taken up residence in the community, or have enjoyed a long tenure at the school. Some students are the children of former Downing attendees, which, staff said, deepens the trust and familiarity between families and the school. According to a veteran teacher, "kids really enjoy coming to school here."

Situated in a Philadelphia neighborhood that is quickly gentrifying, Downing is aptly described as an "evolving" community. School personnel described the neighborhood's newer residents as more "affluent" and "professional" than those native to the area. Many new residents engage with the school, some in preparation for their as-yet-unborn children's eventual enrollment. While Downing staff reported that these residents bring an array of resources (i.e., connections and funds), the principal, Ms. Peters, reports mediating emerging conflicts between neighborhood newcomers and members of the school's established Home and School Association. At times, she explained, these groups have "different perspectives on what they think their community should look like."

In interviews with 11 staff members—the principal; guidance counselor; two parents; one bus driver/special assistant; and six teachers—we consistently heard about the gradual push-out of long-time neighborhood residents amid the rising price of local housing. Despite the transformation occurring in the neighborhood, stakeholders agree that Downing has continued to maintain a close-knit family feel that is characterized by a high-level of parental engagement. Class sizes are relatively small at Downing, with fewer than 25 students per room.

Downing's student population is about 60% Caucasian, 15% Latino, and 10% African-American. Survey data collected from staff as part of this study suggest that the culture around student discipline is collaborative and student-centered. Additionally, Downing staff members were less likely to report the use of punitive disciplinary practices than teachers at any of the other three case-study schools described in this chapter. In conversations, teachers reported feeling fortunate to work there.

The administrative team at Downing is small—consisting of just Peters and a guidance counselor. Each is highly visible throughout the school. During our researchers' visits, students approached the administrators frequently to say hello or to report on how they were doing. Discipline referrals at Downing are handled by the principal, often in consultation with the guidance counselor. The counselor, however, admitted that she feels conflicted about her secondary role as disciplinarian because of its potential to undermine the trusting relationship she needs to support students with personal issues.

Downing is not a school with chronic discipline or climate issues; however, teachers report that there are instances when suspension should be used. In contrast, the principal and guidance counselor avoid issuing suspensions at all costs. Staff reported that discipline and suspension practices were quite different under prior administrations. One veteran teacher remarked that Downing was once "kind-of run like a Catholic school...everything was cut and dry... strict"—thus suspensions were frequent. In our interviews, teachers characterized disciplinary incidents as more isolated and less severe than

in the past. Nonetheless, they also perceive the current discipline strategy as overly lax.

Competing ideologies

According to teachers and administrators at Downing, reducing suspension has been a goal of the last two successive principals. The current administration reported being aware of the District's emphasis on reducing suspensions, and that this past year the school's OSS rate fell to nearly zero. In 2015-16, the year our survey data were collected, the OSS rate was less than half that of District K-8 schools overall.

Yet, despite Downing's solid culture, it is not without its challenges. The virtual elimination of suspension as a disciplinary option has created great frustration among teachers, and thus brought to the fore ideological differences between teachers and administrators. Although the administrative team embraces the district's philosophy, teachers' beliefs about the use and purposes of suspension have been slower to evolve despite their acknowledgement that suspension may not actually lead to positive changes in student behavior. Teachers reported that suspending students sends a strong and sometimes necessary message to students and families about moral and behavioral expectations. In addition, they acknowledged that an OSS gives teachers a needed "vacation" from a child's antics.

Teachers mentioned struggling with Peters' message that teachers should handle student behavior on their own rather than sending students to her and the guidance counselor. According to the guidance counselor, teachers are told to "try to address [student infractions] using whatever skills they have. If it's a student that has issues that continue to arise—a frequent flyer—teachers are to come up with a plan."

This represents a significant shift in the way discipline is handled at Downing. According to the guidance counselor, pink slips were "a big part of the culture" as recently as the 2015-16 school year. In fact, Peters described the situation as having pink slips coming "out of her nose." According to teachers, the

option of referring discipline matters to the office allowed them to focus on instruction. As a result of administrators' expectations, pink slips decreased dramatically in 2016-17. The principal reported that while Downing's staff is aware of the Code of Conduct, it is not a focus at the school. She described this tool as inconsistent with the Downing philosophy of dealing with student discipline in a non-punitive way.

Downing teachers recounted incidents in which their calls for a student's suspension went unsupported by the principal. The result, they said, was that teachers feel at odds with administration. Though somewhat grudgingly, they report that they do now work harder to handle behavioral incidents on their own. When disciplinary referrals do take place, teachers at Downing report that their administration's preferred method of handling infractions consists of conversations with students to discuss their infractions. One teacher complained, "Sometimes there's not a lot of consequences for disruptive behavior. It's more of a conversation, which is fine, but then sometimes I feel like it needs to be taken a step further."

Current approaches to discipline

Through our interviews with the principal and various members of the school staff, it was clear that Peters deeply believes that suspension is an ineffective response to handling student infractions, and that she objects to punitive consequences for children. Rather, she professes a philosophy of proactively working to reduce disciplinary issues, and subsequently curtailing the need to suspend students from school. Thus her strategy is to emphasize conflict resolution, respect for peers, an atmosphere of inclusion, and positive community norms. She reported:

> *I'm not of a punitive nature about suspensions. Suspensions don't work… there's a mentality behind it that people believe if somebody does something so egregious they need to be suspended or it sends a message to the parent, it's going to stop the behavior. But then it never does …So, I'm of the mindset that*

we need to come from a positive place first. Point out what people are doing right, what students are doing right.

The guidance counselor, whom the principal hired, is closely aligned with this philosophy. In narrating an incident involving a student from a troubled home, she described herself as "coming from the emotional side of it and really wanting to treat her wholly, versus being punitive and saying 'You knew what you were supposed to do, so it's detention.'"

In our interviews with school personnel, we noted plenty of evidence of Peters' message of using positivity to shape the school's culture. For instance, a parent volunteering in the lunchroom described the principal's wish "to keep it a positive environment…she's not a fan of yelling or that type of discipline… just a respectful environment between the kids and the adults."

To achieve these goals, the principal and counselor at Downing have instituted an online behavior-tracking system that transmits daily updates to parents; and an incentive system that rewards students for good behavior with fun activities on Fridays. Unlike many schools in the district, Downing has adequate support staff to assist with discipline; the principal reported that she is able to send support to a classroom when a teacher needs it.

Peters acknowledged teachers' criticisms that not all students respond to this positive, non-punitive approach. In more challenging cases, the counselor works to identify interventions for individual students, often with the goal of helping students understand what is motivating their own behavior. In addition to talking with students, the counselor frequently contacts parents and invites them in to discuss issues both at school and at home. The guidance counselor may also initiate the RTII process, triggering interventions like a daily behavior report with frequent teacher sign-offs. At the time of our data collection, roughly 4% of Downing's student body had been assigned behavior reports or other RTII interventions.

Students with ongoing behavior challenges may lose their Friday privileges, and may be required to participate in service learning (i.e.,

helping in younger students' classrooms) as a form of restitution. Peters believes this not only serves as a consequence for students, but also helps to build empathy; teachers noted that service learning may serve as a reward rather than a punishment since students typically enjoy it. In addition, students with ongoing disciplinary issues must spend time engaged in reflective activities such as writing apology letters to those they may have wronged. These reflection activities take place in a designated room that is overseen, a few hours a week, by a teacher who has a reputation for being "strict" and who holds a de facto disciplinarian role for the school more generally. Both the teacher and the principal acknowledge that a "good cop, bad cop" dynamic exists: Students are referred to the de facto disciplinarian by teachers who believe the principal would administer a less stringent consequence than is warranted.

In sum, Downing teachers see that Peters is trying to be preventative and to deal with problems that arise on a case-by-case basis. They appreciate the positive climate her approach helps support. At the same time, they openly wish for a stronger approach to discipline. For her part, the principal is aware that teachers would prefer she use suspension more and that she's perceived as being "soft" on students. Nonetheless, she is committed to her vision and to encouraging teachers and staff to come up with alternative ways of managing behavior.

Case study 3: A grounded approach

At 8 a.m. on a Wednesday in April, Stafford Elementary School students slowly trickle into the cafeteria as adults greet them with cordial "good mornings." One student settles at a table where three others play Connect Four. Others line up to retrieve their breakfasts from cafeteria workers chatting over the sounds of a radio. Out on the playground, at least 30 adults—mostly parents—linger as perhaps 400 kids talk in groups or engage in horseplay. Eventually, the students begin to form lines and ultimately follow their teachers through the door and down orderly corridors lined with inspirational quotes and artwork.

This morning routine underscores Stafford's overall feel: It is a place with established routines, attentive staff, engaged parents, and rules and procedures that are widely understood and generally observed. It is home to approximately 500 K-5 students. In 2016-17, the student population was just under 50% Caucasian, around 20% African-American, and 15% Latino, with the remaining student body made up of Asian students and those of other ethnicities. The school had an average daily attendance rate of 95% in 2015-16. About three quarters of Stafford students are considered economically disadvantaged—a far lower percent than in SDP overall. Academically, Stafford's fifth-grade students scored above the district average on both reading and math on the 2016 PSSA. The surrounding neighborhood is quiet and largely residential, and boasts several playgrounds, hiking trails, and bike paths.

In a two-day visit to Stafford, researchers conducted interviews with seven teachers, one support staff member, one parent, and two school administrators. They also held two separate focus groups with seven fifth-grade students in total. In addition, the researchers observed activities in various spaces, including two classrooms during class time, the cafeteria during breakfast and lunch, the recess playground during breakfast and lunch and the front lobby and K-2 corridors during the school day.

This research revealed Stafford to be a school without serious behavior problems. For instance, the School Progress Report from 2014-15 reveals that fewer than 5% of the school's students received an OSS the previous year. The counselor confirmed:

> It's really a pretty calm environment around here. If we have a fist fight or something, it's few and far between; it's not like it's happening daily. And it's usually over something silly, like boys were trying to get the ball from each other and ended up in a fist fight or something.

The school's positive ethos benefits from its dedicated staff and parent community. Several staff members live in or have lived in the surrounding neighborhood, and the principal grew up nearby. The school has had the fortune of being situated in a strong community with invested parents. Teachers reported feeling lucky to work there. The staff at the school is generally stable and described the students as mostly well-behaved, noting the strong parental involvement at the school.

All in all, however, the data we collected at Stafford paints a complex picture: The school boasts a low suspension rate—less than half the district average—that is likely a product of both a relatively compliant student body and the principal's belief that behavior should be managed in the classroom. However, teachers' survey responses suggest that teachers believe that suspensions are necessary and help maintain order in the building. Like teachers at Downing, those at Stafford desire a stronger presence from their school administration in handling disciplinary issues. While teachers expressed an appreciation for having the freedom to manage their own classroom and students, they also believed that the administration should use more severe consequences when dealing with serious and ongoing student misbehavior.

Managing behavior in the classroom

Teachers at Stafford described their principal, Ms. Mazzoni, as encouraging and upbeat. However, those we spoke with were unanimous in the view that her leadership style and expectations for discipline can be problematic. Whereas the previous principal emphasized school-wide expectations, especially in the hallways and other common spaces

in the building, teachers reported that the current principal has placed a much stronger emphasis on their managing their own students and classrooms. While several mentioned feeling thankful to be trusted to handle their own classrooms, most simultaneously expressed a desire for more support from their administration on discipline. One teacher expressed concern that students have different understandings about the expectations for appropriate behavior. She has noticed, she reported, an increase in hallway misbehavior.

To contend with the absence of school-wide expectations, some grade-level teams at Stafford try to be consistent in addressing misbehavior within the grade. These teachers work together to enforce consequences for students, and some take turns holding teacher-administered lunch detentions. Other grade-level teams have less coherence.

The principal reported working to support classroom-level behavior management by emphasizing proactive support of positive behavior at the school level. All in all, however, our case study findings from Stafford reflect the survey finding that proactive supports for positive behavior at Stafford are relatively sparse and non-routinized.

When behaviors do escalate, Stafford's counselor is often the go-to. The counselor herself is somewhat conflicted about her dual role as both trusted advisor for students and disciplinarian. She reported spending a great deal of time talking with students, helping them reflect on their actions, and running peer mediation and groups for students having behavior problems. When problems persist, the counselor says, she reaches out to parents. She may eventually schedule a meeting that includes Mazzoni and may result in a referral for supportive services.

Stafford's counselor and principal both describe the school's overall disciplinary approach as being "progressive," with consequences moving from recess and lunch detention to reflection to parent meetings. Mazzoni gets involved in individual cases at the counselor's request; they always confer before suspending a student.

Suspensions are uncommon at Stafford,

reserved mainly for serious offenses like repeated fighting. Pink slips are only used in extreme cases. Typically, referrals to the counselor are communicated via email and anecdotal notes from teachers. One fifth grade teacher explained:

> [Discipline] is pretty much at the teacher level. I know that [suspending students] goes against our SPR report and other school performance profiles, so… we try to keep it off the record as much as possible when it comes to paperwork and stuff like that.

Regarding the Code of Conduct, the counselor said she only referred to it in the case of a very serious incident—a weapons infraction, for example—to make sure that protocol was being followed. For less serious incidents, the Code is not referenced. And while the principal reported "zero tolerance" for physical altercations, she also said that the consequence for fighting depends on each student's role in the incident. Minor physical incidents, like mutual pushing and shoving on the playground, would almost never result in a suspension. The counselor explained:

> Sometimes when they fight they don't get [suspended]. Most of the time we deal with it in house here. We find a way to deal with it without doing a suspension because for most kids a suspension is not really going to change their behavior. They need to kind of learn from their own … behavior and hopefully make changes that way.

A wish for more support

Stafford's teachers, for their part, reported that consequences are not administered consistently at the school and that serious incidents are often not addressed stringently enough. While the principal and counselor may understand why two students involved in a fight do not receive the same consequence, their reasoning is less clear to teachers. One third-grade teacher expressed the belief that much misbehavior goes unaddressed:

> [The principal's] response is always [that we cannot address all misbehavior

> *because of] our lack of staff. There are behaviors that need to be dealt with that are just kind of pushed to the side.*

Several teachers expressed concern about the cumulative impact of letting small incidents go unaddressed. Another third-grade teacher shared:

> *Today I had a report from one of the women in the cafeteria that she was disciplining a student for running in the hallway, and another one of the students in my classroom happened to walk by and say "look at that ugly woman yelling at that girl." That should probably be addressed somewhere along the line but that just kind of gets [left] out. Things like that are going to escalate. Kids realize they get away with these things and they just take it to the next level, and that level of respect for adults and the people in the building kind-of just goes down.*

Despite some differences in terms of how discipline should be handled, teachers and administrators at Stafford are united in their belief in the school as a positive and strong environment for their students. In addition, they share a general perception that the support they receive is inadequate for addressing the disciplinary challenges they face: Teachers wish for more support and consistency from their principal, who, in turn, notes the need for more staff and resources from the District.

Case study 4: PBIS in a challenging context

Transition times at Clybourne School can feel chaotic, especially on the third floor, which houses the middle school in this K-8 building. That hallway is loud; students push and shove, and teachers call from their classroom doorways to move along and get to class. These instructions are largely ignored. In mid-afternoon, as one travels downstairs from the third floor, food wrappers and overturned lunch trays litter the stairwell. The lower levels of the building have a noticeably calmer climate, but raised voices—teachers' and students'—echo throughout the building.

Clybourne is situated in a neighborhood that faces considerable challenges, including high rates of poverty, drug use, and violence. It faces serious academic challenges, with very small percentages of students scoring proficient or above on state assessments. All of the school's students are classified as economically disadvantaged, and a larger-than-average percentage receive special education services. Nearly all Clybourne students are African American. A few years ago, Clybourne incorporated students from another nearby school that was shuttered, doubling the school's population. The influx of students from the nearby school motivated Clybourne's long-time principal, Mr. Jackson, to pursue PBIS training for his staff. While student misbehavior is an ongoing and serious problem, the staff believes that behavior and climate would be worse without PBIS.

Our research team visited the school on three separate school days in the spring of 2017. We observed a meeting of the school's PBIS team, several classrooms, the lunchrooms, hallways during transition times, and the accommodation room. We spoke in interviews and focus groups with four classroom teachers, the principal, the special education coordinator, the PBIS lead, and two support staff.

Teachers and staff members we spoke with emphasized that Clybourne's student body is challenging to work with, often noting that students with severe social and emotional issues are not receiving services they need. The staff also mentioned that some of the behavior challenges in the school are likely attributable to students being behind academically and struggling to complete their work. Staff and teachers alike describe their dedication to making the school the best place it can be. At the same time, many characterized student-staff relationships as generally negative. In our time in the building, we observed frequent looks of exasperation on the part of exhausted teachers.

Enacting the district message

Clybourne's principal and teachers emphasized that many students' school behavior is influenced by the lack of structure they experience at home. An aide said:

Some of [our students] are out here on their own. They're running around. I don't know where the parents could be. I don't [know] what's going on, but a lot of them are going through some things, you can tell. And they bring it into the school.

Principal Jackson, who makes all final decisions regarding suspension, uses exclusionary disciplinary actions sparingly and only after considering the home situations of the students involved. He lamented that assigning an OSS does not prove to be a useful consequence for many students, noting that suspended students are often seen riding their bikes up and down the block all day. The principal also described the risks students may face from being sent home:

> I am not putting a kid at home in that situation because at the end of the day, I come here for kids, I don't come here for adults. I haven't been doing this for all these years for grownups. I did this to try to change the lives of children so why would I say, "you are going to go to your house and be suspended in a home where I don't even think that you're being taken care of"? I am not going to do it.

The school uses the District's Code of Conduct only as a guide, Jackson reported, adding that, in some cases, the Code's recommended

consequences for particular behaviors are unrealistic given the prevalence of those infractions at the school. Ultimately, he does what he feels is best in response to misbehavior given the particular student and situation.

Approach to discipline: Working hard to make PBIS work

By most accounts, Clybourne is working to implement its PBIS program with fidelity. The PBIS team, which includes the PBIS lead, the principal, and a number of teachers, meets on a monthly basis. The meetings follow a structured format: reviewing PBIS data, identifying a problem, and then coming up with an intervention. The teachers and other school staff we spoke with were all aware of the school's token economy system, and school-wide expectations for behavior are displayed prominently throughout the school with specific expectations for different settings. Consequences for various kinds of infractions have been identified and clarified among teachers.

At Tier II of PBIS, Clybourne uses "check-in, check-out," an evidence-based system that pairs students with behavioral challenges with adult mentors, who provide consistent support and accountability (Cheney et al., 2009; Hawken, Adolphson, Macleod, & Schumann, 2009; Hawken, MacLeod, & Rawlings, 2007). The PBIS lead facilitates a weekly meeting to discuss the progress of these students and make determinations about next steps. Students who show progress in regulating their own behavior may "graduate" out of Tier II; those who fail to progress may be referred for more intensive behavioral health services. During our visits, nearly 20% of the Clybourne student body had Tier II referrals.

The staff members and teachers we spoke with at Clybourne consistently described the principal as involved in climate efforts and committed to the PBIS program. Some reported that the adoption of PBIS has helped shift the emphasis at Clybourne to positive rather than negative behaviors. The school's PBIS Lead believes it was important to the school's ability to handle the influx of students following the

nearby school's closure; it enabled staff, she reported, to collectively say, "This is how we do things."

Despite these successes, members of the leadership team reported that the PBIS program is only effective for some students and that not all teachers adhere to the school's expectations for reinforcing positive behavior and using the token economy system appropriately. The prevailing belief is that behavior and climate in the school would be much worse without PBIS, but that the PBIS program has not reached its potential due to a lack of buy-in and consistency among some staff.

Needed resources: People and space

Unlike many schools in the District, Clybourne has an accommodation room where first-through eighth-grade students can be sent during the day for 45 minutes or for an entire day, depending on the severity of the infraction. While teachers are also expected to send classwork with their students to the accommodation room, in theory the purpose of the space is for reflection and restorative activities. The day we visited Clybourne's accommodation space, our researchers observed yelling and a standoff between an aide and a student, but no reflection or completion of classwork.

Despite its relatively well-developed PBIS system and the presence of an accommodation room—a resource many schools in the SDP wish for—Clybourne staff strongly expressed the need for more resources. Specifically, interviewees reported a dire need for more and better trained staff, as well as additional space, including a larger and better-equipped accommodation room. Several respondents cited staff shortages as a main reason for the disorder in the hallways. When asked what resource would benefit the school the most, one staff member responded:

> *[We need] people in the hallways, in the stairs. The stairs are a mess with food because the kids come up out of that lunch room and just drop everything on the steps. Why? Because there's not*

enough people to stand at the doors and tell them, "Don't bring that food out of the lunch room. Eat in the lunch room." Instead of being in class, kids are in the staircase or in the halls because there are no people in the halls telling them to get out and go back to class.

Principal Jackson specifically identified an effective and attentive school police officer as a valuable resource the school lacks. While Clybourne—unlike many elementary and middle schools in SDP—does currently have a school police officer; Jackson describes him as insufficiently engaged.

A challenging population with a dedicated staff doing all they can

The staff members at Clybourne recognize that they are dealing with a challenging student population whose lives outside of school influence behavior in school. The staff described themselves as dedicated to working with this population of students and doing all they can to help the students be successful, but the school could benefit from additional staff, space, and access to behavioral and mental health services. PBIS plays a significant role in this school's culture, although it remains only a piece of the school's approach to discipline. The accommodation room is viewed as necessary and valuable, although who it actually benefits is a bit unclear from our observations. The Clybourne staff and Principal Jackson appear to still be working on finding a coherent and effective strategy for better addressing the needs of their student body.

Conclusions

Each of the four cases described in this chapter offers a glimpse inside a school that is working to align itself with the district's climate and suspension-reduction goals. Our profile analysis located three of the four schools—Gannis, Downing, and Clybourne—within Profile 3 (collaborative and relational); Stafford, despite being classified in Profile 1 (reactive and autonomous), has a below-average suspension rate. The consistencies and inconsistencies, and alignments and misalignments, that we observe by looking across these four instantiations of SDP-aligned climate efforts therefore give rise to useful insights about the barriers and facilitators for schools as they work to enact the district's climate agenda.

A key consistency we observed among all four case-study schools concerns the receipt of district messages about the need to reduce OSS and improve climate. Administrators at all four schools report having heard these messages—largely communicated via the School Progress Reporting process. How school leaders interpret them, however, is less consistent, and these inconsistencies are borne out in school-level policy. At Stafford, Downing, and Clybourne, principals echo district leaders in asserting that suspensions are largely ineffective and a last resort. Stafford and Downing's principals have all but prohibited OSS in response, and with striking results: Both Stafford and Downing reported suspension rates of less than half the district average for 2015-16.

Administrators at Gannis, however, interpret the district's message differently. Rather than "don't suspend students," they understand the directive to mean "use suspension only when necessary and be sure to follow proper procedures when you do." This school—whose suspension rate for 2015-16 was nearly double the district average—does not seem to see a conflict between the use of OSS and an otherwise collaborative and relational approach to discipline. On the contrary: Suspension is viewed as a last resort, but also as an important tool for maintaining a positive and orderly climate overall despite serving a very disadvantaged and challenging student body.

In all cases, the principals of the schools in our case-study sample have responded to district calls for reductions in OSS by pushing increased responsibility for behavior management to classroom teachers. Casually sending a troublesome student to the office is, by and large, a thing of the past in all four of these schools. At Gannis, teachers describe a sense of personal accountability for building their own behavior-management skill sets, and outline steps they have taken and supports that assist them in doing so.

Conversely, teachers at both Stafford and Downing report feeling unsupported by administrators on discipline, and express the belief that they are being asked to do too much. For some teachers, the loss of suspension as a useful tool for temporarily removing problem students from their classrooms and sending strong messages to parents seems emblematic of this perceived lack of administrative support. It's a change many teachers meet with bitter resignation. At Downing, a "shadow" disciplinary system reflects teachers' preferences for more punitive responses to student misbehavior, essentially circumventing the restorative climate the principal is trying to foster; at Stafford, the relatively trouble-free student body obscures the lack of a coherent disciplinary vision.

Teachers at Clybourne, though outwardly supportive of the PBIS principles promoted by the principal, struggle and often fail to execute them at the classroom level. Clybourne's student body is particularly disadvantaged—significantly more so than those at Stafford or Downing, for instance. For teachers at this school, the combination of rampant emotional and behavioral issues, a suspension rate slightly below the district average, and downward pressure on classroom behavior management presents a seemingly impossible conundrum. Though all the schools in our sample face resource limitations, particularly in the area of staffing for discipline and student management, it is in Clybourne's case where this need seems most pronounced, and where the missed opportunity for strong PBIS implementation is most striking. Without additional staff and training specifically designed to build staff's PBIS skills and buy-in, the likelihood of Clybourne ever realizing the full potential of PBIS appears slim indeed.

Two of the four schools in our case-study sample—Gannis and Clybourne—are part of SDP's PBIS initiative. Yet these two schools' enactment of the approach is strikingly different. Staff members at Clybourne are working to implement the systems and processes of PBIS at the school and classroom levels, and have progressed to the adoption of Tier II PBIS systems. Implementation, however, is poor; the school's nascent PBIS system seems entirely overwhelmed by the sheer volume of day-in, day-out emotional and behavioral issues at the school, many of them severe. Conversely, our researchers observed that Gannis seems to be PBIS "in name only." Though its student-centered, positive climate is receptive to PBIS practices, few are actually in use. The strength of the school's climate, we observed, derives more from the staff's consistent vision and connectedness to the students and their families than from PBIS per se. And, Gannis' high suspension rate suggests that discipline functions, essentially, at two different levels: the caring, relational level that works well for most students; and the law-and-order

level that removes those students who do not respond. Thus Gannis—perhaps the strongest school in our case-study sample in terms of its coherent embrace of a positive school climate—emerges as neither a strong implementer of PBIS nor a suspension-reduction success story.

Thus, our case-study research serves to highlight a few key questions, crystallized by the specific contexts of these schools: How can school leaders at Downing and Stafford bring teachers on board with climate goals that make their already challenging jobs even more difficult? What would it take to achieve effective PBIS implementation in a school as challenged as Clybourne? And, how can Gannis maintain a climate that is, by all accounts, positive and student-centered without resorting to the liberal use of OSS with a few?

We will return to these questions, and cast them in the light of all of our qualitative and quantitative findings, in the final chapter of this report.

Chapter Five. A Matter of Context

In Chapter 1 of this report, we detail SDP's recent efforts to facilitate dramatic shifts in schools' disciplinary practices and climate through a combination of policy and programmatic changes. Chapter 2 describes some results of these initiatives: Elementary- and middle-school leaders report awareness of the need to reduce OSS, and of the potential benefits of climate initiatives like PBIS. Many describe efforts to adopt PBIS in whole or in part, and with or without financial support from the district. At the same time, this chapter reveals stubborn barriers to the realization of SDP's climate and disciplinary goals—chiefly in the form of resource limitations and philosophical misalignments within schools.

In Chapter 3, we explore patterns in schools' approaches to climate and discipline, and find three distinct profiles of discipline and climate. The extent to which individual schools reflect these patterns is related to attributes of their student populations and features of their neighborhood contexts. In addition, we find that schools' profiles predict their students' academic achievement and disciplinary outcomes. The effect sizes on academic outcomes we observe in schools with collaborative climates and non-punitive approaches to discipline, relative to all other schools, range from .18 to .24 standard deviations. Effects of this magnitude are regarded in the education literature as significant from a policy perspective (Hedges & Hedberg, 2007), and are comparable to those observed in most rigorous studies of instructional interventions (Lipsey et al., 2012). We find, in other words, that *a collaborative, relational, and non-punitive approach to climate and discipline is associated not only with decreased risk of students receiving OSS, but also with academic-achievement benefits that rival those produced by most instructional interventions.* This is powerful, and underscores the urgency of helping schools overcome the obstacles to strong implementation of climate programming.

Chapter 4 explores the role of context with regard to climate improvement, with a focus on schools' deeply ingrained assets and challenges. Viewed together, Chapters 3 and 4 provide a sense of the tremendous diversity of SDP schools' contexts and highlight the persistent and alarming association between schools' obstacles and outcomes and the race and poverty level of their students. They underscore one of the key conclusions of this study: *that efforts to shape schools' climates and approaches to discipline can only succeed to the extent that they accommodate and adapt to the assets and challenges of particular contexts*.

Chapter 4 illustrates that contexts vary widely even within SDP. We argue, given this, that tailored implementation approaches may help groups of similar schools adapt, support, and supplement climate programming in order to help initiatives like PBIS take hold. And we identify themes that are consistent across SDP schools. In order to implement climate initiatives well, and in order to reduce or eliminate the use of exclusionary practices, we argue that all K-5 and K-8 schools need:

1. Strong leadership around climate that consistently communicates a clear vision and roles for all staff.

2. Training and support that can help teachers understand the harms of exclusion and embrace the goals, purposes, and practices of proactive climate-improvement efforts.

3. Support staff who are numerous enough to be visible and trained to carry climate efforts into non-instructional spaces.

4. Places of respite for students who need them, including both non-punitive retreats within school buildings and mental and behavioral health options for needs schools simply cannot meet.

5. Universal trauma training aimed at helping school staff identify and address students' emotional needs in a context where behavioral and mental-health services are often inadequate or altogether unavailable.

The findings we identified in the course of this study offer support for the promise of PBIS and of SDP's focus on reducing OSS. However, the exploratory nature of the research demands caution in how these results are interpreted and used. This study was not designed to produce confirmatory evidence as to the existence or nature of disciplinary and climate profiles within SDP, nor does it support causal claims—it would be wrong to conclude, for instance, that the climate characteristics that define our school profiles *cause* the differences we observed in student outcomes. (We plan future experimental and rigorous quasi-experimental research in collaboration with SDP that will help us better understand causality.)

Similarly, school and district leaders in SDP should resist the temptation to use the profiles we posit here to inform conclusions or decisions about particular schools. Our findings regarding individual schools' profile assignments are based on surveys with response rates of between 50 and 60%, with much higher participation from some schools than others. For at least some of the schools in our analysis, the response rate was well below what would be needed to make accurate profile classifications. For this reason, we

emphasize the profiles themselves rather than which schools belong to each, and we have worked to disguise the identities of the individual schools in our research. Instead, school leaders would do well to use the findings of the report in a more general way, to assess their institutions' strengths and areas for growth, and to set aspirational targets. District leaders might consider the characteristics of the three profiles in establishing benchmarks for schools overall, and for thinking generally about the kinds of supports that can help schools of each type to move toward successful climate improvements.

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Appendix A: Statistical Analyses

Latent Class Analysis

The statistical method used to identify the school profiles in response to research question 3 was latent-class analysis (LCA). LCA is an analytic method that uses a large array of attribute data to identify patterns that reflect underlying classes, or profiles (Dayton, 1998). We applied this method to survey responses aggregated at the school level, to identify patterns of disciplinary approaches and climate that exist within the district.

Latent class analysis is multivariate statistical method used to discover groupings in categorical data. LCA involves a process of comparing different possible solutions in order to identify the number of latent classes—in this case profiles—that best captures meaningful variation in the data. The LCA model estimates class membership probabilities and item-response probabilities conditional on class membership. Because LCA is a measurement model, the measurement error is estimated from the vector of latent-class membership probabilities and removed. We used SAS v9.3 with PROC LCA Version 1.3.2 (Lanza, Dziak, Huang, Wagner & Collins, 2015) in which parameters are estimated by maximum likelihood.

To support the interpretability of the profiles, survey items were transformed to z-scores and then averaged separately by profile. To identify the number of classes which best described the latent structure, we examined competing solutions with varying numbers of classes. To assess the relative fit of of these various solutions, we examined several information criteria based on the log pseudo-likelihood. The model with three classes was preferred by the likelihood-ratio G2 deviance statistic and Schwarz Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC; Schwarz, 1978).

The next step in assessing the results of the LCA analysis was to explore the classificatory accuracy of the best-fit model; that is, the level of success in assigning schools to the three profiles. We observed that schools in each of the three identified profiles had 0.99 average probability of class membership, indicating high confidence that profiles were representative of their constituent schools. There was no significant difference in average probability of class membership between the three groups (F (2,163) =0.35, p=0.7081). Moreover, we find the average probability for schools to be a member of a non-assigned class was less than 0.01.

Finally, model identification was assessed by examining the log-likelihood for many replications with different starting values. This process involved estimating the same model hundreds of times with different starting values for maximum likelihood estimation using the EM algorithm. The hope is that most of the replications will result in the same small log likelihood statistic, which is a measure of the amount of support provided by the data for all possible values in our results. Although the log-likelihood for the model we report on was among the smallest (lowest decile), we note that replicates produced a wide range of log-likelihoods. This indicates that although the model produces a solution with good fit relative to competing specifications, and although the model produced excellent classificatory accuracy, it is not well identified. As such it is plausible that other profile solutions might also be found that fit the data nearly as well.

A key aim of our study is to test the suitability and utility of this method for researching school climate and discipline. We do not view the resultant profiles as confirmatory evidence of the typology, but rather as one way of organizing complex data into meaningful profiles within the broader mixed methods study. We are interested in explicating the profiles based on the LCA of survey data in combination with case studies to better understand school discipline in context as it relates to student disciplinary and academic outcomes. To aid interpretation of the profiles, survey items were transformed to z-scores and then averaged separately by profile. The direction and magnitude of survey item means guided the explication and naming of profiles.

Event History Analysis

Our preliminary analysis examined the likelihood of a student receiving at least one OSS at a given school. We estimate survivor functions based on the partial likelihood method of fitting a proportional hazards model, which allows for heterogeneity in estimating the survivor function (Allison, 1995). To increase precision of estimates for profile main effects, the model included student-level covariates for grade, number of unexcused absence (in weeks), number of weeks between start of school and start of student enrollment, and a set of binary status indicators for gender, Free/Reduced Lunch, Limited English Proficiency, Hispanic, African-American, and whether or not the student received a prior OSS suspension in the district.

We can test if the probability that a student is suspended is the same in the three school profiles by estimating hazard ratios. A hazard is a statistical term that refers to the likelihood of an event occurring in a given period of time. A hazard ratio is the percent change in the hazard comparing once group to another. Like an odds ratio, hazard ratios are positive and the further the hazard ratio is from 1, the bigger the effect it represents. A large positive hazard ratio

indicates a high probability of the event occurring (i.e. high probability of a student receiving an OSS). A hazard ratio less than 1 means that hazard is reduced. A decrease in the hazard corresponds to an increase in expected survival time, or the period of time during which the event does not occur. We conducted the statistical analyses in SAS v9.4 using the PROC PHREG procedure, which performs regression analysis based on the Cox proportional hazard model.