Nuance in "No Excuses": Unexpected Progressive Pedagogy and Policy

Monique H. Harrison[1] (iD)

Abstract

"No Excuses" charter schools are at the center of many debates in education policy. First, what accounts for their test success, excellent learning environments or merely test preparation? Second, are strict behavior policies necessary to create efficient learning environments or are they harmful to students and their ability to navigate authority? This study uses classroom observations, student surveys, and interviews of administrators, teachers and students to understand the dynamics of pedagogy and discipline in two high-performing charter schools in New York City. Surprisingly, what makes these top "no excuses" schools successful is what distances them from the "no excuses" standard definitions. The schools displayed progressive mathematics pedagogy, reflective and abridged discipline practices, and strong school cultures that retained both students and teachers. These findings suggest that there are more nuances in the "no excuses" model than previously known and which need to be understood before continued replication.

[1]Stanford University, CA, USA

Corresponding Author:
Monique H. Harrison, Graduate School of Education, Stanford University, 520 Galvez Mall, Stanford, CA 94305, USA.
Email: moniqueharrison@stanford.edu

Testing success is complex. Does it reflect deep learning, excellent pedagogy, and supportive environments or rather test preparation and/or privilege? "No Excuses" (NE) charter schools live in this ambiguity—hailed for producing excellent results in both testing and college acceptance for underrepresented groups, and criticized for their harsh discipline policies, shallow test-oriented learning, and low college completion rates. But which is it? Or does it all exist simultaneously? Recent work has shown that harsh discipline policies themselves are not related to academic success and potentially damage non-academic outcomes like social and behavioral skills (Golann & Torres, 2020). How are these schools producing outcomes and is it worth it?

Understanding the relationship to learning and academic success in these schools is timely and important given that charter schools have now become a staple in many urban regions. In New York City (NYC), the context for this study, about 10% of students attend charter schools (Algar, 2016). Charter networks like KIPP, Uncommon Schools, Success Academy, and Achievement First each have many schools in the city (a combined total of 107 in NYC in January, 2020). These networks in particular embrace the "no excuses" (NE) banner, which is defined as touting high expectations, a college-going culture, extended school time, and strict behavior systems (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011; Golann, 2015; Goodman, 2013; Whitman, 2008). A meta-analyses of NE charter schools points to increased test scores for these students (Cheng et al., 2015). As suggested by Torres and Golann (2018), the mechanisms that are producing positive results need to be fully understood before advocating for broad replication of schools/school cultures that emphasize strict disciplinary procedures.

The development of national standards and tests created an opportunity to understand the success of these NE schools. The changes brought by the Common Core Standards have, in math, placed an emphasis on number sense, critical thinking, and the utilization of multiple strategies, a diversion from the traditional practices that emphasized memorization and speed and which are easier to coach toward testing success (Boaler, 2015). It is then surprising that some NE charter schools have continued to have mathematical success. Testing-oriented pedagogies seems to be incompatible with deep, conceptual learning. The stereotypical NE charter school would seem at odds with progressive teaching, housing silent classrooms with a focus on basic skills and test preparation (Golann, 2015; Sondel, 2015). These environments are not conducive to the type of instruction necessary to create critical thinkers—working in groups, opportunities to work through complex problems, analyzing errors, and other strategies discussed later.

Additionally, the strict no excuses method of behavior management is scrutinized for being too harsh and operating as a tool of social reproduction

(Golann, 2015). This occurs as a predominantly elite, white teaching force demand compliance from students of color and reinforce white culture/values, often in racist and sexist ways (Ferguson, 2000; Lewis & Diamond, 2015; White, 2015). However, others promote strict behavior regulations as necessary for keeping order and maximizing learning, especially as schools start out (Boyd et al., 2014). Arum (2005) argues, "If schools fail to exercise moral authority over their students, they are unable to socialize students adequately and become chaotic places where teaching and learning fall by the wayside" (p. 4). But how much discipline is too much, and how do schools manage to achieve high scores if their environments are perceived as hostile?

In order to understand the success of these schools, I studied two high-performing NE charter schools in New York City with school and classroom observations, student mindset surveys, and teacher, student, and administrator interviews. I focused on math classrooms to uncover whether the rule-based management system aligned with a traditional rules-based teaching paradigm, and how both fared in the light of the new Common Core assessments. Additionally, I assessed how the behavior systems in these schools were implemented and perceived by students, teachers, and administrators. This study sheds light on some of the pedagogy and practices employed by NE schools and posits why they are achieving such high scores in seemingly inhospitable learning environments.

Conceptual Framework

In order to understand the context of this study, it is critical to understand the history, research, and theory that have situated the charter school classroom in the heart of the debate on strict behavioral practices and academic testing success in low-income areas.

History of Schooling in Urban, Low-Income Areas

In 1981 Jean Anyon published her classic ethnography of schools and found that working class students conceived of knowledge differently than their middle and high-income peers. They were more likely to consider knowledge something that other people make and school and learning as a procedural system (Anyon, 1981). These processes differed greatly in high income areas, where students saw themselves as creators of knowledge and learning as a process of discovery. How far have the educational differences between communities advanced in 35 years?

We know that educational institutions tend to value middle class participation, language styles, and values, putting students from different backgrounds at a disadvantage (Bernstein, 1961; Calarco, 2018; Lareau, 2011; Stanton-Salazar & Valenzuela, 2001). Golann (2015) observed that NE charter schools produce students who "monitor themselves, hold back their opinions, and defer to authority" (p. 104), thus reinforcing behaviors suitable for working-class jobs and undermining the skills necessary for higher education and middle-class careers. She also suggests that NE charter schools are producing "worker-learners," students who comply with directives all day long and can produce test scores but are not being developed into critical thinkers, able to question authority and be lifelong learners (Ben-Porath, 2013; Golann, 2015). Other research shows how this comes to fruition when students from low-income backgrounds, particularly those from low-income neighborhood schools, struggle to navigate authority once they arrive at college (Jack, 2016). These studies on NE schools collectively call for attention to the way curriculum is delivered to students and the ways in which their bodies and minds are policed to help us understand whether NE schools are just a new way of teaching the same lessons of compliance, obedience, and passivity.

However, many NE charter networks claim the opposite—that they are institutions of empowerment and complex learning, and often show evidence of narrowing racial test gaps and college attendance. One of the largest charter networks, KIPP, produced their own internal data claiming that 33% of their low-income eighth graders were graduating from college, compared with 8% nationally (KIPP Foundation, 2015). Others suggest that the effects of attending a Harlem Children's Zone middle school, another NE network, are enough to close the Black-white achievement gap in mathematics and the effects of their elementary school are large enough to close the racial achievement gap in both mathematics and ELA (Dobbie & Fryer, 2011).

Behavior Management and Pedagogy

Proponents of the NE model claim that the violence and chaos in some traditional urban schools that prevented learning warranted the reaction of strict behavior norms (Whitman, 2008). Mastery Charter Schools Network claims it's "sweat the small stuff," NE behavior policies have all but erased violence from their turnaround schools (Keierleber, 2017). However, much has already been done to understand what types of behavior practices are most effective and appropriate for children in learning contexts.

Research supports authoritative classroom behavior practices that encompass limits and rules, but explains them to students (Baumrind, 1971; Brophy, 1987; Walker, 2009). These practices allow students to understand why they

are expected to comply with rules. Conversely, authoritarian styles of behavior management operate from a "because I said so" mindset, where teachers expect students to submit to their authority out of fear of punishment (Brophy, 1987). "If [educators] succeed in breaking the child's will, the result will be a docile individual who rigidly follows prescribed norms and is essentially externally controlled rather than self-guided. If they fail, the result will be an individual who resents and resists authority and is prone to delinquency and crime" (Brophy, 1987, p. 235). Although this seems a strong statement, this is at the heart of the conflict around NE schools. In order to justify, reason, and critique ideas, student agency is required, seemingly at odds with some NE behavior policies.

The question seems to be—how much discipline is the correct amount? Emile Durkheim states, "Discipline is needed to teach the child to rein in his desires, to set limits on his appetites of all kinds, to limit and through limitation, to define the goals of his activity" (Durkheim, as cited by Arum, 2005, p. 14). Arum (2005) posits that over-legislation of teachers and schools has led to a lack of basic discipline that needs to be reclaimed. Proponents of strict behavior reform cite excellent results and the need for order as justification for their somewhat harsh practices. Some NE schools claim that the strict behavior norms *enable* teachers to focus on high quality instruction in the classroom without the time wasted on classroom management (Green, 2016).

However, implementation of discipline is inconsistent. In one study of NE schools, students were expected to stay at "level zero," or remain silent, for the majority of the day—while receiving instruction, waiting to be called on, or independently finishing worksheets (Sondel, 2015). Other NE schools emphasize a "warm-strict" approach, advocating for a more authoritative stance while maintaining behavior standards. This practice, being a "warm demander" is said to facilitate a culture of achievement for students of color (Ware, 2006). "Warm demanders expect a great deal of their students, convince them of their own brilliance, and help them to reach their potential in a disciplined and structured environment" (Arum, 2005, p. 77). Other work in KIPP schools has shown that some charter schools tend to be stricter in their first years, as they establish relationships with students and families, and then ease off, and that overwhelmingly the administration has close ties to the families and children under their care (Boyd et al., 2014). Strictness in classroom management is not necessarily inappropriate but has the potential to be in conflict with some of the best practices in mathematics teaching (discussed below). This study targets the ways in which high-achieving NE charter schools are teaching mathematics, and the extent to which their behavior management systems might affect the learning environment.

Best Practices in Math

The Common Core standards have capitalized on recent research on the best practices to foster critical thinking, flexibility with numbers, and conceptual understanding of mathematics in the K-8 grades. In response, there has been a movement to change math practices from rote and computational to open and conceptual to both increase learning and performance (Boaler, 2006; Boaler & Sengupta-Irving, 2012; Schoenfeld, 2002). The argument is that high quality math instruction gives students open-ended tasks, growth mind-set messages, and opportunities to see multiple representations of mathematical principles (Boaler, 2015; Boaler et al., 2016). Other practices include valuing mistakes as learning opportunities, validating student choice in the use of multiple strategies, allowing students to ask questions of each other and debate both method and concept, using mathematical authority to determine correctness, and giving students multiple opportunities to voice mathematical strategies, both theirs and others. Boaler and Selling (2017) calls this "active engagement" and describes that students who problem solve, discuss ideas, and apply methods are more likely to have a lifelong positive relationship with math. Cohen and Lotan (2014) also advocate group work, and the importance of think-alouds, collaborative sense making, and valuing process over product.

However, there are still those who advocate for a more balanced pedagogical approach, incorporating progressive practices alongside repetitive practice (Larson & Kanold, 2016). Like all schools beholden to test score accountability, NE charter schools have had to navigate this changing landscape and adjust their teaching practices in order to continue to prepare students for higher education and to achieve on Common Core assessments.

Methodology

Setting

This look at "no excuses" (NE) math education began as a pilot study with two urban charter schools in New York City—Growth Academy and Win Charter (pseudonyms).[1] Both middle schools served 300 to 400 students in grades five through eight during the 2016 to 2017 academic year. While they represent two different charter management organizations (CMOs), both opened approximately 10 years ago. Since then, each school has demonstrated a multi-year history of excellent test scores within their charter networks and on state tests.

In addition to these shared organizational characteristics, there were many other similarities. The hallways in each school were freshly painted in bright

Table 1. Enrollment Statistics.

Growth Academy	Win Charter
74% Hispanic	66% Hispanic
26% African-American	33% African-American
92% Free/reduced lunch	82% Free/reduced lunch
23% Special education	16% Special education
5% Student attrition	
15% English Language Learners	10% English Language Learners

Table 2. Math Achievement Scores.

	Growth Academy (%)	Win Charter (%)
Met State standards	71	81
District	17	20
City	36	
Comparison Group*	41	55

Note. Table 2 shows percent of students at this school met State standards on the State math test, and shows a comparison to the percent of students at other schools located in the same district, and to the percent of students who met the State standards in NYC as a whole.
*The Comparison Group shows how similar students performed at other schools throughout the city. Calculations explained https://tools.nycenet.edu/resources/comp-group.html

colors and inspirational messages and college banners adorned classroom walls—including references to the school's NE policies. The furniture looked new. Adults smiled at me in the hallways. When switching classrooms or going to lunch, students—whom adults referred to as "scholars"—walked through the halls in mostly silent lines.

As seen in Table 1, both schools serve large Hispanic and Black populations (census categories). Both schools also had high percentages of students who receive free and reduced-price lunches, an indicator for socio-economic status. Growth Academy had a particularly high percentage of Special Education students (23%), which superseded the district average; Win Charter had a comparable number with the surrounding local public schools. Growth Academy also shared their attrition rate because they were proud of the number of students they retain.[2] Growth Academy also has a higher percentage of English Language Learners (ELL).

According to the 2016 NYC School Quality Snapshot, each school's math scores are high when compared to their district and city averages (Table 2). 71% of Growth Academy students met the state standards in Math, compared

to 17% district average. 81% of Win Charter students met the state standards in Math, compared to 20% district average. The city's average overall was 36%. The comparison group was defined as students from other schools across the city who were the most similar to the students at this school, based on their prior test scores, disability status, and economic need. The "comparison group" result is an estimate of how the students at this school would have performed if they had attended their local school instead.

Data

The data-gathering consisted of 8 days, 4 spent at each charter school in November 2016, collecting the data described below.

Classroom observations. Four classrooms were observed and video recorded, each for three consecutive math lessons. At Win Charter, I observed fifth and eighth grade classrooms and at Growth Academy, sixth and seventh.[3] Field notes were taken and a codebook of symbols was used to indicate behavior incidents, pedagogical moves, and interesting vignettes with time stamps for reference.

Interviews. I conducted and audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with participating administrators (N = 3), teachers (N = 5), and students (N = 16). The students were picked in partnership with their teacher based on the observations in class and with the goal of selecting an academically and socially diverse group. I also interviewed several students who had recently come from other schools, as I thought they would offer an interesting perspective based on their ability to compare and contrast their schools. Interviews were aimed at understanding each stakeholder's view of the behavior systems and the math learning environment.[4]

Mindset survey. Before my arrival, students anonymously took a hard-copy math mindset survey to determine their self-efficacy and mindset around mathematics (modestly adapted from Boaler, Chen, Williams, & Cordero, 2016). Between the four classrooms, there were a total of 112 surveys collected. In addition to collecting demographic information, the survey consisted of 27 likert-scale questions that could be answered on a six-point scale of Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree.[5]

Analysis

At the conclusion of data collection it was decided that this study would not be concerned with the differences between the charter schools (as they were

minimal), but instead mostly aggregate the data to better understand the math environments that drive the success of these NE schools.

Using the transcribed classroom data, three coders (85% inter-rater reliability) utilized a math-specific version of Bloom's Taxonomy (Shorser, 1999) to sort the types of questions teachers were asking their students. Note that non-academic questions were not included in this sample. Questions asking students to define a term or identify the problem were coded as "Knowledge." "Comprehension" categorized questions asking students for a procedure or next step in a complex problem. "Applying" referenced mathematical problem solving. Questions from teachers about why an operation was performed or explaining the thinking of others were designated as "Analysis." If students were asked to do an error analysis of a situation or propose a mathematical rule, then the question was labeled as "Evaluation/ Synthesis."

Survey analysis began by disaggregating each question by response and then grouping questions by theme, which included self-efficacy about mathematics, the nature of math, growth mindset, and affective responses. In the results, when it is stated whether students agreed with a certain phrase it can be inferred that the results aggregated "Strongly Agree," "Agree," and "Somewhat Agree." Similarly "Strongly Disagree," "Disagree," and "Somewhat Disagree" are also grouped. When one particular response (i.e., Strongly Agree) was responsible for the majority of the overall percentage, it will be noted. Every question was also looked at in terms of gender, grade level, and school site differences. If no mention of a difference was noted, it is to be assumed that there was no substantial difference.

Results and Discussion

After 2 weeks in New York City and 7 days in these two NE charter schools, I identified three reasons these high performing NE charter schools were achieving their success amidst a behavior system that would seemingly be incompatible with critical thinking. One, they implemented progressive pedagogy. It far exceeded the traditional didactic strategies seen in most math classrooms and allowed for critical thinking as well as opportunities for sharing their ideas and analyzing errors without judgment. Second, their version of NE leaned toward the authoritative rather than the authoritarian, with critical administrator reflection and thoughtful teacher implementation. Students overwhelmingly embraced the rules and could explain their purpose. The school pulled off a warm-strict behavior management system, navigating the waters between dominating physical control and ordered learning. Third, students' math success was linked to each school's culture, which embraced

social justice, valued and retained teachers, and focused on creating a warm, encouraging environment. What was most striking was that the factors shaping the schools' successes seemingly defy the historical definition of a NE charter school. There are lessons for all schools about what it takes to succeed, and how to define that success.

Progressive Pedagogy

Pedagogy at both schools was unexpectedly progressive and a clear reason for students' mathematical success. It far exceeded the traditional didactic strategies seen in most math classrooms and allowed for deeper conceptual understanding and critical thinking as well as opportunities for engagement with peers and growth mindset messaging.

First, it is important to note that students at both schools overwhelmingly reported enjoying math class, with 93% agreeing with the statement "I like math," 85% disagreeing with the statement "math is boring," and 88% agreeing with the statement "I look forward to my mathematics lessons" (37% of total strongly agreed). This was supported by student interviews, where all students claimed to enjoy math, their teacher, and their school. So what was happening in the classrooms that provided an excellent learning environment?

Balancing progressive practice with the procedural. First, I evaluated the degree to which "progressive" math practices were enacted and, in contrast, how much rote memorization, test prep, and traditional instruction was present. Overall, both pedagogies were utilized and interviews revealed that this blending was purposeful.

NE models are in a transitional moment, with Common Core and new accountability measures forcing the curriculum and pedagogy to change. Some schools, like Win Charter, were high performing before the change but had relied on algorithmic, computational practices and on the new test did very poorly. They viewed this as an opportunity to shift their teaching practices toward critical thinking. Nadia, an administrator there noted the impact on her school:

> When I got here, the year before Common Core had been implemented, we used to have 90% pass rates with a very low rigor test. I remember the achievement scores significantly dropped for Win Charter Schools, into the fifties, maybe forties. It just tells you, well, you raise the rigor and look what happened. Then last year our exam scores came back and . . . overall 84% of our students got a three or a four on the exam, [passing]. That feels great, when

you actually attack it from putting higher rigor things in front of students and improve at teaching math in a better way and adjust to the Common Core.

The administrators of both schools talked about the balance between skill practice and more complex mathematical tasks. One example is from Nadia, one of the administrators at Win Charter:

> "We're constantly playing around with the balance, kids need to get the mid- to low- level questions – that's what we focused on last year. Our [review] block was all about the skills practice. We got them that. Now we know they've gotten this. They're on great levels with these things. How do we get them to attack these harder, more novel problems? A lot of that is through group work, real life tasks - problems that bring in multiple skills."

The student survey also supported the premise that students believe math is both procedural and creative. On the procedural side, 96% of students agreed with the statement "Mathematics involves mostly facts and procedures that have to be learned," and 98% agreed with the statement "In math, it is important to remember lots of methods." On the other hand, some responses leaned toward a broader understanding of mathematics, including 82% agreeing with "Math is creative," 80% disagreed with the statement "There is usually only one way to solve a math problem" (43% strongly disagreed) and 93% agreed with the statement "Math is a subject with lots of connections between ideas" (47% strongly agreed). Further, "I can tell if my answers in math make sense" was agreed with by 92% of students. These results show that for these students, math took on multiple dimensions. It was fluid, yet there was memorization involved. It was logical and creative, connected and methodological.

Cognitive demand. The level of cognitive work students were completing was an additional area of interest in this study. All classrooms observed had a balance of teacher questions that ranged from the computational to the cognitively complex. The results are reported in Figure 1.[6]

I classified high-level thinking skills as the analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of mathematical ideas, which all represent the critical thinking necessary to extend the mathematical algorithm or calculation. On average, about 30% of the questions were of this higher order level thinking. Lower-level questions (Knowledge and Comprehension) accounted for an average of about 40% of teacher questions and applying. Even with classroom variability in both the range of questions observed (54–233) as well as the spread of question types, all the classrooms had a similar balance of lower- and higher-level thinking questions.
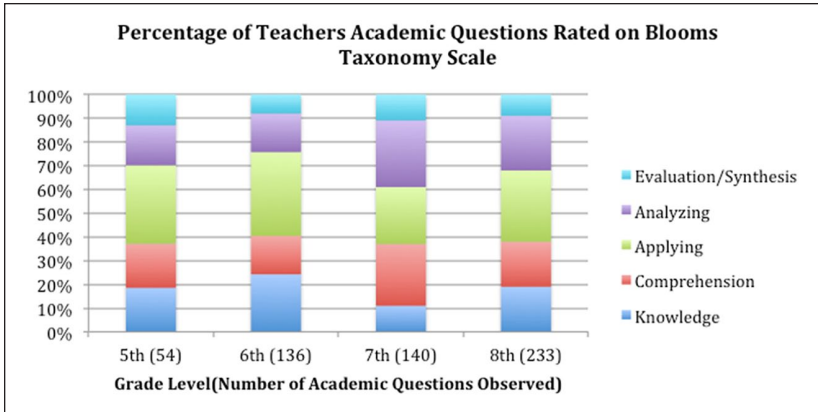
Figure 1. Cognitive demand of teacher questions.

It should also be noted that the level of questions did not directly translate to what was being asked of students in their math packets. The teacher could take a question and make it simpler by literally asking them to state the question, or could make it more complex by asking a student how they think a student would answer a question if they did not understand order of operations. The students engaged with the teacher's questions more often than the actual content on their paper, suggesting that the level of cognitive demand in the classroom was connected to teacher practice more than curriculum.

Students learning from one another. It is important for critical thinking and conceptual understanding that students have opportunities to explain their thinking and put a voice to their mathematical ideas. For example, math educators can ask students to complete mathematical tasks in small groups, thus encouraging students to communicate and defend their reasoning.

In the math classes I observed, educators used multiple partner interactions each day. Ms. Bell described in her interview that she hoped for 30% of class time to be spent collaborating, which was supported by my observations. Figure 2 shows the average number of instances of meaningful partner work in each classroom over the 3 days of observation (2 days for fifth grade). This provides a picture of the collaborative nature of the classrooms; an eighth grader could predictably have 12 separate learning encounters with a partner during an average lesson each day (90 minutes). The sixth grade classroom actually had many instances of student interaction, but had the
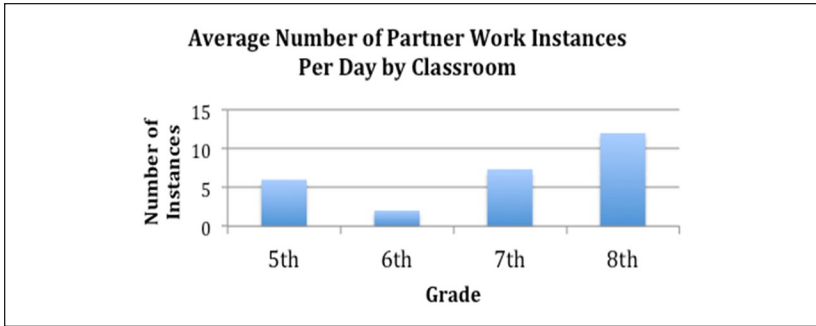
**Average Number of Partner Work Instances
Per Day by Classroom**

Figure 2. Instances of partner work.

largest number of superficial partner encounters,[7] reflected in Figure 2 as a low number of instances. This was perhaps a combination of that particular lesson's content, teacher choice, and teacher skill.

Group work was prevalent and utilized to develop students' conceptual understandings through partner sharing and verbalizing thinking. Understandably, this was both intentional and developmentally adjusted for each grade level, with higher grades doing more abstract thinking and error analysis.[8]

Growth mindset. Students overwhelmingly reported growth mindsets around mathematics on their survey. One critical component of growth mindset is how students view mistakes—either as opportunities for learning or indicators of incompetence. Generally, students thought of themselves highly as mathematicians, 95% agreed with the statement "I believe I can do well in math." 86% of students agreed with the statement "I enjoy being challenged in math," and 95% agreed with the statement "If I put in enough effort I can succeed in mathematics." Mathematics tends to be the subject most often related to a fixed mindset (Boaler, 2015) so it was surprising that students embraced these tenets in their learning.

When the administrators were asked what they would like to see teachers do when students make a mathematical mistake, the responses from each administrator were similar. At Win Charter, Nadia said she wanted the teachers to "have no tell," or in other words not give away if the answer was correct. Instead, she wanted the students to direct the correction and then she would revisit the original student to see if they were convinced by new evidence. At Growth Academy, Lisa responded,

"I like to see teachers ask questions . . . 'explain more, tell me about this, walk me through your work,' because I think a lot of times, people see a wrong answer, and they assume the kid knows nothing, and it's very possible the kid is 90% there, or the kid is actually doing something they can teach you, and help you understand what five other kids may have done. I like to learn from the kids and ask as many questions as possible."

This practice was evident in the seventh grade classroom at Growth Academy, observing a teacher Lisa trained. Rather than giving the answer, Ms. Bell consistently asked students, "What evidence do we have for that?" Additionally, Ms. Bell asked more high order thinking questions and allotted the most class time to partner work than any other teacher I observed. She reflected on how she handled mistakes here:

"I have certain mistakes, like anticipatory mistakes in my lesson plan that I look for, because I don't think every mistake is worth showing. Especially if students have not mastered a skill, showing them too many mistakes is very confusing, so I'm trying to keep a balance in terms of what can most people learn from and what will most people make a blunder on, so I can show them and hopefully it will prevent them from doing it again."

Teachers like Ms. Bell were not simply responding to student mistakes, but rather anticipating what types of mistakes would make the best teaching moments.

Adult efforts to create a positive classroom culture around mistakes were taken up by students in their interviews as well. Students stated that they felt comfortable making mathematical mistakes in the classroom. On the survey, 68% disagreed with the statement "When I make a mistake in math, I feel bad." On the walls of Win Charter was a poster that said the three pillars of Upper School math were 1. Relentless Practice, 2. Mistakes = Progress, and 3. ONE TEAM (100%). Each classroom observed, some more often than others, would put a mistake on the board and ask the class what the misconception had been. Perhaps because students were constantly exposed to error-analysis and mistakes in their classes, they were more apt to respect and discuss different ideas.

To assess the students' perceptions of this practice, student interviewees were asked what happened in class when a student made a mathematical mistake.

He always says that he's never doing the teaching, we teach each other, because if somebody makes a mistake, it's on us to help them figure it out . . . We never give each other answers, either. You have to figure that out on your own. But

we're going to give you hints and tips and try to help you. Then he will bring the class together and we all have to chat. He would sometimes put the student's work on the board, which is good, and then we can see it and then say 'Oh, here's where you made that mistake, and here's how you fix it.' That's good. (Natalia, eighth grader, Win Charter)

If you give her a wrong answer, [the teacher] would be happy so that the other person that's talking, they can make it a better response. Even if it's correct, she would still be so excited because then it might be something that they missed out, and then they can add the other scholars' mistake and make one full conclusion. (Taylor, fifth grader, Win Charter)

Celly, a seventh grade student from Growth Academy, also commented on what other students in the class do when someone makes a mathematical mistake, she responded that "they raise their hand to say that they disagree but they also give the reasoning. But it's not nothing rude or anything like that."

My observations of seventh and eighth grade classrooms closely aligned with Celly's remarks. However, in the lower grades, if someone provided a wrong answer, others often responded to mistakes by omitting small gasps or shooting their hands into the air. However, these same students often knew their reaction was inappropriate. Mark, a fifth grade student, stated in their interview that if someone makes a mathematical mistake, "Well the other students like, they laugh but then if they laugh, they get an automatic detention since it's being rude, not respectful to another scholar." Another student discussed a practice in their classroom called "showing love" where "we put our fingers out toward them so they don't feel, like, bad." Since creating a safe environment for mistakes seemed to be a goal of each teacher interviewed, it makes sense that older students in each of these schools would have internalized these messages with more exposure.

With aspects of progressive practices evident in my observations, I now turn to an analysis of the behavior systems in these schools. Were they punitive and harsh as some research has documented or was there something different that could explain the high achievement of students? I find that they both did and did not meet the expectations I had for a NE environment.

Behavior

Behavior management was connected to the success of these schools. These schools seemed to have their own version of NE, which leaned toward the authoritative rather than authoritarian. The schools achieved a "warm-strict" behavior management system.

Table 3. Examples of Behavior Management Types.

Behavior management instance	Examples
Positive	"Excellent focus in the room"—Growth Academy
	"She turned immediately, even if her hand was up, she put it down to show care to a teammate"—Win Charter
Neutral	"Make sure our pens are down and we're listening"—Growth Academy
	"5, 4, 3, 2, 1"—Win Charter
Negative	"I'm waiting on two people—Growth Academy
	"It's a demerit, not only were you not listening but . . ."—Win Charter

Classroom practices. In both schools, educators employed some of the typical NE disciplinary practices. As was expected, students were dressed in uniform with collared shirts and khakis with no-makeup policies and turn-taking speech. Students walked in straight, silent lines between classes along painted pathways on the floors. In the classrooms, there were many behavior management strategies that mimicked "Teach Like A Champion," like wait time, positive naming, and achieveing 100% participation (Lemov, 2010). Given the 10 pages of behavior expectations in the student handbooks, it was surprising to find that class time was not overwhelmed by behavior corrections. From the transcripts of the classroom videos, behavior management instances were categorized into three categories (positive, neutral, and negative), examples are given in Table 3.

For the most part, negative behavior corrections were minor, took very little class time, and were immediately resolved. Positive remarks toward students were counted as behavior management, however if a teacher was verifying a correct answer from a student, we did not count it. For example, when a student gave a correct answer and the teacher said, "Perfect! That's beautiful" we did not count it as a behavior management instance. However if a teacher praised a student for being on task, "Linda has her pencil ready," or highlighted mathematical creativity, "you guys are doing a really nice job with this novel situation" we did count it as a behavior management strategy. The instances in each classroom were tallied and the results showed an interesting variance by classroom, seen in Figure 3. Note that class length was similar for all grades (around 80–90 minutes).

Win Charter (fifth and eighth grade) both had twice as many positive behavior instances as negative. However, they were also the highest in
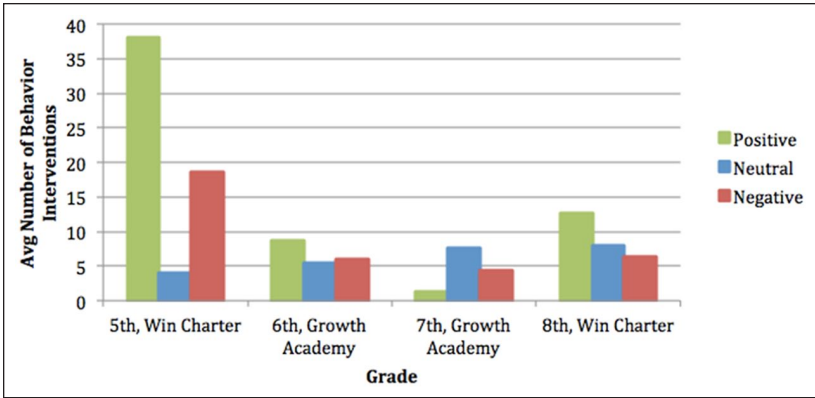
Figure 3. Average number of behavior management instances.

aggregate behavior-related instances per class, with the fifth grade classroom having 61 total instances compared to eighth grade with 27. Growth Academy had fewer behavioral instances overall (20 and 13 respectively), but also less pronounced ratios of positive to negative and a higher neutral to other ratio. The seventh grade classroom had the fewest amount of comments, barely any behavior instances at all, with more negative than positive. This difference could indicate that each school emphasized different behavior management systems, or that the teachers simply had different styles. It is worth noting that although the seventh grade classroom did not have many positive comments, the feeling in the class was warm and the teacher laughed with her students often. Observations also happened over just a few days, so it was important to consult the interviews of students, teachers, and administrators to understand more about the behavior systems in place.

Student buy-in. In interviews, students confirmed that there were strict rules and consequence systems. An eighth grader at Win Charter told me, "It's kind of complicated. The system here is set up that if you do something a little bit wrong you get a demerit for it. Maybe you ask me a question and I'm not prepared to answer, that would be a demerit, and four demerits equal detention." In both schools, there was some sort of small unit-based system for behavior management—demerits at Win Charter and deductions at Growth Academy (which would come out of their "paycheck" they received weekly for doing their "job" of being a student). A sixth grade student at Growth Academy explains "you don't really want a deduction because then they won't be able to participate in certain activities, and they may get lunch

bench, and that's like detention, and they get cold lunch instead of hot lunch. Depending on how severe the problem is, they'll get after school detention or dean's bench, which is like for an extra hour." Students used their pretend funds as currency to participate in fun activities and "buy" privileges.

Although students were well aware of the behavior structures, they did not seem to resent the rules, instead providing justification and enthusiasm. When asked to compare their current school with their previous school, Jada (seventh grade) from Growth Academy said, "It's different because, I'm gonna just compare it to my old school, they were more loose with things—no dress code, they didn't care if you did homework, if you got in trouble you didn't get consequences for it. You could run around the school and nobody's gonna stop you. This school is more strict and on task, on track with what they're doing. They have consequences for a reason and make you do your homework for a reason." Ashley (eighth grade) at Win Charter added, "I think this school is different from other schools because the teachers push you harder, and I love that about this school." This was substantiated by many other students in the sample, the feeling that yeah, it's hard and strict, but I'm glad I'm here.

Although one student, when asked whether they wanted to change anything about their school, said, "I think we should change the consequence system because these teachers in the school, they want so much from us," most other students commented on the need for school rules and rather emphasized that the school needed to get "better lunches" and "more field trips," comments that are similarly declared by every middle-schooler I have ever met.

Warm-demanders and critical reflection. It seemed like students understood that there are reasons for rules and above all, it's not personal. This conclusion was supported by teacher and administrators, who voiced their desire to be warm-demanders and to emphasize the reasoning behind their consequence system. When asked about the behavior expectations at Growth Academy, eighth grade teacher Mr. Nish said,

> I do think that there are, in many ways, high expectations here. And I'm sure if you compare our school to a lot of other schools, people would come here and be like, it's a lot. And it is a lot. They have very long days, and the expectations are really high for kids. But it does feel like a good balance with their high expectations, but it is also joyful. And that's a balance that I don't think you get at a lot of other schools. And I also think that there's the right balance of things that we focus on. There are very high expectations for kids, but it's not about like, here are the expectations, and you either make it or you don't. It's here are the expectations, and then how do we support them in order to meet those expectations.

When asked what they thought the purpose of behavior policies was, administrators also shared a tone of rules with reason, stating that they are there "to provide a consistent, predictable, safe learning environment for kids to get all that they can out of the time that they're with us." This was echoed by the math lead I spoke to at the same school. "Again, I don't think you need a ton of games and tricks. I think, just investing kids in your own love of what you're teaching and doing is a really powerful thing versus threatening after-school detention and all of that. It actually goes a long way."

At Growth Academy, students were observed during instruction standing up, altering the blinds, going to the restroom, and sharpening pencils without needing explicit teacher permission. When asked about the physical freedom students had in the classrooms, an administrator stated that disciplinary practices were a source of discussion on campus and in their practice as administrators. Nadia, an administrator at Win Charter said,

> The pitfall of demerit/merit system is teachers relying on it rather than really thinking about all the human and other tools that they actually have. It becomes a tool of, it typically happens with first year teachers, it's like a tool of control rather than a tool to supplement and reinforce habits. That's something that I think we've talked and troubled with a lot, of you know how do we use it so that it's not a tool of control but like actually are we truly forming habits of students.

Both schools were having critical conversations about the discipline structures they enacted with students. They were aware of the negative potential of controlling students' bodies and minds. They were actively engaged in reflecting on and amending their system. The principal at Growth Academy shared that a few years before they had gone through their handbook and took out rules they thought were over-emphasizing obedience. They asked themselves, "What rules were justifiable?" Walking in silent lines seemed justified so as to not disrupt the learning in other classrooms. They enforced homework completion consequences because it is connected to their learning and life habits. However they ended up relaxing some of their rules on dress code that they felt were not related to improved learning.

These conversations about behavior policies and reflective leadership also prompted a deeper look into what made these schools so successful, even within their charter networks.

School Culture

A third reason for the students' success was each school's culture, which embraced social justice, valued and retained teachers, and created a warm

encouraging environment. On my third day at Growth Academy, I asked an eighth grade math teacher about the strengths and areas for improvement in the math department. I originally saw this as a simple question, one I asked every administrator. But his response was surprising:

> I think I would say that when people, especially people who are far away from the work . . . talk about math instruction, I think one of the things that often gets lost in that conversation is what is the underlying culture of the school in which the math instruction is taking place. Because I would say that the vast majority of people who are working in schools like ours did not sign up to be math teachers first, they signed up to be agents of social change, right? . . . Any conversation that confines itself to math instruction I think misses the broader point of what we're trying to do . . . And I think that the thing that animates me a lot is what is the underlying culture in which the math instruction is taking place. I think that if you were to go back to the question, is that one of our strengths? I would say absolutely, that is probably a primary strength, the school culture in which this exists. The adult culture that then has led to the student culture, that has allowed our kids to then access higher level math and science and reading and all those things, in an environment where if you lose that, subtle things happen that become really big.

Mr. Nish's response was all at once jarring and completely rational. Math instruction never happens in a bubble. Although their pedagogy was strong, it was the overall tone of their school, the respect for individuals, the teacher-student relationships, and the culture that undergirded students' success.

This theme remained constant with other administrators and teachers; Lisa, an administrator at Growth Academy added,

> Honestly, high student performance is not coming from a curriculum or a piece of paper. It's coming from so many things. It comes from the execution. It comes from teacher preparedness. It comes from shown content and all that. It comes from the other pieces of the puzzle that are not in the classroom at all, the culture, the socio-emotional piece, I think, have a big part. We do [professional developments] here, about what our kids are experiencing at home. I think it's important that our staff is aware of that.

These types of responses led to a curiosity about how to define the school culture and look for lessons for other schools curious about how to reproduce these charter schools' success.

To understand more about the school culture, teachers were asked why they worked there and what made their school unique. Ms. Bell, a seventh grade teacher at Growth Academy related that, "The culture, it's literally like

a family. I'm with kids from seven until seven. Most kids, until six. We're around each other more than we're around our biological families. Because of that, it feels safe, there's a purpose. I wake up and I have no problem going to work because it means something. I'm impacting people and the kids are really sweet."

From the teachers and administrator interviews, it would seem that the schools have strong cultures of achievement and caring; in this case, the student population tended to agree. Ashley, an eighth grader at Win Charter described, "If you don't understand something, you can always go to a teacher after school, because teachers are always really open. They always try to make time to help us. I think that's part of why teachers at this school are so wonderful. They always want to make sure that we know what we're learning." This idea of feeling "cared for" was prevalent in student interviews across schools and grades.

Although I did not see curriculum actively targeting inequality, the teacher beliefs about the role of math in social justice permeated their interviews. In the classroom, teachers emphasized their students' abilities, calling them scholars and having them speak loudly and with confidence. Every teacher observed prompted students with the phrase "loud and proud" and explicitly discussed that students should be confident and use their voices. The fact that social justice had permeated the discourse, pedagogy, and curriculum is noteworthy. If school culture is the key to student success, then these schools provide a model from which to draw. However, the sustainability of these practices (12 hours with students per day) is up for debate, though teacher retention was high at both schools.

Teacher retention/satisfaction. Both Growth Academy and Win Charter had very low teacher turnover and cited it often as a source of their success. This is unusual for a charter school, given that teacher attrition has been a large problem, with more charter teachers likely to leave the school (6%) or profession (14%) than their traditional teacher counterparts when controlling for school and teacher factors (Gross & DeArmond, 2010). An administrator at Growth Academy said that teachers had been around for a long time, and their math success "shows the power of joining a really strong, stable team who have stayed for many years."

Lisa discussed the strategies the school used to secure their teachers, "When I'm coaching my teachers, the first thing I'm thinking about is, 'Are you happy? Because if you're not, your lesson is not going to be happy, your kids are not going to be happy. What do I need to do to help you be happier and less strained?' because our work is hard and it's draining." Focusing on teacher happiness is not a staple concern of charter districts, which have been

known to have extremely high turnover of teachers who were unhappy in their jobs (Miron & Applegate, 2007).

The same was also true at Win Charter, where an administrator suggested, "I think a lot of employees you speak to here will say this Win Charter is special. I think a big reason for that is just the time people have stayed here. We have veteran knowledge across multiple subjects year over year and that's allowed [us] to create the stability to build and create certain traditions and expectations . . . we don't think of teachers as cogs in a wheel . . . we really value each teacher's individual growth and development." She described low teacher turnover as a cyclical process, not only did they have low turnover, but having veteran teachers was a reason why they retained other teachers.

Another component that seemed to be cyclical was the amount of teacher autonomy over the curriculum in each school. Because of their high test scores and veteran staff, these schools were given autonomy within their networks to test, and in some cases develop, the curriculum that would be used network-wide. This autonomy is both a result and a cause of their school culture and teacher retention. This autonomy also could be related to why the teachers felt happy, motivated, and aligned with the mission of their school.

Confirming this, many teachers interviewed talked about "good fit" where they felt they were doing important work in a positive environment. One example came from Trish, a teacher at Growth Academy, "I would like to never leave this place, which is cool because . . . I don't think people get to go to places where they will say [that]." With difficulty in teacher retention across charter school networks, the extreme success of these particular schools should be considered in the context of an environment that focuses on (and is successful at) teacher satisfaction.

One component that contributed to teacher satisfaction was the teachers' sense of purpose and mission-alignment. Teachers consistently talked about being drawn to the work because of a higher call for social justice and wanting to be a part of a team that supported their efforts. For example, Trish, a teacher at Growth Academy noted, "A lot of charter schools have missions and mission statements, but I think that everything that happens here, and all the people that are here, live and breathe that mission. And there's an alignment that I think probably does not exist at other schools."

Teachers' view of the mission of each school was oriented around social justice and equity. When asked why they taught math, teachers responded by talking about how math is a vehicle to make change. Bruce, a teacher at Win Charter said, "I enjoy teaching [math] and I like it. That's one category. Then the other category is, we're talking [about] this population of kids who we serve, like math in particular is an area of struggle across the board nationally.

The way I do it is like, 'We're going to prove all that wrong,' and we have the data which is pretty cool." A teacher at Growth Academy, Ms. Evans noted that,

> When I was in college, and the reason that I studied International Relations, is because I was driven not by the political side of it, but the social justice aspect of it. Which is why I ended up in TFA [Teach For America], and that's why I ended up in a charter school, and that's why I ended up in this charter school. And particularly after the [2016] election, I see it as the biggest driver of making change. I think that there are a lot of people that are dissatisfied with the way that the world works, and I think the role that I can play within that is through education.

Teachers joined these two schools because they believed in the mission of empowerment, equity, and mobility through education. The school leadership provided the structures and support for them to fulfill this mission and teachers felt satisfied with the balance of work that was required to make the impact they were hoping to achieve.[9]

Reflection. Overall, the adults in these school buildings seemed to be reflective and thoughtful, not just impulsively enacting policy or blindly spouting cliché mission statements. For example, when asked about the purpose of school, Nadia from Win Charter responded,

> "Oh, I think it's to learn and to challenge ideas. It's so funny, my husband and I talk a lot about this. In our ideal world, what would school be? I think what I sometimes feel is lacking in school is not really preparing kids for the real world. Just in general, public, charter or whatever, school as an institution has been designed for an industrial era. How do we adapt so that we're actually getting kids to solve really unique problems that matter to our current economy or current society? School should be a place where the knowledge there is applicable to what is happening in my world."

Nadia's deep thinking adequately represents my experiences with the adults in these schools who are deeply invested, spending their time out of school still reflecting on their school's role in educational injustice.

A sense of deep reflection pervaded all of the interviews conducted. Administrators were reflecting on their teacher preparation and development, teachers were reflecting on the balance of their students' exposure to critical thinking tasks, students were reflecting on their experience with math, education, and their future. In their reflections it was clear that generally, people were happy, working hard to make students' lives better, and that they believed in and respected one another.

Limitations

This study was limited in both its size and scope, short enough that I possibly received an abridged view of the schools. Toward the end of each visit there were definitely more behavior instances once the novelty of the "lady with the camera" was wearing off. However when students were asked in interviews whether the days their schools were being researched were "normal days," they all confirmed they were and from what was observed, the instructional style was extremely consistent. Although not a comprehensive view, this study does serve as an existence proof of the variability of charter school contexts and gives nuance to the definition of NE charter schools.

Conclusion

> "Whereas the most powerful level is school culture, and the most powerful thing is kids who have a teacher that they think cares about them. That they know believes in them, and a school that then keeps those teachers and allows them a place to teach."
>
> <div align="right">- Mr. Nish, Teacher, Growth Academy</div>

Academic success does not happen in a bubble; there was more happening in the math classroom of these two charter schools than just mathematics instruction. The time spent at two of the highest-performing charter schools in New York City revealed that they did not achieve at high levels solely because of their math instruction or behavior management, nor did they ascend to their position based purely on their school culture. All of these pieces were in place, providing an environment conducive to math learning, risk-taking, and educational investment.

The math pedagogy was thoughtful and well-executed, with care and purpose in the balance between conceptual learning and practice. Although there was room for growth in their group work practices and in implementing open-ended tasks, the instruction was clear and there was an emphasis on valuing mistakes, elevating student voice, identifying multiple strategies, making connections, and analyzing the rationale behind mathematical choices. Administrators and teachers were purposefully balancing rote work and conceptual understanding.

Just as importantly though, it was the elements of school culture that helped to create an enthusiastic student body that not only had success in math, but also enjoyed their school experience. School culture was co-created by administrators and teachers who engaged in multiple types of reflective practices. They had critical conversations about behavior systems to

avoid using them as "tools of control" and instead utilized a warm-strict behavior system. Having teachers and administrators who are having social-justice-based conversations about their "no excuses" environments mediated at least some of the negative effects of strict behavior norms. Teachers, administrators, and students alike felt lucky to be in their school and proved it by staying—both schools had a higher retention rate of students and far less turnover for teachers than the average charter school. The administrators were groomed from within each school, maintaining this internal knowledge and appreciation for the school culture.

Future research would be advised to conduct a longer visit in each school, and to visit more schools, both from more charter networks, and more schools within each network. Research targeting the local traditional schools might also be helpful when establishing comparisons for what students in the charter schools would be experiencing otherwise. This research is not able to make any distinctions about the capacity of any charter network. Although both networks have CMO-provided curriculum that is intended to homogenize the instruction, scripted curriculums do not necessarily lead to similar student outcomes (Milner, 2013). It may also be wise to interview parents from these schools to add an additional stakeholder perspective on the merits of each particular school, and how they have come to understand the strict behavioral practices.

What we know about good schools and good math applies to NE charter schools in New York City as well as to any other teaching environment. When teachers are respected, developed, given autonomy, and are invested in the school's mission, they will stay in their jobs—which has huge benefits for both the institution and the students. When students are given rules with reasonable justification and powerful positive messages about their abilities, they will strive to achieve, comply, and perform. When schools use research-based practices about math education and consistently critically evaluate their systems of both curriculum and behavior pedagogy, they become powerful learning environments.

It is also important to remember that the rigid NE schools that other researchers like Joanne Golann and Beth Sondel describe exist and are accurately described. This research in no way denies that there are charter schools which are places of behavioral control, traditional silent workhouses intent on producing "worker-learners," and consumed by test score preparation rather than empowerment. This study hopes to shed some light on some of the particular differences between charter schools and the practices that lead to higher performance, high teacher retention, and overall satisfaction with the schooling experience.

We should work toward moving beyond describing school practices with sweeping generalizations like "no excuses." Each charter network and even every school has its own culture and pedagogy; some are even designed to be so. Just like the term "parochial school" can account for any number of pedagogies, school rules, and teaching styles, the term "charter school" also does not connote any type of pedagogy or school culture. There is a need to be more discerning and identify the specific practices within any school or classroom to understand the success of students.

Additionally, with the continued growth and expansion of "no excuses" charter schools, this research hopes to curtail the blind replication of this school model without consideration of the factors that can make these schools successful, some of which would seem to defy the traditional "no excuses" definition.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

Funding

ORCID iD

Monique H. Harrison 🆔 https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2181-130X

Notes

1. This study served as a preliminary look at classrooms in "no excuses" schools to explore the relationship between discipline and mathematics learning, and thus was limited in size and scope so as to quickly determine potential findings and consider future research.
2. Retention is a large issue for charter schools, who are accused of "counseling out" their more difficult, special education, or under-performing students to re-enroll in the traditional public school system (Torre, 2013).
3. It should be noted that for one class at Win Charter, only 2 days were observed due to scheduling issues.
4. Some of the administrator and teacher quotes included in this paper have been edited for clarity (i.e., removing the word "like," taking out trailing half

sentences, and adding the implied connecting words where necessary). Student quotes were not edited.
5.   One limitation of the survey was that there was no neutral option, meaning students had to choose whether to Somewhat Disagree or Somewhat Agree.
6.   Please note that the number of instances is low for fifth grade because we were not able to record for a third day in that classroom.
7.   Some of the partner interactions were superficial. They were framed as checking their answer with their partner's or correcting a partner's paper rather than sustained problem solving and sense-making. Partner work that was deemed superficial was not counted in these tallies.
8.   There were no observed instances of students working in groups larger than two students.
9.   Unfortunately, no questions were asked about pay scales or teacher benefits, so this study is not able to discuss these tangible factors that can also be important when retaining teachers.

References

Algar, S. (2016). *Charter schools now serve 10 percent of all NYC students*. New York Post. https://nypost.com/2016/09/07/charter-schools-now-serve-10-percent-of-all-nyc-students/

Anyon, J. (1981). Social class and school knowledge. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *11*(1), 3–42. https://doi.org/10.2307/1179509

Arum, R. (2005). *Judging school discipline*. Harvard University Press.

Baumrind, D. (1971). Current patterns of parental authority. *Developmental Psychology*, *4*, 1–103. https://doi.org/10.1037/h0030372

Ben-Porath, S. (2013). Deferring virtue: The new management of students and the civic role of schools. *Theory and Research in Education*, *11*, 111–128. https://doi.org/10.1177/1477878513485172

Bernstein, B. (1961). Social structure, language and learning. *Educational research*, *3*(3), 163–176.

Boaler, J. (2006). How a detracked mathematics approach promoted respect, responsibility, and high achievement. *Theory Into Practice*, *45*, 40–46. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip4501_6

Boaler, J. (2015). The brain and mathematics learning – Chapter 1. In J. Boaler (Ed.), *Mathematical mindsets* (pp. 1–10). John Wiley & Sons.

Boaler, J., Chen, L., Williams, C., & Cordero, M. (2016). Seeing as understanding: The importance of visual mathematics for our brain and learning. *Journal of Applied & Computational Mathematics*, *5*, 5. https://doi.org/10.4172/2168-9679.1000325

Boaler, J., & Selling, S. K. (2017). Psychological imprisonment or intellectual freedom? A longitudinal study of contrasting school mathematics approaches and their impacton adults' lives. *Journal for Research in Mathematics Education*, *48*(1), 78–105.

Boaler, J., & Sengupta-Irving, T. (2012). Nature, neglect and nuance: Changing accounts of sex, gender and mathematics. In C. Skelton, B. Francis, & L.

Smulyan (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of gender and education* (pp. 207–220). SAGE Publications.

Boyd, A., Maranto, R., & Rose, C. (2014). The softer side of "no excuses". *Education Next*, *14*(1), 48–53.

Brophy, J. (1987). *Synthesis of research on strategies for motivating students to learn*. Educational Leadership.

Calarco, J. M. (2018). *Negotiating opportunities: How the middle class secures advantages in school*. Oxford University Press.

Cheng, A., Hitt, C., Kisida, B., & Mills, J. N. (2015). *No excuses charter schools: A meta-analysis of the experimental evidence on student achievement* (EDRE Working Paper Series No. 2014–11). EDRE. https://doi.org/10.1007/s13398-014-0173-7.2

Cohen, E. G., & Lotan, R. (2014). *Designing groupwork: Strategies for the heterogeneous classroom*. Teachers College Press.

Dobbie, W., & Fryer, R. G. (2011). Are high-quality schools enough to increase achievement among the poor? Evidence from the Harlem children's zone. *American Economic Journal Applied Economics*, *3*, 158–187. https://doi.org/10.1257/app.3.3.158

Ferguson, A. A. (2000). *Bad boys: Public schools in the making of Black masculinity*. University of Michigan Press.

Golann, J. W. (2015). The paradox of success at a no-excuses school. *Sociology of Education*, *88*(2), 103–119. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040714567866

Golann, J. W., & Torres, A. C. (2020). Do no-excuses disciplinary practices promote success? *Journal of Urban Affairs*, *42*, 617–633. https://doi.org/10.1080/07352166.2018.1427506

Goodman, J. F. (2013). Charter management organizations and the regulated environment: Is it worth the price? *Educational Researcher*, *42*(2), 89–96. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x12470856

Green, E. (2016). *Beyond the viral video: Inside educators' emotional debate about 'no excuses' discipline*. https://ny.chalkbeat.org/2016/3/8/21103270/beyond-the-viral-video-inside-educators-emotional-debate-about-no-excuses-discipline

Gross, B., & DeArmond, M. (2010). *Parallel patterns: Teacher attrition in charter vs public schools*. Center on Reinventing Public Education.

Jack, A. A. (2016). (No) Harm in asking: Class, acquired cultural capital, and academic engagement at an elite university. *Sociology of Education*, *89*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/0038040715614913

Keierleber, M. (2017). *At Philadelphia's Mastery Charter Network, Culture Is Key to Turning Around Failing Schools*. Retrieved February 18, 2022, from https://masterycharter.org/news/at-philadelphias-mastery-charter-network-culture-is-key-to-turning-around-failing-schools/

KIPP Foundation. (2015). *The promise of college completion: KIPP's early successes and challenges*. Author.

Lareau, A. (2011). *Unequal childhoods: Class, race, and family life, with an update a decade later*. http://www.scopus.com/inward/record.url?eid=2-s2.0-84887663310&partnerID=tZOtx3y1

Larson, M. R., & Kanold, T. D. (2016). *Balancing the equation: A guide to school mathematics for educators and parents*. Solution Tree Press.

Lemov, D. (2010). *Teach like a champion: 49 techniques that put students on the path to college*. John Wiley & Sons.

Lewis, A. E., & Diamond, J. B. (2015). *Despite the best intentions: How racial inequality thrives in good schools*. Oxford University Press.

Milner, H. R. (2013). Scripted and narrowed curriculum reform in urban schools. *Urban Education*, *48*(2), 163–170. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085913478022

Miron, G., & Applegate, B. (2007). *Teacher attrition in charter schools*. Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice.

Schoenfeld, A. H. (2002). Making mathematics work for all children: Issues of standards, testing, and equity. *Educational Researcher*, *31*, 13–25. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189x031001013

Shorser, L. (1999). *Bloom's taxonomy interpreted for mathematics*. University of Victoria.

Sondel, B. (2015). Raising citizens or raising test scores? Teach for America, "no excuses" charters, and the development of the neoliberal citizen. *Theory & Research in Social Education*, *43*(3), 289–313. https://doi.org/10.1080/00933104.2015.1064505

Stanton-Salazar, R. D., & Valenzuela, A. (2001). Subtractive schooling: U.S.-Mexican youth and the politics of caring. *Contemporary Sociology*, *30*, 210. https://doi.org/10.2307/2655442

Torre, K. (2013). Charter schools and the process of "counseling out". *Theory, Research and Action in Urban Education*, *2*(1). https://traue.commons.gc.cuny.edu/issue-2-fall-2013/torre/

Torres, A. C., & Golann, J. W. (2018). *NEPC review: Charter schools and the achievement Gap*. National Education Policy Center.

Walker, J. M. T. (2009). Authoritative classroom management: How control and nurturance work together. *Theory Into Practice*, *48*, 122–129. https://doi.org/10.1080/00405840902776392

Ware, F. (2006). Culturally responsive teaching that supports a culture of achievement. *Urban Education*, *41*(4), 427–456. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085906289710

White, T. (2015). Charter schools: Demystifying whiteness in a market of "no excuses" corporate-styled charter schools. In B. Picower & E. Mayorga (Eds.), *What's race got to do with it?* (pp. 121–145). Peter Lang.

Whitman, D. (2008). An appeal to authority: The new paternalism in urban schools. *Education Next*, *8*(4), 52–59.

Author Biography

Monique H. Harrison, is a PhD candidate in the Sociology of Education program at Stanford and a Dissertation Fellow at the Michelle R. Clayman Institute for Gender Research. She has degrees in sociology (MA, Stanford), school leadership (MEd, Harvard), and human development (BS, Cornell). She was a middle school classroom teacher, teacher coach, and administrator for both district and charter schools. Her research focuses on inequality and stratification in education and the workplace. www.MoniqueHarrison.com