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Effective Discipline Methods

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Abstract

School systems have the main responsibility of educating students, and to help achieve this goal, schools need standards of behavior that promote safety, order, and discipline methods to address unacceptable behavior. This paper set out to explore the current discipline methods that schools use, and the effects (positive or negative) of each method. Relevant literature articles were reviewed and analyzed. Exclusionary discipline (out of school suspension and expulsion) is a commonly used discipline method in schools, but research has shown that it is not effective and can be harmful when overused for minor infractions. Furthermore, out of school suspension rates are higher among students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities resulting in a school discipline gap. The most common alternative interventions to suspension include: in school suspension, positive behavior interventions and supports, restorative practice, social emotional learning, professional development, and the principal's role. These interventions have varying effects on improving behavior and reducing exclusionary discipline. Professional application, limitations of the current research, and recommendations for future research are discussed as well.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The primary goal of any school system is to educate students. In order to educate students well, schools need a safe learning environment. Even more so, teachers and students are entitled to learning environments that are not riddled with chaos and continual disruption (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). A common response to chaos and disruptive behaviors in schools is the use of exclusionary discipline, including out of school suspension and expulsion. Piggybacking on the zero tolerance drug policies put in place in the 1980's, schools began enforcing zero tolerance policies for behavior issues in the late 1980's. The zero tolerance policies in the schools called for expulsions for guns and all weapons, drugs, and gang violence, and a mandate for suspensions for offenses such as smoking, dress code violations and school disruptions (Skiba & Losen, 2015).

Suspension and expulsion rates have been on the rise since the 1970's (Losen & Skiba, 2010). Of the 49 million students enrolled in public schools in 2011-12, 3.5 million were suspended in-school, 3.45 million were suspended out-of-school and 130,000 were expelled (Losen et al., 2015). Rates of suspension and expulsion are higher for students of color, low-income students, and students with disabilities (Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2013). According to the Civil Rights Data Collection, black students are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than white students, while students with disabilities are twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension as their non-disabled peers

(Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). This results in a school discipline gap (Losen et al., 2015). Losen et al. (2015) further ascertains that if we ignore the discipline gap educators will be unable to close the achievement gap.

It is widely known in the literature that suspensions and expulsions are ineffective and can increase the risk of negative social and academic outcomes (Raffaele Mendez, 2003, Balfanz, Byrnes, and Fox, 2013, Marchbanks III et al., 2015). Since exclusionary discipline removes the student from the classroom, they have a loss in classroom instructional time that can damage the students' academic performance (Losen et al., 2015). Involvement in exclusionary discipline has shown to have significant negative outcomes, these include: grade retention and dropping out of the school system (Marchbanks III et al., 2015). Individuals involved in discipline are much more likely to move into the juvenile justice system, according to Fabelo et al. (2011). High school students who drop out are at higher risk for incarceration as well (The Civil Rights Project, 2000). This has been commonly called the "school to prison pipeline." Furthermore, there are significant fiscal implications to exclusionary discipline as well. A student who drops out of high school will earn less over a lifetime than a high school graduate, and pay less in taxes than the high school graduate (Shore & Shore, 2009). This results in a loss of federal and state income tax revenue. In addition, the high school drop-out experiences worse health and a shorter life expectancy when compared to a high school graduate, placing higher burden on

our healthcare system (NIH, 2003). Higher levels of OSS and expulsion create collateral damage that can affect the academic achievement of non-suspended students as well. The effect of this was seen most in schools with high levels of OSS and expulsion and schools with low levels of violence (Perry & Morris, 2014). A recent large research study done found no academic benefits in schools with higher suspension rates (Fabelo et al., 2011).

The goals of suspension have been to improve school safety and student behavior. However, there is little evidence that frequent reliance on removing misbehaving students improves student behavior or student safety (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Furthermore, the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) does not support the concept of zero tolerance for the developing child, and maintains that exclusionary discipline is counter-productive to the intended goals. The AAP recommends that out of school suspension and expulsion should only be considered the appropriate discipline method for the most dangerous and extreme circumstances. And determined on an individual level and not as a blanket policy (AAP, 2013).

If out of school suspension and expulsion are to be used as discipline methods in only the most dangerous and extreme circumstances and not as a blanket policy, what other options for improving discipline are recommended? Options include school-wide interventions consisting of positive behavior interventions and supports (SWPBIS) or changing the disciplinary codes of conduct. Strategies involving relationship building (restorative practices) and

social-emotional learning (SEL) approaches are also alternative strategies to improving disciplinary practices (Skiba & Losen, 2015). Furthermore, it is important to support educators in improving disciplinary practices. This can be done through professional development, training, technical assistance, codes of conduct that support alternative discipline strategies, and increased presence of mental health and instructional support persons in schools. Collaboration with community agencies including pediatricians, mental health providers, juvenile justice, and social service agencies can help promote a healthy discipline environment. Of course administrative support cannot be overlooked as vital to success in implementing effective disciplinary alternatives (Skiba et al., 2015). Parental support and understanding of these alternative strategies is critical to their success as well. Schools need to collect data on rates of out of school suspension and expulsion accurately to ascertain if methods of discipline are effective or not, and respond appropriately. These alternative strategies for improving school discipline will be discussed in further detail. This literature review will answer the question: what are the effects of exclusionary discipline, and what are the effective alternative methods to exclusionary discipline?

Personally, as a middle school teacher in an urban public school with high incidents of negative behavior, I am highly interested in researching what are effective alternatives to suspension. Too often the students I teach are suspended and return to school with no behavioral improvement and have fallen behind academically due to the lost days of academic instruction. Keeping students in

school would offer more opportunities for interventions to improve behavior. I am specifically interested in researching the effects of School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS) and their effects on suspension rates. I have served on my school PBIS implementation team for the last three years. We have recently completed our PBIS cohort training with Minnesota PBIS. We are still in the process of implementing SWPBIS with fidelity but I am interested in finding more schools that have implemented with fidelity and how it has affected their suspension rates. I also teach social skills and work to utilize Restorative Practices (RP) to middle school students I case manage. I would like to further research schools that effectively implement Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and RP in their school and the effects on suspension rates. Lastly, as an educator participating in many hours of Professional Development (PD), I am interesting in research pointing to PD programs that effectively increase classroom management skills of educators while decreasing the use of exclusionary discipline practices.

Finally, this topic is of interest to me from personal experiences that included school violence and disruptive behavior, often resulting in a suspension. I work as a special educator in an urban middle school with 98% of our student body being students of color, 90% of our students receiving free or reduced lunch, and 30% of our students receiving special education services. Knowing that suspension rates are higher for students of color, low income students and students receiving special education services, I have grown interested in

researching effective ways to lower suspension rates. My desire is to implement effective methods to discipline.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Research was completed by conducting electronic journal searches using ERIC, EBSCOhost, Google Scholar through the Bethel University Library System. Search parameters limited results to peer-reviewed articles published after 2000. With the exception to two research articles used from 1976 and 1988 regarding in school suspension. Search terms used included: *school discipline methods, suspension, expulsion, alternatives to suspension, benefits of suspension, in school suspension, school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports, restorative practices, restorative justice, social emotional learning, teacher professional development programs*. The structure of this chapter is designed to review literature related to: 1) Exclusionary discipline (out of school suspension and expulsion) including current rates of exclusionary discipline, trends in usage of exclusionary discipline and its effects, 2) alternatives to exclusionary discipline including in school suspension, school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports, restorative practices, social emotional learning, teacher professional development, and the principal's role in disciplinary change. The effectiveness of each discipline method was researched through this literature review.

Reactive Discipline Practices

The important debate happening today in communities, district offices, and schools is the practice of school discipline. Without a doubt, any approach to discipline schools implement, is to create school climates that are safe, orderly, and civil, while teaching children basic values of respect and cooperation (Losen

& Skiba, 2015). Outside of keeping schools safe and orderly, teachers are unable to teach and students are unable to learn in environments surrounded with disorder and disruption (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). The current question is how can schools effectively provide safe, orderly learning environment, when the reality of many schools is marked with daily chaos and disruption.

For over 20 years, numerous policymakers and educators responded to problems with school safety and disruption with a "get tough" philosophy better known as zero tolerance (Losen & Skiba, 2015). Zero tolerance was a product of state and federal drug enforcement policies from the 1980's. It refers to policies that punish all offenses severely, no matter how minor. But as zero tolerance drug programs in communities were being eliminated, schools were beginning to adopt those zero tolerance policies to punish all offenses severely, no matter how minor (Peterson & Skiba, 2006). Research has strongly shown that zero tolerance policies in schools are ineffective, and in turn, increase the risk for negative academic and social outcomes, primarily for students from historically disadvantaged groups. Yet, as more effective, research-based approaches to discipline are being implemented in schools across the nation, there is still resistance to changing the existing conditions of putting students out of schools. Many educators in schools plagued with excessive suspension rates see few alternatives to suspending or expelling a student for negative behaviors (Losen & Skiba, 2015).

Zero Tolerance

As stated earlier, since the early 1990's school discipline has been dominated by the philosophy of zero tolerance. Originally developed in communities for drug enforcement, zero tolerance phased out in the late 1980's just as it began picking up steam in schools across the nation. Zero tolerance policy in schools has a predetermined consequence, typically severe and punitive, to send a message that certain behaviors would not be tolerated in school (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Zero tolerance policy took form in school districts across the nation calling for expulsion for guns and all weapons, drugs and gang-related activity, and to mandate increased suspension and expulsion for less serious offenses such as school disruption, smoking, and dress code violations (Losen & Skiba, 2015).

The motivation for schools to adopt zero tolerance policies stemmed from the fear that drugs and violence were spreading in our nation's schools. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) surveyed a nationally representative sample of 1,234 school principals or disciplinarians at the elementary, middle, and high school levels in 1990-91 and 1996-97 to see if behaviors in schools were in fact worsening.

As zero tolerance took root in U.S. public schools from the fear of random violence during the 1990's, it was evident that behaviors falling under the category of zero tolerance, or schools will not tolerate, seemed to expand (Peterson & Skiba, 2006). Data has consistently shown that school violence and

disruption have remained stable since approximately 1985 (DeVoe et al., 2004; National Center for Education Statistics, 2006). Although school violence and disruptions remained stable, zero tolerance policy began a practice and philosophy of removing students from school at increased rates that continues today (Losen & Skiba, 2010).

The American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) does not support the concept of zero tolerance for the developing child given the research demonstrating the harmful and counterproductive effects. Out of school suspension and expulsion should be considered appropriate in only the most extreme and dangerous circumstances.

Out of School Suspension (OSS) and Expulsion

Out of school suspension is defined as an occurence in which a child is temporarily removed from his/her regular school for disciplinary purposes to another setting, usually home, but could also be a behavioral center (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Usually the suspension excludes the student from school for one day or longer. Expulsion is defined differently in each state (Skiba, Eaton, & Sotoo, 2004). The Minnesota Department of Education defines expulsion as an action to prohibit an enrolled student from further school attendance, this can last as long as 12 months from the date the student was expelled (Minnesota Department of Education, 2013). It is the most serious consequence of inappropriate behavior.

Close to 3.5 million public school students were suspended with the average suspension lasting 3.5 school days during the 2011-12 school year. Over half of those 3.5 million students were suspended at least twice leading to an estimated 18 million public school days lost due to suspensions (Losen et al., 2015). Furthermore, black students, students who are economically disadvantaged, and special education students are disproportionately suspended, with black males having the highest suspension rates (Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2013, U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Both suspension rates and number of days suspended are higher among these subgroups. According to the Civil Rights Data Collection (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014), black students are suspended and expelled at a rate three times greater than white students, while students with disabilities are twice as likely to receive an out-of-school suspension as their non-disabled peers. Girls of color are suspended at higher rates than girls of any other nationality or race (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014).

Involvement in exclusionary discipline has shown to have significant negative outcomes, these include: grade retention and dropping out of the school system (Marchbanks III et al., 2015). One study following 181,897 9th graders in Florida state confirmed the racial disproportionalities and also discussed the consequences later in life of being suspended in the 9th grade (Balfanz, Byrnes, and Fox, 2013). The study found that suspension was not only common among

9th graders, but being suspended even once in the 9th grade is associated with higher risks (two-fold) of dropping out of school. Students suspended in the 9th grade had lower rates of high school graduation and post-secondary enrollment related to absences and course grades. Suspended students missed an average of 7 days of school and among students who were suspended, the number of days lost to suspension accounted for 40% off their absences. Furthermore, individuals involved in discipline are much more likely to move into the juvenile justice system, according to Fabelo et al. (2011). Students who are suspended and ultimately fall behind on school work are at risk for dropping out of school. High school students who drop out are at higher risk for incarceration as well (The Civil Rights Project, 2000).

A common assertion that many believe is that schools with high suspension rates are boosting the achievement of the students who do not misbehave (Losen et al., 2015). A study in Texas tracking every middle school student over 6 years and controlling for 80 variables found no academic benefits in schools with higher suspension rates (Fabelo et al., 2011). Furthermore, a study tracking the effect of high suspension rates on 17,000 students who were never themselves suspended found that they had lower math and reading scores over a period of three years (Perry & Morris, 2014). Higher levels of OSS and expulsion create collateral damage that can affect the academic achievement of non-suspended students. The effect of this was seen most in schools with high levels of OSS and expulsion and schools with low levels of violence (Perry &

Morris, 2014). In addition, suspension does not appear to deter future misbehavior for any group (Raffaele Mendez, 2003).

There are significant fiscal implications to out of school suspension and expulsion as well. Since students who experience out-of-school suspension and expulsion are more likely to have grade retention and/or drop-out of high school (Marchbanks III et al., 2015). If a student does not graduate from high school the long-term costs are significant. A student who drops out of high school will earn less over a lifetime than a high school graduate and pay less in taxes than the high school graduate (Shore & Shore, 2009). This results in a loss of federal and state income tax revenue. One study examining students in Texas estimated that students who drop out cost $750 million over the lifetime of each cohort (Marchbanks III et al., 2015). And grade retention in the state of Texas costs $178 million per year (Marchbanks III et al., 2015). In addition, the high school drop-out experiences worse health and a shorter life expectancy when compared to a high school graduate, placing higher burden on our healthcare system (NIH, 2003). Overall, seeking alternatives to out of school suspension and expulsion is in the best interest to the student and society as well.

As suspension rates are higher for students of color, students who are economically disadvantaged, and students receiving special education services, it diminishes their odds of graduating and enrolling in post-secondary schooling. Losen, et al. (2015) assert that the racial achievement gap will only be decreased when the school discipline gap has been addressed. However, improvement

efforts need to be more comprehensive than just decreasing the suspension rates as suspension is part of other indicators that the student has fallen off the track to high school graduation and post-secondary success (Balfanz, Byrnes, and Fox, 2013).

Interventions should be comprehensive in order to reduce suspensions, address student attendance, and student achievement, while at the same time decreasing disciplinary disparities between groups of students (Balfanz, Byrnes, and Fox, 2013). It is important to monitor suspension rates and teacher ratings of behavior of students in the late elementary years to identify students at risk for behavioral issues in order to implement higher quality interventions as they transition to middle school (Raffaele Mendez, 2003). Alternatives to OSS and expulsion include: ISS (in school suspension), restorative justice, positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS), social-emotional learning, and staff professional development. If done well they have the opportunity to improve graduation rates, life outcomes, and achievement scores as well as decreasing the rate of incarceration for juveniles and adults (Losen & Martinez, 2013).

In-School Suspension (ISS)

ISS is a discipline method that involves temporarily removing a child from his or her regular classroom, but remains under supervision of school staff (The U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2011). The student is usually removed for at least half a day and direct supervision means that that school staff are in the same physical location as the student (The U.S. Department

of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2011). Educators since the early beginnings of the public school system have been trying to figure out what to do with a disruptive student. Teachers in the one room schoolhouse days would place disorderly students in the corner of the room with a pointed cap (Morris & Howard, 2003). A student being placed in ISS has typically broken a school policy and is withdrawn from their regular school schedule and activities for a specified period of time (Dickinson & Miller, 2006).

The first known ISS programs took birth at four suburban Minneapolis schools in 1971 and were introduced in a 1976 article in the American School Board Journal by D.M. O'Brien. O'Brien's article, In-School Suspension: Are They the New Way, lays out the foundation of ISS to include both education and just forms of punishment. The four suburban Minneapolis programs were set up to be seventy five percent behavior education and twenty five percent punishment. A study of ISS programs in the 1980's conducted by Paula Short found that the primary goal of schools placing students in ISS was to exclude the problem student while still providing some type of education for the student. She found that ISS programs from the 1980's had these common characteristics:

- Students are isolated while working on class assignments. There is no interaction with other suspended students or peers in the halls and cafeteria.
- Students eat isolated from peers.
- Average length of time in ISS is three to five days.

- Privileges are restricted and talking is not allowed.
- Teachers send assignments to students to complete.

Short (1988) found that ISS programs from the 1980's fall into three categories: academic model, punitive model and therapeutic model. In the academic model it is believed that the discipline problems transpire from lacking skills in a specific academic area. It is believed that student behavior will improve with additional academic instruction in that academic area. According to Short, the punitive model is the most commonly implemented model in schools in the 1980's. This model is utilized under the belief that students misbehave because they want to cause trouble, and this model is intended to deter students from misbehaving. The punitive model is characterized by a brief sentence (two to ten days), strict rules and a lack of privileges (Short, 1988). This approach is not likely to create a positive school climate or change the behavior of the misbehaving student (Strategy Brief, 2015). A third ISS program identified by Short is the therapeutic model. An assumption of this model is that student misbehavior stems from a specific problem the student is going through. Students will talk with staff and problem solve with the goal of the student recognizing, acknowledging and stopping the behavior. Some characteristics of a therapeutic model are improvement of students' self-image and understanding of the school environment, counseling strategies, training for school staff and parents, and monitoring of student behavior after leaving ISS (Short, 1988).

The model Short (1988) recommended and John Sheets (1996) implemented in the 1990's is the individualized model. This model is created under the assumption that students misbehave for a multitude of reasons and the individualized model should seek to change behavior through a collaborative approach designed to best meet the individual needs (Morris & Howard, 2003). The Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy published an article of a successful ISS program in an urban U.S. middle school. The program had students utilize writing strategies with the aim of having the student to write and reflect on their behavior in a non-punitive way (Haley & Watson, 2000).

Strategy Brief (2015) recommend the following pieces for an ISS program to run successfully: a reasonable time limit, location that is conductive for students to complete their schoolwork, problem solving, social skills instruction and mediation between students and teachers, behavioral assessments and possible interventions for the student. Also, trained and skilled staff should lead and enforce ISS guidelines and expectations.

Even though the individualized ISS program is recommended throughout the literature, the punitive model that began over 40 years ago is still the most commonly used ISS model (Amuso, 2007, Morris & Howard, 2003). A primary problem of ISS is the amount of missed education opportunities students experience as their environment is typically isolated and solitary. Students are expected to work on classroom assignments independently and without the opportunity to inquire for help when it is needed (Allman & Slate, 2011).

Students who may already be struggling in the classroom are not likely to benefit from being removed from the classroom (Dickinson & Miller, 2006). The U.S. Department of Education (2014) recommends that ISS be reserved for the most severe cases with data collection practices in place to ensure students are not disproportionately being placed in ISS.

Grounds for Suspension

Students and school staff deserve learning environments that are safe and supportive to learning. When negative behaviors interfere with that safe and supportive learning environment, the state of Minnesota is called to have discipline policies in place. According to Minnesota Law 121A.61, schools are required to have a written district-wide discipline policy. This is to include written rules of conduct for students, minimum consequences for violations of the rules, and grounds and procedures for removal of a student from class. This policy is to be developed by administrators, teachers, employees, students, parents, community members, law enforcement agencies, county attorney offices, social service agencies and any other individuals the school board determines appropriate. Minnesota statute 121A.45 states that no student shall be dismissed without attempting to provide alternative educational services before dismissal unless the student is creating immediate and substantial danger to self or surrounding persons or property. Minnesota statute 121A.45 goes on to state that students may be dismissed for the following: (a) willful violation of any reasonable school board regulation, (b) willful conduct that significantly disrupts

the rights of others to an education, or the ability of school staff to perform their job, and (c) willful conduct that endangers the student or other students, school staff or property of the school.

Minneapolis Public Schools, one of Minnesota's largest, urban school districts, breaks down behaviors and possible consequences into five different levels (2013). Out of school removal optional consequences begin with level three behaviors. Examples of level three behaviors are: Threats/intimidation; Extortion; Sexting; Theft or vandalism under $500.00; Property offenses; Substance impairment; Possession of stolen property; Propping open secured facility doors or bus doors; Opening, entering or leaving the bus through emergency exit; Holding onto exterior portion of bus. A student could be suspended for one day or less. Examples of level four behaviors are: Suspected substance use or possession; Possession of drug paraphernalia; Assault; Terroristic threats; Theft or vandalism over $500. Out of school removal for these offenses is not to exceed four school days. Examples of level five behaviors are: Weapons possession or use; Arson; Pyrotechnics; Drug or alcohol sale/intent to sell; Sexual assault; Severe physical assault; Bomb threats; Bombs or incendiaries; Robbery. Potential consequences for level five behaviors are: out of school removal from instruction for five or more days (ten if there is a Recommendation for Expulsion). While taking into consideration the age of the student, a student could potentially be recommended for expulsion. For each of these levels of behavior, there are recommendations for skills training and

restorative practices. For example, a student committing a level three behavior, it is recommended they receive small group skill instruction, lessons in anger management, conflict resolution, and bus safety depending on the offense. For restorative practices, it is recommended they have a restorative back to class plan, staff-led mediation for incidents involving equal power between persons, and restitution for property incidents.

The largest school district in California, Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) radically changed their discipline policy in response to the growing number of minority and disabled student receiving suspensions (Graham, 2013). The school board in LAUSD adopted a new policy that banned the use of suspensions for "willful defiance." Willful defiance is a vague description of behaviors that lump together less severe discipline issues. These could include: students who use their cell phone in class, talking back to a teacher, repeated tardiness, or public displays of affection. During the 2011-2012 school year almost half of LAUSD's suspensions were due to willful defiance, almost 350,000 suspensions. That is a large number even considering LAUSD serves 640,000 students. As expected, LAUSD had a drastic decrease in suspension rates, but it is important to note that decreasing suspension rates is not an appropriate goal if there is no effective alternative discipline plan in place (ie. restorative practices, school-wide positive behavior interventions and supports, social-emotional learning, and professional development). By keeping students in

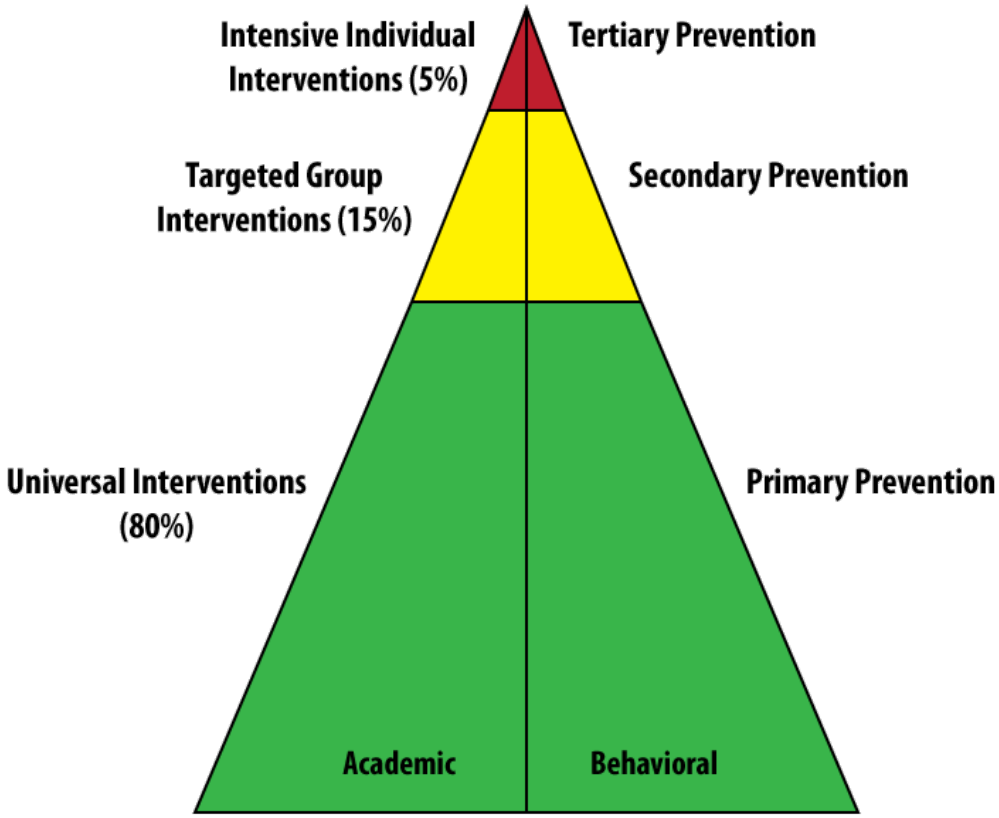
school there is more opportunity for educations to offer appropriate interventions to improve behaviors.

Proactive Discipline Practices

School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (SWPBIS)

SWPBIS is a systems approach to establishing the social culture and behavioral supports needed for all children in a school to achieve both academic and social success (Childs et al, 2016). The main components of SWPBIS include: prevention of the problem behavior, teaching expected behaviors and skills, acknowledging appropriate behavior, arrangement of consistent consequences for the problem behavior, on-going collection and use of data for decision making, continuum of intensive, individualized interventions and supports, and implementation of the systems that support effective practices (Horner, 2013). Another huge component of SWPBIS is a focus on changing the behavior of school staff, such as giving praise for positive student behavior instead of focusing on negative behavior, proactively teaching expected behaviors instead of reacting to unexpected behaviors and making decisions based on collected data (Vincent et al, 2013). SWPBIS is typically implemented by a team of ten adults with similar demographics to the students they are instructing. Teams are made up of administrators, general education teachers, special education teachers, parent, and classified staff (custodian, parent liaison). This team will define the school's behavior expectations, create lessons to teach the expected behaviors, design systems to acknowledge students' behavioral success and review office

discipline referral (ODR) data (Vincent et al., 2013).



The PBIS Pyramid

SWPBIS is intended to reach every student in the building. Understanding that students have different needs, SWPBIS follows a multitiered response to intervention philosophy located in the SWPBIS Pyramid on page 26. The Minnesota Department of Education (2012) has alternatives to suspension described for each tier of the pyramid. Tier 1 (Universal Support) is for all students at all times. Every student in the building is exposed to expected behavior lessons each year and is rewarded for positive behaviors. Systemic approaches of Tier 1 include but are not limited to implementing a whole child approach, teaching, modeling, and reinforcing behavior expectations and

social/emotional learning competencies, intentionally creating a caring and respectful school community, embedding culturally responsive practices into instruction, actively engaging staff, students and families, and lastly developing discipline policies that include alternatives to suspension. Tier 2 is intended for the students who do not respond satisfactorily to Tier 1. Tier 2 is targeted for specific students and focuses on early intervention and problem-solving. Systemic approaches for some students in Tier 2 include but are not limited to targeted, evidence-based instruction to build skills, differentiation of interventions based on the needs of a student, monitoring academic and behavior progress, and implementing restorative practices and mediation programs. Students in Tier 2 may also carry around a point sheet for targeted behaviors, create behavior contracts, and participate in community service or problem-solving circles. Students that do not respond positively to Tier 2 supports receive individualized support in Tier 3. Tier 3 is intensive focusing on the needs of individual students. Systemic approaches for individual students include but are not limited to implementing assessment-based interventions, convening a collaborative support team determining if a student is in need of additional services through the school, community, or other agency, making adjustments to the environment, teaching replacement skills, reinforcing positive behaviors, and developing a crisis management plan. Practical examples in Tier 3 may look like one to one support, alternative programming, appropriate in-school suspension, and life skills

training. This support in Tier 3 is determined by the behavioral support team in a behavior support plan (Vincent et al., 2013).

Implementing the SWPBIS system is regarded for reducing the need for interventions like suspensions while changing school culture and well as change in individuals (Cohn, 2001). Researchers have discovered a variety of desirable effects of implementing SWPBIS. One study with a sample of 12,344 elementary school children (49% of students receiving free/reduced lunch, 12.9% of students receiving special education services, 45% African American, 46% Caucasian) showed that schools implementing SWPBIS had a significant positive intervention in the areas of: reducing office discipline referrals (ODR), lower rates of aggressive or disruptive behaviors and improvement in the area of student concentration (Bradshaw et al., 2010). An empirical research study of 1,122 elementary, middle and high schools showed that schools implementing SWPBIS show a decreasing trend in ODRs, ISS, and OSS (Childs et al. 2016). The positive impact of SWPBIS on ODRs has been upheld by multiple other researchers (Lassen et al., 2006, Luiselli et al., 2005, Sadler & Sugai, 2009).

Implementation of SWPBIS shows a significant positive change in student behavior while the same correlation is inconsistent for student academic achievement (Houchens et al., 2017). Over a five year study, Bradshaw, et al. (2010) found no difference in student achievement in math or reading for students in schools implementing SWPBIS and schools that were not. Empirical research of students enrolled in schools in Kentucky showed no significant differences in

academic outcomes whether the school was implementing SWPBIS or not. A randomized controlled trial with 60 elementary schools found that implementation of SWPBIS was related to the improvement in students' reading performance (Horner et al., 2009). Schools implementing SWPBIS with high fidelity did have better academic outcomes than those schools implementing SWPBIS with low fidelity (Houchens et al., 2017).

While research shows that SWPBIS is effective in reducing disciplinary infractions, Vincent, et al., (2013) took a closer look at disciplinary exclusion rates by racial/ethnic groups across time. They targeted what effects SWPBIS has on disciplinary exclusions for African American, Latino, and American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) students as they typically experience the most exclusionary discipline outcomes. White students were used as their comparison group. Vincent et al., (2013) findings show that implementation of SWPBIS in middle schools correlates with lower rates of ISS, overall high rates of truancy, especially with American Indian and Latino students, some reduction in disciplinary exclusions for American Indian and Latino students, but little for African American students. In conclusion, race continued to be a predictor of disciplinary exclusion rates even with the implementation of SWPBIS (Vincent et al., 2013).

Information from the Minnesota Department of Education (2015) report that from 2010 to 2014 they have had 12,000 fewer suspensions largely attributed to schools and districts implementing SWPBIS. SWPBIS launched in 2005 in

Minnesota and has since spread to over 150 school districts and is being implemented in over 25 percent of the state's 2,000 schools. From 2010 to 2014 Minnesota has seen a 26.8 percent reduction in suspension for all black students, a 27.5 percent reduction in suspensions for all Hispanic students, 21.6 percent reduction in suspensions for all white students and 6,200 fewer suspensions statewide, or a 20 percent reduction, for all students with disabilities.

SWPBIS has numerous positive effects on schools (Vincent et al., 2013), but in order to maximize these positive effects schools should increase the accountability for cultural awareness within the SWPBIS model (Vincent et al., 2013). As student populations in the U.S. are becoming more diverse, the majority of school staff are white (Toldson, McGee, & Lemmons, 2013). This could create gaps in the staff behavioral support and what the students' needs actually are. SWPBIS implementation could be adjusted to incorporate training for staff to increase their awareness of cultural differences through peer coaching, professional development and continued dialogue around the discipline problems related to cultural differences (Vincent et al., 2011). Also, schools should increase their accountability for basing support decisions within the SWPBIS framework on data disaggregated by student race/ethnicity (Vincent et al., 2013). SWPBIS stresses data based decision making. Often though, the race/ethnicity of students is not commonly examined when deciphering SWPBIS discipline data (Vincent, 2008). It is highly recommended that schools implementing SWPBIS

begin to analyze race/ethnicity data for SWPBIS best to supporting the needs of students (Vincent et al., 2013).

Restorative Practices

Restorative practices (RP) are defined as "informal and formal processes implemented throughout the school building that aim to proactively build relationships and a sense of community (preventing conflict), and to repair harm after wrongdoing has occurred (resolving conflict) (Skiba, Arredondo & Rausch, 2014)." Three core principles of restorative practice include: repairing harm, involving stakeholders, and transforming community relationships (Macready, 2009, Mallett, 2016). RP are appropriate for situations when the student is primarily responsible for unsafe school behaviors or disruptions and has a focus on accountability, collaboration, and relationships (Gonzalez, 2015, Mallett, 2016). RP require a school wide philosophy shift and it is important that it be embraced at all levels to help improve school climate (Macready, 2009, Reimer, 2011, Gonzalez, 2015). Even if there is a personal commitment to RP by both teachers and administrators, if necessary cultural systems and structures are not in place, then it is difficult to sustain the program (Reimer, 2011).

Diverse models of RP have been implemented in schools across the United States in recent years to address the concerns of the negative impact of exclusionary discipline (Gonzalez, 2015). There is growing empirical evidence for implementing these approaches as alternatives to keep students in school and out of the juvenile justice system (Schiff, 2013).

One recent longitudinal study was conducted to assess the impact of restorative justice in the Denver Public Schools (DPS) (Gonzalez, 2015). This was a multiyear examination of the implementation of RP across several sites in the DPS from 2008-2013. Data was taken from open ended interviews, observations, and secondary analyses of discipline data from DPS at the district and school levels. Data showed that between 2006 and 2013 the overall suspension rate decreased from 10.58%-5.63% after implementing RP. Suspension rates for each sub group also decreased with the largest reduction in African American students. Suspension rates for African American students fell 7.2 percentage points. The African American/White gap decreased significantly by almost 4 percentage points, and there was a decrease in the Latino/White gap. Another finding showed that after RP implementation DPS showed a substantial and steady increase in the percentage of students scoring proficient or above on statewide tests as well as an increase in the average ACT score. High school drop-out rates decreased and on-time graduation rates increased. Qualitative data from this study showed that DPS changed the culture and approach to discipline within their district. Administrators, students, and teachers have attributed the culture change to the use of restorative practices that created accountability and promoted meaningful relationships.

Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) started the Whole School Restorative Justice (WSRJ) program in 2005 and has had similar results to the DPS implementation of RP (Jain, 2014). In 2012 OUSD actually went into a

voluntary agreement with the Office of Civil Rights to help close the discipline gap between African American and white students. OUSD is one of the largest school districts in the state of California, serving 45,000 students, one-third of those students were African American students. After implementing WSRJ and more recently the Peer RJ program results show a considerable reduction in suspensions among RP schools compared to non-RP schools. The most significant decline was for African American students suspended for disruption/willful defiance, decreasing the suspension rates by 40%. In addition, schools with RP had significantly better academic outcomes compared to non RP schools. The WSRJ program used multi-level strategies to change the school climate. Classroom circles (tier 1), repair harm/conflict and build relationships circles (tier 2), mediation and family group conferencing, welcome/re-entry circles post juvenile justice centers. This study cited some challenges to RP implementation and these included: limited time and trainings, staff buy-in, unclear discipline policies and protocols for serious offenses, information sharing and communication, student attitudes, inconsistency in application of RP.

Another study conducted with two large and diverse high schools in the United States addressed the effect of RP on teacher-student relationships and equity in school discipline (Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gerewitz, 2015). The results showed that teachers with greater RP implementation levels were associated with better teacher-student relationships. Higher RP implementation predicted greater teacher respect, this held for students across various racial and

ethnic groups. Additionally, teachers who were high RP implementers had fewer differences in the number of misconduct/defiance referral issued to Asian/White and Latino/African American student groups compared with the larger discipline gap for teachers who implemented RP less often. This study also highlighted the importance of integrating student perspectives on implementation of RP to ensure its success.

There are many ways that RP can be implemented within schools, usually using a multi-level approach, but the use of a restorative justice center in place of detention is unique. Faculty members from Hawthorne Elementary in Sioux Falls, South Dakota started The Restorative Justice Center (RJC) (Ashworth et al., 2008). Any student referred for detention can use the RJC as an alternative. It is an after school program staffed by teachers, volunteers, and college students. It involves a one hour meeting that includes: group/circle time, small group time, expression/art time, group work with an action plan, and a celebration/closing the circle time. Implementation effects have not been studied, but this is a unique way to implement RP.

Social-Emotional Learning

Social-emotional learning (SEL) is defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2018) as: "the process through which children and adults acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain

positive relationships, and make responsible decisions." It involves five competencies including: self-awareness, social-awareness, responsible decision-making, self-management, and relationship skills (CASEL, 2018). It is not a single program, but rather a coordinated strategy across classrooms, schools, districts, homes, and communities (CASEL, 2018). Effective approaches to SEL should incorporate four elements represented by the acronym SAFE (sequenced, active, focused, and explicit). Sequenced involves coordinated activities to foster skills development. Active incorporates active forms of learning to help students master new skills and attitudes. Focused is a component that emphasizes social and personal skills. And lastly, explicit is defined as targeting specific emotional and social skills.

The effectiveness of SEL has been studied in many settings. A recent meta-analysis looked at the impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning through school-based universal interventions (Durlak et al., 2011). This study looked at 213 school-based, universal SEL programs involving 270,034 kindergarten through high school students. Findings from the meta-analysis show that SEL programs produced significant positive effects on social-emotional competencies and attitudes about self, others, and school. Students also had improved prosocial behaviors and reduced conduct and internalizing problems, and improved academic performance. A small subset of all the reviewed studies showed an 11-percentile gain in academic performance. Another important finding was also that classroom teachers and other staff effectively conducted

SEL programs. This is important to note because these results suggest that SEL programs can be incorporated into routine educational practices. SEL programs have been successful in urban, rural, suburban schools as well as at all educational levels (elementary, middle, and high school). Although this analysis shows that SEL has been studied less in high school and rural settings. Beneficial SEL programs should incorporate SAFE practices and be well implemented to achieve the positive student outcomes that have been discussed.

Improving social-emotional functioning could also have the potential to increase children's success in school, work, and life. A recent study found that emotional and social competencies in early childhood were associated with young adult outcomes in employment, education, need for public assistance, substance abuse, mental health, and criminal activity (Jones, Greenberg, & Crowley, 2015). The study looked at measured outcomes (teacher's ratings of children's prosocial behavior) in kindergarten and outcomes 13-19 years later. They recommend that a kindergarten measure of social-emotional skills may be useful for identifying children at risk for noncognitive skill deficits later in life, resulting in possible early intervention.

In 2011 CASEL launched a program aimed at supporting school districts' capacities to promote SEL for all students, called the Collaborating Districts Initiative (CDI) (Kendziora & Yoder, 2016). Eight large urban school districts joined the CDI and CASEL helped implement systemic changes to integrate SEL. The American Institutes for Research (AIR) studied the effects of this

implementation. Overall, students' academic performance and attendance improved in CDI implementation years, but most notably suspensions decreased significantly during CDI implementation. However, changes in students' social and emotional outcomes were not consistently positive. This study did highlight the importance of quality professional learning experiences and administrative support in achieving successful implementation of a district wide SEL program. By building students' social and emotional competence through training and implementation of SEL school districts can address discipline issues proactively (Osher et al., 2015).

Professional Development

Teaching effectiveness is a huge challenge facing public schools across the nation (Pianta, 2011). School staff need support in increasing student achievement levels while at the same time reducing the rates at which students are excluded from instruction due to disciplinary reasons. While it is clear that staff need training, evidence suggests that most teacher professional development has no significant impact while school districts continue to pour in thousands of dollars per teacher each year on professional development (Pianta, 2011). Professional development programs can effectively accomplish raising achievement levels and reducing lost instructional time for disciplinary reasons (Gregory et al., 2013). A recent study reviewing the evidence on how teacher professional development affects student achievement found that of 1,300 studies reviewed, only nine studies met What Works Clearing-house's evidence standards

without reservations (Yoon et al., 2007). Of the nine studies that met the evidence standards, all were at the elementary level and showed moderate effects on student achievement.

Another recent study looking at new evidence-based approaches to teacher professional development and training focused in on My Teaching Partner (MTP), an evidence-driven professional development program designed to improve teacher effectiveness and student learning (Pianta, 2011). MTP is a year long program that through coaching and ongoing feedback, increases teachers' skill set and awareness of effective teacher-student interactions. MTP coaches provide feedback using an observational assessment of teacher-student interactions, the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), after teachers submit videotaped interactions to MTP (Gregory, et al., 2014). CLASS has three domains that guide the coaching and teacher reflection process: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional support (Pianta, 2011). A randomized controlled trial of 78 middle and high school teachers and over 1,400 students had findings that teachers trained in MTP had improvements compared to control teachers who had no training in MTP. Areas of teacher improvement were positive classroom climate, teacher sensitivity, teacher regard for adolescent perspectives, instructional learning formats, and analysis and inquiry (Allen et al., 2011). Pianta (2011) found that a teacher participating in MTP saw on average, an increase of nine percentage points per student on academic tests of

achievement and preventing one student from failing end of the year state assessments.

While MTP has a track record of improving student performance on academic tests, a recent study by Gregory, Allen, Mikami, Hafen, & Pianta (2013) is the first to test whether MTP reduces teachers' dependence on using exclusionary disciplinary practices in the hopes of maintaining a productive learning environment. Knowing that African American students are the most likely to be suspended (Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2013, U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014), the benefits of improved teacher-student interactions may be especially important for teachers and their African American students (Gregory et al. 2013). In August 2010, 82 teachers from five middle and high schools in were assigned to either the controlled condition of the MTP program for two years of coaching. Teachers in each group had the same average age, years of experience and were almost identical in gender and racial makeup. There were 979 participating students: 59% African American, 30% White, 8% Hispanic, and 3% Asian. Classroom makeup for both groups was very similar with approximately two thirds of each class being African American students and one third low income students. Findings from the study show that 13.7% of African American students and 5.1% of all other participating students in the control (non MTP) teachers' classroom received at least one exclusionary discipline referral, a difference of 8.6 percentage points. In the MTP teachers' classroom, 6% of African American students and 5.8% of all other students

received at least one exclusionary discipline referral, a difference of 0.2 percentage points. Non-African American students in MTP classrooms were also less likely to be excluded for disciplinary reasons. In summary, students in MTP classrooms, regardless of race, were less likely to receive exclusionary discipline. MTP has been shown to peer interactions, improvement in student engagement with academic work, improvement on standardized achievement tests, and teachers' reduced use of exclusionary discipline. As Pianta (2011) pointed out, districts waste thousands of dollars on non-effective professional development programs, Gregory et al. (2013) recommend that administrators carefully examine teacher support programs to make sure they have a sustained, focused, rigorous, and comprehensive approach.

The Principal's Role in Disciplinary Change

Although a number of school and classroom-wide interventions have been shown to be effective in improving student discipline or climate (Bradshaw et al., 2010, Childs et al. 2016) it is vital to have strong leadership in the school's principal. A recent large study in Indiana with 43,320 students at 730 schools over the school year 2007-2008 analyzed contributing factors to OSS versus ISS. This study found that multiple factors contribute to the use of exclusionary discipline, these include: type of infraction, race, gender, socioeconomic status, and school characteristics including the principal's attitude towards discipline. Results of this study show students are more likely to receive OSS instead of ISS if the principal believes OSS and expulsion are an important part of school

discipline and inevitable. Furthermore, schools with principals who were more focused on prevention had lower rates of OSS. If schools desire to change their disciplinary outcomes it is vital that school leadership is aware and supportive of effective alternative disciplinary approaches.

CHAPTER 3: DISCUSSION, APPLICATION, & CONCLUSION

Summary

Out of school suspensions started being implemented as a punitive form of discipline decades ago stemming from zero tolerance drug policies of the 1980's. Suspension rates steadily rose from the 1980's and in 2011-12 3.45 million students were suspended from school with higher rates for students of color, low income students, and students with disabilities. It is commonly accepted that suspensions are ineffective in changing future behavior and can increase the risk of negative social and academic outcomes. Still, schools continue to have disruptive students and often times the quickest way to deal with that student is by removing them, often times in the form of a suspension. It is recommended that out of school suspension be reserved for the most dangerous and extreme circumstances. As data shows, it is clear that students are being suspended for offenses outside of the most dangerous and extreme circumstances (Losen & Skiba, 2010).

Understanding that exclusionary discipline still exists and can potentially be excessively implemented, research has indicated that some school systems can lower the rates of educators using exclusionary discipline methods such as out of school suspension (Graham, 2013). The systems discussed in the literature included SWPBIS, RP, SEL, PD and The Principal's Role in Disciplinary Change. These five systems, when implemented with fidelity, have shown to decrease suspension rates and increase student achievement. The only way we

can clearly understand the effects these systems have on exclusionary discipline is when schools ethically and accurately collect and report data on rates of out of school suspension and expulsion.

Professional Application

Suspensions have been ingrained into our education system for decades as an approach to punish students for unwanted school behaviors. Those behaviors could include but are not limited to school defiance, disruptions to learning environments, disrespect to school staff, fighting, weapons, drug use and truancy. As educators and human beings we may desire and expect that the offender be punished for his or her unexpected behavior. School staff may even advocate that a student be suspended for reasons like: the rest of the class needs to see that acting that way has consequences, we need to set the tone, if we do not suspend him or her they will just continue to act that way, what are we supposed to do if the parents are not involved, we need a break from these behaviors, or we will show him/her who runs this school.

While desiring to maintain a safe and effective learning environment and having suspensions in our toolbox of discipline methods, we as professional educators need to understand the consequences of suspending students. Suspending students can be linked to lower likelihood of academic achievement, high rates of high school dropouts, higher rates of entering the juvenile justice system and increase in the likelihood to be incarcerated. Groups that are suspended at the highest rates are students of color, students who are

economically disadvantaged and students with a disability. Research indicates that suspending a student does not deter future misbehavior. Perhaps the most important point those contemplating policy and intervention remedies should consider is that behavioral and disciplinary issues affect students in several complex and interconnected ways.

One intervention for reducing suspension rates is School Wide Positive Behavior Supports and Interventions (SWPBIS). When implemented with fidelity, research indicates that SWPBIS will lower office discipline referrals and suspension rates (Childs et al. 2016). The main components of SWPBIS include: prevention of the problem behavior, teaching expected behaviors and skills, acknowledging appropriate behavior, arrangement of consistent consequences for the problem behavior, on-going collection and use of data for decision making, continuum of intensive, individualized interventions and supports, and implementation of the systems that support effective practices. I have just completed two years of PBIS training along with my school's implementation team as we are beginning to roll out SWPBIS. I have seen the benefits of PBIS in my Federal Setting III Emotional/Behavioral Disorder classroom. SWPBIS requires a lot of teamwork on the front end with systems built in place. Many challenges we have faced as a new school implementing SWPBIS have been lack of staff buy in (SWPBIS suggests you need 80% of staff participation to be successful), lack of systems built on the front end, finding time to meet as a team, and high staff turnover rates.

Another intervention to lowering suspension rates is Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). A quote I heard at one training was, "If you haven't taught the skill, you can't assume the student has the skill to do a specific task or respond a specific way." SEL involves five competencies including: self-awareness, social-awareness, responsible decision-making, self-management, and relationship skills. Effective approaches to SEL should incorporate four elements represented by the acronym SAFE (sequenced, active, focused, and explicit). Sequenced involves coordinated activities to foster skills development. Active incorporates active forms of learning to help students master new skills and attitudes. Focused is a component that emphasizes social and personal skills. And lastly, explicit is defined as targeting specific emotional and social skills. Having had the opportunity to teach a middle school social skills class this past year I have been able to see the benefits and wish more students in our school would have the opportunity to participate in a social skills class. Like many of the proactive disciplinary systems, they require resources. Teaching social skills can eliminate the need for reliance on reactive disciplinary systems. When we have school discipline incidents with students in my social skills class, we have been able to use the class, if appropriate, as a time to walk through or talk through the incident to be used as a teaching moment.

Whether it be PBIS, SEL, Restorative Practices, or Professional Development, they all require a lot of work on the front end and require that the proper systems are in place. Without effective systems in place I have felt it is

easy to fall back to a stance of, we have no other options but to suspend. If the school year is rolling along and the school has not made it a priority to develop alternatives to suspension, schools are much more likely to continue using suspensions as the primary way of responded to negative behaviors in the school. Lastly, it is vital to have strong leadership advocating for and ensuring implementation of these effective alternatives to suspension (Bradshaw et al., 2010). Many of these alternatives require many resources that need the backing of the key stakeholders in the school and district.

Limitations of Research

Recent research clearly indicates that students of color, low income students, and students receiving special education services are suspended at much higher rates than their peers. While this is known, many schools and even districts in urban settings have some of the highest rates of suspension. These schools do not have a racial discipline gap because they serve primarily students of color. Limited research was available on urban schools with high percentages (70% or greater) of students of color. Specifically, how does school-wide implementation of SWPBIS and SEL affect suspension rates in schools with high percentages of students of color.

Implications of Future Research

Further research is needed for schools with high minority populations and high rates of low-income students. These are populations that are suspended at higher rates than their peers and lose on average at least twenty percent of

school staff each year. How do schools in these environments implement alternatives to suspension with fidelity, when there is on average twenty percent staff turnover each year in high-poverty, urban, public schools (Ingersoll, 2004)? Outside of staff turnover rates, further research is necessary in addressing how schools can effectively teach students when many of their basic needs are not being met. If you are living in poverty, you are more likely to not follow school discipline policies (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014).

As pressure is put on schools and school leaders to reduce suspension rates, research shows that the unintended consequence of this is schools "cheating" or "gaming" the system. This could look like schools using ISS more frequently, sending students home with parent permission, putting a student on homebound services, or even "suspending" students without ever documenting the suspension. More research needs to be done on these informal disciplinary practices.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the research indicates that suspensions do not effectively change negative behaviors and are commonly overused. It is a reactive, punitive form of punishment stemming from 1980's zero tolerance drug policies. Research has brought to life a few proactive, alternatives to suspension. Those alternatives include Restorative Practices, Social and Emotional Learning, School-Wide Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports and Professional Development for staff. There are other alternatives but these four have proven to

improve school climate. Further research is needed for schools in urban, high poverty communities as these are some of the students suspended at the highest rates. School systems built on the front end, with fidelity, can improve school climate, student achievement, all while reducing the likelihood of a student being suspended.

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