Bullying and Positive School Climate

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Virginia Secondary School Climate Study

Development of a Standard Model for School Safety Assessment

Conducted in collaboration with:

• Virginia Department of Education

• Department of Criminal Justice Services and Center for School Safety

Funded by U.S. Dept. of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Project Timeline

Oct 2012  Project began
Spring 2013  Grades 7-8 surveyed
Spring 2014  Grades 9-12
Spring 2015  Grades 7-9
Spring 2016  Grades 9-12
Development of a Standard Model for School Safety Assessment

Goal 1. Develop improved measures of school climate and safety.

Goal 2. Investigate the association between authoritative school climate and school safety using improved measures.

Goal 3. Identify school climate features that are associated with lower rates of school exclusion and dropout, especially among disproportionately punished minority students.

Starting Year Two of 4 Years
Across varied communities,
effective schools have a structured and supportive school climate...
that facilitates safety and student engagement...
and leads to fewer discipline problems and higher achievement.
School Context → School Climate → Safety & Engagement → Behavior & Achievement

- School Context
  - School Ethnic Composition
  - School Poverty
  - Community Crime

- School Climate
  - Community and School Characteristics
  - Disciplinary Structure

- Safety & Engagement
  - Support
    - Teacher Support
    - School Support Services
  - Emotional Attachment
  - Cognitive Commitment
  - Behavioral Involvement

- Behavior & Achievement
  - Academics
    - Test Scores
    - Graduation Rates
    - Racial Equity
  - School Disciplinary Violations
    - Suspensions
    - Racial Equity
    - Less Bullying
    - Less Victimization
Classic study of parents

Two contrasting groups
• “Authoritarian” strict discipline-oriented
• “Permissive” lacking in discipline

Source: Baumrind, 1966
Four types of parenting

- Authoritarian
- Authoritative
- Negligent
- Permissive
Four types of school climate

- Authoritarian
- Authoritative
- Negligent
- Permissive
Authoritative School Discipline: High School Practices Associated With Lower Bullying and Victimization

Anne Gregory, Dewey Cornell, Xitao Fan, Peter Sheras, Tse-Hua Shih, and Francis Huang
University of Virginia

In this study we examined authoritative discipline theory, which posits that 2 complementary aspects of school climate—structure and support—are important for adolescents' safety in school. Using a statewide sample of over 7,300 ninth-grade students and 2,900 teachers randomly selected from 290 high schools, we showed, using hierarchical linear modeling, that consistent enforcement of school discipline (structure) and availability of caring adults (support) were associated with school safety. Structure and support were associated with less bullying and victimization after we controlled for size of school enrollment and the proportion of ethnic minority and low-income students. These findings suggest that discipline practices should not be polarized into a “get tough” versus “give support” debate because both structure and support contribute to school safety for adolescents.

Prior study of 9th grade
Starting in 2012-13, the School Safety Audit for 2012-13 will include a Secondary School Climate Survey for students and teachers. This survey will be administered in alternating years in grades 7 and 8 (starting spring 2013) and then grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 the next year (starting spring 2014). The survey is a new component of the annual school safety audit which school divisions are required to submit to the Virginia Center for School Safety (VCSS), according to 22.1-279.8.B of the Code.

- Survey Instructions
- Superintendent's Memo

What is the purpose of the survey?

The purpose of the survey is to provide schools with information on school climate and safety conditions in order to maintain a safe and orderly school environment conducive to learning. The survey will measure student and teacher perceptions of school rules and discipline, teacher-student relationships, student engagement in school, and the extent of bullying and teasing at school.

Who will participate in the survey?

The survey will be administered to students and teachers in grades 7 and 8 in all Virginia public schools on an alternative year basis starting in March/April of 2013. The survey will be administered to students and teachers in grades 9, 10, 11, and 12 on an alternating year basis starting in March/April of 2014. All teachers will be asked to complete the survey. Schools may choose from two options for surveying students: (1) Survey all students; or (2) Survey a random sample of 25 students in each grade.
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Virginia 2013 School Climate Survey

This survey is being given to Virginia students in grades 7 and 8. The survey asks how you feel about your school and how students get along with one another and their teachers. We want to know your opinion in order to learn ways to improve your school.

Your individual answers to the survey are anonymous, which means that no one will know how you answered. Student answers will be summarized in a report to the school that does not include anyone’s name.

There are 4-6 pages of questions and it should take about 15-20 minutes to complete the survey.

Use the Next and Previous buttons at the bottom of the screen to go to the next or previous page.

Caution! Do not use the back button of your browser to go back to the previous page. If you use the browser button, your results will be lost and you will need to start the survey again.

What is your password for taking this survey? Your teacher should have this password for you. It has three UPPERCASE letters and three numbers with no spaces. Many students will have the same password, so you will not be identified by this password. After entering the password, click on Next button at the bottom of the page.
Who explained this survey to you? (Check all that apply.)

- [ ] A teacher or some other adult at school explained the survey to us.
- [ ] I watched a short video about the survey on my computer screen.
- [ ] Our group watched a short video on a screen everyone could see.
- [ ] No one explained the survey to us.

How do you feel about going to this school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like this school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am proud to be a student at this school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School is boring.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I usually finish my homework.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I hate going to school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting good grades is very important to me.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I want to learn as much as I can at school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel like I belong at this school.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
132 school divisions
2,085 public schools
1.2 million students

Elementary 1,169
Middle 309
High 309
Combined 48
Centers (special ed, career/technical, alternative) 218
Preschool 32
Sampling Strategy

Schools – all required

Teachers – all invited

Students – 2 options for schools:

1. Whole grade – all 7th & 8th grade students
2. Random sample – 25 students per grade
Participation

Schools – 423 (98.4%)
Teachers – 9,134 (79%)
Students - 43,805 (84.8%)
  1. Whole grade – 28,582 (85.3%)
  2. Random sample – 15,223 (83.9%)
I feel physically safe at this school. 90 percent agree.

I feel there is adequate safety and security in this school. 73 percent agree.

The disciplinary practices at this school are effective. 59 percent agree.

I worry about someone committing a shooting at this school. 25 percent agree.
Teacher Reports of Student Aggression

A student said rude or insulting things to me.  

A student threatened to harm me.  

A student threatened me with a weapon.  

Student physically attacked, pushed, or hit me.
1. Structure
   - Rules are strictly enforced, but fair
2. Support
   - Teachers treat me with respect, willing to seek help from them.
The school rules are fair

The punishment for breaking school rules is the same for all students.

If a student does something wrong, he or she will definitely be punished.

Students at this school only get punished when they deserve it.
Most teachers and other adults at this school care about all students.  
75

There are adults I could talk to if I had a personal problem.  
71

If I tell a teacher someone is bullying me, the teacher will do something to help.  
81

Most teachers and other adults at this school treat students with respect  
72
Bullying is a problem at this school.

Students here often get teased about their clothing or physical appearance.

Students get teased or put down because of their race or ethnicity at this school.

There is a lot of teasing about sexual topics at this school.
# Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Disagree/Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Agree/Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bullying is a problem at this school.</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students here often get teased about their clothing or physical appearance.</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students here often get put down because of their race or ethnicity.</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a lot of teasing about sexual topics at this school.</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Stable factor structure
- Works for males and females, grades 6-12, white and minority students
- Teacher and student versions
## Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Agree / Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bullying is a problem at this school.</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students here often get teased about their clothing or physical appearance.</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students here often get put down because of their race or ethnicity.</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a lot of teasing about sexual topics at this school.</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students here get teased or put down about their sexual orientation.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students get teased or put down about their religion at this school.</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students treat one another with respect in this school (reverse scored for scale)</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Virginia Middle Schools

Authoritarian
35

Authoritative
176

Negligent
176

Permissive
36

Structure
Support

Hi
Lo

Hi
Lo
How much teasing and bullying do we observe in schools with different levels of structure and support?

**IV - 4 groups of schools**

**DV - School percentile in Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying**
Middle school results using **STUDENT** perceptions of Prevalence of Teasing & Bullying

- Schools with Low Structure and Low Support rank on average at the 71\textsuperscript{st} percentile in Prevalence of Teasing and Bullying
Middle school results using **STUDENT** perceptions of Prevalence of Teasing & Bullying
Middle school results using **STUDENT** perceptions of Prevalence of Teasing & Bullying

![Graph showing the prevalence of teasing and bullying across different school structures](image-url)
Middle school results using **STUDENT** perceptions of Prevalence of Teasing & Bullying

**Prevalence of Teasing & Bullying**

- Low Structure and Low Support (n = 176)
- Low Structure and High Support (36)
- High Structure and Low Support (35)
- High Structure and High Support (176)

**School Percentile**

![Graph showing the relationship between type of school and prevalence of teasing and bullying](image-url)
Middle school results using **STUDENT** and **Teacher** perceptions of Prevalence of Teasing & Bullying

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Student Prevalence of Teasing &amp; Bullying</th>
<th>Teacher Prevalence of Teasing &amp; Bullying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low Structure and Low Support (n = 176)</td>
<td><strong>70</strong></td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low Structure and High Support (36)</td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Structure and Low Support (35)</td>
<td><strong>60</strong></td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High Structure and High Support (176)</td>
<td><strong>55</strong></td>
<td><strong>50</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Middle School General Victimization

Have any of the following happened to you personally at school this year? This includes while you are going to or from school. This also includes school events like field trips, school dances, and sports events.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A student stole my personal property.</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A student physically attack, pushed, or hit me.</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A student threatened to hurt me.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A student threatened me with a weapon.</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A student said mean or insulting things to me.</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Middle school results using **STUDENT** and **Teacher** perceptions of Prevalence of Teasing & Bullying and Student General Victimization
How is school climate related to school suspension rates?

1. Prior 9th grade research
2. Racial disparity in suspension rates
   - High school
   - Middle school
3. New 7th and 8th grade results
The Relationship of School Structure and Support to Suspension Rates for Black and White High School Students

Anne Gregory
Rutgers University
Dewey Cornell
Xitao Fan
University of Virginia

This study examined the relationship between structure and support in the high school climate and suspension rates in a statewide sample of 199 schools. School climate surveys completed by 5,035 ninth grade students measured characteristics of authoritative schools, defined as highly supportive, yet highly structured with academic and behavioral expectations. Multivariate analyses showed that schools low on characteristics of an authoritative school had the highest schoolwide suspension rates for Black and White students after statistically controlling for school demographics. Furthermore, schools low on both structure and support had the largest racial discipline gaps. These findings highlight the characteristics of risky settings that may not meet the developmental needs of adolescents and may contribute to disproportionate disciplinary outcomes for Black students.
Long Term Suspension Rates for Black and White Students (per 1,000 students)

- Middle School: 3 (White), 7 (Black)
- High School: 3 (White), 7 (Black)
Short Term Suspension Rates for Black and White Students

- **Middle School**
  - White: 7
  - Black: 17

- **High School**
  - White: 8
  - Black: 17

Legend:
- Blue: White
- Red: Black
Long Term Suspension Rates for Black and White Students by School Type

- **Low Structure and Low Support (n = 176)**: 9 for Black Students, 5 for White Students
- **Low Structure and High Support (36)**: 6 for Black Students, 2 for White Students
- **High Structure and Low Support (35)**: 5 for Black Students, 2 for White Students
- **High Structure and High Support (176)**: 5 for Black Students, 2 for White Students
Short Term Suspension Rates for Black and White Students by School Type

- **Black Students**
  - Low Structure and Low Support (n = 176): 20
  - Low Structure and High Support: 19
  - High Structure and Low Support (35): 13
  - High Structure and High Support (176): 13

- **White Students**
  - Low Structure and Low Support: 9
  - Low Structure and High Support: 8
  - High Structure and Low Support: 6
  - High Structure and High Support: 6
How is school climate related to school performance on state-mandated testing?
School Climate and SOL Passing Rates

The graph illustrates the average percentile passing rates for different types of schools. The x-axis represents the type of school, categorized as Low Structure and Low Support, Low Structure and High Support, High Structure and Low Support, and High Structure and High Support. The y-axis represents the average percentile passing rates.

Legend:
- Red square: 7th Grade English Reading
- Blue triangle: 7th Grade Mathematics
- Black circle: 8th Grade English Reading
- Purple cross: 8th Grade English Writing
- Turquoise asterisk: 8th Grade Mathematics
- Orange diamond: 8th Grade Science

The graph shows an upward trend in passing rates across all categories, with the 7th Grade English Reading having the highest average percentile passing rates, followed by 7th Grade Mathematics, 8th Grade English Reading, 8th Grade English Writing, 8th Grade Mathematics, and 8th Grade Science.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Middle School Values</th>
<th>Definitely, Highly, or Extremely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telling the truth, even when it is difficult.</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Treating others with respect and being considerate of their feelings.</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing what is right, even if my friends disagree.</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admitting my mistakes when I do something wrong.</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respecting the views of people of a different race or culture.</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping others who are less fortunate than me.</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being kind to others.</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doing my part to make the world a better place.</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obeying the law.</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overall Importance of 9 Values

- Low Structure and Low Support (n = 176)
- Low Structure and High Support (36)
- High Structure and Low Support (35)
- High Structure and High Support (176)