ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR TRAINING IN THE AREA OF

HANDLING STUDENT DISCIPLINE

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ABSTRACT

School safety is the utmost priority for an elementary school administrator and is high on the list of public concerns. The intent of this study was to identify the professional development that Virginia Elementary School principals receive in the area of handling student discipline. The study addressed the following research questions: (a) to what extent do current elementary school administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline; (b) to what extent do elementary school administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline in principal preparation coursework; (c) what are the most prevalent topics when administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline; and (d) what future training, in the area of handling student discipline, do elementary school administrators need?

This descriptive, quantitative study included a survey, created by the researcher that was used to collect data from 103 elementary school administrators. The results indicate that the administrators did not receive comprehensive training in the area of handling student discipline. In particular, training regarding suspensions and minority overrepresentation was severely lacking while the training around safety and security was the most prevalent. Forty-nine percent of the administrators indicated that their principal preparation programs did not address student discipline in a required coursework. The results of this study provide school district leaders with information on current gaps in the area of student discipline included in professional development provided to elementary school administrators in principal preparation programs and during their tenure as administrators.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

School safety is the utmost priority for an elementary school administrator (principal and assistant principal) and is high on the list of public concerns. Students, teachers, staff, and visitors have a right to feel safe when they attend school and students who misbehave must be dealt with effectively. A school is a place where children have the opportunity to learn, grow, and become lifelong responsible citizens. Despite efforts to maintain a school environment that is safe and secure for students, staff, and the community, challenges still arise in the area of student discipline. School administrators and teachers have the responsibility to teach students how to properly behave in a school setting (Sugai, Sprague, et al., 2000).

Background of the Problem

Student disciplinary action is on the rise and the prevention of student violence and disruption has become a topic of national discussion. Rausch and Skiba (2004) gathered discipline data for grades K-12, in the State of Indiana that provide an example of the national trend. Expulsion and out-of-school suspension data from the 1995-1996 school year until the 2002-2003 school year were gathered. During this time frame, expulsion rates slowly declined from the peak in 1998 where approximately 1 in 100 Indiana students were expelled. However, out-of-school suspension rates are on the rise. In 2003, an average of approximately 14 out of 100 students were suspended. Of the students suspended, 51% received an out-of-school suspension due to disruptive behavior. Middle school students are often the most frequently suspended, followed by high school and then elementary students. Negative student discipline not only affects the climate of the school, but also the conditions in a classroom, where teaching and learning is the primary goal (Rausch & Skiba, 2004).

When looking into the Indiana discipline data, Rausch and Skiba (2004) surveyed 325 principals across the state. When they analyzed the survey results, they identified statements that yielded high levels of consensus and other statements that had little consensus. For example, principals strongly agreed with the statements "Getting to know students individually is an important part of discipline" and "Disciplinary consequences should be scaled in proportion to the severity of the problem behavior." There was minimal consensus with the statements "Zero

tolerance sends a clear message to disruptive students about appropriate behavior in schools" and "Due to high standards of academic accountability, some students will probably have to be removed from school."

Rausch and Skiba (2004) also performed a cluster analysis using the survey results and grouped principals on their perspectives on student discipline. Table 1 shows the three groups and the principal perspectives.

Table 1

Sample Responses by Principals with Different Perspectives on School Discipline

Group	Perspectives
Prevention Orientation	- Developing and implementing prevention programs pays off in terms of decrease disruption and disciplinary incidents.
	- Suspension and expulsion do not really solve disciplinary problems.
	- Working with parents is critical before suspending a student from school.
	- Conversations with students referred to the office should be factored into most decisions about disciplinary consequences.
Support for Suspension and Expulsion	- Zero tolerance makes a significant contribution to maintaining order.
	- Out-of-school suspension is a necessary tool for maintaining order.
	- Most if not all disciplinary problems come from inadequacies in the child's home situation.
	- Administrator duties don't allow the time to get to know the students on an individual basis.
Pragmatic Prevention	- Suspension and expulsion allow students time away from school that encourages them to think about their behavior.
	- Teachers are adequately prepared to handle problems of misbehavior and discipline.
	- Least likely to believe that: Violence is getting worse.

Note. From Rausch, K. & Skiba, R. (2004). Unplanned Outcomes: Suspensions and Expulsions in Indiana, p.4.

Questions arise from these data about the various perspectives. Which of the Rausch and Skiba perspectives are backed with current research to show that they are the most effective

ways to handle student discipline? To what extent have the administrators been trained in student discipline? Were the administrators who were surveyed trained in different ways that influenced their response? Professional development for administrators in the area of handling student discipline is important because administrators should know, understand, and implement the best way to handle student discipline.

Sprague, Smith and Stieber (2002) surveyed principals in Oregon regarding school safety and found that the most important training topics were behavior management systems, prevention programs, and dealing with inappropriate behaviors. Schools that have larger numbers of students saw discipline as a higher priority than schools with fewer than 500 students.

Administrators must have an understanding of what research has shown to be effective when working with students who have misbehaved, and administrators should know all effective tools to maintain a high level of safety in their schools. The growing number of student discipline issues and the effects on school safety and student achievement require principals to have administrative preparation and continuing education that is centered on effectively handling student discipline. Training should include (a) strategies for working with disruptive students, (b) understanding, identifying, and overcoming the minority overrepresentation, (c) implementing school-wide discipline programs, (d) school safety and security, (e) effectiveness of removing students from the classroom, and (f) working with classroom teachers and their system of classroom management (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2002; Epstein et al., 2008; Gregory & Mosely, 2004; Rausch & Skiba, 2004; Sugai & Horner, 2002, 2006; Sugai, Horner, et al., 2000; Sugai, Sprague, et al., 2000). Training must include effective research-based methods (Rausch & Skiba, 2004).

School mission statements reflect a school's highest priorities. In 2004, all state departments of educations, including the District of Columbia, had an education mission, vision, or goal statement. Sixteen states included social behavior language in their statement, usually centered on citizenship. Thirty-five states had statewide initiatives focused on student behavior that are centered on character education, bullying, and positive behavior support. A 2004 review (Doolittle, Horner, Bradley, Sugai, & Vincent, 2007) of state certification requirements for elementary school administrators revealed that 20 (40%) states required knowledge in school-wide behavior support, 9 (18%) states required classroom behavior support knowledge, and 9

(18%) states required knowledge on how to handle individual students. Seventy-six percent of the states have certifications that require teachers to have coursework in classroom behavior support.

School administrators not only have to maintain a safe school, but they need to be aware of and up to date on the legality of disciplining students. There are numerous local, federal, and state laws and regulations that must be followed when disciplining students, especially students with special needs. Administrators and teachers need to have continued training to ensure they are aware of current laws, court cases, and updates (Yell & Rozalski, 2008).

Statement of the Problem

Currently, the field of education has a great amount of attention focused on improving student achievement, instructional strategies, and providing interventions to ensure student success (Epstein, Atkins, Cullinan, Kutash, & Weaver, 2008). However, schools are challenged with problematic student behavior. Reducing disruptive behaviors can increase the amount of time students spend in the classroom and teachers can increase effective teaching for all students (Epstein et al., 2008; Skiba, 2004; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Petrson, 2002).

One of the common strategies school administrators use to handle students sent to their office for disruptive behaviors is removing the student from the classroom setting (in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, expulsion), but there is limited research that supports this approach. There is extensive current research (Luiselli et al., 2005; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba, 2000; Sugai & Horner, 2002, 2006) that supports proactive and positive behavioral programs when dealing with student discipline at a school-wide, small intervention group, or individual basis. School administrators also must be vigilant to ensure students from minority groups are not overrepresented in discipline data and, if they are overrepresented, this needs to be addressed (Day-Vines & Terriquez, 2008)

It is essential for administrators to be adequately prepared when a student is referred to the office for discipline reasons. This includes knowing how to approach the situation, how to approach the student, how to support the teacher, and which strategies proactively address the student's behavior. The administrator must be aware of how teachers handle student discipline in their classrooms. Administrators play a key role in how discipline is handled within their school, in the classroom and out of the classroom (Bear, Blank, & Smith, 2009; Sprague, Smith &

Stieber, 2002). To ensure school administrators are handling student discipline using effective, research-based strategies, specific training must be provided to administrators during principal preparation coursework and while in the position of leading a school community (Nicholson, Harris-John & Schimmel, 2005; Rausch & Skiba, 2004).

Purpose of the Study

This study investigates the extent of training that current Virginia elementary school administrators, principals and assistant principals, receive around handling student discipline in principal preparation coursework and while in the position of a school administrator. The intent is to determine the training school administrators receive to properly handle student discipline and what future training is needed. This research study will focus on Virginia public elementary school administrators. The researcher's goals are to understand and determine if, and in what areas, school administrators receive student discipline training. Within the study, school administrator includes both the principal and assistant principal.

Research Questions

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

1. To what extent do current elementary school administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline?
2. To what extent do elementary school administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline in principal preparation coursework?
3. What are the most prevalent topics when elementary school administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline?
4. What future training, in the area of handling student discipline, do elementary school administrators need?

Significance of the Study

This study will attempt to determine the training topics elementary school administrators have received regarding handling student discipline and what future training is needed. It is expected that the results of this study will be useful for school districts in determining potential professional development on the topic of discipline. Colleges and universities can use the results of the study to determine future coursework necessary to ensure school administrators are well

prepared. The results of this research can be used in the development of a student discipline training module focused on best practices for administrators. It is also expected that this study will be of interest to others who are researching student discipline, minority overrepresentation, school-wide discipline programs, and administrator professional development.

Definition of Terms

Discipline – To teach or train (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005).

Discipline Referrals – A report that documents a student's violation of a rule set by a teacher or school and that requires administrative support (Putnam, Luiselli, Handler, & Jefferson, 2003).

Disobedience – Student refusal to obey a rule.

Disrespect – Inappropriate, rude, vulgar, or defiant language or gesture that is directed at any person (Luiselli, Putnam, Handler, & Feinbert, 2005).

Fighting – The use of physical violence against another person.

Overrepresentation – A population is over-represented in a particular population.

Positive Behavior Support – A proactive approach for addressing student discipline that includes teaching desired behaviors, positive reinforcement, and interventions (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Professional Development – Ongoing learning opportunities for school staff; training.

Responsive Classroom – A method used in schools and with students to promote social and academic excellence (Brock, Nishida, Chiong, Grimm, & Rimm-Kaufman, 2008).

School Administrator – A school principal or assistant principal; the leader(s) of a school.

School-wide behavior programs – Systematic program within a school developed to reduce discipline issues and teach values, beliefs, and rules associated with the school mission (Sugai & Horner, 2006).

Student Discipline –Teaching and training to ensure proper behavior; order and control.

Suspension, Out of School – A fixed amount of time a student is not allowed to attend school or be on school grounds (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997).

Suspension, In School – An alternative setting that removes students from the classroom for a period of time, while still allowing students to attend school and complete their work (Skiba et al., 1997).

Zero-tolerance – A method of sending a message that certain behaviors will be not be tolerated by punishing all offenses severely, no matter how minor (Skiba, 2000).

Limitations

Limitations are conditions over which the researcher does not have any control (Gay & Airasian, 2000). The limitations within this study include the survey return rate, administrators who have only been in the position for one year, and district student discipline initiatives and training focuses.

Delimitations

Delimitations are conditions or parameters the researcher places on the study (Gay & Airasian, 2000). The researcher has control of the delimitations. This study is focused on one state and limited the participants to Virginia elementary public school administrators. The researcher has used purposeful random sampling in identifying the participants in order to ensure the sampling will be evenly distributed across the state so each region of the state is represented.

Organization of the Study

This research document is divided into five chapters. This chapter introduced the purpose of the study, the significance, definition of terms, and limitations/delimitations. Research questions that guided the study are listed. Chapter 2 includes a review of related literature. The review begins with research in the area of disciplinary practices used in schools. Then, minority overrepresentation is addressed and school-wide disciplinary practices are reviewed. Lastly, the impact on student discipline on both schools and school administrators is discussed. Chapter 3 describes the research design and the methodology used in this study, including data collection procedures, instrumentation, and data analysis procedures. Chapter 4 includes the research findings. Chapter 5 identifies the conclusions, limitations, and recommendations for future research.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Students and teachers must feel safe and respected in school. Effective teaching and learning take place in a well-managed classroom and school, because the students are engaged and interested. The engagement and interest of the students leads to fewer discipline issues (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003; Sprague & Golly, 2004). As stated in chapter one, the word discipline means to teach or train (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005). As children are disciplined, they are taught social rules and behavior (Amstutz & Mullet, 2005; Skiba & Peterson, 2003). Within a school, discipline can be defined as the "degree of order or structure" (Mukuria, 2002, p. 432).

This chapter reviews the literature that relates to discipline in schools with an emphasis on (a) infractions that result in a discipline referral, (b) what subsequent action an administrator takes, (c) school-wide discipline programs, (d) zero-tolerance, and (e) minority overrepresentation in disciplinary actions. The relevant literature was gathered through a variety of sources. EBSCOhost (all databases) was the primary database used to gather the literature. Key search terms were *student, discipline, behavior, school administrator, school-wide discipline, positive behavior support, character education, office referral, zero tolerance, suspension, assistant/vice principal, decision-making, and minority overrepresentation, training*. Google and Google Scholar were used, if a specific or needed article, author, or topic was not found through EBSCOhost. Numerous books regarding school administrators and school-wide discipline strategies were also reviewed.

A variety of research methodologies have been used when studying discipline. Among the most commonly used are quantitative studies that include surveys, statistical analysis, and quasi-experimental research (Skiba, Simmons, Peterson, McKelvey, Forde, Gallini, 2004; Skiba et al., 1997; Luiselli et al., 2005). Some qualitative research has been done, in particular the use of case studies (Mukuria, 2002).

Two challenges that constantly affect education are academic achievement and discipline. "Students are not safe, respectful, and responsible if schools impede the learning process of others" (Sprague & Golly, 2004, p. 3). Educators are expected to teach socially acceptable behaviors and develop intervention strategies that ensure students will be safe and placed in

productive learning environments. "As a society, we are looking to schools to be or become settings where our children learn the skills for successful adulthood" (Sugai, Horner, et al., 2000, p. 133).

Teachers in America are expected to teach citizenship skills and how to follow school rules. If students are misbehaving or not following the school rules, teachers and school administrators are to discipline the students (Bear, 1998). Most students come to school knowing how to behave, but others need to be taught these skills. Students are continuously taught social skills throughout their education. Students who are at-risk for having discipline problems need explicit instruction about behavioral expectations to be successful in school and life (Skiba & Peterson, 2003). Teachers, at times along with the students, set classroom rules in the beginning of the school year. Schools also set school-wide rules and local school districts set policies regarding student behavior. Students are expected to follow these rules throughout the year. The rules are in place so that each student is safe and the school is orderly. Often, teachers have classroom management strategies that are implemented. With these rules in place and followed by students, appropriate classroom behavior should be evident (Marzano et al., 2003).

Disciplinary Practices

Discipline referrals. An office discipline referral is a report that documents a student's violation of a rule set by a teacher or school and that requires administrative support. Teachers complete a discipline referral and submit it to the administration for either data entry or for the administrator to assist with disciplining the student. Some basic information included in an office discipline referral is student name, teacher, time of day, date, location of problem behavior, and problem behavior (Irvin et al., 2006; Putnam et al., 2003; Sugai, Sprague, et al., 2000). Schools and school systems collect and analyze the data to determine what kind of incidents are occurring, where they occur, when they occur, the students who frequently receive office referrals, and which teachers are referring the students. School faculty who review the data effectively, go beyond just looking at the data and make decisions based on their review of the data. When data are effectively reviewed, staff can analyze and consider all aspects of the data to make evidence-based decisions. Researchers warn schools or districts who collect data on office discipline referrals to be cautious, because one limitation to collecting referral data is that each

school or staff member has a different standard in what determines a misbehavior that would result in an office discipline referral (Creighton, 2005; Sugai, Sprague, et al., 2000).

Students are often sent to the office, typically by their classroom teacher, with an office referral for being disrespectful or noncompliant. Skiba et al. (1997) conducted two studies in Midwestern urban middle schools to review school discipline referrals. They looked at the type of discipline referral and the consequence the student received. In the first study, discipline data from 19 middle schools (11,001 students) were reviewed. The data came from the county-wide system and each school was responsible for entering the data into the system using specific codes. A total of 41.1% of the students had a discipline record during one school year. The top four causes for office discipline referrals are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Top Four Causes for Office Discipline Referrals

Incident	Percent of all Incidents
Disobedience	27.6%
Conduct Interference	12.8%
Disrespect	10.7%
Fighting	10.6%

Suspension, a fixed amount of time the student is not allowed to attend school or be on school grounds, was by far the most used disciplinary action for a referral (33.0%) of all incidents. The next highest three were reprimand (12.3%), in-school suspension (10.1%), and parent contact (9.4%). All incidents led to a consequence of some kind (apology, detention, peer counseling, etc). Fighting most often lead to suspensions. Behaviors such as disobeying, misconduct, and disrespect often lead to a mild consequence such as parent contact, apology, withdrawal of privileges, counseling, and reprimand (Skiba et al., 1997).

The second study by Skiba et al. (1997) is similar to their first study. The researchers gathered the data at one medium-sized middle school (grades 7-9) with 610 students. The school enrollment included 12% non-white and 29.5% economically disadvantaged students. Similar to the first study, disobedience and disrespect were at the top of the list for reasons for the discipline referral. In this school, during a one-year period, 38.2% of all students received an office referral. Fifty-eight percent of the referrals were from incidents that occurred in the

classroom while 13% occurred in the hallway. In this school, the most frequent disciplinary action was that a report was sent home (72% of the time). The other top actions were: other (24%), parent called (22%), and students make up time (10%). At times, more than one action occurred, which accounts for a total percentage of more than 100. In contrast with the schools in study one, student suspension was 9% and in-school suspension was 6% (Skiba et al., 1997).

These two studies indicate that middle school children are involved in discipline issues mainly for insubordination and noncompliance. The authors suggested that this may be due to their developmental stage. The administrative actions varied greatly between the studies especially with suspensions. Also, the more serious types of discipline problems like possession/use of a weapon, stealing, and destruction to property reportedly did not occur often (Skiba et al., 1997).

Similar data were collected by Putnam et al. (2003) in a Massachusetts urban working class community elementary school (Kindergarten-6th grade). The school had about 600 students and a diverse population. During the 1997-1998 school year, 31.8% of the students were sent to the office for discipline reasons. The most frequent reasons for the office referrals were disruption and harassment. Defiance, inappropriate language, and fighting were also among the top five reasons for students receiving office referrals. The researchers found in this descriptive study that about 50% of the referrals came from students in grades five and six (Putnam et al., 2003).

Suspension. Suspension is a disciplinary action or consequence for inappropriate behavior that removes a student from the school or classroom setting for a specific amount of time (DeRidder, 1991). Suspension is one of the most widely used strategies for disciplining students across the nation (DeRidder, 1991). An in-school suspension removes the student from the general classrooms, but still allows him/her to attend school daily. Students are usually placed in a specific classroom or school office, with adult supervision, for the entire duration of the in-school suspension. A student receiving an out-of-school suspension for his/her behavior is not allowed on school grounds for the length of the suspension (Mendez & Knoff, 2003).

Suspension has been a discipline strategy for numerous years and is a frequent form of punishment by schools. There is great debate to determine if suspending students is a successful discipline strategy, if there is consistency among schools and their suspension policies, and if the racial and gender disparity within suspension rates are balanced (Christle, Nelson, Jolivette,

2004; Costenbader & Markson, 1998; DeRidder, 1991; Dupper, 1994; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Nichols, William, Iadicola, 1999; Nielsen, 1979; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1980).

Students may be suspended at any grade level (kindergarten-12th grade) for numerous reasons. Usually suspensions last 10 days or less for one incident and students can be suspended more than one time during their schooling or school year (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Some actions, such as weapons, drugs, or gang-related activity, require suspension based on the school district policies as well as state and federal laws. However, students are typically suspended based on a principal's discretionary decision. Principals usually have discretion over suspensions for student behavior such as disobedience, abusive language, and leaving school grounds (Putnam, et al., 2003; Skiba et al., 1997).

Mendez and Knoff (2003) examined suspension trends in a large Florida school district. The district, the twelfth largest school district in the nation, serves about 146,000 racially and economically diverse students. The researchers reviewed out-of-school suspension data gathered through the school district's Management Information System (MIS) during the 1996-1997 school year. The researchers examined student demographics, number of suspensions, and students' behavior that led to suspensions (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Data on the number of students suspended at the elementary, middle, and high school levels reveal that elementary school students are suspended less frequently than middle and high school students. Middle school students have the highest rate of suspension. Males are suspended more often than females, and students who are Black are suspended more than any other race (Arcia, 2006, 2007; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Rausch & Skiba, 2004).

Within the Mendez and Knoff (2003) study, during the 1996–1997 school year, 3.36% of elementary school students, 24.41% of middle school students, and 18.46% of high school students were suspended at least once. Black students were suspended more frequently than White and Hispanic students. Of students who were suspended at least once over all grade levels, 28.28% were Black males and 13.64% were Black females. Twelve percent of White males, 4.53% of White females, 15.42% of Hispanic males, and 6.48% of Hispanic females were suspended. These results show that males, middle school students, and Black students are at a higher risk of experiencing suspension than other student groups (Mendez & Knoff, 2003).

Students are suspended for multiple reasons, but there are a few behaviors seen throughout the research that dominate the reasons for suspension. Disobedience, disruptive

behavior, and fighting are the most common reasons for student suspensions. Possession of a weapon, drugs, alcohol, or narcotics constitutes less than 3% of school suspensions (Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Morrison, Anthony, Storino, & Dillon, 2001; Rausch & Skiba, 2004; Wu, et al., 1980). There is some discrepancy in the common infractions for suspension because each school system and researcher identifies various descriptions for each offense. The Mendez and Knoff study (2003) reported that 20% of total suspensions were for students being disobedient or insubordinate. Thirteen percent of students were suspended for being disruptive and another 13% for fighting. Those were the top three infractions that resulted in suspension. Suspensions for substance possession are seen much more frequently in high school than middle and elementary schools. The number of suspensions per 100 students was 0.01 for elementary school, 0.85 for middle school, and 4.28 for high school. In this study (Mendez & Knoff, 2003) disobedience is the highest offense in middle school, especially when compared to elementary school. The number of suspensions per 100 students was 3.62 for elementary school, 35.73 for middle school, and 26.74 for high school.

Costenbader and Markson (1998) surveyed students to gain their perception of suspension. The students were asked to share their opinions of the reasons for suspension, why these behaviors occur, the effectiveness of suspension, and suggestions for ways beyond suspension that would be alternative interventions. A 63-item paper-and-pencil survey was given to the students who were asked within the first 10 questions whether or not they had been suspended. If they answered no, the students were finished with the survey. If they had been suspended, they were given the remainder of the survey. The researchers used 620 surveys that were gathered from four different schools. Fifty-nine percent of the surveys indicated the student had never been suspended either in school or out of school. Eighteen percent of the total students surveyed had been internally suspended (in-school suspension) at least once in their educational tenure and 22% had been externally suspended (out-of-school suspension) at least once in their educational tenure. As in other research, Costenbader and Markson (1998) found that there was overrepresentation with males and Black students in regards to out-of-school suspensions. Students reported being suspended mostly for fighting, talking back to school staff, and using obscene language. Students were asked how they felt at the time of suspension. Thirty-four percent of students receiving in-school suspension and 26% of students receiving out-of-school suspension felt angry at the person who sent them to suspension. Students also frequently

responded that they were happy to get out of the situation. Primarily, students felt that suspension either did not help them at all or only a little bit to solve their problem to the point that they would not be suspended again. The final survey question asked the students to identify strategies other than suspension to help them solve their problems. The students (37% in-school and 38% out-of-school suspended students) responded that providing classes that are more interesting and useful and having teachers better prepared to respond to a similar situation (24% in-school and 33% out-of-school suspended student responses) would be more effective. The researchers give some insightful information to how students feel about suspensions and their effectiveness (Costenbader & Markson, 1998).

   Zero-tolerance. In 1994, the federal government adopted the Gun Free Schools Act, which mandates that all states and school districts receiving federal money have a zero-tolerance policy for gun possession on school grounds. In accordance with this policy, students are automatically expelled for no less than one year if they possess a weapon on the school grounds. The Act allows local education agencies to modify the expulsion requirement for a student on a case-by-case basis (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2004; Sughrue, 2003; US Department of Education, Section 4141). In addition to a mandatory one-year expulsion for a possession of a firearm on school grounds, there is also an obligation to refer these students to the criminal justice or juvenile justice system (US Department of Education, Section 4141). The original intentions of the zero-tolerance policy were to have safer schools, punish students who brought weapons to school, separate the students from the school community, and use a harsh punishment that would deter students from bringing weapons to school (Reyes, 2006; Skiba, 2004). Zero-tolerance policies have been around since the 1980s and have taken on different interpretations since then, from severely punishing a student possessing a firearm to punishing all discipline offences severely (Reyes, 2006; Skiba, 2000).

   The Commonwealth of Virginia is in compliance with the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 and it is documented in the Virginia Code of Law (§ 22.1-277.07, § 18.2-308.1). Within the Code of Virginia (§ 22.1-277.07), a school board shall expel a student for a period of not less than one year if the student has possessed a firearm, destructive device (item to be used as a weapon: grenade, bomb, rocket) or a pneumatic gun on school property or at a school-sponsored activity. A local school board or school district designee may determine, based on the facts of the situation, that special circumstances exist and that no disciplinary action or a different term of

expulsion is suitable. Under Virginia Code of Law § 22.1-277.07, local school districts must provide their student conduct code and documentation of students expelled to the state in order to receive federal funding and be in compliance with the Code of Law.

Since the 1994 mandate, a variety of interpretations of zero-tolerance have developed which, at times, have resulted in large numbers of suspensions and expulsions for small events e.g., possession of aspirin or toy guns, insubordination, disruption (Johnson, Boyden, & Pittz, n.d.; Reyes, 2006). The philosophy of zero-tolerance is a get-tough, no-nonsense approach to student discipline that is implemented in hopes that the serious punishments will send a message that negative, unsafe, or disruptive behavior will not be tolerated. However, there are very limited data, if any, showing zero-tolerance policies reduce school violence (Ayers, Dohrn, & Ayers, 2001; Reyes, 2006; Skiba, 2000, 2004; Skiba & Peterson, 1999, 2000).

Dunbar and Villarruel's research (2002) focused on how school-based administrators develop an understanding of zero-tolerance polices. As a part of their study, they describe two examples of zero-tolerance being implemented differently. The first example involved an elementary student in urban Michigan, who at school found a gold chain with a one-inch long gold replica of a gun on the end and turned it into the office. An extensive investigation was conducted to find the student who brought this to school so that he/she could be punished.

Another example involved a high school student in rural Michigan who brought a rifle to school and the principal told the student to turn around and take the gun home. Both of these incidents occurred in Michigan where they have a zero-tolerance policy mandating permanent expulsion of any student who brings a weapon to school. It is apparent in the two examples that the policy is interpreted differently depending on the school. The authors state that these are just two examples of the vast differences of how the zero-tolerance policy is deciphered, school-by-school.

Dunbar and Villarruel (2002) used a policy analysis framework to understand how zero-tolerance policies are interpreted and implemented in urban and rural districts. They conducted face-to-face interviews with 36 of the 42 principals in an urban school district where 25 students had been expelled during the 2000–2001 school year. In the rural district, they interviewed 8 of the 9 principals and found 21 students were expelled during the 1999–2000 school year. The interviews revealed a variety of perceptions of the zero-tolerance policy and how it is implemented in various schools. In the urban schools, the administrators generally enforced the

policy as set by the Michigan laws, but the administrators in the rural schools did not. The rural administrators made discretionary discipline decisions based on the culture of the community (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2002, 2004).

In 2008, the American Psychological Association (APA) put together a task force to review zero-tolerance policies and practices. In their extensive review of literature, they found limited research showing the benefits of zero-tolerance policies. Zero-tolerance policies and decisions can be extremely controversial with the public and can deprive students of their right to an education. The current research does not show a connection between safer schools and zero-tolerance policies. The APA recommendations include reforming zero-tolerance practice, policy, and research and providing alternatives to zero-tolerance (American Psychological Association, 2008).

With the discrepancy in the understanding of zero-tolerance policies and how the law is implemented, there is concern that these policies do not solve the problem of violence in schools. The mandatory sanctions limit the flexibility an administrator has when dealing with such discipline problems. Rather, administrators should focus on how to support the students while ensuring a safe environment (Ayers et al., 2001).

Schools and school districts differ in their suspension codes, policies, and procedures (Wu et al., 1980). Often school districts identify behaviors that mandate suspension and other behaviors that can be disciplined via a principal's discretion. Therefore, punishment for student misbehavior can be different from school to school and situation to situation. The research shows, however, that it is predominantly males and Black students who are suspended (Wu et al., 1980).

Minority overrepresentation. School discipline should be administered fairly and consistently; yet, multiple researchers have found that minorities, especially Black students and males are overrepresented in discipline data (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005; Gregory & Weinstein, 2006; Reyes, 2006; Skiba, 2000). Black students receive more punitive discipline consequences and are suspended at greater rates than their White peers (Skiba, 2000). When Black students are disciplined, it is often for subjective infractions such as defiance, disrespect, and excessive noise compared to their White peers who are disciplined for more concrete behaviors such as possession of tobacco, truancy, and obscene language (Johnson et al., n.d.;

Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba, 2000). Minority overrepresentation in suspension data begins when students are in preschool and kindergarten programs (Gilliam, 2005).

Numerous researchers acknowledge the racial and gender disproportionally but Skiba et al. (2002) drew upon the earlier research and pressed on to find out more about the disparities. Their research focused on the extent discipline disparities are evident by race, gender, and socioeconomic status as well as the misbehavior for which students were punished. The researchers focused on all middle schools (19 schools with 11,001 students) in a large, urban district. The ethnic demographics of the school were 56% Black students, 42% White students, and 2% other ethnic backgrounds. Blacks and males received a disciplinary consequence at a greater rate compared to White students and girls as shown in Table 3. These results also suggest that the disproportionality in referrals to the office can contribute to the disproportionality in suspension rates. The researchers determined there was a minimal influence of socioeconomic status on gender or race on disciplinary actions (Skiba et al., 2002).

Table 3

Disproportionality on Disciplinary Consequence by Gender, Race, and Socioeconomic Status

	Gender		Racial Status		Free/reduced-cost status (SES)		
	Male	Female	Black	White	Free	Reduced	Not eligible
% Referred	49.9	31.5	48.4	21.4	45.6	38.5	32.8
% Suspended	29.2	15.3	27.0	17.1	25.9	19.9	15.2
% Expelled	0.6	0.1	0.6	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.2

Skiba et al. (2002) found disproportionality in the types of referrals students were receiving. Females were more likely than males to be punished for one infraction—truancy. Males were referred to the office for fighting, endangering, conduct interference, throwing objects, gambling, and threatening behaviors. When analyzing referrals by race, it was evident that there were differences in the reasons for referrals. Black students were more likely referred to be for disrespect, excessive noise, threat, and loitering. White students were more likely to be referred for smoking, leaving without permission, vandalism, and obscene language. The researchers concluded it is difficult to determine which offenses are more serious but it is apparent that there are different patterns for each race. The behaviors that the White students were referred for consist of more objective actions than the behaviors of the Black students

which are more subjective. Skiba et al. (2002) have added to the years of research that shows minority overrepresentation and disproportionality in discipline data. They suggest effective teacher training with a focus on cultural miscommunication and diversity in the classroom should take place to curb the racial inequity (Skiba et al., 2002).

The subjective behavior of defiance or disrespect is often the behavior for which Black students are disciplined. Gregory and Weinsten (2006) used a high school's one-year discipline data to examine the discipline trends among ethnic groups to determine if students referred for defiant behavior were referred by one teacher (situation specific) or multiple teachers (cross situational). The ethnic makeup of the large high school (2,882 students) used for this study was: 37% White, 30% Black, 12% Latino, 11% mixed, 8% Asian, and 1% other. The most common referral (74%) for all students was "defiance of adult authority". But, as the researchers took a closer look, the data indicated that there was minority overrepresentation. There were fewer Black students than White students enrolled in the high school but the Black students were referred for defiance more than the White students (58% of Black students referred for defiance compared to 5% of White students). When reviewing the referral data to categorize the student referrals as situation-specific (referred by one teacher) or cross situational (referred by two or more teachers), 86% of Black students received referrals from one to three adults and 14% were referred by four or more adults. On average, the students were in six classes a day. The researchers determined these data showed a situationally specific pattern since the problems were not seen by every teacher (Gregory & Weinstein, 2007). Again, these data show that Black students are overrepresented in student discipline referrals.

Awareness and attention must be drawn to the disproportionality in student discipline referrals, especially in Black students and males. Strategies to curb the trend are necessary otherwise these students will continue to be excluded from the classroom-learning environment, resulting in increased academic failure, drop-out rates, and special education referrals (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005; Day-Vines & Terriquez, 2008; Gilliam, 2005; Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). To date, there have not been any "empirical research testing specific interventions" (Gregory et al., 2010, p. 65) focused on reducing minority overrepresentation in discipline referrals.

Researchers are providing strategies that may result in closing the discipline gap. Day-Vines and Day-Hairston (2005) focus on cultural differences that may contribute to the specific

behavior styles of Black males. They point out that the Black male subculture, cultural norms, and communication styles are different than a mainstream American culture and it is imperative that school personnel understand the ethnic variations. They also suggest that the school counselor be knowledgeable about the cultural differences, work directly with students, and be proactive in promoting social behavior.

Other strategies or ideas to address minority overrepresentation in student discipline include:

- Administrator and teacher training on promoting a positive school climate, understanding cultural differences, and recognizing minority overrepresentation (Day-Vines & Terriquez, 2008; Gregory & Mosely, 2004);
- Student-led discussion groups (Day-Vines & Terriquez, 2008);
- Creating a school discipline committee to make certain there is equity in disciplinary procedures and consequences (Day-Vines & Terriquez, 2008); and
- Treating exclusion (suspension or expulsion) as a last resort and recognizing zero-tolerance policies should be used with caution (Gregory et al., 2010; Skiba, 2000).

It is evident that there is minority overrepresentation in student discipline data. More attention and research must be drawn to minority overrepresentation. "There is a pressing need for scholarly attention to the racial discipline gap if efforts addressing the achievement gap are to have greater likelihood of success" (Gregory et al., 2010, p. 59).

School-Wide Behavior Programs

Schools implement systematic efforts to reduce discipline issues and teach the values, beliefs, and rules associated with the school mission. Importantly, principals need to establish a school-wide organizational structure. This structure also continues into the classroom (Hartzell & Petrie, 1992). Students need to be taught appropriate behaviors and the school-wide and classroom rules. The students should be held to the expectation of meeting the set forth rules and behaviors. Through a school-wide system, values are taught and students understand the structures throughout the entire school building. School-wide behavioral systems can prevent unwanted behaviors from occurring (Hartzell & Petrie, 1992).

Positive behavior support. Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a systematic way of proactively addressing student behavior. Positive behavioral interventions and specific systems

are put in place to encourage socially appropriate behavior. PBS focuses on teaching students how to behave in all settings (Cohen, Kincaid, & Childs, 2007; Simonsen, Sugai, & Negron, 2008; Sugai, Horner, et al., 2000; Sugai & Horner, 2002). Within the 1997 amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), PBS and Functional Behavioral Assessments (FBA) are identified as two integral aspects that should be considered when disciplining students with special needs. Although these strategies were not new, there is now national attention being given to implementing PBS by educators working with all students, both those with and without disabilities. PBS intervention is a total-school approach that has a prevention focus. Positive reinforcement is a large part of PBS as is data-driven decision-making. Students who remain in the classroom instead of spending time in the office or out of school for their behavior have more time on task resulting in a rise in their engagement. This results in improved academic achievement for students. One of the main goals within PBS is to decrease discipline problems so students can remain in the classroom-learning environment (Luiselli et al., 2005; Sugai, Horner, et al., 2000).

The key elements of PBS include:

- Involving key school-based stake-holders in the design of the behavior procedures,
- Focusing on prevention and proactive strategies,
- Designing individual student behavior support plans, as necessary,
- Teaching the desired behaviors and setting expectations in a proactive manner,
- Providing positive reinforcement to students that are exhibiting the desired behaviors,
- Monitoring effectiveness of behavior support by collecting and analyzing data (Horner & Sugai, 2000; Luiselli et al., 2005; Sugai & Horner, 2002; Sugai, Horner, et al., 2000).

Positive Behavior Support is designed at the school level and is a collaborative process that involves all stakeholders (administrators, teachers, students, bus drivers, parents, specialists, community members). A school team, composed of teachers and administrators, is formed to make decisions and to analyze discipline data. The team gathers information from stakeholders, develops the school-wide intervention plan, shares it with staff, students, and parents, monitors the program, and makes modifications as needed. An administrator is a vital part of the team and active support is necessary to ensure success. Teams without strong leadership are often ineffective (Luiselli et al., 2005; Sugai, Horner, et al., 2000). PBS is not a "canned" program but

one that is developed at the school level following general guidelines set by the school.

Prevention is a primary focus of PBS. There are three tiers in which the students in a school are placed (see Figure 1).
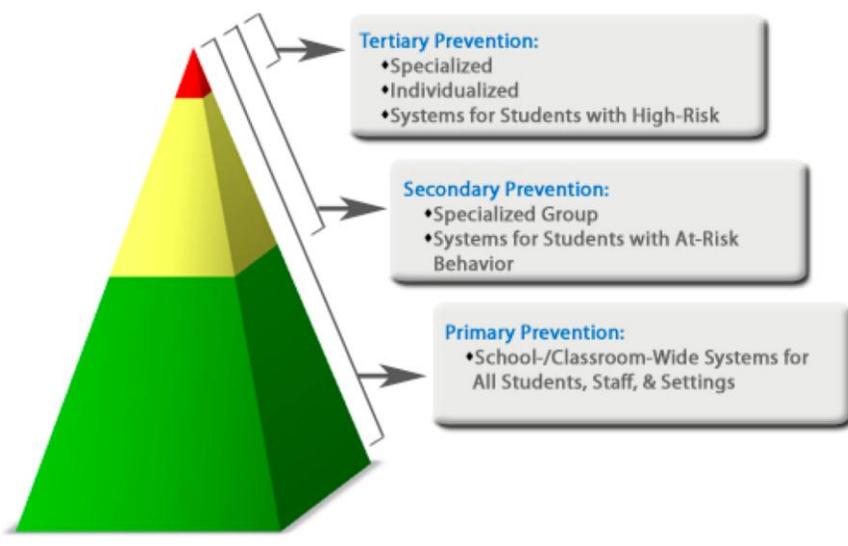
Figure 1. Continuum of school-wide instructional and positive behavior support: Three tiers of prevention. Adapted from www.pbis.org

The first and largest tier includes about 80-90% of the student population and consists of students without serious behavior problems. General school-wide and classroom discipline systems are put in place to prevent these students from having discipline issues. Examples of school-wide and classroom systems include rewarding the students for following the rules and defining and teaching specific behaviors or routines. The second tier includes about 5-15% of students who are at-risk for problem behaviors. The second tier preventions include additional instructional and behavioral supports that are used in small groups or individually. The third tier includes students with chronic or intense behavior problems, which are usually about 1-7% of the student body. For this small group of students individualized interventions are customized to meet the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of the child. An example of an individualized plan is a Functional Behavioral Assessment. A FBA is a collaborative assessment of student behavior that helps school teams understand the problem behavior(s) and put appropriate interventions in place. (Scott, Liaupsin, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2003; Scott, Nelson, & Zabala 2003;

Sugai & Horner, 2002; Sugai, Horner, et al., 2000).

If a student's behavior warrants a FBA, the school team works together to gather information about the reasons behind the behavior. During the process of developing the FBA, the team identifies the problem behavior, reviews data (observations, checklists), formulates a hypothesis for when and why the behavior occurs, and develops a plan to correct the behavior. As the team works together to write the FBA, they collaborate to develop an intervention plan. This intervention plan is referred to as the Behavior Intervention Plan or BIP (Iwata et al., 2000; Nelson, Martella, & Marchand-Martella, 2002; Nelson, Roberts, Rutherford, Mather, & Aaroe, 1999; Scott et al., 2003a; Scott et al., 2003b). By focusing on proactive preventative strategies, students learn appropriate behaviors, classrooms are orderly, and students are academically successful (Marzano et al., 2003).

After the school-wide expectations have been developed, these expectations must then be taught directly to students. All students do not come to school having learned appropriate social skills. For this reason, it is imperative that the expected behaviors be taught just like other subjects. Students who behave appropriately and follow the set behavioral expectations are given positive feedback. An essential part of PBS is a consistent school-wide recognition system that rewards the students who behave appropriately. The type of recognition system is decided at the school level but can range from good-news referrals, tokens, positive notes or calls home, stickers, and coupons. One important key to recognition is consistency among staff (Sprague & Golly, 2004).

Lastly, data are used to determine PBS decisions. School teams must document discipline issues through the use of a discipline report/referral (created at the school level) and other data available at the school (achievement scores, attendance records, grades). According to Sugai & Horner (2002), the data gathered are used to define and prioritize areas of concern, determine how to address these areas of concern, evaluate the impact of the interventions, and guide long-term planning and future goals.

Luiselli et al. (2005) conducted research in a diverse urban Midwestern elementary school. The school sought the researchers' expertise to improve behavior at their school. The components of PBS were implemented during an implementation phase. Teachers received training, a school-wide behavior plan was implemented, and a behavior support team monitored progress. The researchers used office discipline referrals, suspensions, and academic

performance as measurements. Baseline data were collected during a pre-intervention phase. After three years of PBS implementation, discipline problems decreased (see Table 4). Academic performance also increased. From the pre-intervention to intervention years (years 1 and 2), reading comprehension on the Metropolitan Achievement Test-Seventh Edition increased by 18 percentage points and mathematics improved by 25 percentage points (MAT-7; Luiselli et al., 2005).

Table 4

Average Office Referrals and Suspensions

	Pre-Intervention	Intervention	Follow-up
Office Discipline Referrals	1.30	.73	.54
Suspensions	0.31	.25	.20

Note. Daily average per 100 students

When PBS is implemented at an elementary school, discipline strategies that include exclusionary measures can be decreased or eliminated. Scott (2001) studied an inner-city elementary school that was providing students little success academically and with problem behaviors. After the staff discussed the possibility of implementing PBS the upcoming year, they all agreed to adopt and commit to PBS. Over the summer, all staff members attended an all-day professional development session. During this facilitated session, problem behaviors and locations were identified and simple solutions were brainstormed. By the end of the day, the staff identified the cafeteria, hallway/stairs, and gymnasium as three problem areas, agreed upon proactive solutions, and determined school-wide behavioral expectations for each area. A seven-member team was identified which met monthly to look at data, report back to staff, and make any changes needed throughout the school year (Scott, 2001).

Research conducted by Scott (2001) focused on data related to "SAFE" (suspension and failure eliminated) referrals and suspensions. The SAFE room was used to send students who had violated school rules, similar to an in-school suspension model. At the end of the year during which PBS was implemented, there was a 61% decrease in the amount of hours students spent in the SAFE room and a 65% decrease in the number of days students were suspended. Since the researcher did not look at problem behaviors, we do not know if problem behaviors decreased or if staff handled discipline differently. However, the school staff chose to continue PBS the

following year with a focus on specialized interventions for students with continued behavior problems (Scott, 2001).

Since the late 1990s, schools and school systems have used PBS to address school-wide, classroom, and individual behavior. PBS emphasizes early intervention, a team-based approach, data driven decision-making, and ongoing progress monitoring (Sugai & Horner, 2008). Luiselli et al. (2005) echoe others when they report "student discipline problems decreased and academic performance improved following a PBS intervention at an urban elementary school" (p. 192).

Responsive classroom. Responsive Classroom is an approach developed by the Northeast Foundation for Children that schools can adopt and teachers can implement to promote academic excellence and develop students' social skills. The overarching goal of Responsive Classroom is to create a school and classroom climate that supports learning with equal importance on the social and academic curriculum. Under the guiding principles, students learn critical social skills (responsibility, empathy, self-control, cooperation), teachers have an awareness of developmental characteristics, teachers focus on how children learn, and there is a focus on social interaction (Brock et al., 2008).

There are some specific aspects of the Responsive Classroom, program that are used to teach students the social and academic curriculum. Some of these include a daily morning meeting, working together as a class community to establish rules and logical consequences, classroom organization that allows students to be independent, academic choice, and guided discovery through which students learn how to care for their learning environment (Brock et al., 2008; Horsch, Chen, & Wagner, 2002; Rimm-Kaufman, Fan, Chiu, & You, 2006).

Recently, Brock et al. (2008) conducted a quasi-experimental three-year longitudinal study on the effectiveness of Responsive Classroom. Six schools located in a school district in the Northeast were selected to participate in the study. Three of the schools implemented the Responsive Classroom program and the other three were comparison schools. The researchers studied 520 students in grades 3–5 (grade 3 in year one, grades 3 and 4 in year two, and grades 3–5 in year three) and 51 teachers. Selected students had at least one identified risk factor (low family income, single parent status, low maternal education, or limited English proficiency), and 31.8% were minorities. Teachers in the implementation schools participated in a two-week long training. Data were collected using classroom observations, standardized test scores, teacher and student questionnaires and interviews. The researchers found the following:

- Students in the Responsive Classroom schools for three years showed academic gains in math and reading.
- There is a strong association between positive teacher attitudes and the implementation of Responsive Classroom.
- Children felt more positive about their class, school, and teacher.
- Teachers more frequently engaged in and placed higher value on collaboration.

Recently, Brock et al. (2008) found that children who had better social and academic behavior were in classrooms where the teacher implemented many of the Responsive Classroom practices. These students also had a positive perception of school. The researchers indicate that limited research addresses the effectiveness of Responsive Classroom, and their research is an effort to begin to fill this void. (Brock et al., 2008).

Horsch, Chen, and Wagner (2002) researched Responsive Classroom that was implemented in nine low-income public schools in Chicago to address students' social-emotional needs. These nine schools were a part of an eleven-year partnership with Erikson Institute and were involved in The Schools Project. A few years into the project, staffs were excited about new instructional strategies that were being put into place, but they were frustrated with the lack of caring and respect the students were displaying, knowing this had an effect on the students' academic success, The Schools Project began to search for something that would strengthen the students' sense of belonging. Responsive Classroom was chosen as an approach to use within the classrooms. The staff involved in The Schools Project and interested in the Responsive Classroom approach attended training led by the Northeast Foundation for Children.

Horsch et al. (2002) report that they found varied levels of implementation and varied levels of success in their case histories. In classrooms where Responsive Classroom was implemented, the children were internalizing the philosophy and becoming part of a caring learning community. The teachers had varied opinions of the program and about one-third developed a deep understanding, one-third implemented parts of the program, and one-third considered Responsive Classroom inappropriate for their students or their teaching style. In one school, the entire school embraced Responsive Classroom and their community saw huge positive changes. Their administration supported and the teachers embraced the philosophy. This urban school became a caring community and the staff saw positive changes, behaviorally and academically, in the students. The researchers concluded that as educators look to implement

school-wide behavioral interventions, it is important to understand that one intervention/program/philosophy will not fit all schools or an entire school district. Individual school administrators must look at their needs and make decisions based on their needs and goals (Horsch et al., 2002).

School leaders focused on improving student discipline must implement strategies that fit the needs of the school. There is not one specific packaged program or intervention that will work at all schools. School leaders should reflect on what is working within their school and then look for areas to improve. To find specific areas of focus, data should be used to drive decision-making. One way to collect data is through office discipline referrals, which is something most schools already have in place (Sugai, Sprague, Horner, & Walker, 2000).

School Administration and Student Discipline

School administrators have an incredible job. Administrators are expected to undertake numerous roles and make many high-stakes decisions. Throughout the last 20 years, the role of the school principal has been focused on being an instructional leader (Daresh, 2002). Yet, the management responsibilities still exist. The balance between the two presents an ongoing challenge. Even at this crossroad, Daresh (2002) stated:

> Principals are still ultimately responsible for ensuring that their schools have a safe and orderly environment for student learning. Many principals would rather not deal so much with student discipline but would instead like to be involved with curriculum and instruction. But you are responsible for dealing with student behavior. (p.163)

The challenge of difficult students brings increased pressures to the job. Principals spend more time than they would like on student discipline, and the amount of time has increased over the years (Cranston, Tromans & Ruegebrink, 2004; Daresh, 2002, 2004, 2006a, 2006b; DiPaola & Tschannen-Moran, 2003; Grubb & Flessa, 2006).

A safe school is important to a principal. Friedman, Friedman, and Markow (2008) collected data from a nationwide survey given to principals of elementary, middle, and high schools to determine principals' satisfaction with their schools. Twelve indexes were used to determine the overall satisfaction index, one of which was negative student behavior. Two sample questions were: "Is disorderly student behavior a problem at your school?" and "Are threats to teachers or staff a problem at your school?" The top three indexes related to

principals' overall satisfaction were negative student behavior, decision-making involvement, and school equipment and facilities. These results show that principals are not as satisfied with their schools if there are negative student discipline issues.

Impact on student discipline. Mukuria (2002) studied four different high school principals working in schools, to see how they addressed discipline problems within their schools. Two schools had high suspension rates and two had low suspension rates, Information about the four principals was gathered qualitatively through observations and interviews. Mukuria gathered information in the areas of school discipline, the principals' perceptions and use of suspensions and daily routines, and the activities of the principals including communication with parents and teachers and overall dealings with discipline problems within their schools.

The findings of the research indicated that the principals with low suspension rates shared the same administrative qualities among themselves and the principals with high suspension rates shared the same mentality among themselves. All four principals used different leadership styles, yet there were similarities in their thinking. The principals with low suspension rates had clear visions, supported teachers, included teachers in decision-making, set high standards and expectations for their students, and were committed to the education of their students. The opposite was true for the leaders of schools with high suspension rates. All principals agreed that parental involvement was an effective way of dealing with discipline problems (Mukuria, 2002).

Furthermore, the principals with low suspension rates had school-wide discipline programs within their schools and used the district discipline policy as guidelines but were not rigid about following the document exactly. These principals used strategies other than suspension as they dealt with students. The school-wide discipline programs/policies were formed using input from teachers, students, parents, and community members. The students knew the behavior that was expected at school and preventative measures were in place to meet disciplinary challenges. However, the principals in the high suspension schools did not have a school-wide discipline program and were inflexible with their district discipline policies (Mukuria, 2002).

Mukuria concluded "there was a lack of uniformity in defining suspensions and that administration of suspension was arbitrary" (p. 445). In addition, this research shows that principal leadership influences how discipline is handled within a school. Even though district

discipline policies were set, principals made decisions at the school level that either went along with the district policy or simply used the policy as a guide (Mukuria, 2002).

Beyda Lorie and Lee (2007) used qualitative research to examine administrator practices in dealing with discipline. They interviewed three female and three male administrators who were administrators for at least five years at six different schools (all levels). Each were asked about how they handle students sent to the office for disrupting class, what they do with students who are repeat referrals, what they usually do with first time referrals, and how they deal with teachers who refer students.

If a student was sent to the office with a referral, whether it was the first time or a repeat referral, all six administrators reported getting the facts of the situation. They hear the student's side and usually the teacher documents what happened on the referral form. Once all the facts are understood, then administrators work to determine a consequence. Five of the six administrators have a set of procedures for consequences that follows a continuum that they use for every student. Examples of consequences include talking with the student, after-school detention, Friday afternoon detention, Saturday school, in school suspension, out of school suspension, and expulsion. Administrators try to talk with the students so they understood what they did and help with goal setting to prevent the problem from reoccurring. Some administrators collaborate with parents or other staff members. The consequences given are limited and every administrator handle things differently. Students who get referred to the office may have parent or family factors they are dealing with, mood or emotional factors, or skill factors. Students with skill factors are usually low achievers, may have high absenteeism, and/or may struggle with class content (Beyda Lorie & Lee, 2007).

Working with teachers is another aspect of dealing with student discipline. Teachers who make frequent referrals often have poor classroom management skills, have personality factors (mood swings, minimal patience), do not relate well to the students, and have students who consistently misbehave. Examples of strategies to work with these teachers include coaching (administrator working closely with teacher on classroom management strategies), formal training on student discipline and classroom management, and supporting the teacher (Beyda Lorie & Lee, 2007).

The administrators in this study recognized that many times they do not spend enough time with students who are sent to the office with discipline referrals because of other

responsibilities and workload. There are limited studies like this one, so even though this study used a small sampling of six administrators, it provides an insight to how administrators handle student discipline.

Role and Training of Assistant Principals

Assistant Principals also have an important role in a school. They have a variety of duties but often the role of the disciplinarian is the most prominent, especially at the high school level. Other roles and responsibilities they might have include evaluating teacher and support staff evaluators, attending student activities, functioning as program managers, working with the custodians, monitoring student attendance, scheduling, and working with parents. Often, assistant principals begin their careers with goals of being an instructional leader and end up working more with the tasks listed above without a clear job description (Calabrese, 1991; Celikten, 2001; Daresh, 2004; Daresh, 2006; Glanz, 1994; Koru, 1993). Research about the assistant principal and the role of the assistant principal is limited (Celikten, 2001; Glanz, 1994). In 1992, Catherine Marshall wrote the first book that detailed the job description and role of the assistant principal. She stated that the assistant principal position is the beginning of the leadership chain with principal, assistant superintendent, and superintendent to follow. Therefore, the assistant principal role should not be forgotten and training must be implemented (Marshall, 1991).

As the disciplinarian, the assistant principal works with students who have received office referrals. Simonsen et al. (2008) reported that one middle school administrator dealt with 5,367 office referrals within one year. Glanz (1994) researched the responsibilities of the assistant principal and what they view as their duties as assistant principals. He surveyed 164 assistant principals (82% response rate) in New York City. The assistant principals had a variety of years of experience and were serving at all levels of schooling (elementary, middle, and high school). Through his research, Glanz found that the role of assistant principals has not changed drastically over the years. Assistant principals spend most of their time on managerial tasks compared to the limited amount of time spent on instructional duties. Over 93% of the surveyed assistant principals stated that their main responsibilities were lunch duty, student discipline, and ordering textbooks (Glanz, 1994). Researchers echo Glanz (1994) stating that student discipline is one of the major responsibilities of an assistant principal (Calabrese, 1991; Celikten, 2001;

Daresh, 2004; Daresh, 2006; Koru, 1993; Marshall, 1991; Simonsen, et al., 2008).

Daresh (2002; 2004; 2006), an avid researcher and writer on the principalship and assistant principalship, addresses some aspects of discipline. He categorizes discipline as a "management duty." Discipline is an ongoing activity that can take up a large chunk of time for school administrators. Daresh (2004) states that administrators make hundreds of decisions each day and many are determined by personal choice and how students are disciplined is often a personal choice decision. This can be frustrating for teachers, because the decisions are not always uniform. Daresh suggests building a personal platform so that staff and the community know and understand an administrator's basis for decision-making. Students who are disruptive in the classroom prevent others from learning. The administrator has the responsibility to take action to ensure that the classroom environment and instructional programs are optimal. Administrators disciplining students can be a form of counseling and advising students rather than a punishment. Time spent with misbehaving students could result in a turning point in their lives. For new assistant principals, Daresh (2004; 2006) suggests reviewing the district and state code of conduct and collaborating with the principal to discuss his view of discipline. The maintenance of discipline referral records is imperative. Daresh (2002; 2004) echoes others in the finding that discipline is often one of the top three jobs of an assistant principal. However, in schools that do not have assistant principals, the job lands in the lap of the principal.

In 2007, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration revised the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC), which provides states a standard for developing their own standards regarding administrative licensing (NPBEA, 2007). Within the ISLLC standards, student discipline could fall under Standard 2a whose function is to "nurture and sustain a culture of collaboration, trust, learning, and high expectations." Also, Standard 3 Function C states that administrators should "promote and protect the welfare and safety of students and staff" (NPBEA, 2007, p. 2). In general, assistant principals need additional training with all roles especially since this position leads to higher administrative roles. Novice leaders in a school building should have student discipline training within their position. However, most professional development provided for assistant principals does not deal with discipline even though it is how they spend the majority of their time (Oliver, 2005). Oliver (2005) surveyed assistant principals in Orange County, CA in 2000, 2002, and 2004. The longitudinal trend research indicated that over the years more professional development is provided to assistant

principals. In 2002, about 25% of assistant principals identified discipline as an area for increased professional development.

Administrators should consider the student and teacher as they handle student discipline. Teachers often want severe disciplinary actions taken if a child is sent to see the administration, but this might not always be necessary. Administrators should be trained to involve the teachers when working with students. There are also times when teachers make misjudgments and administrators need to use balance to resolve the conflict and support the teacher and the student. Training should include policies and procedures set in place by the school, district, and state (Tredway, Brill, & Hernandez, 2007). Purvis and Leonard (2001) found that within a graduate discipline course, the following topics should be included:

- definition of student discipline,
- classroom/school security,
- techniques for developing positive self-concept in students, and
- techniques for recognizing and reinforcing appropriate behavior.

They found the focus should be on prevention that should be taught through undergraduate and graduate classes (Purvis & Leonard, 2001).

Conclusion

As the above literature review illustrates, researchers are beginning to engage administrators in a discussion about what drives their decision-making as it relates to student discipline (Green & Barnes, 1993; Fields, 2003). In addition, there are gaps in the literature with regards to the training administrators receive in their degreed programs and in ongoing professional development on the topic of dealing with student discipline.

Most of the research states that suspension of students does not solve the problem, yet, there is a heavy reliance on this method of student discipline. When students are removed or excluded from the classroom, students struggle and often fail academically. Students who are in a well-managed and engaging learning environment have a greater chance of success than students who are not in the classroom. Researchers have documented strategies, other than excluding students from classrooms that are effective when handling student discipline within the school. Subsequently, school leaders and researchers must ensure school administrators receive training in the area of effective discipline and implement research-based strategies in

their school buildings.

Literature was reviewed that relates to how discipline is handled school-wide. However, literature specifically about classroom management was not included in this review. Effective classroom management is vital to school-wide discipline and the school administrator should work with teachers in this area, but this study is not centered on the classroom teacher. Research focused on expulsion was also not included because it often is not a "principal's discretionary" punishment but one that is required by the school district or state. There are a variety of school-wide behavior programs and those with significant research are discussed in this literature review. Some schools or school districts may have individual plans that have been developed locally. Finally, the most recent works of John Daresh, which are primarily books, were included. The majority of his journal articles was written in the 1980s and early 1990s and therefore was not included in this review of the more recent literature.

Within the literature examined, it is evident that student behavior and discipline is always present in schools and communities. Schools have always been depended upon to ensure that all students learn and practice citizenship skills. School administrators spend great amounts of time dealing with student discipline. Yet, there is limited research and training to determine what methods administrators use to discipline students and if they are effective. Consistency across administrators and schools in how they handle discipline has yet to be thoroughly researched. For example, if a student did something that resulted in a referral to the office, would he receive the same consequence or treatment in a sampling of schools?

As schools continue to focus on student learning, student behavior and discipline problems cannot be overlooked. Teachers will continue to have problems beyond what they can control in the classroom, and the school administration will have to step in to help find a solution for both the student and teacher. These solutions may include deciding upon a form of discipline for the student. The consequences given to students for discipline issues can vary from school building to school building and administrator to administrator. Therefore, this research study will discern the extent of training elementary school administrators have in the area of handling student discipline and what future training is needed.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to identify the extent of training that current Virginia elementary school administrators, principals and assistant principals, receive around handling student discipline in their principal preparation coursework and in their current position of school administrator. The data collected can be used by school districts to determine potential professional development topics within this area. A training module focused on elementary school administrators and student discipline could be the result of the proposed research.

Chapters 1 and 2 provide an overview of the study being proposed and a review of current literature related to the topic of student behavior and administrator professional development. This chapter describes the research questions, research design, study sample, instrumentation, data collection procedures, and methods of analysis.

Research Questions

The study will address the four research questions:

- to what extent do current elementary school administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline;
- to what extent do elementary school administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline in principal preparation coursework;
- what are the most prevalent topics when administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline; and
- what future training, in the area of handling student discipline, do elementary school administrators need?

Research Design

This study was conducted in the Commonwealth of Virginia. By definition, this inquiry is classified as a descriptive quantitative study (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Data were collected in order to find out more about the training school administrators have received in the area of handling student discipline and what further training needs to occur. This study was a mixed methods design with quantitative the primary and qualitative the secondary methodology. A

survey, created by the researcher, was used to collect the data.

Sample

Participants in this study were selected from elementary school principals and assistant principals in the Commonwealth of Virginia, which has approximately 1,176 public elementary schools. Since it is customary in descriptive research to sample 10 to 20% of the population (Gay & Airasian, 2000), about 20% of the population was identified for participation. The potential participants were chosen using a purposeful random sampling method. A table of random numbers was used to select the schools where the participants worked. Using this method, it is probable that a representative sample will be selected (Gay & Airasian, 2000). Every elementary school within the Commonwealth of Virginia was identified and entered into and Excel spreadsheet. Each school was assigned a number 1 to 1,176 (total number). To determine the representative sample 1,176 numbers were put into a random sampling tool, 235 (20% of population) random numbers were generated. The researcher identified each principal and assistant principal from the 235 schools who were identified by the random sampling. Collectively, there were 429 principals and assistant principals identified. Not all schools had an assistant principal. After the principal and assistant principal from each selected school were identified, their electronic mail addresses were obtained from the Virginia Department of Education and school websites.

Instrumentation

The researcher developed the survey instrument because the extensive review of the literature revealed no previously developed survey in this area of research. To develop the survey questions, the researcher envisioned a daylong training for elementary school administrators centered on handling student discipline. The daylong training would consist of multiple hour-long sessions during the day on different topics relating to student discipline. Using the review of the literature presented in chapter two, the researcher identified the following six overarching topics that could be included in a daylong training for school administrators. The training topics were:

- positive behavioral strategies (Sugai & Horner, 2002, 2006; Luiselli et al., 2005),

- minority overrepresentation (Day-Vines & Hairston, 2005; Gregory & Mosely, 2004; Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba, 2000),
- safety and security (Dunbar & Villarruel, 2002; Sprague, Smith & Stieber, 2002),
- suspension (Rausch & Skiba 2004; Costenbader & Markson, 1998),
- behavior disruptive students (Skiba et al., 1997; Sugai, Sprague, et al., 2000),
- supporting classroom management (Epstein et al., 2008).

The envisioned training sessions would be designed to last one hour and cover content specific to the topic. The sessions would be designed so the content did not overlap since all administrators would attend each session. Appendix A contains a diagram of the training topics and the content that could be covered within each topic.

As an example, the minority overrepresentation training would include the following content:

- characteristics of cultural and racial factors that may influence student discipline including ethnic variations in communication patterns,
- national, state, or local discipline statistics and trends with a focus on minorities,
- discipline strategies or interventions that are successful with minority students,
- working with teachers to ensure they understand cultural and ethnic communication patterns and characteristics of all students and the implications for instruction, and,
- determining if disproportionate suspensions exist amongst a racial group and developing an action plan to remedy the problem.

The envisioned training content within each training session was translated into survey questions, which were organized into a single matrix with the question stem "In the past two years, how much training have you had in the following areas?" For each question, the column responses were:

- no training (0 hours),
- limited training (15 minutes to less than 2 hours),
- moderate training (2 to 5 hours),
- extensive training (5 or more hours).

The respondent was directed to select one answer for each question.

A second section in the survey addressed the training that administrators received in their

principal preparation program. The principal preparation program content areas related to handling student discipline instruction are listed in Appendix A. These content areas are included in survey items under the question stem "During your Principal Preparation program, how much coursework was dedicated to the following areas?" The column responses were:

- an entire 1-3 credit course,
- taught within a course(s),
- not taught at all.

Using the work of Creighton, Coleman, and Adams (1997) as a guide, a system of symbolic logic truth tables or matrices was created to ensure content validity within the survey. This system is used to create strong measurement items. Truth tables increase inter-item correlations and construct descriptor validity. Symbolic logic truth tables also allow the researcher to ensure that each question in the survey is purposeful, correctly worded, and ties to the topic.

The symbolic logic process begins with the formulation of the constructs or big ideas to be addressed in the survey. For this survey, the researcher used the training topics (positive behavioral strategies, minority overrepresentation, safety and security, suspension, behavior of disruptive students, supporting classroom management) and principal preparation programs as the constructs. For each construct, a single stem definition was developed (see Table 5). Definitions with multiple stems are broad and can have similarities with other constructs. Single stem definitions are clear and succinct resulting in increased content validity (Creighton et al., 1997). The symbolic logic method ensures that each construct is isolated or discrete from the other constructs. Regarding the daylong training, each hour-long session provided different knowledge for the administrators. Symbolic-logic truth tables utilize "if/then" statements for comparison. When comparing constructs using if/then statements, two-way disagreements are desired. This disagreement ensures that each construct is isolated and measures different aspects.

Table 5 shows the constructs, single-stem definitions, and the symbolic logic matrix. The if/then truth table process was completed using the constructs included in this survey and two-way disagreement was established. Beginning with constructs 1 and 2, the following if/then statement was created: If a principal had training in positive behavior strategies (construct 1), then he/she had training in minority overrepresentation (construct 2). Since it was determined that there was one-way disagreement to this if/then statement, a "**.**" (period symbol) was placed

in row 1, column 2. This same process was repeated for each construct. As the process continued, the if/then statements were reversed. So, in row 2, column 1, the statement is the reverse of the first example: If a principal had training in minority overrepresentation [construct 2], then, he/she had training in positive behavior strategies [construct 1]. Since this statement was also considered a disagreement, a two-way disagreement was determined and "R" was added.

Table 5

Construct Symbolic-Logic Chart

		Construct Descriptors						
Constructs		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. **Positive Behavioral Strategies -** A proactive approach for addressing student discipline that includes teaching desired behaviors, positive reinforcement, and interventions.		X	.R	.R	.R	.R	.R	.R
2. **Minority Overrepresentation** – racial disparities in office referrals and disciplinary consequences.		.R	X	.R	.R	.R	.R	.R
3. **Safety and Security** – maintaining order within the school and keeping all bodies within the school out of harms way		.R	.R	X	.R	.R	.R	.R
4. **Suspension -** A fixed amount of time a student is not allowed to attend regularly scheduled classes (in school suspension) or attend school/be on school grounds (out of school suspension).		.R	.R	.R	X	.R	.R	.R
5. **Behavior of Disruptive Students** – management of students who do not follow school rules and procedures		.R	.R	.R	.R	X	.R	.R
6. **Supporting Classroom Management** – structures in a classroom that ensures students are in an organized and effective environment.		.R	.R	.R	.R	.R	X	.R
7. **Principal Preparation Programs** – college-level degree with courses that are required to be a school administrator		.R	.R	.R	.R	.R	.R	X

Note. An "X" is placed in the cell where the descriptor correlates itself. An "A" denotes two-way agreement, a period denotes one-way disagreement and an "R" denotes two-way disagreement.

Once the creation of the constructs and the truth table exercise ensured disagreement, descriptors were developed. Descriptors are statements that relate to each construct. For this survey, the researcher used the content areas covered in each training session as the descriptors.

The descriptors then became the survey questions. The resulting constructs and descriptors are displayed in Appendix A.

Once the descriptors were identified, another truth table was created. To correlate the descriptors, if/then statements were constructed. Two-way agreement was desired to best predict inter-item correlation among the descriptors. The determinations were recorded in the symbolic-logic truth table as shown in Table 6. The numbers across the top of the truth table represent the corresponding descriptors. The "X" was placed in the cell where the descriptor correlates with itself. An "A" was placed in the cell if there was two-way agreement, a "." (period symbol) was placed in the cell if there was one-way disagreement, and an "R" was placed in the cell if there was two-way disagreement. Again, two-way agreement was desired.

As an example, the completed truth table for the construct positive behavioral strategies is shown in Table 6. In this case, the if/then statement for descriptors 1 and 2 in the construct positive behavioral strategies reads: If a principal implements ways to encourage and maintain socially appropriate behavior [descriptor 1] then, he/she accesses the status of behavior support and discipline in the school [descriptor 2]. Since it was determined that there was a two-way agreement to this if/then statement, an "A" was placed in row 1, column 2. This same process was completed for each descriptor. See Appendix B for the truth tables for all descriptors within each construct.

Table 6

Positive Behavioral Strategies Symbolic-Logic Matrix

Descriptors	Construct Descriptors				
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Implementing ways to encourage and maintain socially appropriate behavior	X	A	A	A	A
2. Assessing the status of behavior and discipline in the school	A	X	.	A	A
3. Systematic efforts to reduce discipline issues	A	A	X	A	A
4. Developing and implementing a school-wide discipline program	A	A	A	X	A
5. Proactively addressing student behavior	A	A	A	A	X

In the truth tables exercise, if the statements did not strongly agree, the statements were

refined to increase strength. For example, under the construct safety and security, one descriptor read: State and federal laws that pertain to school safety. This descriptor did not agree with two other descriptors so the wording was adjusted to add the words "local" and "regulations." The descriptor now reads: Local, state, and federal regulations and laws that pertain to school safety. This change resulted in the descriptor agreeing with all other descriptors.

The constructs and descriptors were identified and created by reviewing current research and the review of current practice. The processes of symbolic-logic truth tables allowed the researcher to strengthen the constructs and descriptors. This approach provided a systematic way to ensure the developed survey was researched-based and had content validity (Creighton et al., 1997). Dr. Theodore Creighton, a Virginia Tech professor, assisted and reviewed the descriptors and truth tables used in this study once they were developed. See Appendix C for the complete survey.

A field test of the survey was conducted with seven elementary school administrators. When selecting field test participants, the researcher ensured ethnic and gender diversity as included both principals and assistant principals. The researcher adjusted the survey based on results and feedback from the field test.

Data Collection

The researcher submitted a request for approval by the Institutional /Review Board (IRB) of the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The request was approved (see Appendix L).

All 429 potential survey participants were sent an electronic communication on June 1, 2010. The communication included an introductory letter requesting their participation and a link to the survey on SurveyMonkey (see Appendix D). A reminder notice and a thank-you participation receipt were e-mailed to all participants two weeks following the initial email. A total of 103 administrators completed the survey. The data were collected via SurveyMonkey in June and July of 2010 and downloaded into the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis.

Methods of Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the survey data and report ranking of means

and patterns surfacing for research questions 3 and 4. In addition, correlation analysis was used to address any existing relationships and help answer research questions 1 and 2. The researcher used SurveyMonkey and JMP Software to calculate the survey results. Survey results were categorized within the seven survey constructs. An item analysis was performed to determine results.

After data were collected, a confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to confirm to what degree and whether or not the survey responses aligned with the constructs and descriptors of the survey. As verbal logic matrices were used to address content validity, confirmatory factor analysis was used to address construct validity.

Summary

This chapter included a discussion of the methodology used in this study. The researcher described the identification of the sample, construction of the survey, and the methods for data collection and analysis. Chapter 4 summarizes the findings and chapter 5 presents conclusions and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to identify the extent of training current Virginia elementary school administrators, principals and assistant principals, receive around handling student discipline in their principal preparation coursework and in their current position of school administrator. The study addressed and answered four research questions:

- to what extent do current elementary school administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline;
- to what extent do elementary school administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline in principal preparation coursework;
- what are the most prevalent topics when administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline; and
- what future training, in the area of handling student discipline, do elementary school administrators need?

Factor Analysis

Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted to validate the instrument and validate that the descriptors were closely aligned and consistent with constructs. The factor analysis determined if the respondents identified any of the known constructs and if the descriptors correctly measured what they were intended to measure. It also reduced the number of variables to a manageable set (Creighton, Coleman, & Adams, 1997). The factors were identified using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

An eigenvalue of 1.00 was used for the factor analysis and it was determined that the responses for the seven constructs fell within four major constructs with only one highly significant construct. Table 7 lists the constructs found (see Appendix F for the complete list). Any variable with an eigenvalue less than 1.00 was considered insignificant and therefore not interpreted. The results of the factor analysis indicated that the respondents did not identify seven survey constructs. The survey constructs are not independent from each other; rather, they strongly measure only one item.

Table 7

Survey Factor Analysis (eigenvalue of 1.00)

Factor/Construct	Eigenvalue	% of Variance
1	16.223	55.941
2	2.054	7.084
3	1.513	5.218
4	1.127	3.888

Note: Only the most significant factors were listed. See Appendix F for complete list.

Construct Validation

A construct validation test was conducted to determine if respondents answered the descriptors of individual constructs in a similar manner. The construct validation test also determined the validity of the survey and the accuracy of the responses. The respondents indicated four factors which the researcher further identified as four of the constructs.

Within the first construct, many of the descriptors from various constructs were apparent. The strongest correlations were among descriptors for the positive behavioral strategies (see Table 8) and behavior of disruptive students (see Table 9) constructs.

Table 8

High Correlations within Factor One: Construct - Positive Behavioral Strategies

Question	Correlation
Q1	.789
Q2	.808
Q3	.776
Q4	.838
Q5	.731

Table 9

High Correlations within Factor One: Construct – Behavior of Disruptive Students

Question	Correlation
Q15	.806
Q16	.812
Q17	.749
Q18	.817
Q19	.796

Within the first construct, the respondents also identified some descriptors from the classroom management, suspension, and minority overrepresentation constructs (see Table 10). Overall, the first construct was a combination of all constructs identified by the researcher.

Table 10

High Correlations within Factor One: Additional Descriptors

Construct	Question	Correlation
Suspension	Q13	.817
Suspension	Q14	.781
Supporting Classroom Management	Q21	.812
Supporting Classroom Management	Q24	.800
Minority Overrepresentation	Q25	.806

The construct in factor two was identified as principal preparation programs with all correlations falling between .569 and .780. Factor three was recognized as safety and security with question 12 from the suspension construct overlapping. Finally, factor number four was identified as the minority overrepresentation construct. See Appendix G for the complete component matrix. The question number corresponds to the questions/descriptors listed in Appendix E.

Research Questions

Results for each of the four research questions are discussed in this section.

Research question one. *To what extent do current elementary school administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline?* To determine the extent respondents received training in student discipline, their responses to the survey were categorized according to six constructs. Over half (53%) of school administrators indicated that they had moderate to extensive training in the safety and security construct. This was the highest percentage within the six constructs. On the other hand, the majority (74%) of the respondents indicated that they had received limited or no training in two of the constructs: suspension and minority overrepresentation. The responses for each construct are summarized in the following sections.

Safety and security. Questions in the safety and security construct addressed whether school administrators had training during the past two years in emergency preparedness, dealing with a school threat or crisis, implementing a crisis plan, strategies to protect the safety of students, and laws/regulations pertaining to school safety. This construct had the least number of respondents (13%) stating they had no training. Most school administrators received either limited (33%) or moderate (36%) training.

Positive behavior strategies. The five questions within the positive behavior strategies construct focused on aspects of student behavior when systematic and proactive strategies are in place within the school to reduce discipline issues. When responses to the four questions were combined, 26% of respondents stated they had no training, 32% limited training, 26% moderate training, and 16% extensive training.

Suspension. To determine if school administrators had training regarding suspension, respondents were asked about training in the areas of the effectiveness of removing a student from the classroom, student suspensions, zero-tolerance policies, and paperwork involved when disciplining a student. Overall, 74% of school administrators responded they had limited (38%) or no (36%) training in the construct. Only 26% indicated moderate to extensive training in the suspension construct during the past two years.

Behavior of disruptive students. Regarding the working with disruptive students construct, respondents were asked about their training on working with students who have repeated office referrals and strategies to reduce the behaviors. A relatively high percentage (33%) within the study stated they had no training in this area. In the area of working with disruptive students, 38% responded they had limited training, 15% had moderate training, and 11% had extensive training.

Supporting classroom management. The construct supporting classroom management
was developed to determine if the school administrator had training in classroom management
systems and strategies and in techniques to work with teachers to develop strong classroom
management. Of the school administrators, 78% indicated they had limited, moderate, or
extensive training that addressed classroom management in the last two years, while 22% had no
training.

Minority overrepresentation. Minority students have cultural and racial factors that may
influence student behavior. These factors may include ethnic variations in communication
patterns. Of the school administrators who responded to the survey, 74% had limited or no
training within this construct. A small percentage (9%) had extensive training. This was the
smallest percentage compared to the extensive training reported in the other six constructs.

Summary of results for research question one. Table 11 and appendix K summarize the
responses of administrators regarding their training for the six constructs. In table 11, training
responses were combined for no and limited training as well as for moderate and expensive
training.

Table 11

School Administrators' Responses for Training for Each Construct

Construct	None/Limited %	Moderate/Extensive %
Positive Behavior Strategies	58	42
Safety and Security	46	53
Suspension	74	26
Behavior of Disruptive Students	68	33
Supporting Classroom Management	56	44
Minority Overrepresentation	74	26

Note: For the purposes of this comparison responses for no and limited training were combined and
moderate and extensive training were combined.

Research question two. *To what extent do elementary school administrators receive
training in the area of handling student discipline in principal preparation coursework?* To
determine if educational leadership or principal preparation programs address handling student
discipline in their required coursework, a construct with six questions was established. Current

school administrators were asked if they had received instruction that addressed the six constructs (positive behavior strategies, safety and security, suspension, disruptive students, supporting classroom management, and minority overrepresentation) in their principal preparation coursework. For each construct, respondents were asked to identify if they had training (a) within one course, (b) in an entire course on the topic, or (c) if the topic was not at all addressed during their principal preparation coursework. Only a small number (5%) of school administrators responded that they had an entire course focused on handling some or all aspects of student discipline. Forty-nine percent of school administrators responded they had not been taught topics related to student discipline and 47% stated a topic was taught within a course (see Appendix J).

 Research question three. *What are the most prevalent topics when administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline?* Responses to descriptors were analyzed to address this research question. The response choices of moderate training and extensive training were combined for analysis. Percentages were calculated and descriptors were sorted by response percentage. The three descriptors with the most training received by school administrators were within the construct safety and security. School administrators received the most training in implementing a school-wide crisis plan (62.14%). Training in the areas of emergency preparedness (60.19%) and strategies for dealing with a school threat or crisis (59.22%) were the other two descriptors that were rated among the top three within the safety and security construct. All descriptors in the safety and security construct were in the top half of all descriptors when sorted by most prevalent training topics (see Appendix I).

 Another area of prevalent training topics in the area of handling student discipline is working with and supporting classroom management. Eighty percent (4 out of 5) of the descriptors in the construct supporting classroom management were among the top half of all descriptors in terms of the amount of training received in the area of handling student discipline. School administrators reported moderate to extensive training in identifying classrooms in which teachers ensure students are engaged and on-task (54.37%) and working with teachers to improve their classroom management (48.54%).

 Table 12 summarizes the most prevalent training topics reported by school administrators.

Table 12

Percentage of Most Prevalent Training Topics Among School Administrators

Descriptor/ Training Topic	Construct	Moderate/ Extensive
Implementing a school-wide crisis plan	Safety and Security	62.14%
Emergency preparedness	Safety and Security	60.19%
Strategies for dealing with a school threat or crisis	Safety and Security	59.22%
Identifying classrooms where teachers ensure students are engaged and on-task	Supporting Classroom Management	54.37%
Working with teachers to improve their classroom management	Supporting Classroom Management	48.54%

Note: For the purposes of this comparison responses for moderate and extensive training were combined.

Research question four. *What future training, in the area of handling student discipline, do elementary school administrators need?* Descriptors were analyzed by the amount of training elementary school administrators received. In this study, areas for which school administrators reported limited-to-no training were identified as areas of future training needs. As shown in Table 13, three out of five descriptors within the minority overrepresentation construct had high percentages of limited-to-no training and were identified as future training needs. These included examining discipline statistics and identifying trends related to minority students (84% of administrators had limited to no training), determining if disproportionate suspensions exist and developing a plan to remedy the problem (79%), and characteristics of cultural and racial factors that may influence student discipline including ethnic variation in communication patterns (74%).

Regarding suspensions, all four descriptors within this construct had a 70% or higher response of limited-to-no training in this area. An additional descriptor, research-based effective consequences for students who have been disobedient, disrespectful, and/or not followed school rules, also had a large number (76%) of school administrators indicating they received limited to no training. (see Table 13 and Appendix H.)

Table 13

Percentage of Least Prevalent Training Topics Among School Administrators

Descriptor/ Training Topic	Construct	Limited/ No Training
National, state, and local discipline statistics and trends with a focus on minorities	Minority Overrepresentation	84.47%
Determining if disproportionate suspensions exist amongst a racial group and developing an action plan to remedy the problem	Minority Overrepresentation	78.64%
The appropriate situation to suspend a student from school	Suspension	77.67%
Research-based effective consequences for students who have been disobedient, disrespectful, and/or not followed school rules	Disruptive Students	75.73%
Zero-tolerance policies	Suspension	74.76%
Characteristics of cultural and racial factors that may influence student discipline including ethnic variations in communication patterns	Minority Overrepresentation	73.79%
Effectiveness of removing a student from the classroom or school for discipline reasons	Suspension	72.82%

Note: For the purposes of this comparison responses for limited and no training were combined.

Summary

  The school administrators who completed a survey indicated variation in the amount of training they received in the various areas of school discipline. Areas for which they reported the greatest amount of training was safety and security. The areas for which they received considerably less training included minority overrepresentation and suspension. Chapter 5 includes a discussion of these findings and implications for school districts and for further research.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Elementary school administrators work with students and teachers to ensure a safe learning environment. This study measured the extent of training current Virginia elementary school administrators, principals and assistant principals, receive around handling student discipline in their principal preparation coursework and in their current position of school administrators. A quantitative design was used in this study. Elementary school administrators responded to a survey about the extent of their training with regards to student discipline. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. To what extent do current elementary school administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline?

2. To what extent do elementary school administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline in principal preparation coursework?

3. What are the most prevalent topics when administrators receive training in the area of handling student discipline?

4. What future training, in the area of handling student discipline, do elementary school administrators need?

Within this chapter, the findings from the data are discussed, implications for school district leaders and preparation of school administrators are shared, and recommendations for future research studies are given.

Finding 1 Factor Analysis

Using an eigenvalue of 1.00, it was determined that out of the seven constructs, all responses fell within four constructs/factors and only one highly significant factor. The highly significant factor had an eigenvalue of 16.223 and the other four constructs with eigenvalues greater than 1.00 ranged from 1.127 to 2.054.

Discussion. Seven survey constructs would have emerged using an eigenvalue of 1.00 if the original proposal was accurate. However, a large difference existed between factor one and factor two. The factor analysis revealed that only four constructs were significant and of those four, only one had a highly significant eigenvalue. This suggests that only one construct emerged

within the survey. Moving forward, any future research should limit the number of survey constructs. This would allow for more in-depth analysis into the descriptors of the constructs, leading to a richer understanding of how administrators are trained to handle student discipline.

Finding 2 Construct Validation

A construct validation was conducted to identify the four significant constructs. The factor analysis detailed above showed that the respondents identified four factors. Within the first and most significant factor, many of the descriptors from various constructs were apparent. Unlike the other three, factor one, had descriptors that cut across each of the seven constructs. Factor one was identified as student discipline in general. The construct in factor number two was identified as principal preparation programs with all correlations falling between .569 and .780. Factor three was recognized as safety and security with one question from the construct suspension overlapping. Finally, factor number four was identified as the construct minority overrepresentation.

Discussion. The construct validation showed that survey respondents only identified one construct, which was student discipline in general. The other six constructs were shown to be not as significant for survey respondents. Instead, respondents picked descriptors or questions on the survey, which represented student discipline in general without additional categorization. This phenomenon points to the larger notion that student discipline is made up of many facets but is not easily compartmentalized into specific constructs. For example, all 34 descriptors in the survey were highly correlated with one another, not just those descriptors falling within one construct. This finding further supports the existence of one construct for the entire administrator training survey as discussed in finding one.

Factor number two, principal preparation programs, was the next most identifiable construct. These survey questions all dealt with training received prior to beginning the work of a school administrator and had a different stem on the survey, which could account for its higher construct rating.

Finding 3 Research Question One

The results of the analyses of the survey responses indicate that elementary school administrators do not receive comprehensive training in the area of handling student discipline.

In particular, training regarding suspensions and minority overrepresentation was severely lacking while training around the safety and security construct was the most prevalent. For elementary school principals to be able to effectively handle student discipline, they need a well-rounded and continual training program around all six identified constructs. This training should focus equally on all aspects of student discipline for optimum impact.

Positive Behavior Strategies. Regarding this construct, only 16% of teachers stated they had extensive training on positive behavior strategies. The remaining 84% of teachers had moderate to no training in this realm. This is surprising given that this is a key strategies being implemented in schools that has been proven effective (Brock et al., 2008; Luiselli et al., 2005; Sugai & Horner, 2008). As stated in the literature review, by focusing on proactive preventative strategies, students learn appropriate behaviors, classrooms are more orderly, and students are academically successful (Marzano et al., 2003). More teachers being trained in positive behavior strategies would likely dissipate chronic student discipline issues.

Safety and Security. This construct had the least number of respondents (13%) stating they had no training. While training in emergency preparedness, dealing with a school threat or crisis, implementing a crisis plan, strategies to protect the safety of students, and laws/regulations pertaining to school safety are vital, it is not surprising that administrators had the most training in this construct. However, safety and security does not proactively impact student discipline and is mainly focused on crisis prevention and management. School administrators do need this type of training, but it must be integrated with working proactively and directly with students to alleviate discipline problems.

Suspension. This result was surprising because suspension is the most-used disciplinary action for an office referral, yet 74% of administrators reported they had limited or no training on this construct (Mendez & Knoff, 2003; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997). In addition, research has shown that suspension is one of the least effective methods of disciplining a student (Costenbader & Markson, 1998; Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Administrators need training so they are aware of current research around suspension and they learn alternatives to suspension.

Behavior of Disruptive Students. When it comes to working with disruptive students, one facet involves working with students who have repeated office referrals and using strategies to reduce their problem behaviors. Of the administrators surveyed, 71% had limited to no training in this area. This points to a lack of needed training for administrators on a systematic,

consistent, fair and research-based way to best handle disruptive students. Working with disruptive students often goes hand in hand with suspensions. If administrators don't know effective research-based ways to handle and correct student behavior, this could be a reason suspension is the most widely used disciplinary technique.

Supporting Classroom Management. A majority of school administrators (78%) had some level (limited, moderate, or extensive) of training about classroom management systems and strategies. Just as the Responsive Classroom approach suggests, students need to be taught both social and academic curriculum in the classroom (Rimm-Kaufman et al., 2006). If classroom management strategies are effective, student discipline needs at the administrative level decrease.

Minority Overrepresentation. As stated in the literature review, disproportionate and more punitive discipline based on race and gender is commonplace in public schools today (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005; Skiba, 2000). For example, White students are disciplined for more objective reasons, while Black students are disciplined for more subjective actions. However, while this is such a poignant issue in schools today, 74% of respondents stated they had limited or no training on this construct. Training on this issue should focus on awareness of the problem, first and foremost, and then on strategies to close the discipline gap. Administrators are doing a disservice to themselves and to minority students by not keeping pace with the research and training available on this issue.

Summary. The survey results related to the first research question show that there are training gaps and discrepancies across all six constructs. Without a systematic training protocol in place for all administrators, student discipline will continue to be inconsistent and not in the best interest for students. Administrators need to seek comprehensive, research-based training that positively impacts students. Without a state or county-wide training system in place, discipline will continue to vary by school to the detriment of all involved.

Finding 4 Research Question Two

When school administrators were asked if they had received instruction on the constructs included in the survey during their principal preparation coursework, only a small number (5%) had an entire course focused on handling one or all aspects of student discipline. A major finding of the study revealed that 49% of the school administrators stated they had not been taught topics

related to student discipline in their principal preparation coursework. Meanwhile, 47% of respondents stated that student discipline constructs were taught within a course.

Discussion and implications for practice. The finding that 49% of those surveyed had not received any training on student discipline points to a gap in the training that administrators receive prior to assuming their leadership role. This gap must be closed in order for schools to operate effectively and with purpose by administrators using research-based methods for combating student discipline.

Assistant principals have a variety of duties, but often the role of disciplinarian is most prominent (Daresh, 2004; Daresh, 2006). This is of concern because assistant principals are often hired directly after principal preparation coursework and have limited on-the- job-training regarding student discipline. Daresh (2004) states that how students are disciplined is often a personal choice decision by administrators. This research substantiates that finding because a high percentage of administrators (49%) have received no formal training on student discipline issues and thus are forced to rely on decision-making influenced only by their personal background and not research-based training.

Finding 5 Research Question Three

Regarding prevalent areas of training, school administrators indicated they received the greatest amount of training in the areas of implementing a school-wide crisis plan (62.14%), emergency preparedness (60.19%), and strategies for dealing with a school threat or crisis (59.22%). Another area of prevalent training topics is the area of working with and supporting classroom management. School administrators had moderate to extensive training in identifying classrooms where teachers ensure students are engaged and on-task (54.37%) and in working with teachers to improve their classroom management (48.54%).

Discussion and implications for practice. As stated above, school administrators must integrate crisis management and emergency preparedness procedures with working proactively and directly with students to alleviate discipline problems. It is of note that implementing crisis plans and emergency preparedness procedures seems to have a more formal process in place already than other matters of student discipline. Administrators should have the same amount, if not more, training focused on the topic of handling student behavior.

Classroom management is of importance because if classrooms are well managed, behavior does not rise to the level of the administrator. Training for school administrators needs to focus on strategies to train and support the classroom teacher.

Finding 6 Research Question Four

Descriptors in which respondents had limited-to-no training were identified as areas for future training. Minority overrepresentation is the most pressing area for future training. Top areas of focus for future training include:

- Examining discipline statistics and trends with a focus on minority students (84% of administrators had limited to no training),
- determining if disproportionate suspensions exist,
- developing a plan to remedy the problem (79% had limited to no training), and
- identifying characteristics of cultural and racial factors that may influence student discipline including ethnic variation in communication patterns (74% had limited to no training).

Another construct that should be at the core of all future training on discipline is suspensions. All four descriptors related to suspensions had a 70% or higher response of limited-to-no training. One additional descriptor, which 76% of school administrators identified as having limited-to-no training, is research-based effective consequences for students who have been disobedient, disrespectful, and/or not followed school rules.

Discussion and implications for practice. Future training should be focused on minority overrepresentation and suspension because surveyed administrators reported a clear lack of training on these topics. This is interesting because research shows that minorities are overrepresented when it comes to suspensions (Day-Vines & Day-Hairston, 2005; Skiba et al., 1997). The two topics are clearly related and more comprehensive training on both would benefit students and administrators. A fair and structured handling of suspensions would lessen the problem of minority overrepresentation.

Implications for District and State School Leaders

This study's results point to the need for focused administrator training on various areas of student discipline. More training and set discipline standards will benefit students by ensuring

they are treated equally and that behavior is corrected promptly and efficiently so that students stay in school for optimal learning. When discipline problems are handled correctly, the focus turns to the most important task at hand–educating students in an environment that fosters learning.

This study also shows that local, district, and state school leaders need to continuously look at discipline data so they remain cognizant of the issue of minority overrepresentation. The study found that 74% of respondents had limited or no training regarding minority overrepresentation. School leaders must be aware of this issue and work to better understand racial and gender disproportionality and ethnic variations. Training for school administrators should focus on fostering a better understanding of subcultures, cultural norms, and communication styles in order to equitably handle student discipline. Schools should be required to gather and analyze their student discipline data around gender, race and incident (what they are being suspended for) as well as the effectiveness of suspensions vs. other discipline methods.

When students have multiple suspensions, administrators should realize that other strategies need to be put into place to correct the negative behavior more effectively. The literature review presented in chapter 2 revealed that suspensions are overused and might not be in the best interest of students in that they tend not to "fix" the behavior problem over the long-term. A lack of training regarding suspensions could also be hampering administrators as they continue to use suspensions with little knowledge of the research and statistics related to this disciplinary method. Alternative classroom placements, for example, could ensure that students can continue learning.

Administrators should also look at county-wide discipline data to ensure their school statistics are in line with other schools in the area. This benchmarking process will help administrators ascertain how office referrals, suspensions, minority overrepresentation, and other data compare to other schools. The study also points to the need for student discipline to be a continuing topic of conversation among students, parents, teachers and administrators.

To address the training needs revealed through this study, there should be a discipline committee in each school and also at the county level to ensure there is continuous training with set standards and topics that keep pace with current, pertinent research. The discipline committee should develop and implement a required research-based training program, focused on each construct related to student discipline. It is noted that this training does not need to be extensive

or burdensome, but should be ongoing and focus on research-based strategies and techniques for handling student discipline. At the county or state level, a requirement could also be enacted that would call for a set amount of training hours around student discipline issues for recertification. This study clearly points to the need for additional training to help school administrators more effectively handle discipline matters in a consistent way that does not vary from school to school or by student race and gender.

Implications for the Preparation of School Leaders

Training on student discipline should not wait until an administrator starts working in a school. Coursework designed to inform and instruct future school administrators about how to deal with students who come to the office for disciplinary action is also imperative. When a future administrator graduates from a university program, that person should be confident and informed about student discipline from their first day on the job.

The results of this study show that the most pressing issues regarding student discipline are minority overrepresentation and suspension. Training should therefore start with these topics as the primary focus. The coursework should include awareness of issues of minority overrepresentation and different strategies administrators can use with each different student and situation they face. Student discipline is a continual learning process and administrators should continue to seek out the latest research and data on this issue so they do not remain stagnant with their methods.

It is of note that the study found that 49% of school administrators stated they had not been taught topics related to student discipline in their principal preparation coursework. There should be a principal preparation program requirement nationwide to include curriculum on handling student discipline in all coursework. Future administrators should also learn strategies to ensure there is a school-wide discipline program in place, including a discipline committee. This committee can work with the administrator to ensure set standards regarding student discipline are followed by everyone. A major component of a school administrator's job is student discipline, so university programs should instruct future administrators on how to discipline students fairly using research-backed methods.

Principal preparation programs should integrate the topic of student discipline throughout their coursework. It is simply a lost opportunity not to teach research on and techniques of

student discipline as a fundamental part of any higher educational leadership program. Administrators should not be expected to learn on the job about how to discipline effectively and fairly.

Recommendation for Future Research

This study measured the training that school administrators receive to properly handle student discipline in principal preparation programs and while in the role of an administrator. The study showed that only one highly significant construct emerged from the survey. It would be beneficial to refine the survey instrument with limited constructs and redo the study to further investigate the descriptors within each construct. This would help to better clarify and discern which descriptors fall into each construct and why. It would also allow for more in-depth analysis into the descriptors of the constructs, leading to a richer understanding of how administrators are trained to handle student discipline.

This study set a baseline for the Commonwealth of Virginia and its student discipline training. Therefore, repeating the same survey at set intervals would help determine changes in training, if any, that are taking place as a result of the study. Because this study was limited to elementary schools, future studies should include both middle and high schools to provide additional information and insights into how student discipline evolves as students get older. Do discipline practices change? Do the issues of minority overrepresentation and suspension remain as significant in middle and high school as they are for elementary schools? These questions could and should be answered by expanding the study to include grades K-12.

While this study was conducted in the Commonwealth of Virginia, future research could expand the study to other states and even nationwide to determine if the findings change from state to state. It would also be interesting to administer the survey in another state as part of a research-based training program already in place to compare the differences in responses between administrators in both states.

To further this analysis of the extent of training administrators receive regarding student discipline, future research should also focus on investigating the beliefs, opinions, values, and leadership styles of administrators and their impact on how administrators handle student discipline.

Conclusion

The results of this study showed there is a need for specific training that goes beyond crisis management and the safety and security of students and delves deeper into issues around minority overrepresentation, suspensions, and other discipline techniques. For example, the study showed that 74% of administrators reported limited or no training with regards to suspensions. Research has shown, however, that while suspension is the most widely used disciplinary action for an office referral, it is also one of the least effective ways of disciplining a student (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). It is alarming that the majority of administrators surveyed reported having minimal training about suspensions so they may not even be aware of this issue and how to combat it effectively. The study clearly identified administrators, both those during their preparation to be administrators and during their time as administrators, need more training on all aspects of student discipline. Hopefully, the result of this training will be an increased use of alternate, research-based methods of discipline that benefit the student.

To improve administrator training around student discipline, the Commonwealth should also develop and implement a research-based training program that all administrator are required to take for recertification. Principal preparation programs should also better integrate student discipline into all coursework.

Finally, present and future administrators should stay abreast of current student discipline research in the educational community because this topic will be at the forefront of their work throughout their career. Students have the right to learn in a safe and nurturing environment, and administrators should be responsible for learning and using research-based, effective, and fair disciplinary techniques to achieve that goal.

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Appendix A Training Topics and Content Matrix

In-Service Training →

School Administrator Training Dimensions - Handling Student Discipline

Pre-Service Training →

Principal Preparation Programs - Handling Student Discipline

Positive Behavioral Strategies

- Implementing ways to encourage and maintain socially appropriate behavior
- Assessing the status of behavior and discipline in the school
- Systematic efforts to reduce discpline issues
- Proactively addressing student behavior
- Developing and implementing a school-wide discipline program

Minority Overrepresentation

- Characteristics of cultural and racial factors that may influence student discipline including ethnic variations in communication patterns (how students of various races communicate)
- National, state, or local discipline statistics and trends with a focus on minorities
- Discipline strategies or interventions which are successful with minority students
- Working with teachers to ensure they understand cultural and ethnic communication patterns and characteristics of all students and the implications for instruction
- Determining if disproportionate suspensions exist amongst a racial group and developing an action plan to remedy the problem

Safety and Security

- Strategies for dealing with a school threat or crisis
- Emergency preparedness
- Developing a school-wide crisis plan
- Local, state, and federal regulations and laws that pertain to school safety
- Protecting the safety of students

Suspension

- The appropriate situation to suspend a student from school
- Paperwork involved when removing a student from the classroom because of misconduct
- Effectiveness of removing a student from the classroom or school for discipline reasons
- Zero- tolerance policies

Behavior of Disruptive Students

- Handling a student sent to you (the administrator) for discipline reasons
- Research-based effective consequences when working with students who have been disobedient, disrespectful, and/ or not followed school rules
- Working with students who have repeated office referrals
- Strategies to reduce student discipline office referrals
- Developing a plan for students who demonstrate at-risk behavior

Supporting Classroom Management

- Assessing and analyzing classroom design and management systems
- Working with teachers to improve their classroom management
- Identifying classrooms where teachers ensure students are engaged and on-task
- Strategies to ensure high standards and expectations are set for each student by classroom teachers
- Techniques for recognizing and reinforcing appropriate behavior used in a classroom

Principal Preparation Programs - Handling Student Discipline

- Research validated practices for handling student discipline
- Counseling and advising students who are sent to you/your office
- Protecting the safety of students
- School-wide discipline research validated practices
- Working with teachers to develop effective classroom management systems
- Racial and gender disparities in office referrals and disciplinary consequences

Appendix B Survey Truth Table Matrices

Positive Behavioral Strategies - A proactive approach for addressing student discipline that includes teaching desired behaviors, positive reinforcement, and interventions.					
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Implementing ways to encourage and maintain socially appropriate behavior	X	A	A	A	A
2. Assessing the status of behavior and discipline in the school	A	X	.	A	A
3. Systematic efforts to reduce discipline issues	A	A	X	A	A
4. Developing and implementing a school-wide discipline program	A	A	A	X	A
5. Proactively addressing student behavior	A	A	A	A	X

Minority Overrepresentation – racial disparities in office referrals and disciplinary consequences.					
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Characteristics of cultural and racial factors that may influence student discipline including ethnic variations in communication patterns (how students of various races communicate)	X	A	A	A	A
2. National, state, or local discipline statistics and trends with a focus on minorities	A	X	A	.	A
3. Discipline strategies or interventions that are successful with minority students	A	A	X	A	A
4. Working with teachers to ensure they understand cultural and ethnic communication patterns and characteristics of all students and the implications for instruction	A	A	A	X	A
5. Determining if disproportionate suspensions exist amongst a racial group and developing an action plan to remedy the problem	A	A	A	A	X

Safety and Security – maintaining order within the school and keeping all bodies within the school out of harms way					
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Strategies in dealing with a school threat or crisis (bomb threat, unknown/unwanted/dangerous person on or near campus, etc)	X	A	A	A	X
2. Emergency preparedness (fire drills, lock-down, evacuation, etc)	A	X	A	A	X
3. Developing a school-wide crisis plan	A	A	X	A	X

	1	2	3	4	5
4. Local, state and federal regulations and laws that pertain to school safety	A	A	A	X	X
5. Protecting the safety of students	X	X	X	X	X

Suspension - A fixed amount of time a student is not allowed to attend regularly scheduled classes (in school suspension) or attend school/be on school grounds (out of school suspension).

	1	2	3	4
1. The appropriate situation to suspend a student from school	X	.	A	A
2. Paperwork involved when removing a student from the classroom because of misconduct	A	X	.	A
3. Effectiveness of removing a student from the classroom or school for discipline reasons	A	.	X	A
4. Zero- tolerance policies	A	A	A	X

Behavior of Disruptive Students – management of students who do not follow school rules and procedures

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Handling a student sent to you (the administrator) for discipline reasons	X	A	A	A	A
2. Research-based effective consequences when working with students who have been disobedient, disrespectful, and/or not followed school rules	A	X	A	A	A
3. Working with students who have repeated office referrals	A	A	X	A	A
4. Strategies to reduce student discipline office referrals	A	A	A	X	A
5. Developing a plan for students who demonstrate at-risk behavior	A	A	A	A	X

Supporting Classroom Management – structures in a classroom that ensures students are in an organized and effective environment.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Assessing and analyzing classroom design and management systems	X	A	A	A	A
2. Working with teachers to improve their classroom management	A	X	A	A	A
3. Identifying classrooms where teachers ensure students are engaged and on-task	A	A	X	A	A
4. Strategies to ensure high standards and expectations are set for each student by classroom teachers	A	A	A	X	A
5. Techniques for recognizing and reinforcing appropriate behavior used in a classroom	A	A	A	A	X

Principal Preparation Programs – college-level degree with courses that are required to be a school administrator	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Research validated practices for handling student discipline	X	A	A	A	A	A
2. School-wide discipline research validated practices	A	X	A	A	A	A
3. Counseling and advising students who are sent to you/your office	A	A	X	.	A	A
4. Working with teachers to develop effective classroom management systems	A	A	A	X	A	A
5. Protecting the safety of students	A	A	A	A	X	.
6. Racial and gender disparities in office referrals and disciplinary consequences	A	A	A	A	A	X

Appendix C Survey

Elementary School Administrators and Student Discipline

*1. Gender
Female   Male

*2. Role in School
Assistant Principal   Principal

*3. Total Number of Years in School Administration
Less than 1 year
1-4 years
5-10 years
10-15 years
16 years or more
Other

*4. In the past two years, how much training have you had in the following areas?

No training – 0 hours
Limited training – 15 min – less than 2 hours
Moderate training – 2-5 hours
Extensive – 5 or more hours

- Assessing and analyzing classroom design and management systems
- Systematic efforts to reduce discipline issues
- National, state, or local discipline statistics and trends with a focus on minorities
- Strategies to reduce student discipline office referrals
- Effectiveness of removing a student from the classroom or school for discipline reasons
- Research-based effective consequences when working with students who have been disobedient, disrespectful, and/or not followed school rules
- Protecting the safety of students
- Working with students who have repeated office referrals
- Strategies in dealing with a school threat or crisis (bomb threat, unknown/unwanted/dangerous person on or near campus, etc)
- Handling a student sent to you (the administrator) for discipline reasons
- Developing a plan for students who demonstrate at-risk behavior
- The appropriate situation to suspend a student from school
- Working with teachers to improve their classroom management

- Developing a school-wide crisis plan
- Strategies to ensure high standards and expectations are set for each student by classroom teachers
- Determining if disproportionate suspensions exist amongst a racial group and developing an action plan to remedy the problem
- Discipline strategies or interventions, which are successful with minority students
- Emergency preparedness (fire drills, lock-down, evacuation, etc)
- Identifying classrooms where teachers ensure students are engaged and on-task
- Techniques for recognizing and reinforcing appropriate behavior used in a classroom
- Characteristics of cultural and racial factors that may influence student discipline including ethnic variations in communication patterns (how students of various races communicate)
- Implementing ways to encourage and maintain socially appropriate behavior
- Working with teachers to ensure they understand cultural and ethnic communication patterns and characteristics of all students and the implications for instruction
- Assessing the status of behavior and discipline in the school
- Local, state and federal regulations and laws that pertain to school safety Developing and implementing a school-wide discipline program
- Zero- tolerance policies
- Proactively addressing student behavior
- Paperwork involved when removing a student from the classroom because of misconduct

* 5. During your Principal Preparation Program, did you have training and to what extent in the following areas:

Entire 1-3 credit course   Taught within a course(s)   Not taught at all

- Racial and gender disparities in office referrals and disciplinary consequences
- Working with teachers to develop effective classroom management systems
- Research validated practices for handling student discipline
- Protecting the safety of students
- Counseling and advising students who are sent to you/your office
- School-wide discipline research validated practices

Appendix D Letter to Participants

Subject: Request from a Colleague

Dear Virginia Elementary School Administrator,

Principals and Assistant Principals have school safety as an utmost priority. Despite efforts to maintain a school environment that is safe and secure for students, staff, and the community, challenges still arise in the area of student discipline.

I am a Virginia assistant principal and a doctoral candidate in Educational Leadership at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech). My research is focused on elementary school administrators and the training they receive in the area of handling student discipline.

I am seeking your help to complete my study. You have been randomly selected, from the pool of Virginia elementary school administrators, to participate in my study and your participation is voluntary. All replies are anonymous and your name or school name will not be identified or reported in any part of this research.

The survey instrument will allow me to measure the amount of training you have received as a school administrator and in your principal preparation program in the area of handling student discipline.

The link below will direct you to the survey. I estimate it will take you approximately 15 minutes to complete. After completing the survey, click on the 'Done' button. Please complete the survey by **June 15, 2010**.

If you have any questions, contact me at 703.868.9523 or jkindelan@vt.edu.

I realize as the school year is coming to an end, you are extremely busy. I appreciate the time you spend helping me complete my research and sharing your experiences.

Link to survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/R7DJY29

All my best,

Julie

Julie Kindelan
703.868.9523
jkindelan@vt.edu

Appendix E Question Numbers and Corresponding Descriptors Used During Data Analysis

Question Number	Question/Descriptor	Construct
1	Implementing ways to encourage and maintain socially appropriate behavior with all students	Positive Behavior Strategies
2	Assessing the status of behavior and discipline in the school	Positive Behavior Strategies
3	Proactively and positively addressing student behavior	Positive Behavior Strategies
4	Systematic efforts to reduce discipline issues	Positive Behavior Strategies
5	Developing and implementing a school-wide discipline program	Positive Behavior Strategies
6	Strategies for dealing with a school threat or crisis (bomb threat, unknown/unwanted/dangerous person on or near campus, etc)	Safety and Security
7	Emergency preparedness (fire drills, lock-down, evacuation, etc)	Safety and Security
8	Implementing a school-wide crisis plan	Safety and Security
9	Local, state and federal regulations and laws that pertain to school safety (local district discipline handbook, Code of VA, reporting discipline to state, Special Education discipline, etc.)	Safety and Security
10	Strategies to protect the safety of students	Safety and Security
11	Effectiveness of removing a student from the classroom or school for discipline reasons	Suspension
12	Zero- tolerance policies	Suspension
13	The appropriate situation to suspend a student from school	Suspension

14	Paperwork involved when removing a student from the classroom because of misconduct (suspension letters, documentation in student file, etc)	Suspension
15	Working with students who have repeated office referrals	Behavior of Disruptive Students
16	Strategies to reduce student discipline office referrals	Behavior of Disruptive Students
17	Developing a plan for students who have repeated office referrals	Behavior of Disruptive Students
18	Handling a student sent to you (the administrator) for discipline reasons	Behavior of Disruptive Students
19	Research-based effective consequences for students who have been disobedient, disrespectful, and/or not followed school rules	Behavior of Disruptive Students
20	Effective classroom design and management systems	Supporting Classroom Management
21	Working with teachers to improve their classroom management	Supporting Classroom Management
22	Identifying classrooms where teachers ensure students are engaged and on-task	Supporting Classroom Management
23	Strategies to ensure high standards and expectations are set for each student by classroom teachers	Supporting Classroom Management
24	Techniques that teachers should use when recognizing and reinforcing appropriate student behavior in the classroom	Supporting Classroom Management
25	Discipline strategies or interventions, which are successful with minority students	Minority Overrepresentation

26	Working with teachers to ensure they understand cultural and ethnic communication patterns and characteristics that may influence student discipline	Minority Overrepresentation
27	Characteristics of cultural and racial factors that may influence student discipline including ethnic variations in communication patterns (how students of various races communicate)	Minority Overrepresentation
28	National, state, or local discipline statistics and trends with a focus on minorities	Minority Overrepresentation
29	Determining if disproportionate suspensions exist amongst a racial group and developing an action plan to remedy the problem	Minority Overrepresentation
30	Research validated practices for handling student discipline	Principal Preparation Program
31	School-wide discipline research validated practices	Principal Preparation Program
32	Counseling and advising students who are sent to you/your office	Principal Preparation Program
33	Working with teachers to develop effective classroom management systems	Principal Preparation Program
34	Protecting the safety of students	Principal Preparation Program
35	Racial and gender disparities in office referrals and disciplinary consequences	Principal Preparation Program

Appendix F Factors Identified and Eigenvalues

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	16.223	55.941	55.941	16.223	55.941	55.941
2	2.054	7.084	63.025	2.054	7.084	63.025
3	1.513	5.218	68.243	1.513	5.218	68.243
4	1.127	3.888	72.131	1.127	3.888	72.131
5	0.772	2.661	74.792			
6	0.725	2.500	77.291			
7	.611	2.109	79.400			
8	.608	2.097	81.497			
9	.557	1.921	83.417			
10	.500	1.724	85.141			
11	.447	1.540	86.682			
12	.405	1.397	88.079			
13	.371	1.280	89.358			
14	.335	1.154	90.512			
15	.325	1.120	91.632			
16	.310	1.068	92.700			
17	.272	.939	93.639			
18	.257	.886	94.526			
19	.230	.792	95.318			
20	.199	.686	96.004			
21	.187	.645	96.648			
22	.175	.603	97.251			
23	.159	.549	97.801			
24	.143	.492	98.293			
25	.130	.449	98.742			
26	.109	.375	99.117			
27	.108	.374	99.491			
28	.083	.287	99.778			
29	.064	.222	100.000			

Appendix G Component Matrix

Component Matrix[a]

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
VAR00001	.789	.254	-.191	-.168	-.149
VAR00002	.808	.206	-.072	-.234	.056
VAR00003	.776	.315	-.082	-.347	-.011
VAR00004	.838	.149	-.249	-.061	-.009
VAR00005	.731	.221	-.100	-.318	-.065
VAR00006	.624	-.087	.563	-.179	-.162
VAR00007	.590	-.026	.593	-.196	-.149
VAR00008	.641	-.058	.614	-.063	-.130
VAR00009	.659	.039	.308	.174	.013
VAR00010	.787	.007	.293	.142	-.002
VAR00011	.704	-.258	-.020	-.081	.381
VAR00012	.672	-.175	.302	.220	.048
VAR00013	.817	-.099	.117	.167	.313
VAR00014	.781	-.149	.250	.228	.141
VAR00015	.806	.102	-.246	-.221	.124
VAR00016	.812	.248	-.215	-.244	-.013
VAR00017	.749	.098	-.064	-.064	-.045
VAR00018	.817	-.013	.015	-.153	.206
VAR00019	.796	.051	-.151	.129	.137
VAR00020	.737	.170	-.090	-.082	-.120
VAR00021	.812	.146	-.087	-.010	-.195
VAR00022	.667	.160	.131	.092	-.303
VAR00023	.722	.134	-.009	.348	-.223
VAR00024	.800	.159	-.125	.041	-.114
VAR00025	.806	-.088	-.223	.030	.144
VAR00026	.592	-.002	-.239	.470	-.258
VAR00027	.674	-.082	-.317	.437	-.083
VAR00028	.787	-.013	-.059	.176	.240
VAR00029	.741	-.072	-.060	.148	.160
VAR00030	-.335	.759	.117	.090	.086
VAR00031	-.249	.780	.078	.168	.120
VAR00032	-.411	.682	.101	.131	.150
VAR00033	-.149	.666	.161	.004	.309
VAR00034	-.222	.569	-.144	.027	-.321
VAR00035	-.218	.647	.241	.137	.078

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 5 components extracted.

Appendix H Descriptors Identified as Limited to No Training

(percent of respondents identifying limited to no training in each descriptor)

Descriptor	No and Limited Training
National, state, or local discipline statistics and trends with a focus on minorities	84.47%
Determining if disproportionate suspensions exist amongst a racial group and developing an action plan to remedy the problem	78.64%
The appropriate situation to suspend a student from school	77.67%
Research-based effective consequences for students who have been disobedient, disrespectful, and/or not followed school rules	75.73%
Zero- tolerance policies	74.76%
Characteristics of cultural and racial factors that may influence student discipline including ethnic variations in communication patterns (how students of various races communicate)	73.79%
Effectiveness of removing a student from the classroom or school for discipline reasons	72.82%
Paperwork involved when removing a student from the classroom because of misconduct (suspension letters, documentation in student file, etc)	70.87%
Handling a student sent to you (the administrator) for discipline reasons	69.90%
Systematic efforts to reduce discipline issues	68.93%
Discipline strategies or interventions, which are successful with minority students	66.99%
Developing a plan for students who have repeated office referrals	66.02%
Working with teachers to ensure they understand cultural and ethnic communication patterns and characteristics that may influence student discipline	66.02%
Techniques that teachers should use when recognizing and reinforcing appropriate student behavior in the classroom	65.05%
Working with students who have repeated office referrals	63.11%
Strategies to reduce student discipline office referrals	62.14%

Descriptor	No and Limited Training
Local, state and federal regulations and laws that pertain to school safety (local district discipline handbook, Code of VA, reporting discipline to state, Special Education discipline, etc.)	61.17%
Implementing ways to encourage and maintain socially appropriate behavior with all students	61.17%
Effective classroom design and management systems	61.17%
Strategies to ensure high standards and expectations are set for each student by classroom teachers	56.31%
Developing and implementing a school-wide discipline program	55.34%
Strategies to protect the safety of students	54.37%
Proactively and positively addressing student behavior	53.40%
Assessing the status of behavior and discipline in the school	52.43%
Working with teachers to improve their classroom management	51.46%
Identifying classrooms where teachers ensure students are engaged and on-task	45.63%
Strategies for dealing with a school threat or crisis (bomb threat, unknown/unwanted/dangerous person on or near campus, etc)	40.78%
Emergency preparedness (fire drills, lock-down, evacuation, etc)	39.81%
Implementing a school-wide crisis plan	37.86%

Appendix I Descriptors Identified as Moderate and Extensive Training

(percent of respondents identifying moderate to extensive training in each descriptor)

Descriptor	Moderate and Extensive Training
Implementing a school-wide crisis plan	62.14%
Emergency preparedness (fire drills, lock-down, evacuation, etc)	60.19%
Strategies for dealing with a school threat or crisis (bomb threat, unknown/unwanted/dangerous person on or near campus, etc)	59.22%
Identifying classrooms where teachers ensure students are engaged and on-task	54.37%
Working with teachers to improve their classroom management	48.54%
Assessing the status of behavior and discipline in the school	47.57%
Proactively and positively addressing student behavior	46.60%
Strategies to protect the safety of students	45.63%
Developing and implementing a school-wide discipline program	44.66%
Strategies to ensure high standards and expectations are set for each student by classroom teachers	43.69%
Implementing ways to encourage and maintain socially appropriate behavior with all students	38.83%
Effective classroom design and management systems	38.83%
Local, state and federal regulations and laws that pertain to school safety (local district discipline handbook, Code of VA, reporting discipline to state, Special Education discipline, etc.)	38.83%
Strategies to reduce student discipline office referrals	36.89%
Working with students who have repeated office referrals	36.89%
Techniques that teachers should use when recognizing and reinforcing appropriate student behavior in the classroom	34.95%
Developing a plan for students who have repeated office referrals	33.98%
Working with teachers to ensure they understand cultural and ethnic communication patterns and characteristics that may influence	33.98%

Descriptor	Moderate and Extensive Training
student discipline	
Discipline strategies or interventions, which are successful with minority students	32.04%
Systematic efforts to reduce discipline issues	31.07%
Handling a student sent to you (the administrator) for discipline reasons	30.10%
Paperwork involved when removing a student from the classroom because of misconduct (suspension letters, documentation in student file, etc)	29.13%
Effectiveness of removing a student from the classroom or school for discipline reasons	27.18%
Characteristics of cultural and racial factors that may influence student discipline including ethnic variations in communication patterns (how students of various races communicate)	26.21%
Zero- tolerance policies	25.24%
Research-based effective consequences for students who have been disobedient, disrespectful, and/or not followed school rules	24.27%
The appropriate situation to suspend a student from school	22.33%
Determining if disproportionate suspensions exist amongst a racial group and developing an action plan to remedy the problem	21.36%
National, state, or local discipline statistics and trends with a focus on minorities	15.53%

Appendix J Principal Preparation Survey Results

Descriptor	Entire Course		Taught Within a Course		Not Taught	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Research-validated practices for handling student discipline	5	5%	48	47%	50	49%
School-wide discipline research validated practices	5	5%	48	47%	50	49%
Counseling and advising students who are sent to you/your office	5	5%	48	47%	50	49%
Working with teachers to develop effective classroom management systems	5	5%	48	47%	50	49%
Protecting the safety of students	5	5%	48	47%	50	49%
Racial and gender disparities in office referrals and disciplinary consequences	5	5%	48	47%	50	49%

Appendix K Mean Responses by Construct – Amount of Training Received

Mean Responses by Construct - Amount of Training Received
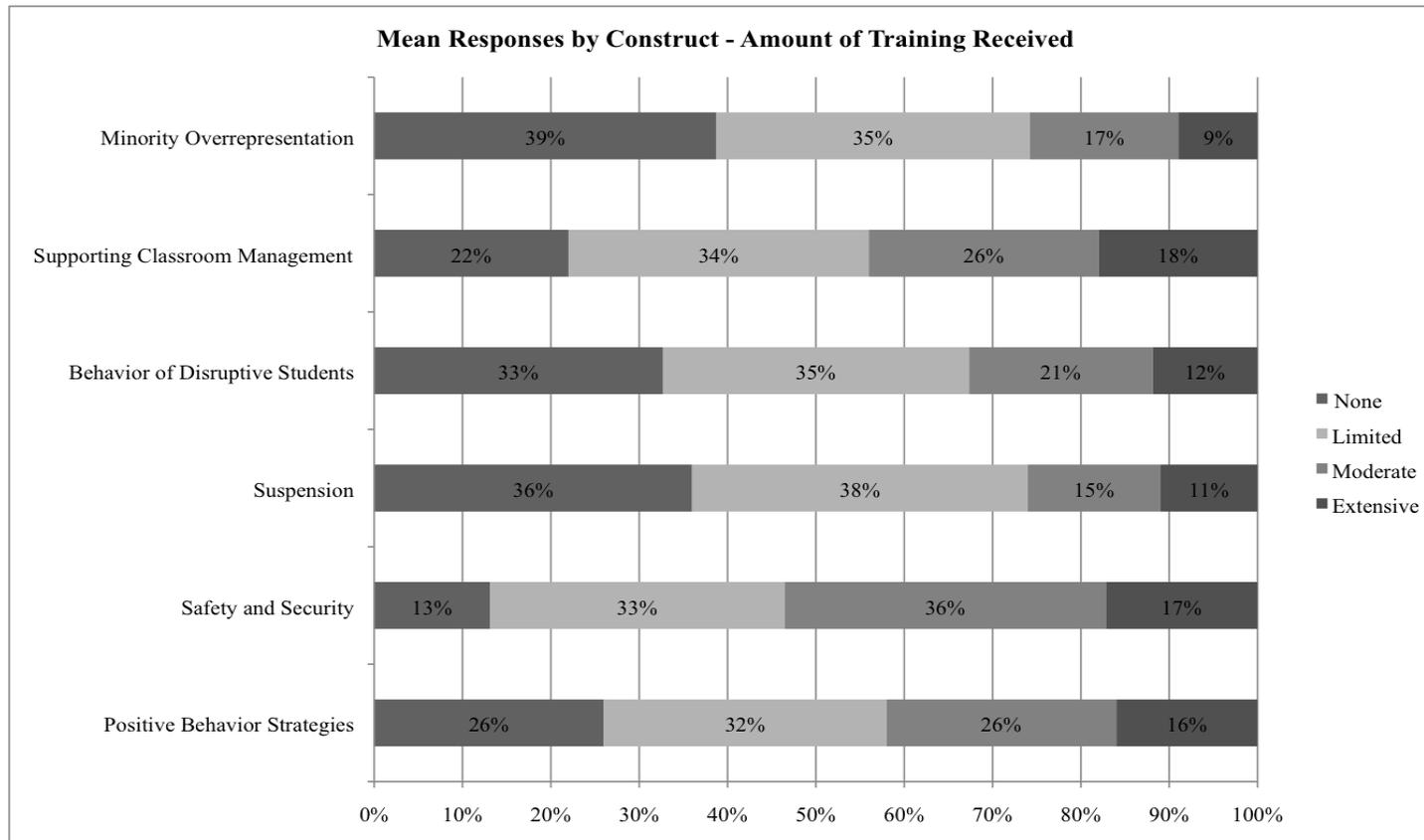
Appendix L IRB Approval Letter

🏛 **VirginiaTech**

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 12, 2010

TO: Theodore Creighton, Julie Kindelan

FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires June 13, 2011)

PROTOCOL TITLE: Elementary School Administrator Training in the Area of Handling Student Discipline

IRB NUMBER: 10-446

As of May 12, 2010, the Virginia Tech IRB Administrator, Carmen T. Green, approved the new protocol for the above-mentioned research protocol.

This approval provides permission to begin the human subject activities outlined in the IRB-approved protocol and supporting documents.

Plans to deviate from the approved protocol and/or supporting documents must be submitted to the IRB as an amendment request and approved by the IRB prior to the implementation of any changes, regardless of how minor, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. Report promptly to the IRB any injuries or other unanticipated or adverse events involving risks or harms to human research subjects or others.

All investigators (listed above) are required to comply with the researcher requirements outlined at http://www.irb.vt.edu/pages/responsibilities.htm (please review before the commencement of your research).

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:
Approved as: **Exempt, under 45 CFR 46.101(b) category(ies) 2**
Protocol Approval Date: **5/12/2010**
Protocol Expiration Date: **NA**
Continuing Review Due Date*: **NA**
*Date a Continuing Review application is due to the IRB office if human subject activities covered under this protocol, including data analysis, are to continue beyond the Protocol Expiration Date.

FEDERALLY FUNDED RESEARCH REQUIREMENTS:
Per federally regulations, 45 CFR 46.103(f), the IRB is required to compare all federally funded grant proposals / work statements to the IRB protocol(s) which cover the human research activities included in the proposal / work statement before funds are released. Note that this requirement does not apply to Exempt and Interim IRB protocols, or grants for which VT is not the primary awardee.

The table on the following page indicates whether grant proposals are related to this IRB protocol, and which of the listed proposals, if any, have been compared to this IRB protocol, if required.

— *Invent the Future*

IRB Number 10-446   page 2 of 2   Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board

Date*	OSP Number	Sponsor	Grant Comparison Conducted?

*Date this proposal number was compared, assessed as not requiring comparison, or comparison information was revised.

If this IRB protocol is to cover any other grant proposals, please contact the IRB office (irbadmin@vt.edu) immediately.

cc: File

VIRGINIA POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE AND STATE UNIVERSITY
An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution