

Discipline Disproportionality in an Urban School Division within the
Commonwealth of Virginia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine what change, if any, existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligned behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework. This research used quantitative data with a nonexperimental descriptive design. The researcher sought to answer the questions:

1. What is the number and percentage of students receiving an office discipline referral by race, gender, and those with a disability?
2. What is the number and percentage of students receiving suspensions, both in-school and out-of-school, related to office discipline referrals for students by race, gender, and those with a disability?
3. How has the number and percentage changed for incidents over the three years of implementing a systematic approach that aligns behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability?
4. How has the number and percentage changed for consequences over the three years of implementing a systematic approach that behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability?

This study included 39 schools (24 elementary schools, seven middle schools, five high schools, one middle/high school, one specialty high school, and one alternative school) of an urban school division in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The selected division leadership team established an outcome to decrease office discipline referrals (ODRs), In-School Suspension (ISS), and Out-of-School Suspensions (OSS) in order to increase instructional time in the classroom. The sampled schools had evidence of varying levels of implementation. This study examined the effects of a multi-tiered system of support on student discipline.

This study found that the proportion of students receiving ODRs was not reduced by the implementation of a multitiered framework. Additionally, the number of ODRs increased for most subgroups over the period of the study. However, the study did find that the disproportionality for SWD decreased for ODRs. The study also found that the gap in proportions between Black students receiving ISS and White students receiving ISS increased. Despite the growing disparity between Black and White students, disproportionality for SWD receiving ISS decreased. Conversely, the proportion of Black students receiving OSS decreased over the 3-year period of the study. In conjunction to the findings related to ISS, the disproportionality of SWD receiving OSS decreased during this study period. Finally, the study found that the proportion of female students receiving LTS increased over the 3-year period of the study. This study did not include an analysis of the critical features of a multi-tiered system of support.

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GENERAL AUDIENCE ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine what change, if any, existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligned behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework. This research used quantitative data with a nonexperimental descriptive design.

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Dedication

Trust in the lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight. Proverbs 3:5-6

To God be the glory for the things He has done in my life. Without Him, I am nothing. To my mom in heaven, Audrey Elaine, thank you for preparing me for whatever life had to present. To Granny, I love and miss you dearly. Thank you for living every day of your life as an example for others to live by. You were a great role model. To my parents, Robert and Valerie Ransome, I appreciate your unwavering love, prayers, and support. To my aunt, Genevieve Lancaster and my uncle, the Rev. Dwight Romeo Zwannah “Ike” Johnson, thank you for always shining a light on my path to ensure safety. To my inner circle, John Merritt, Chris Smith, Ronzel Bell, Lisa Ellerbee Cruz, Keith Green, Tony McCain, Nick Snead, and Andrew Snead, thank you guys so much for the encouragement and support. To the best band director heaven has, Hosea Brower, thank you for the lessons in persistence.

To my wife, Stephanie, and our daughters, Jada and Jenna, you sacrificed so much to support my dreams and you lifted me up when I should have been lifting you up—I dedicate this dissertation to you.

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Chapter One

The Problem

Educators adopt policies that are focused on supporting student achievement (Cannata et al., 2017). It is impossible to focus on educational goals without first working to manage student behavior. Many school administrators implement policies that are meant to create an environment that is conducive to learning. However, these policies can be enforced in a manner that is inconsistent with the needs of the student population. As such, not all policies promote equality in the educational setting (Cannata et al., 2017).

Historically, students of color are more likely to experience exclusionary discipline (Bradshaw et al., 2010; Losen, 2011; Nogeura, 2003; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). In addition, national studies have shown that students with disabilities are also more likely to experience disparities since not all educational professionals are trained to properly understand and address behavioral concerns displayed by these students (U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 2019). For decades, race and gender differences in school discipline, as well as the harms associated with them, have been reported. Suspension from school will limit classroom time and thwart academic success for students who are already falling behind (Gregory et al., 2017).

It is advantageous for educators and administrators to determine how to best increase graduation rates and prevent students from dropping out. When students have negative experiences in schools, their likelihood of dropping out increases (Turcios-Cotto & Milan, 2013). These efforts around graduation rates and dropout prevention by educational leaders should particularly address the needs of students with Emotional Disabilities, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and Specific Learning Disabilities, and students from minority backgrounds, such as Black and Latinx students, who are more likely to experience disadvantages in this area (Gregory et al., 2010; Turcios-Cotto & Milan, 2013). Additionally, when students are suspended or expelled, they are isolated from their school community, making them less likely to retain the motivation needed to meet graduation requirements in terms of academic efforts and behavior (Turcios-Cotto & Milan, 2013). Therefore, this research used quantitative data with a nonexperimental descriptive design to determine what change, if any, existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligns behavior, social-emotional wellness,

and academics into one decision-making framework, in an urban school division within the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Overview of the Study

This quantitative study used a nonexperimental descriptive design to determine what change, if any, existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligned behavior, and social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework. The researcher selected the 39 schools based on the application of a multi-tiered framework. This study added to the body of research relating to educational leadership and discipline disproportionality by examining responses to office discipline referrals that lead to In-School Suspensions, Out-of-School Suspensions, and Long Term suspensions.

Statement of the Problem

Student discipline has always been a concern for educators. The literature indicates that the reduction of teaching time in the classroom hurts student performance (Losen et al., 2015). The literature also indicates that “school exclusion—out-of-school suspension and expulsion—remains a substantial component of discipline in our nation’s schools” (Skiba et al., 2014, p. 640). Professional organizations such as the American Psychological Association (2008) and the American Academy of Pediatrics (2013) have released recommendations on the ineffectiveness and dangers of punitive exclusion and have advised that such sanctions be used only as a last resort. While there is broad agreement that schools must use all effective tactics to encourage safety and an effective learning environment, studies have repeatedly found that suspension and expulsion are not among such effective strategies (Skiba et al., 2010).

Significance of the Study

This study is of significance for educational leaders who want to know if a systematic approach to discipline that aligns behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework reduced disparities in discipline data with regards to race, gender and those with disabilities in an urban school division within the Commonwealth of Virginia. This study contributes to the body of literature as educators continue to explore ways of

increasing instructional time in the classroom while eliminating exclusionary discipline practices as they further implement a multitiered framework. Additionally, this study provides evidence that a systematic approach to addressing discipline disproportionately is essential to reducing the missed time from learning while increasing opportunity for student achievement.

National Perspective

At the national level, it is important to ensure that students with disabilities (SWD) have fair access to educational opportunities. Such is also the case for students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (Hahn et al., 2018). Historically, in the United States, these students have been met with inequality; therefore, educators need to review, with consistency, their practices toward equity. Although de jure segregation ended with the Brown vs. the Board of Education decision, integration took years to be enforced, and de facto segregation persists (Tienda, 2017).

Today, there are still clear disparities between schools in neighborhoods based on their class composition, minority status, and related factors (Hahn et al., 2018). Schools in lower-income neighborhoods, for instance, are less likely to have schools and resources that allow for quality education for their students (Tienda, 2017). Thus, these disparities are still present in a manner that could result in negative outcomes pertaining to the academic success of these students.

State Perspective

The state board of education's role is to set standards and guidelines to maximize students' academic outcomes throughout the state (Virginia Department of Education [VDOE], 2020). Creating safe and inclusive schools is one goal of the state. In particular, it is thought that employees and students should feel safe in the school environment. One program offered by the VDOE (2020) is for ALL Learners Education Equity Summer Institute. The summer institute concentrates on public policies affecting student's educational outcomes, how social-emotional learning and trauma-informed treatment are important strategies for resolving disparities in achievement, and how state-wide educator readiness programs need to participate in equity dialogue and can affect student outcomes across the state. The ultimate aim is to investigate the effects of systemic bias in public education and increase state dialogue on policies and activities that positively affect equity results for Virginia's students in public schools (K-12) (VDOE, 2020).

When students succeed in primary and secondary school, they are more likely to continue on to higher education. Students who can graduate with a college degree tend to be more competitive in terms of the types and quality of jobs available (Zajacova & Lawrence, 2018). In addition, these individuals tend to live healthier lives and have access to resources that are needed. Taking action that will reduce behavioral incidents in schools, as well as the negative impacts that these discipline attempts create, could ensure that a greater number of students have the support that they require to excel in academics and increase their likelihood of being able to access quality jobs to support themselves once they reach adulthood.

Local Perspective

At the local level, it is important to consider that school policy is created based on the requirements of district educational leaders and the principals and assistant principals within the individual school. The literature does demonstrate that inequalities are present in terms of how students are disciplined on the basis of racial, ethnic, and gender differences (Wallace et al., 2008). These distinctions have the potential to vary according to the geographical setting of a school, but these trends at the local level are reflective of trends at the state and national levels. Through the use of the local perspective, it is possible to understand how the policies created by the school can translate into the academic and behavioral outcomes achieved by the students (Wallace et al., 2008). Thus, by collecting data that summarizes student demographics and behavioral infractions, it is possible to measure this relationship and to use the results to improve school outcomes. The school division researched as part of this study has worked consistently over the past three years to address the concerns related to discipline disproportionality. Studying their trends could lead to an awareness of effective strategies for providing more proportional disciplinary responses.

The school division studied, applied and was approved to receive grant funding from the VDOE to adopt and implement the Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS). The VTSS provides a framework that aligns academic, behavior, and social-emotional wellness to school divisions. When implemented with fidelity, the framework's outcome is intended to create learning environments that lead to positive results for all students by providing needed support for students and school staff.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what change, if any, existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligned behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework. This research used quantitative data with a nonexperimental descriptive design. The analyzed data was captured over a 3-year period.

Justification of the Study

Schools should comply with local, state, and national requirements as a part of their regular practice. To accomplish this, SWD needs equal access to a free and quality education (Hahn & Truman, 2015). In particular, schools should adhere to the guidelines in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, a federal statute requiring equal access to public education for students with a range of disabilities (Lipkin et al., 2015).

Furthermore, it is expected that schools remain equal and offer education access in the same manner to students regardless of their race, gender and disability. While educators and administrators are aware of these requirements, they are not always adhered to effectively in practice (Ford, 2013). Therefore, it is important for these individuals to be aware of where opportunities for improvement within their own school and school divisions exist. When educators note that they may not be in compliance with laws and standards, it is imperative for them to participate in a change process to ensure that these ethical and legal obligations are met (Lipkin et al., 2015). With exclusionary practices, students may miss school, meaning they are missing opportunities to learn. Disproportionality affects children in poverty, SPED, and children of color, and many of these individuals are already members of vulnerable populations.

Research Questions

The research questions guiding the examination of the disproportionality of exclusionary discipline practices in one urban school division within the Commonwealth of Virginia were:

1. What is the number and percentage of students receiving an office discipline referral by race, gender, and those with a disability?

2. What is the number and percentage of students receiving suspensions, both in-school and out-of-school, related to office discipline referrals for students by race, gender, and those with a disability?
3. How has the number and percentage changed for incidents over the three years of implementing a systematic approach that aligns behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability?
4. How has the number and percentage changed for consequences over the three years of implementing a systematic approach that aligns behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability?

Conceptual Framework

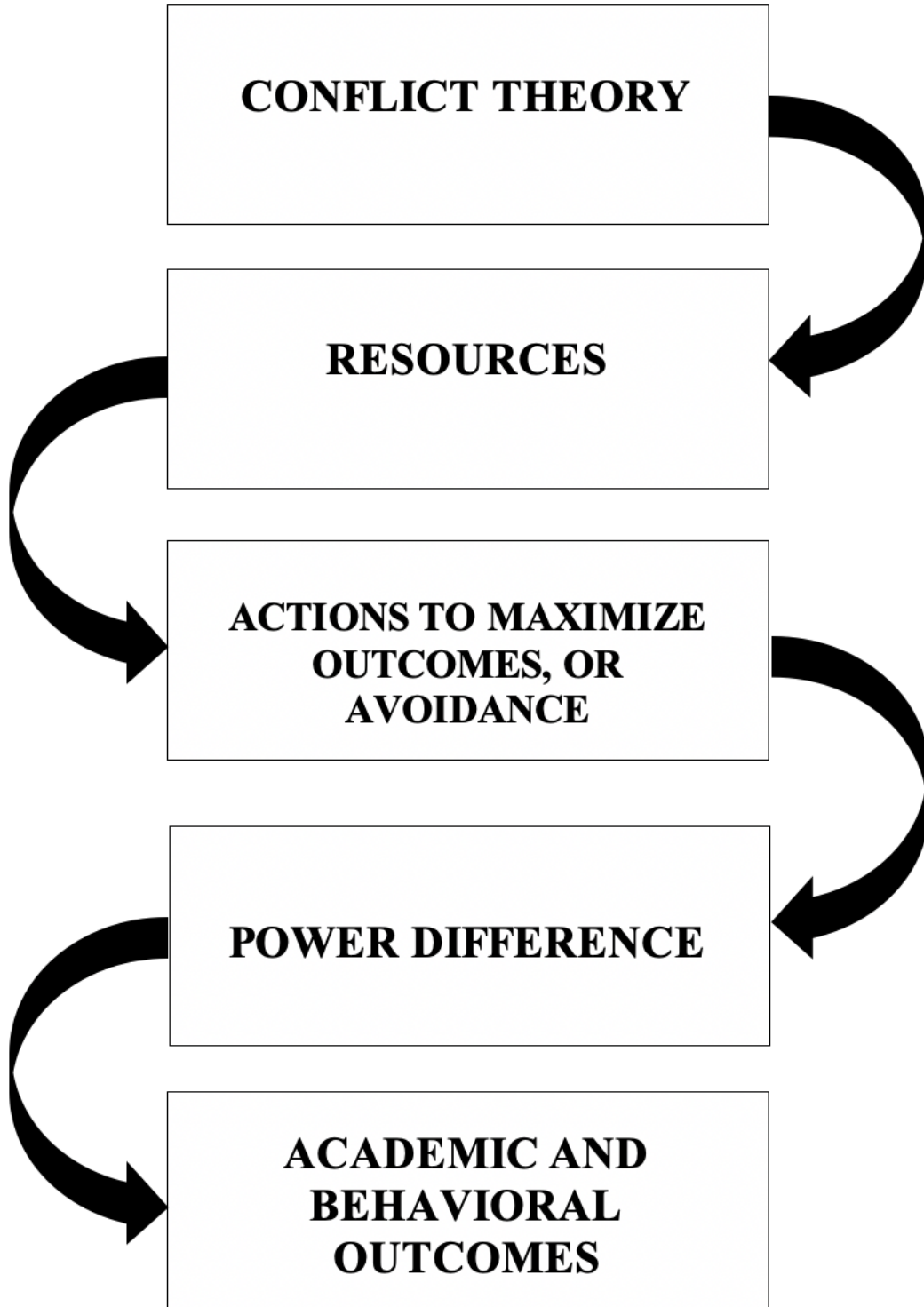
It is reasonable to study behavior and punishment in schools through the application of conflict theory. According to conflict theory, members of society consistently compete for a limited supply of resources (Esteban et al., 2012). A diagrammatic representation of this theory is shown below in Figure 1. This concept notes that it is possible to establish and maintain social order through power and domination rather than through conformity.

In addition, conflict theory also assumes that people will take the actions they perceive to maximize beneficial outcomes (Yu et al., 2006). In school, it is possible to use this framework to understand the behavior of students. Individuals who have learning disabilities may become engaged in distracted or seemingly troublesome behaviors because they are worried about doing well in school or what their peers will think of them (Eitle & McNulty Eitle, 2016). As such, behavioral problems could develop due to a perceived threat that may or may not be present in the school setting. Thus, this study's findings were interpreted through an application of the definitions of the conflict theory.

Additionally, conflict theory notes that power differences exist in society, and these power differences could be used to explain behavior. Some postulate that students act out in school in an attempt to fight against what and who they perceive to hold power (Wodtke, 2012). Since students may generally be upset at the consequences that social institutions have held for them before, they may take out this anger against school and teachers.

Figure 1

The Underlying Cause of Conflict



If a student had a poor experience with a teacher or administrator in the past, they may continue to react to these school-based superiors in the same manner (Mahvar et al., 2018). Some of the observed behavioral issues may also stem from the student's home life. However, it is important to ensure that students have the resources needed to cope with the differences that they may have faced in the past and to move forward in a positive direction.

Thus, conflict theory could be used to gain an improved understanding of why these behavioral infractions may occur from the perspectives of the educators. Conflict theory could also be applied to determine how altering support, or the power structure, may result in improved behavior in the school setting. Finally, assessing these situations allow for a better understanding of why these behavior infractions occurred or why they were perceived as such.

Definition of Terms

The following terms were described and specified for the purpose of this study.

Discipline is the procedure that is applied by schools in response to a student's negative behavior (Browne et al., 2001).

Disproportionality is defined as the over- or underrepresentation of a group along a particular data point relative to representation within a population (Bryan et al., 2012).

Gender will be defined by the gender reported by the student information system. Male and female options are available (National Institute of Health, 2019).

In-School Suspension (ISS) is a discipline model where a student is removed from the classroom and compelled to stay in another room for a variable length of time, ranging from part of a day to several days in a row (Blomberg, 2004).

Long term suspension (LTS) is when a student may be suspended from attendance at school for 11 to 45 school days and may extend beyond a 45-school-day period but shall not exceed 364 calendar days (§ 22.1-277.05 of the Code of Virginia).

Office discipline referrals (ODRs) have been described as incidents in which a staff member witnesses a student breaking a school rule and reports the incident to administrative leadership, who then imposes a penalty on the student (Irwin et al., 2006).

Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) gives the school principal, any assistant principal, or, in their absence, any teacher, can suspend a student for no more than ten school days (§ 22.1-277.04 of the Code of Virginia).

Race and ethnicity refer to the identity of the individual student, or as reported by the school's record system. Race is defined by broad categories, including White, Black, Latinx, Asian, and other identifiers specific to populations within a region. Ethnicity refers to identifying as Hispanic or non-Hispanic (National Institute of Health, 2019).

Students with disabilities (SWD) status depends on whether or not the student has been officially diagnosed with a physical, psychological, or learning disability (Banerjee & Chaudhury, 2010). Furthermore, the student must be on an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that is meant to support their educational experience in light of their disability status.

Zero-tolerance pertains to the behavioral policy in place in many Virginia schools, meaning that students are severely punished after their first infraction (Browne et al., 2001).

Limitations

There are some aspects of this analysis about which the researcher had no influence. The scope and generalizability of the findings may be limited due to these limitations. The following are the study's limitations:

1. The phenomenon that the researcher is investigating has already occurred.
2. The school division included in this study had a division leadership team to lead the implementation of VTSS.

Delimitations

In this study, there were factors that the researcher had control over. In this analysis, the delimitations were as follows:

1. This study was limited to 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 school years.
2. The study sample was limited to one urban school division within the Commonwealth of Virginia.
3. This study used only the discipline data as reported on and no other data sources were addressed, including school level unofficial notes.

Organization of the Study

This study contains five chapters. Chapter One introduced the background of the topic, provided an overview of the study, as well as detailed its justification and purpose. Furthermore, this chapter defined the key terms, as well as limitations and delimitations of the study. Chapter

Two offered a review of the literature, including information about research that was significant to discipline disproportionality, including zero tolerance, financial and racial/ethnic bias, and approaches that work in addressing these disparities as they pertain to the field of education. Chapter Three discussed the methodology, or the procedure applied to conduct the research. The research questions and design were noted in detail, as well as information about data sources. Permissions to collect and use data were detailed, as well as information about the management and analysis of data. Chapter Four provided a summary of the results and data analysis associated with each research question, and findings and implications along with a summary and conclusion were provided in Chapter Five.

Chapter Two

A Review of the Literature

Gregory et al. (2017) opined that exclusionary discipline in public schools in the United States has been viewed as a major issue by advocacy and research. The *Every Student Succeeds Act* reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary School Act and contained a series of clauses aimed at reducing exclusionary discipline. The *Every Student Succeeds Act* recognized the school environment as a predictor of student performance, mandated local education agencies to outline how they will mitigate the overuse of exclusionary punishment, and allowed schools to use federal funds for intervention programs like parent involvement, school-based mental health services, and a multi-tiered system of support (Capatosto, 2015). Evidence-based interventions such as a multi-tiered system of support or as it is called in Virginia, the Virginia Tiered System of Supports, which combines behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework, may address discipline disproportionality for these groups.

Purpose of Literature Review

The purpose of this literature review was to highlight research on discipline disproportionality based on race, gender, and students with disabilities. The review of the literature uncovered emerging themes and identified areas or holes in the literature for potential studies. The study on this subject was examined and shared in the sections below.

Search Process

Related literature and research studies pertaining to discipline disproportionality were gathered through a variety of sources. Information for the literature review was obtained from searches via the Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University Online Library's search engine EBSCOhost and Google Scholar, which were the primary sources for gathering literature. A date range of 2000-2019 was used to refine the search. Key search terms were *behavior*, *discipline*, *disproportionality*, *exclusionary discipline*, and *zero-tolerance policies*. From this search, over 60 articles were reviewed. The collection was narrowed based on research studies dealing specifically with student discipline.

Exclusionary Discipline

There is a national discussion regarding exclusionary discipline (Anderson & Ritter, 2017). Many educational institutions have adopted exclusionary discipline policies in spite of their association with negative results for students from specific cultural linguistic backgrounds. Evidence from research studies has shown a relationship between disproportionality of students' discipline and the increase in school dropouts (Wilson, 2012). Noguera (2008) found that minorities (especially Blacks and Latinx), students qualified as low achievers, and males are overrepresented regarding removal from the classroom for punishment via suspensions and expulsions. Many educational facilities have a zero-tolerance approach to education, and thus a thorough investigation into the tenets of their policies and the detrimental effects on special students is needed (Wilson, 2012). Additionally, the study of the academic and behavioral interventions related to the impact of these strict policy implementations, their expected results, and the adoption of culturally aware applications is essential.

Exclusionary discipline is a critical topic of discussion in the education sector. Many schoolteachers have opined that exclusionary discipline is necessary to provide students with a safe and orderly environment (Gregory et al., 2010). Students from unique cultural backgrounds, referred to as coming from Cultural and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) backgrounds, especially Black students, account for the majority of disciplinary action in the United States (Gregory et al., 2010). Other students who are overly represented in disciplinary action are those suffering from severe emotional disorders, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, and Specific Learning Disabilities. These individuals account for the highest number of disciplinary referrals, expulsions, and suspensions. They are eventually adopted into the criminal justice system or special education, losing access to the regular education curriculum (Gregory et al., 2010).

Discipline Disproportionality

Skiba et al. (2014) examined different levels of the relative input of both school leadership and student characteristics about the existent proportion of suspension and expulsions from school comparable to differences in race. The data set used in this analysis contained 730 schools, 43,320 students, and 104,445 incidents. According to the research, core factors influencing education disproportionality include gender, socioeconomic status, and race at both the school and individual levels. School-level factors influencing discipline disproportionality

are the general operations of the school, such as the underlying opinions of the principal, the average grades of the students in the school, and Black student enrollment. Individual level socioeconomic status refers to a student's family background, such as the ability of the parents to financially support their child's education and the student's general living conditions. The researchers found that the type of infraction, student characteristics, and school characteristics all made significant contributions to the likelihood of students being suspended. Educational institutions seeking to lower ethnic and racial disproportionality in discipline should concentrate on school-based interventions because it is impossible to control external factors, such as the financial background of a student (Skiba et al., 2014).

Additional literature relating to discipline disproportionality has identified several key issues. For example, Skiba et al. (2002) looked at the relationship between color and discipline and their impact as sources of racial and gender disparity in relation to punishment in school. In a study using middle school students from a large, urban midwestern public school district serving over 50,000 students, Skiba et al. (2002) reviewed discipline records of all 11,001 students from 19 middle schools in the district. The research found that male and Black students were overrepresented on all measures of school discipline, including referrals, suspensions, and expulsions. Female and White students were underrepresented on all measures of school discipline. Skiba et al. (2002) also found that despite reports that male students were more likely to partake in a wide variety of destructive actions, there were no comparable results for race. Rather, there tended to be a trend of preferential discipline that began in the classroom; Black students were sent to the office for infractions that were more arbitrary in perception. Skiba et al. (2002) expressed that the most urgent need in mitigating racial inequalities in school discipline is likely to be teacher instruction in effective and culturally responsive methods of classroom management.

Factors influencing disproportionality and discipline in schools have also been investigated (Noltemeyer & Mcloughlin, 2010). Other influencing factors such as the impact of out-of-school suspensions for Black students as well as the teachers', parents', and suspended students' perspectives, and whether zero-tolerance policies have a positive or negative impact on students have been investigated. Noltemeyer and Mcloughlin (2010) used data from 326 Ohio school districts and conducted a MANCOVA followed by univariate ANCOVAs to investigate the main effects of ethnicity and school typology, urban, rural, or suburban, on exclusionary

discipline rates as well as their interactive effects. Noltemeyer and McLoughlin (2010) found that, when controlling for student poverty level, Black students were disproportionately represented as recipients of exclusionary discipline and that large urban, very-high-poverty schools utilized these practices most frequently. They also found that discipline disproportionality was most evident in large urban school districts with very high poverty and was least evident in rural school districts with a small student population and low poverty.

Related Issues to Discipline Disproportionality

The literature reveals that there are a number of related issues to discipline disproportionality. Several issues related to this topic are essential to this literature review. Zero-tolerance, racial, ethnic, and financial bias, gender disparities, and the relationship to behavior and discipline are reviewed in the following section.

Zero-Tolerance Policy

The most frequently reported issue in discipline disproportionality is zero-tolerance policies (Simmons-Reed & Cartledge, 2014). In reaction to severe student misconduct, the adoption of the Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 and the provision of discretionary federal grants to schools to enhance safety led to the application of zero-tolerance policies (Bradley, 2002). The American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008) describes zero-tolerance as a disciplinary policy requiring compulsory sanctions for student discipline offenses, regardless of the severity of the misconduct.

The zero-tolerance policy was established in schools as a way of aiming to keep schools safe (Daniel, 2011). In spite of complaints that zero-tolerance policies do not account for the reduction, avoidance, or elimination of school violence and that they are neither correctly defined nor specific, they are still being applied in schools. Additionally, zero-tolerance leads to a variety of interpretations of the expected intent, the context in which punishment is conducted, and the supposed meaning of specific behaviors. According to Krezmien et al. (2006), approximately 95% of all U.S. schools had adopted some type of zero-tolerance policy by 1998.

The intended advantages of the zero-tolerance policy in matters such as gun possession have been undermined by the policy's propagating punishment of students without proper investigation. The Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 mandated that any gun discovered in the possession of a learner inside the institution would result in a mandatory annual expulsion (Skiba

& Peterson, 2000). The policy states that any materials resembling weapons brought onto the school campus would automatically result in a one-year expulsion period regardless of the severity of the action or the context within which the act occurred (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). However, there is a lack of consideration of the context in which the violation occurs, and the policy does include procedural steps for verifying and proving that the purported weapon-wielding student was knowingly in possession of a weapon. Thus, in the quest to control gun use, the majority of U.S. states failed to develop follow-up procedures to avoid mistakes that could prevent a student acquiring an education. According to Cerrone (1999), there needs to be a procedural stipulating the minimum limit of cases or the threshold required before a student is expelled because the application of the Gun-Free School Act of 1994 has led to unfair expulsions and increased discipline disproportionality.

According to the American Psychological Association Zero-Tolerance Task Force (2008), school violence has been on a steady decline from the 1990s, and thus, the argument that zero-tolerance policies enhance school stability by creating a safe environment for students lacks a basis in fact. Therefore, there is insufficient evidence to suggest that zero-tolerance policies have made any positive contributions to educational stability—to the contrary, they cause discipline disproportionality. Moreover, Lewis et al. (2010) observed that it was plausible to argue that the dismal state of student performance among some Black learners was possibly an unintended consequence of the zero-tolerance policy being implemented. Poor school management strategies and structures are significant characteristics of schools using zero-tolerance policies when the management puts too much emphasis on discipline instead of learning (Rocque, 2010).

Zero tolerance school discipline practices have been linked to an uptick in suspensions around the country, a trend that has disproportionately harmed Black children (Heilbrum et al. 2015). Using students in 306 Virginia high schools, Heilbrum et al. (2015) investigated an association between principal attitudes toward zero tolerance and suspension rates for White and Black students. The researchers found that Black suspension rates were more than double White suspension rates. A regression analysis revealed that, when controlling for student poverty and enrollment, principal acceptance of zero tolerance was marginally correlated with suspension rates for both White and Black students, but not with the extent of the racial disproportionality. Heilbrum et al. (2015) completed a paired-sample *t* test which revealed statistically substantial

variations in the kinds of crimes that resulted in suspensions, with Black students slightly more likely than White students to be suspended for disruption offenses and alcohol and drug-related offenses.

Skiba et al. (2010) examined the segregation of students along racial lines. According to the researchers, students' level of discipline was the main issue affecting the education system. Student discipline ranked as the third-most vital legal concern of teachers, after student expression and the process of dispensing and acquiring special education (Skiba et al., 2010).

Additionally, Skiba et al. (2010) found students who had been suspended had the highest probability of being repeat offenders of the same disciplinary issue for which they were previously suspended. This indicates that zero-tolerance policies are highly ineffective. In fact, suspensions and expulsions have negative effects on individual students' futures and there is insufficient evidence to support the idea that suspending or expelling students from school for a period of time lowers the probability of disrupting learning (Skiba et al., 2010). Some suspensions result from bias, with specific students experiencing discrimination based on their race, ethnicity, and social background, leading to disciplinary disproportionality. However, instead of enhancing educational quality for the remaining students, suspension leads to higher rates of school dropouts (Ekstom et al., 1986, as cited by Skiba et al., 2010). It is highly difficult for students to go back to school after a year of suspension due to a myriad of factors, including the environment to which the student is exposed. Students who become school dropouts as a result of their suspension or expulsion are examples of a scenario referred to as the *pushout* phenomenon (Ekstom et al., 1986, as cited by Skiba et al., 2010). In this phenomenon, the remaining students counter-intuitively fail to provide any improvements to the school's learning environment. This argument has been supported by the fact that the majority of schools having higher suspension rates display lower academic quality ratings, as they tend to pay too much attention to the quality of behavior displayed by students, rather than the quality of leadership's governance systems (Skiba et al., 2010). Therefore, schools that display higher expulsion and suspension rates perform poorly despite their demographics or their financial situation (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Consequently, the idea that disciplinary removals, suspensions, and expulsions lead to an improved educational environment is not supported by the literature.

Racial, Ethnic, and Financial Bias and Students' Connectedness to Staff

There are also disproportionalities in education for students of diverse financial backgrounds and race. According to a study by Stone and Stone (2011), Black students were either expelled or suspended from school at a rate approximately 250% greater than that of White students. These researchers conducted an empirical study in which they examined 35 school categories as a sample to represent a student population of 1,382,562 in regard to suspensions (Stone & Stone 2011). Among these students, 46% were White, 44% were Black, and the rest were of other races. Although White and Black populations were almost equal, 71.5% of the suspended students were Black, while only 29.5% were White. Significant offenses that led to these suspensions included weapons in school, cursing, fighting, and deliberately missing classes. When all the socioeconomic factors were held constant, the Black students' suspensions and expulsions remained at a higher rate compared to those of White students (Stone & Stone 2011).

Stone and Stone (2011) also found that Black students were held accountable for more crimes committed off campus than their White counterparts, and these crimes were punished in school through suspensions. If a Black student was suspected to have fought with another student while at home, the school could charge them with bad behavior without any investigation into whether they actually fought. On the other hand, if a White student was suspected of infractions while away from school, their probability of being punished was quite low. This effect showed that there was an existing bias towards Black students even when they did not commit any crimes (Stone & Stone, 2011).

There is a large racial discipline disparity, which amplifies the negative effect of differences in academic results. According to Anyon et al. (2016), there is a significant gap in racial discipline, which consequently increases the negative effects of disparities in outcomes by students. In a research study conducted by Anyon et al. (2016), they looked at racial differences in schools' sense of connection to school adults. Further, they explored whether inequalities in exclusionary discipline practices may reduce all students' sense of connection to educators, not just those who have been suspended or come from racial groups who are overrepresented in out-of-school suspensions. A self-report survey of middle and high school students (n=29,148) was paired with administrative data (n=107 schools) from a large urban school district as a data source. The relationships between students' ethnic backgrounds, youths' connections to school

adults, and school-level racial discipline inequalities were estimated using multilevel modeling techniques. Anyon et al. (2016) stated that when “controlling for school racial composition, gender, grade level and other covariates, students of color were significantly less likely to feel connected to school adults than their White peers” (p. 1). According to the findings, interventions to increase educational success for adolescents of color must consider the relationship dynamics between students and school adults. Also, the researchers found that all students—not just Black students—are negatively impacted by inequitable school disciplinary situations. “The efforts to reduce discipline disparities may improve all students’ connectedness” (Anyon et al., 2016, p. 1). These researchers regarded culture as the central element that influenced student connectedness for Black youth, and it may also apply to White students.

Anyon et al. (2016) further discovered that whenever Black students are treated inappropriately, all students, including the White students, begin to suspect bias from the administrators and consequently feel that their behavior is disrespectful to the Black students. In the light of this information, Anyon et al. (2016) found that out-of-school suspension rates for students of color had a negative correlation with connectedness, contrary to White students’ experiences. According to the findings of this study, there was no negative relationship between White students’ suspension rates and connectedness. Thus, the likelihood of White students being suspended would directly relate to the crimes committed or be even lower than the rate at which they should have experienced expulsion or suspension. When the suspension levels for White students were applied as independent variables, the coefficient patterns were different. The school’s racial composition was thus a negative predictor of connectedness. Therefore, adult practices towards the school’s growth, such as making suspension divisions, impacted the youth’s sense of connectedness to adults in schools.

Additionally, Anyon et al. (2016) opined that there are major differences in the opinions of different races about the connectedness of students to their schools. Therefore, it is improbable that gaps in achievements and discipline would be removed without paying any attention to the differences between students’ relationships with their institution’s leadership staff by race. Put simply, the policies adopted with the aim of obtaining racial and educational equity should also ensure that they take into consideration the dynamics that relate to school staff members’ skills with Black students (Anyon et al., 2016). According to the study results, racial differences in exclusionary discipline were adversely correlated with all student’s expectations of treatment,

attention, motivation, and appreciation from teachers and administrators (Anyon et al., 2016). Differences in race also contributed to the students' opinions about encouragement, concern, and care from the administrators. Any efforts to lower disciplinary action towards students may substantially impact the relationship between the students and the staff. This improvement in the relationship would not only impact those who were previously affected by the stringent disciplinary actions or those from non-dominant races, but the whole student population (Anyon et al., 2016). Discipline imbalances have had adverse outcomes towards Black, Native American, and Latinx youth because these groups are highly subjected to harmful selective disciplinary actions in the school environment. Anyon et al. (2016) opined that educators and policymakers may find it helpful to frame the harm of discipline disparities more generally, such that the impetus for substantive action depends on the self-interests of all group members, not just those who are committed to social justice or racial equity.

Gender Disparities

In a study by Mendez and Knoff (2003), the researchers examined OSS from 142 general education schools in a large, ethnically diverse school district by race, gender, school level, and infraction type. The results showed that the overrepresentation of Black males starts in elementary school and extends into high school. At the middle school level, almost half of all Black males and nearly one-third of all Black females were suspended. Across all grade classes, the majority of suspensions were for minor infractions. Across nearly all infraction forms, black males were overrepresented in suspensions. For all three school levels—elementary, middle, high—black females were suspended at a far higher rate than White and Hispanic females (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). “Black females, like Black males, were overrepresented in the top 15 infractions resulting in suspension given their percentage in the population, but the overrepresentation was not nearly as dramatic as it was for Black males” (Mendez & Knoff, 2003, p. 40).

Morris and Perry (2017) noted that the majority of prior studies in the field of student discipline concentrated on the considerably higher rates of punishment among Black boys; therefore, they focused on Black girls. In a large urban public school district, the researchers examined the effects of race and gender on office disciplinary referrals employing advanced multilevel models and a longitudinal data collection of detailed school discipline records. Morris and Perry's (2017) findings revealed disturbing and major inequalities in the punishment of

Black girls. When background factors were controlled for, Black girls were found to be three times more likely than White girls to earn an ODR; this disparity was significantly larger than the spread between Black boys and White boys. Furthermore, Black girls were disproportionately referred for infractions like disorderly behavior, dress code offenses, defiance, and aggressive behavior. Morris and Perry (2017) argued that the infractions were subjective and influenced by gender interpretations. Morris and Perry (2017) proposed that “school discipline penalizes [Black] girls for behaviors perceived to transgress normative standards of femininity” (p. 1).

Prevention and Intervention

Bottiani et al. (2018) asserted that discipline disproportionality in schools is an educational issue because it involves both students and educators. The overuse of exclusionary punishment in schools underscores the need for more approaches that can bridge the discipline divide, and this is of the utmost importance if schools are to be identified as a foundation for defining ideals and fostering equity.

Discipline inequalities across races and genders can be eliminated whenever evidence-based approaches, such as culturally responsive teaching, are implemented (Bottiani et al., 2018). Culturally responsive teaching is the understanding and integration of a student’s culture into the classroom (Larson et al., 2018). This instills the importance of reducing discipline disproportionality in that the association between teachers’ cultural responsiveness to students and the school’s regulations and policies regarding discipline creates the metrics which can assess whether the educators are trained towards leadership rather than in providing punishment for rule infractions (Bottiani et al., 2018). This indicates that approaches that are more culturally responsive, rather than limiting, are needed in order to achieve a reduction in discipline disproportionality. Culturally sensitive teaching, in which educators are qualified to prevent inequality, can have the same strategies for achieving culturally responsive disciplinary action (Saft & Pianta, 2001).

Gregory et al. (2017) developed a research-based framework for increasing equity in school discipline. The framework contains ten principles that help educators address student behavior in a developmentally appropriate way, while reducing race and gender disproportionality in school discipline. This study aimed to educate recent reforms by compiling a comprehensive list of strategies and procedures for reducing discipline disproportionality. *The*

Framework for Increasing Equity in School Discipline was developed based on naturalistic analysis and several previously conducted intervention studies (Gregory et al., 2017). The Framework is organized into two primary areas, prevention and intervention. Five of the ten principles are about prevention (Supportive Relations; Bias-Aware Classrooms and Respectful School Environments; Academic Rigor; Culturally Relevant and Responsive Teaching; Opportunities for Learning and Correcting Behavior), four target intervention (Data-Based Inquiry for Equity; Problem-Solving Approaches to Discipline; Inclusion of Student and Family Voice on Conflicts' Causes and Solutions; Reintegration of Students after Conflict or Absence), setting the foundations for effective dispute resolution and less unnecessary discipline, and one (Multi-tiered System of Supports) is about both prevention and intervention.

According to Gregory et al. (2017), a multi-tiered system of supports (MTSS) is a tiered approach derived from public health that calibrates the strength of therapeutic supports to students' behavioral needs, with more intensive supports provided when more general solutions struggle to address the issue. A multitiered support structure approach allows schools to monitor data and deliver preventive and intervention programs that reduce exclusionary approaches to student actions in a systematic manner. Evidence suggests that, even in the case of empirically-based interventions, implementation without explicit attention to addressing disparities is unlikely to reduce discipline disparities (Gregory et al., 2017). MTSS allows schools to monitor data and deliver preventive and intervention programs that reduce exclusionary approaches to student actions in a systematic manner. In this framework, Gregory et al. (2017) points out that although MTSS makes improvements in handling behavior, overrepresentation in exclusionary discipline for Black students persists (Skiba et al., 2011; Vincent 2011; Vincent 2016).

In a study by Skiba et al. (2011), the researchers reviewed the documented patterns of ODRs in 364 elementary and middle schools. The aim of this research was to look at racial and ethnic disproportionality in ODRs and administrative discipline decisions in a nationally representative sample. The schools in the study were active in attempts to change their student discipline procedures through the use of Schoolwide Positive Behavior Intervention Supports (SWPBIS). The SWPBIS framework was used to conduct the most widely disseminated and thoroughly researched MTSS framework for minimizing discipline disproportionality (Gregory et al., 2017; Vincent et al., 2016). SWPBIS is simply defined as a whole-school approach to problem behavior management that focuses on identifying, educating, and rewarding behavioral

expectations; providing a standardized continuum of problem behavior consequences; incorporating a multitiered structure of behavior supports; and actively using evidence for decision-making (Surgai & Horner, 2006). A critical component of the SWPBIS implementation process is comprehensive data collection on the frequency of problem activities that result in ODRs and the disciplinary decisions connected with such referrals (Skiba et al., 2011).

School staff recorded the data by posting ODRs daily or weekly to the Student Information System. Skiba et al. (2011) found that disproportionate representation of school discipline may happen at the point of referral or by administrative decisions. Descriptive and logistic regression studies revealed that Black students were 2.19 (elementary) to 3.78 (middle) times more likely than their White peers to be sent to the office for problem behaviors. Furthermore, Black and Latinx students are more likely than their White peers to face OSS or expulsion as a result of the same or comparable issue behavior. These observations expand and are consistent with a long list of similar findings, arguing for direct action, practice, and academic efforts to counter prevalent racial and ethnic disproportionality in school discipline. These findings expand and are consistent with a long list of similar findings, arguing for direct action, practice, and academic efforts to counter prevalent racial and ethnic inequalities in school discipline (Skiba et al., 2011).

Synthesis and Conclusion

The review of literature collectively fields within education that affirm the overarching topic—discipline disproportionality. The explored areas include exclusionary discipline; the enactment of zero-tolerance policies; racial, ethnic, and financial bias and students' connectedness to staff; gender disproportionality in discipline outcomes; and things that work. The results from this research into discipline disproportionality contribute to an understanding of the elements that influence exclusionary discipline. Research shows that Black students are disproportionately represented in discipline data (Anyon et al., 2016; Noguera, 2008; Noltemeyer & McLouglin, 2010; Skiba et al., 2014). Research also revealed that zero-tolerance policies disproportionately impact Black students (Heilbrum et al. 2015; Lewis et al., 2010; Skiba et al., 2010). Staff building relationships with students has a positive effect on student discipline. The research indicates there is gender disproportionality in discipline outcomes. Male students are overrepresented in the data. Moreover, in some studies, Black males accounted for nearly half of the suspended students (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). The research also revealed that Black females

were disproportionately referred for infractions like disorderly behavior, dress code offenses, defiance, and aggressive behavior (Morris & Perry, 2017). Culturally responsive teaching, where the teacher understands and integrates the student's culture into the classroom, is recommended as a way of addressing and ultimately reducing discipline disproportionality (Bottiani et al. 2018). Finally, the literature revealed that although MTSS was implemented, disproportionality persisted.

Chapter Three

The Methodology

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what change, if any, existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligned behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework. This research used quantitative data with a nonexperimental descriptive design.

Research Design

McMillan and Wergin (2010) opined that “educational research is a systematic, investigation involving the analysis of information, to answer a question or contribute to knowledge about an educational theory or practice” (p. 1). As defined by McMillan and Wergin (2010), a study using quantitative data with a nonexperimental design was selected to determine what change, if any, existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligned behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework.

Research Design Justification

Quantitative Research

Quantitative research involves the use of numerical calculations to outline, explain, and explore interactions between traits (McMillian & Wergin, 2010). Numerical data related to office discipline referrals (ODRs), In-School Suspension (ISS), Out-of-School Suspension (OSS), and Long Term Suspension (LTS) were collected in this study. Quantitative research is used to systematically compare data to generalize the entire population (Creswell, 2014). In this study, quantitative research was used to compare the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities.

Nonexperimental

McMillan and Wergin (2010) define quantitative research as either being experimental, where the “researcher has control over one or more interventions that may influence the responses,” (p. 4), or nonexperimental, where the study occurs with “no control over what may influence subject’s response” (p. 4). Nonexperimental research uses frequencies, percentages, averages, and other simple statistics to provide a description of the data collected. The researcher in this study aimed to determine what change, if any, existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligned behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework. The researcher did not have control over the variables that impacted the outcome; therefore, this quantitative research has a nonexperimental descriptive design.

Research Questions

Millan and Wergin (2010) stated that educational research presents questions that, when answered, can be investigated empirically to provide benefits to practice or an existing body of knowledge. The research questions that directed the researcher to examine the disproportionality of discipline in the urban school division within the Commonwealth of Virginia were:

1. What is the number and percentage of students receiving an office discipline referral by race, gender, and those with a disability?
2. What is the number and percentage of students receiving suspensions, both in-school and out-of-school, related to office discipline referrals for students by race, gender, and those with a disability?
3. How has the number and percentage changed for incidents over the three years of implementing a systematic approach that aligns behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability?
4. How has the number and percentage changed for consequences over the three years of implementing a systematic approach that aligns behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability?

Study Population

Site Selection

This study involved an urban school division in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The researcher was acquainted with the school division and was familiar with each school's multitiered framework implementation level. The school division had a student population of approximately 27,000 students and consisted of 44 schools: five early childhood centers, 24 elementary schools, seven middle schools, five high schools, one middle/high school, one specialty high school, and one alternative school. At the time of the study, there was evidence of implementing a multitiered framework at each school site. This study excluded the early childhood centers because the parameters established for the study were grades K-12.

Sample Selection

This research investigated the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities in 39 schools from the chosen urban school division in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The researcher selected the 39 schools based on the application of a multitiered framework integrating behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework. This framework is aligned with the Virginia Tiered Systems of Support (VTSS).

VTSS is a data-informed decision-making framework for establishing the social culture and academic and behavioral supports needed for the school to be an effective learning environment for all students. The essential elements of the VTSS framework are: Aligned organizational structure; Data-informed decision-making; Evidence-based practices; Family, school and community partnerships; Monitoring student progress; and Evaluation of outcomes and fidelity (VTSS, 2020).

The selected division leadership team established an outcome to decrease ODRs, ISS, OSS, and LTS in order to increase instructional time in the classroom. The sampled schools had evidence of varying levels of implementation.

Data Collection and Gathering Procedures

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) Program was completed by the researcher on October 8, 2020 (see Appendix A). Prior to

beginning the research process, the doctoral committee granted permission to proceed with the study. The researcher then requested permission to conduct this study with existing data— Existing Data Research Proposal; Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University’s IRB determined that this study was not human subject research and therefore, approved the request and provided written permission to proceed with the study on January 7, 2021(see Appendix B). Upon IRB approval, the researcher requested permission from the identified school division’s Research and Authorization Committee (RAC) by completing the Research Authorization Request form provided by the school division (see Appendix C) on January 7, 2021. The RAC approval was granted on January 13, 2021 (see Appendix D). The RAC guidelines and procedures for the participating school division were followed. Finally, the researcher contacted the Data Analytics and State Reporting department of Information Technology Services in order to request data aggregated as follows:

- fall membership for each year, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019.
- total population of each subgroup (race, gender, students with disabilities) for each year, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019.
- student discipline data from school years 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019 for each grade level to be broken down by race, gender, and disability.
- total number of ODRs for each student for each year to be broken down by race, gender, and disability.
- total number of dispositions for each student for each year to be broken down by race, gender, and disability.
- total number of ISS for each school for each year to be broken down by race, gender, and disability.
- total number of OSS for each school for each year to be broken down by race, gender, and disability.
- total number of LTS for each school for each year to be broken down by race, gender, and disability.
- request for data to be provided using a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet.

Once the request was submitted, a data developer within the department processed the request. The completed data request was received via email.

Data Treatment and Management

The RAC granted approval to conduct research within the division, and the researcher obtained the requested data in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet from the department of Information Technology Services. The document was password protected by the researcher. According to Vetter (2017), no identifying information should be included in the data organization, collection, or storage. These guidelines were followed by the researcher of this study. Divisi et al. (2017) recommended storing data along with a unique identifier to ensure that the characteristics remain appropriately grouped for the analysis. Based upon the recommendations of Vetter (2017) and Divisi et al. (2017), the researcher requested that the data received from the school division contain no student identification information and ensured that the data was stored with a unique identifier to ensure that the characteristics remained appropriately grouped for the analysis. Separate variable columns were collected to summarize the key information associated with the cases of interest, including information about race, gender, and those with a disability. All data were stored on a password protected folder that was housed on a password protected computer that was used by the researcher only. After the successful dissertation completion, all evidence will be deleted to protect the confidentiality of information.

Data Analysis Techniques

This quantitative study investigated what change, if any, existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities, by applying a descriptive statistical research design. McMillan and Wergin (2010) state that a descriptive study design permits the researcher to describe a phenomenon with statistics such as frequencies, percentages, means, and measures of variance.

Descriptive statistics in this study provide relevant data analysis for future studies in the area of educational leadership and discipline disproportionality. Data collected from the participating school division were reported with descriptive statistics to address research questions one, two, three, and four.

Timeline

The researcher successfully completed the prospectus examination in October 2020. An IRB request was submitted in December 2020 and granted in January 2021. Permission from the

selected school division to complete the study was requested by the researcher and granted by the school division in January 2021. Data was provided to the researcher, and the analysis of the data was completed. In March-April 2021, the summary and conclusion of the study were recorded. The researcher presented the doctoral dissertation to the committee in preparation for the defense of the research in May 2021.

Methodology Summary

The purpose of this study was to determine what change, if any, existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligned behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework. The methodology guided the data collection and analysis to address the four research questions for this study. The final goals of the data collection and analysis were as follow: (a) report the number and percentage of students receiving office discipline referrals by race, gender, and those with a disability; (b) report the number and percentage of students receiving suspensions, both in-school and out-of-school, related to office discipline referrals by race, gender, and those with a disability; (c) determine and report any change in the number and percentage for incidents over the three years of implementing a systematic approach that aligned behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability; and (d) determine and report any change in the number and percentage for consequences over the three years of implementing a systematic approach that aligned behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability.

Chapter Four

The Results of the Analysis of the Data

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine what change, if any, existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligned behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework. This research used quantitative data with a nonexperimental descriptive design. This study collected and reported data to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the number and percentage of students receiving an office discipline referral by race, gender, and those with a disability?
2. What is the number and percentage of students receiving suspensions, both in-school and out-of-school, related to office discipline referrals for students by race, gender and those with a disability?
3. How has the number and percentage changed for incidents over the three years of implementation of a systematic approach that aligns behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability?
4. How has the number and percentage changed for consequences over the three years of implementation of a systematic approach that aligns behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability?

Data Analysis by Research Question

This study collected data from 39 schools, K-12, from an urban school division within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Each of the selected schools had evidence of some form of implementation of a multitiered system that aligned behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework. This analysis used existing data supplied by the chosen school division. Supportive tables are found in Appendix E.

Research Question 1

What is the number and percentage of students receiving an office discipline referral by race, gender, and those with a disability? This study used existing student data provided by the school division to determine what change, if any, existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligned behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework. Tables 1-3 display the number and proportion of unduplicated students receiving an office discipline referral (ODR) for each federally recognized racial group, males and females, and both students with and without disabilities. Additionally, the table displays the frequency and relative frequency of fall membership for each federally recognized racial group, males and females, and both students with and without learning disabilities.

Table 1

SY16-17 Unduplicated Count and Percentage of Students Receiving Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs)

Subgroup	Students w/ Referrals		Student Enrollment		Referral Percentage
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	
Race					
American Indian or Alaska Native	14	0.2%	70	0.3%	20.0%
Asian	49	0.8%	672	2.5%	7.3%
Black or African American	4,118	70.7%	14,245	53.0%	28.9%
Hispanic	563	9.7%	3,427	12.7%	16.4%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	6	0.1%	84	0.3%	7.1%
Two or More	264	4.5%	1,683	6.3%	15.7%
White	813	14.0%	6,699	24.9%	12.1%
Gender					
Female	2,125	36.5%	13,234	49.2%	16.1%
Male	3,702	63.5%	13,646	50.8%	27.1%
Disability Status					
No	4,607	79.1%	23,837	88.7%	19.3%
Yes	1,220	20.9%	3,043	11.3%	40.1%

Table 2

SY17-18 Unduplicated Count and Percentage of Students Receiving Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs)

Subgroup	Students w/ Referrals		Student Enrollment		Referral Percentage
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	
Race					
American Indian or Alaska Native	15	0.3%	86	0.3%	17.4%
Asian	29	0.5%	660	2.5%	4.4%
Black or African American	4,198	70.5%	14,229	53.2%	29.5%
Hispanic	590	9.9%	3,501	13.1%	16.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	10	0.2%	91	0.3%	11.0%
Two or More	275	4.6%	1,760	6.6%	15.6%
White	838	14.1%	6,442	24.1%	13.0%
Gender					
Female	2,172	36.5%	13,185	49.3%	16.5%
Male	3,783	63.5%	13,584	50.7%	27.8%
Disability Status					
No	4,747	79.7%	23,451	87.6%	20.2%
Yes	1,208	20.3%	3,318	12.4%	36.4%

Table 3

SY18-19 Unduplicated Count and Percentage of Students Receiving Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs)

Subgroup	Students w/ Referrals		Student Enrollment		Referral Percentage
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	
Race					
American Indian or Alaska Native	17	0.3%	79	0.3%	21.5%
Asian	32	0.5%	606	2.3%	5.3%
Black or African American	4,429	70.2%	14,371	53.8%	30.8%
Hispanic	647	10.2%	3,653	13.7%	17.7%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	10	0.2%	97	0.4%	10.3%
Two or More	317	5.0%	1,814	6.8%	17.5%
White	861	13.6%	6,114	22.9%	14.1%
Gender					
Female	2,281	36.1%	13,063	48.9%	17.5%
Male	4,032	63.9%	13,671	51.1%	29.5%
Disability Status					
No	5,067	80.3%	23,399	87.5%	21.7%
Yes	1,246	19.7%	3,335	12.5%	37.4%

Out of 5,827 students involved in office discipline referrals for the school year (SY)16-17, 4,118 of these referrals were assigned to Black students (70.7%). White and Hispanic students accounted for 813 and 563 office discipline referrals (14.0% and 9.7%), respectively. In SY18-19, Black students totaled 4,429 or 70.2% of the 6,313 office discipline referrals, while White and Hispanic students account for 861 and 647 (13.6% and 10.2%), respectively. The proportions of Black and White students decreased over the 3-year period by 0.5% and 0.4%, respectively, while the proportion of Hispanic students increased by 0.5%.

Considering gender, 3,702 or 63.5% of male students received a discipline referral in SY16-17 compared to 2,125 or 36.5% of female students. In SY18-19, male students received 4,032 or 63.9% of office discipline referrals, while female students received 2,281 or 36.1%. There was an increase of 0.4% in the male student proportion and a corresponding 0.4% decrease in the female student proportion. Finally, students with disabilities accounted for 1,220 or 20.9% of students receiving office discipline referrals in SY16-17 and 1,246 or 19.7% in SY18-19, a 1.2% decrease in proportion over the 3-year period.

In SY16-17, 14,245 Black students were enrolled in the school division with 28.9% of those students received an office discipline referral. During SY18-19, 14,371 Black students

were enrolled in the school division with 30.8% of those students receiving an office discipline referral. The difference in the referral percentage for Black students from SY16-17 to SY18-19 was an increase of 1.9%. During SY16-17, 6,699 White students were enrolled in the school division with 12.1% of those students receiving an office discipline referral. In SY18-19, although there was a decrease in enrollment of White students to 6,114, there was a 2% increase in the proportion of White students receiving referrals. The Hispanic enrollment increased to 3,427 and the proportion of students receiving an office discipline referral increased by 1.3% over the 3-year period. In SY16-17 male students made up 50.8% of the student population (13,646 students) and 27.1% of those male students received an office discipline referral, compared to 16.1% of female students. In SY18-19, male students were 51.1% of the population (13,671 students) and received 29.5% of the office discipline referrals, while female students were 48.9% of the population (13,063 students) and received 17.5% of the office discipline referrals. The proportions of male and female students receiving office discipline referrals increased 2.4% and 1.4% over the 3-year period respectively. Finally, 40.1% or 1,220 students with disabilities received an office discipline referral in SY16-17 and decreased by 2.7% to 37.4% (1,246 students) in SY18-19.

Research Question 2

What is the number and percentage of students receiving suspensions, both in-school and out-of-school, related to office discipline referrals for students by race, gender and those with a disability? Tables 4-6, shown below, displays the number and proportion of unduplicated students receiving an in-school suspension (ISS) for each federally recognized racial group, males and females, and both students with and without learning disabilities. Additionally, the tables display the frequency and relative frequency of fall membership for each federally recognized racial group, males and females, and both students with and without learning disabilities.

Table 4*SY16-17 Unduplicated Count and Percentage of Students Receiving In-School Suspension (ISS)*

Subgroup	Students w/ ISS		Student Enrollment		Suspension Percentage
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	
Race					
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	0.1%	70	0.3%	4.3%
Asian	25	1.2%	672	2.5%	3.7%
Black or African American	1,453	70.4%	14,245	53.0%	10.2%
Hispanic	208	10.1%	3,427	12.7%	6.1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4	0.2%	84	0.3%	4.8%
Two or More	98	4.7%	1,683	6.3%	5.8%
White	273	13.2%	6,699	24.9%	4.1%
Gender					
Female	763	37.0%	13,234	49.2%	5.8%
Male	1,301	63.0%	13,646	50.8%	9.5%
Disability Status					
No	1,641	79.5%	23,837	88.7%	6.9%
Yes	423	20.5%	3,043	11.3%	13.9%

Table 5*SY17-18 Unduplicated Count and Percentage of Students Receiving In-School Suspension (ISS)*

Subgroup	Students w/ ISS		Student Enrollment		Suspension Percentage
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	
Race					
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	0.2%	86	0.3%	4.7%
Asian	6	0.3%	660	2.5%	0.9%
Black or African American	1,507	72.9%	14,229	53.2%	10.6%
Hispanic	211	10.2%	3,501	13.1%	6.0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4	0.2%	91	0.3%	4.4%
Two or More	73	3.5%	1,760	6.6%	4.1%
White	262	12.7%	6,442	24.1%	4.1%
Gender					
Female	755	36.5%	13,185	49.3%	5.7%
Male	1,312	63.5%	13,584	50.7%	9.7%
Disability Status					
No	1,646	79.6%	23,451	87.6%	7.0%
Yes	421	20.4%	3,318	12.4%	12.7%

Table 6*SY18-19 Unduplicated Count and Percentage of Students Receiving In-School Suspension (ISS)*

Subgroup	Students w/ ISS		Student Enrollment		Suspension Percentage
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	
Race					
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0.0%	79	0.3%	1.3%
Asian	15	0.7%	606	2.3%	2.5%
Black or African American	1,469	72.1%	14,371	53.8%	10.2%
Hispanic	216	10.6%	3,653	13.7%	5.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	0.1%	97	0.4%	2.1%
Two or More	94	4.6%	1,814	6.8%	5.2%
White	240	11.8%	6,114	22.9%	3.9%
Gender					
Female	733	36.0%	13,063	48.9%	5.6%
Male	1,304	64.0%	13,671	51.1%	9.5%
Disability Status					
No	1,607	78.9%	23,399	87.5%	6.9%
Yes	430	21.1%	3,335	12.5%	12.9%

In SY16-17, there were a total of 2,064 students who received an ISS, of which 1,453 or 70.4% were Black students. During SY18-19, 2,037 students received an ISS and 1,469 or 72.1% were Black students. The total number of Black students receiving an ISS increased over the 3-year period. During the same time period, White students received 273 ISSs (13.2%), while decreasing to 240 or 11.8% in SY18-19. The number of White students receiving ISS decreased at a greater rate than the total number of students receiving ISS. In SY16-17, Hispanic students received 208 ISSs (10.1%), while increasing to 216 or 10.6% in SY18-19. For both male students and students with disabilities, the number of students receiving an ISS increased from 1301 to 1304 and from 423 to 430 respectively. Additionally, both subgroups showed an increase in their proportion of students receiving ISS, from 63.0% to 64.0% and from 20.5% to 21.1%.

In SY16-17, Black students were 53% (14,245 students) of the total population and 10.2% (1,453 students) of the Black students received an ISS. During SY18-19, Black students comprised 53.8% (14,371 students) of the total population and 10.2% (1,469 students) received an ISS. In SY16-17, White students comprised 24.9% (6,699 students) of the total student population and 4.1% (273 students) of White students received an ISS during that year. In SY18-19, White students were 22.9% (6,114 students) of the total population and 3.9% (240 students) of White students received an ISS, this is a decrease of 0.2% over the 3-year period. In SY16-17,

Hispanic students were 12.7% (3,427 students) of the total student population and 6.1% (208 students) of Hispanic students received an ISS during that year. In SY18-19, Hispanic students were 13.7% (3,653 students) of the total population and 5.9% (216 students) of Hispanic students received an ISS, a decrease of 0.2% over the 3-year period. In SY16-17, male students represented 50.8% (13,646 students) of the total population and male students received 9.5% of the ISSs during that year. In SY18-19, male students were 51.1% (13,671 students) of the total population and received 9.5% of the ISSs during that year, showing no change over the 3-year period. From SY16-17 to SY18-19, the proportion of female students receiving ISS decreased by 0.2%. In 16-17, students with disabilities represented 11.3% (3,043 students) of the total population and 13.9% (425 students) received ISS. In SY18-19, students with disabilities were 12.5% (3,335 students) of the total population and 12.9% (430 students) received ISSs, a decrease of 1% over the 3-year period.

Tables 7-9 displays the number and proportion of unduplicated students receiving an out-of-school suspension (OSS) for each federally recognized racial group, males and females, and both students with and without learning disabilities. Additionally, the tables display the frequency and relative frequency of fall membership for each federally recognized racial group, males and females, and both students with and without learning disabilities.

Table 7

SY16-17 Unduplicated count and Percentage of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)

Subgroup	Students w/ OSS		Student Enrollment		Suspension Percentage
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	
Race					
American Indian or Alaska Native	5	0.2%	70	0.3%	7.1%
Asian	13	0.4%	672	2.5%	1.9%
Black or African American	2,371	76.4%	14,245	53.0%	16.6%
Hispanic	238	7.7%	3,427	12.7%	6.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	0.1%	84	0.3%	2.4%
Two or More	124	4.0%	1,683	6.3%	7.4%
White	349	11.3%	6,699	24.9%	5.2%
Gender					
Female	1,036	33.4%	13,234	49.2%	7.8%
Male	2,066	66.6%	13,646	50.8%	15.1%
Disability Status					
No	2,341	75.5%	23,837	88.7%	9.8%
Yes	761	24.5%	3,043	11.3%	25.0%

Table 8

SY17-18 Unduplicated count and Percentage of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)

Subgroup	Students w/ OSS		Student Enrollment		Suspension Percentage
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	
Race					
American Indian or Alaska Native	4	0.1%	86	0.3%	4.7%
Asian	13	0.4%	660	2.5%	2.0%
Black or African American	2,287	74.8%	14,229	53.2%	16.1%
Hispanic	254	8.3%	3,501	13.1%	7.3%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	6	0.2%	91	0.3%	6.6%
Two or More	147	4.8%	1,760	6.6%	8.4%
White	346	11.3%	6,442	24.1%	5.4%
Gender					
Female	1,049	34.3%	13,185	49.3%	8.0%
Male	2,008	65.7%	13,584	50.7%	14.8%
Disability Status					
No	2,329	76.2%	23,451	87.6%	9.9%
Yes	728	23.8%	3,318	12.4%	21.9%

Table 9

SY18-19 Unduplicated count and Percentage of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)

Subgroup	Students w/ OSS		Student Enrollment		Suspension Percentage
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	
Race					
American Indian or Alaska Native	9	0.3%	79	0.3%	11.4%
Asian	12	0.4%	606	2.3%	2.0%
Black or African American	2,356	73.9%	14,371	53.8%	16.4%
Hispanic	290	9.1%	3,653	13.7%	7.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4	0.1%	97	0.4%	4.1%
Two or More	152	4.8%	1,814	6.8%	8.4%
White	363	11.4%	6,114	22.9%	5.9%
Gender					
Female	1,111	34.9%	13,063	48.9%	8.5%
Male	2,075	65.1%	13,671	51.1%	15.2%
Disability Status					
No	2,422	76.0%	23,399	87.5%	10.4%
Yes	764	24.0%	3,335	12.5%	22.9%

In SY16-17, there were a total of 3,102 students who received an OSS, of which 2,371 or 76.4% were Black students. During SY18-19, 3,186 students received OSS and 2,356 or 73.9% were Black students, a decrease of 2.5% over the 3-year period. During the same time period, White students received 349 OSS; this was 11.3%, increasing 0.1% to 363 or 11.4% in SY18-19. In SY16-17, Hispanics received 238 or 7.7% of the OSS that year and increased 1.4% to 290 or 9.1% during SY18-19. In SY16-17, male students received 2,066 or 66.6% of the OSS and increased to 2,075 or 65.1% in SY18-19; this represents a 1.5% decrease in the proportion of male students receiving an OSS. Female students showed a corresponding increase in OSS of 1.5% from 1,036 or 33.4% to 1,111 or 34.9%, over the 3-year period. Contrastingly, students with a disability decreased in the proportion receiving OSS, 761 or 24.5% to 764 or 24.0%, from SY16-17 to SY18-19.

In SY16-17, 16.6% of the Black student population, or 1 in 6 students, received OSS. That percentage decreased to 16.4% in SY18-19. The number of White students receiving OSS increased from 349 to 363 over the 3-year period. Additionally, the percentage of the White student population receiving an OSS increased by 0.7%. Hispanic students showed an increase in the percentage of students receiving OSS, from 6.9% to 7.9% over the 3-year period. The

percentage of male students receiving OSS in SY16-17 was 15.1% and increased in SY18-19 to 15.2%. Similarly, 7.8% of female students received OSS in SY16-17 and increased to 8.5% in SY18-19. Students with disabilities decreased a total of 2.1% in the percentage of OSS from 25.0% to 22.9% over the 3-year period.

Tables 10-12 display the number and proportion of unduplicated students receiving a long-term suspension (LTS) for each federally recognized racial group, males and females, and both students with and without learning disabilities. Additionally, the tables display the frequency and relative frequency of fall membership for each federally recognized racial group, males and females, and both students with and without learning disabilities.

Table 10

SY17-18 Unduplicated Count and Percentage of Students Receiving Long Term Suspension (LTS)

Subgroup	Students w/ LTS		Student Enrollment		Suspension Percentage
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	
Race					
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	2	0.8%	672	2.5%	0.3%
Black or African American	174	72.8%	14,245	53.0%	1.2%
Hispanic	20	8.4%	3,427	12.7%	0.6%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Two or More	11	4.6%	1,683	6.3%	0.7%
White	32	13.4%	6,699	24.9%	0.5%
Gender					
Female	67	28.0%	13,234	49.2%	0.5%
Male	172	72.0%	13,646	50.8%	1.3%
Disability Status					
No	183	76.6%	23,837	88.7%	0.8%
Yes	56	23.4%	3,043	11.3%	1.8%

Table 11*SY17-18 Unduplicated Count and Percentage of Students Receiving Long Term Suspension*

Subgroup	Students w/ LTS		Student Enrollment		Suspension Percentage
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	
Race					
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Asian	1	0.4%	660	2.5%	0.2%
Black or African American	215	81.7%	14,229	53.2%	1.5%
Hispanic	19	7.2%	3,501	13.1%	0.5%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Two or More	9	3.4%	1,760	6.6%	0.5%
White	19	7.2%	6,442	24.1%	0.3%
Gender					
Female	79	30.0%	13,185	49.3%	0.6%
Male	184	70.0%	13,584	50.7%	1.4%
Disability Status					
No	198	75.3%	23,451	87.6%	0.8%
Yes	65	24.7%	3,318	12.4%	2.0%

Table 12*SY18-19 Unduplicated Count and Percentage of Students Receiving Long Term Suspension (LTS)*

Subgroup	Students w/ LTS		Student Enrollment		Suspension Percentage
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	
Race					
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0.4%	79	0.3%	1.3%
Asian	2	0.7%	606	2.3%	0.3%
Black or African American	207	76.1%	14,371	53.8%	1.4%
Hispanic	19	7.0%	3,653	13.7%	0.5%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Two or More	14	5.1%	1,814	6.8%	0.8%
White	29	10.7%	6,114	22.9%	0.5%
Gender					
Female	90	33.1%	13,063	48.9%	0.7%
Male	182	66.9%	13,671	51.1%	1.3%
Disability Status					
No	198	72.8%	23,399	87.5%	0.8%
Yes	74	27.2%	3,335	12.5%	2.2%

In SY16-17, there were a total of 239 students who received a LTS, of which 174 (72.8%) were Black students. During SY18-19, 274 students received a LTS and 207 (76.1%)

were Black students, an increase of 3.3% over the 3-year period. During the same time period, White students received 32 (13.4%) LTS, decreasing 2.7% to 29 (10.7%) in SY18-19. In SY16-17, Hispanics received 20 (8.4%) of the LTS that year and decreased 1.4% to 19 (7.0%) during SY18-19. In SY16-17, male students received 172 (72.0%) LTS and increased to 182 (66.9%) in SY18-19; this represents a 5.1% decrease in the proportion of male students receiving an OSS. Female students showed a corresponding increase of 5.1% from 67 to 90 over the 3-year period. In a similar fashion, students with a disability increased the proportion receiving LTS, 56 (23.4%) to 74 (27.2%), from SY16-17 to SY18-19.

In SY16-17, 1.2% of the Black student population received a LTS. That percentage increased to 1.4% in SY18-19. The number of White students receiving LTS decreased from 32 to 29 over the 3-year period. The percentage of the White student population remained the same at 0.5% over the 3-year period. Hispanic students showed a decrease in the percentage of students receiving LTS, from 0.6% to 0.5% over the 3-year period. The percentage of male students receiving LTS in SY16-17 was 1.3% and remained the same in SY18-19. In contrast, the proportion of female students increased from 0.5% to 0.7% over the 3-year period. Students with disabilities increased a total of 0.4% in the percentage of LTS from 1.8% to 2.2% over the 3-year period.

Research Question 3

How has the number and percentage changed for incidents over the three years of implementing a systematic approach that aligns behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability? Table 13 illustrates the change in the count of incidents and the percent of change from the previous year within each federally recognized racial group, males and females, and both students with and without learning disabilities over the implementation period.

Table 13*Change in Frequency of Office Referrals for Race, Gender, and Disability Status*

Subgroup	SY1718		SY1819	
	Incident Change	Percent Change	Incident Change	Percent Change
Race				
American Indian or Alaska Native	+7	+22.6%	+19	+38.0%
Asian	-31	-53.4%	+18	+23.7%
Black or African American	+612	+4.6%	+1,255	+8.6%
Hispanic	+79	+5.6%	+210	+13.1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	+9	+52.9%	-2	-13.3%
Two or More	+71	+8.8%	+30	+3.6%
White	+430	+19.1%	-153	-7.3%
Gender				
Female	+348	+6.1%	+502	+8.1%
Male	+829	+6.8%	+875	+6.7%
Disability Status				
No	+1,108	+8.2%	+873	+6.1%
Yes	+69	+1.6%	+504	+10.3%

Using SY16-17 as a baseline, the number of incidents involving Black students in SY17-18 increased by 4.6% (612 students) when compared to SY16-17. That trend continued in SY18-19 with an additional 8.6% increase. White students experienced a 19.1% increase in incidents in SY17-18, while decreasing 7.3% (153 students) the following year. Hispanic students, similarly to Black students, showed an increase in both years, 5.6% and 13.1% (79 and 210 students), respectively. Considering gender, male and female students experienced increases in both SY17-18 and SY18-19. Students with disabilities showed a small increase of 1.6% (69 students) in SY17-18 and a larger increase of 10.3% (504 students) in SY18-19.

Research Question 4

How has the number and percentage changed for consequences over the three years of implementing a systematic approach that aligns behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability? Tables 14-15 illustrate the change in the count of ISS and OSS and the percent change from the previous year within each federally recognized racial group, males and females, and both students with and without learning disabilities over the implementation period.

Table 14*SY17-18 Changes in Frequency of ISS and OSS for Race, Gender, and Disability Status*

Subgroup	All ISS		Short-Term OSS	
	Suspension Change	Percent Change	Suspension Change	Percent Change
Race				
American Indian or Alaska Native	+3	+100.0%	-3	-33.3%
Asian	-20	-64.5%	+2	+10.0%
Black or African American	+168	+6.9%	-239	-5.4%
Hispanic	+3	+0.9%	-20	-5.2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	+1	+25.0%	+4	+200.0%
Two or More	-40	-24.5%	+33	+15.3%
White	+22	+5.4%	+21	+3.7%
Gender				
Female	+38	+3.3%	+38	+2.2%
Male	+99	+4.5%	-240	-6.1%
Disability Status				
No	+131	+5.1%	-92	-2.3%
Yes	+6	+0.8%	-110	-7.1%

Table 15*SY18-19 Changes in Frequency of ISS and OSS for Race, Gender, and Disability Status*

Subgroup	All ISS		Short-Term OSS	
	Suspension Change	Percent Change	Suspension Change	Percent Change
Race				
American Indian or Alaska Native	-4	-66.7%	+7	+116.7%
Asian	+12	+109.1%	-1	-4.5%
Black or African American	-154	-5.9%	+364	+8.7%
Hispanic	-19	-5.8%	+103	+28.1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	-2	-40.0%	-1	-16.7%
Two or More	+28	+22.8%	+2	+0.8%
White	-96	-22.2%	+11	+1.9%
Gender				
Female	-87	-7.3%	+183	+10.4%
Male	-148	-6.4%	+302	+8.2%
Disability Status				
No	-216	-7.9%	+304	+7.6%
Yes	-19	-2.5%	+181	+12.6%

Using SY16-17 as a baseline, the number of ISS sanctions involving Black students in SY17-18 increased by 6.9% (168 students). That trend reversed in SY18-19 with a decrease of 5.9%. With respect to short-term OSS, the opposite is present; Black students decreased 5.4% in SY17-18 and increased 8.7% in SY18-19. White students experienced a 5.4% increase in ISS during SY17-18, while decreasing 22.2% (96), the following year; both SY17-18 and SY18-19

resulted in increases of short-term suspensions for White students. Similar to White students, Hispanic students showed an increase of ISS in SY17-18 of 0.9% (3) and a decrease of 5.8% (19) in SY18-19. In terms of short-term OSS, Hispanic students decreased in SY17-18, 5.2% (20), while increasing in SY18-19, 28.1% (103). Considering gender, male and female students receiving ISS experienced increases in SY17-18, 4.5% (99) and 3.3% (38), and decreases SY18-19, 6.4% (148) and 7.3% (87). Female students experienced increases in short-term OSS in both years, 2.2% (38) and 10.4% (183), while males experienced a decrease in SY17-18 of 6.1% (240) and an increase in SY18-19 of 8.2% (302). Students with disabilities receiving ISS in SY17-18 were 0.8% (6) and decreased 2.5% (19) in SY18-19. Students with disabilities receiving short-term OSS decreased in SY17-18 by 7.1% (110) and increased by 12.6% (181) in SY18-19.

Table 16 illustrates the change in the count of LTS and the percent change from the previous year within each federally recognized racial group, males and females, and both students with and without learning disabilities over the implementation period.

Table 16

Change in Frequency of Long-Term Out-of-School Suspension for Race, Gender, and Disability Status

Subgroup	SY1718		SY1819	
	Suspension Change	Percent Change	Suspension Change	Percent Change
Race				
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	+0.0%	0	+0.0%
Asian	-1	-50.0%	+1	+100.0%
Black or African American	+33	+17.9%	+6	+2.8%
Hispanic	-1	-5.0%	0	+0.0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	+0.0%	0	+0.0%
Two or More	-1	-9.1%	+6	+60.0%
White	-13	-40.6%	+11	+57.9%
Gender				
Female	+13	+19.4%	+19	+23.7%
Male	+4	+2.2%	+7	+3.8%
Disability Status				
No	+13	+6.9%	+8	+4.0%
Yes	+4	+6.6%	+18	+27.7%

Using SY16-17 as a baseline, the number of LTS sanctions involving Black students in SY17-18 increased by 17.9% (33). That trend continued in SY18-19 with an increase of 2.8% (6). White students experienced a 40.6% decrease in LTS in SY17-18, while increasing 57.9%

(11), the following year. Hispanic students showed a decrease in SY17-18 of 5.0% (1) and no change in SY18-19. Male and female students experienced increases in SY17-18, 2.2% (4) and 19.4% (13), and continued to increase in SY18-19, 3.8% (7) and 23.7% (19). Students with disabilities receiving LTS in SY17-18 increased by 6.6% (4) and increased another 27.7% (18) in SY18-19.

Summary

The aim of this study was to answer four research questions to determine what change, if any, existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligned behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework. The findings of analyses were discussed in this chapter to answer the research questions. The research questions answered were (a) What is the number and percentage of students receiving an office discipline referral by race, gender, and those with a disability? (b) What is the number and percentage of students receiving suspensions, both in-school and out-of-school, related to office discipline referrals for students by race, gender and those with a disability? (c) How has the number and percentage changed for incidents over the three years of implementation of a systematic approach that aligns behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability? (d) How has the number and percentage changed for consequences over the three years of implementation of a systematic approach that aligns behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability? The analysis utilized quantitative data with a nonexperimental descriptive design. The descriptive statistics results were presented. In Chapter Five, the findings, implications of the findings, and suggestions for further research will be discussed.

Chapter Five

The Findings and Implications

Chapter Five provides a final review of the purpose of the study, the research questions motivating the study, and the methods used in the study. The findings, implications, and suggestions for future research relevant to this study are presented. The researcher summarizes and reflects on the method and insights acquired while completing this analysis at the end of this chapter.

The purpose of this study was to determine what change, if any, existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligned behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework. This research used quantitative data with a nonexperimental descriptive design. This study collected and reported data to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the number and percentage of students receiving an office discipline referral by race, gender, and those with a disability?
2. What is the number and percentage of students receiving suspensions, both in-school and out-of-school, related to office discipline referrals for students by race, gender, and those with a disability?
3. How has the number and percentage changed for incidents over the three years of implementing a systematic approach that aligns behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability?
4. How has the number and percentage changed for consequences over the three years of implementing a systematic approach that aligns behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework for students of different races, genders, and those with a disability?

Summary of Findings

The data were analyzed according to the research questions guiding this study. Several findings were identified from the analyses conducted. A summary of findings organized by

research questions, implications of findings, and recommendations for future research and reflections are also reported.

Finding 1

The proportions of students receiving office discipline referrals (ODRs) by race, gender, and disability status remained unchanged over the 3-year period. The number of students receiving ODRs increased from 5,827 to 6,313 over the 3-year period, an 8.3% increase. However, examining the proportions of students receiving ODRs showed very little change. Disaggregating the ODRs by race shows, at most, a 0.5% change in the proportion of those referrals attributable to any given racial group. Similarly, when disaggregating the ODRs by gender, there is no more than a 0.4% change in the relative proportions over the three-year period. The change in the proportion of students with a disability receiving an ODR is the largest at 1.2% over the 3-year period; however, because of the increase in the overall number of ODRs, this subgroup showed a net increase in the number of students observed.

This finding may indicate that school-wide implementation of a multitiered system that combines behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework does not affect the number of ODRs. These findings are consistent with Skiba et al. (2014), who found that educational institutions seeking to lower ethnic and racial disparities in discipline should concentrate on school-based interventions because it is impossible to control external factors. Additionally, Gregory et al. (2017) found that even in the case of evidence-based interventions, implementation without explicit attention to addressing disparities is unlikely to reduce discipline disparities.

Finding 2

The proportion of Black students receiving In-School Suspension (ISS) increased over the 3-year period, while the proportion of their White peers receiving ISS decreased. During SY16-17, Black students accounted for 70.4% of students receiving ISS. This percentage increased over the 3-year period to 72.1%. Conversely, White students accounted for 13.2% of students receiving ISS during SY16-17, decreasing to 11.8% during SY1819. Additionally, the 1.7% increase in the proportion of Black students receiving ISS is greater than the 0.8% growth in the proportion of Black student enrollment. These two data points combine to add to the disproportionality Black students experience in receiving ISS.

This finding may suggest that with the implementation of a multitiered system of support there may have produced a widened gap between Black and White students with regard to ISS. This finding is consistent with research by Skiba et al. (2010), who found that there is insufficient evidence to support the idea that removing students from instruction for a period of time lowers the probability of disrupting learning.

Finding 3

The proportion of Black students receiving Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) decreased over the 3-year period. During SY16-17, Black students accounted for 76.4% of students receiving OSS. This percentage decreased over the three-year period to 73.9%. The 2.5% decrease in the proportion of Black students receiving OSS is greater than the 0.8% growth in the proportion of Black student enrollment. These two data points are moving in opposite directions, decreasing the disproportionality Black students experience in receiving OSS.

This finding shows that the implementation of a multitiered system of support produced a decrease in OSS for Black students. This finding contradicts the research of Stone and Stone (2011) who found that Black student's suspensions remained at a higher rate compared to those of White students. Heilbrum et al. (2015) found that Black suspension rates were more than double White suspension rates.

Finding 4

The proportion of female students receiving Long Term Suspension (LTS) increased over the 3-year period. Female students accounted for 28% of LTS in SY16-17, increasing to 33.1% in SY18-19. Over the same three-year period, the enrolled proportion of female students decreased from 49.2% to 48.9%. This had the effect of moving the proportionality with respect to LTS by gender closer to parity.

It appears that this finding indicates that with the implementation of a multitiered system of support, did not improve the LTS rates of female students. While there is no research related to LTS and Black girls separately, Morris and Perry (2017) discovered in their study that Black girls were found to be three times more likely than White girls to earn an ODR. However, Noguera (2008) found that males are overrepresented in suspensions and expulsions.

Finding 5

Disproportionality for students with a disability decreased for office discipline referrals (ODRs), In-School Suspension (ISS), and Out-of-School Suspension (OSS).

Between SY16-17 and SY17-18, disproportionality with respect to ODRs decreased from 1.85 (20.9% / 11.3%) to 1.58 (19.7% / 12.5%). With respect to ISS, disproportionality decreased from 1.81 (20.5% / 11.3%) to 1.68 (21.1% / 12.5%). Finally, for OSS, disproportionality decreased from 2.17 (24.5% / 11.3%) to 1.92 (24% / 12.5%).

This finding supports research that shows that implementing a multitiered system of support reduces challenging student behavior and the need for exclusionary measures. This finding contradicts Gregory et al. (2010), who found that students with disabilities account for some of the highest numbers of ODRs, OSS, and LTS.

Finding 6

The number of office discipline referrals (ODRs) increased for most subgroups over the 3-year period. Even though the proportions remained constant, students of all racial subgroups experienced increases in the counts of ODRs reported through the student information system. Most notably, Black and Hispanic students and students of two or more racial backgrounds, experienced increases in ODRs in both SY17-18 and SY18-19. This contrasts with their White peers, who experienced an increase in SY17-18 and a decrease in SY18-19. Similarly, students with a disability experienced increases in the number of referrals reported through the student information system in both SY17-18 and SY18-19.

While this finding may suggest that the implementation of a multitiered system of support does not support a decrease on the number of ODRs for all racial subgroups, the finding aligns with the study of Skiba et al. (2011), who found that Black students, attending schools implementing a multitiered framework, were 2.19 (elementary) and 3.78 (middle) times more likely than their White peers to be sent to the office for problem behaviors. Further, results from Skiba et al. (2002) found that Black students were sent to the office for infractions that were more arbitrary in perception.

Finding 7

Black, Hispanic, and male students, along with students with a disability experienced a decrease in short term Out-of-School Suspension (OSS) in SY17-18 followed

by an increase in SY18-19. Each of the Black, Hispanic, male, and students with disabilities subgroups experienced a decrease in the frequency of OSS consequences during SY17-18. Black and Hispanic students experienced 5.4% and 5.2% decreases, respectively, while male students experienced a 6.1% decrease and students with a disability experienced a 7.1% decrease. However, the following year in SY18-19, Black students experienced an 8.7% increase in OSS while Hispanic students, male students, and students with a disability experienced respectively 28.1%, 8.2%, and 12.6% increases.

Table 8 shows that there was a decrease in short term OSS for Black, Hispanic, male, and students with disabilities subgroups in SY17-18. Table 9 shows that there was an increase in short term OSS for Black, Hispanic, male, and students with disabilities subgroups in SY18-19. The researcher is unable to explain the increase and subsequent increase in short term OSS. This finding was supported by the research of Noltemeyer and McLoughlin (2010). Their study found that Black students were disproportionately represented as recipients of exclusionary discipline. Stone and Stone (2011) found that the suspensions for Black students remained at a higher rate compared to those of White students. Anyon et al. (2016) found that out-of-school suspension rates for students of color had a negative correlation with connectedness, contrary to White students' experiences.

Implications of Findings

The results of this study have implications for school and division leaders. Educators can use this information to improve discipline outcomes while implementing a multitiered system of support. The implications of the findings for this study are discussed below.

Implication 1

The school division should continue its focus on the implementation of the principles of VTSS with fidelity (Associated with Finding 1, Finding 2, Finding 3, Finding 4, Finding 5, Finding 6, and Finding 7). As noted in findings 1-7, there is no consistent decrease in office discipline referrals or suspension outcomes, particularly for historically marginalized subgroups. A multitiered, systematic approach to addressing student behavior moves the focus away from discipline as a punitive measure to an opportunity to teach the desired behavior. This continuing shift to this structure could have the effect of decreasing office discipline referrals and suspension outcomes.

Implication 2

School administrators should examine their practices of assigning ISS and OSS as discipline outcomes (Associated with Finding 2). As noted in Finding 2, disproportionality for Black students with respect to ISS has increased. School administrators should look at the type of infractions that are associated with ISS outcomes to determine whether there is any bias when assigning those outcomes. Furthermore, if bias is found in the assignment of ISS outcomes, school administrators should develop a plan of action to ensure the bias is eliminated.

Implication 3

School administrators should examine the combination of increased disproportionality for Black students in terms of ISS and decreased disproportionality in terms of OSS (Associated with Finding 2 and Finding 3). As noted in Finding 2, disproportionately for Black students increased. As noted in Finding 3, disproportionality decreased for Black students. Conducting an examination of the shift in OSS to ISS with respect to similar infractions, should provide an explanation for why two measures are moving in different directions. Throughout this process, school administrators should keep in mind that Black students are still disproportionality removed from instruction.

Implication 4

School administrators should examine the increase of long-term suspension (LTS) outcomes for female students (Associated with Finding 4). School administrators should examine the infractions that led to the increase of LTS for female students to determine the corresponding shift in student behavior. With this information, school administrators can tailor specific support for female students within the VTSS framework.

Implication 5

School administrators should examine the strategies used to decrease ISS and OSS outcomes for students with a disability (SWD) (Associated with Finding 5). As noted in Finding 5, ISS and OSS outcomes for SWD decreased over the 3-year period. School administrators should determine whether the strategies used for SWD are applicable to the broader student population. Implementing an evidence-based approach to improving student behavior aligns with VTSS practices.

Implication 6

School division personnel should provide professional development for school administrators and teachers related to identifying and eliminating racial bias (Associated with Finding 6). As noted in Finding 6, ODRs for Black, Hispanic, and students of two or more racial backgrounds increased in both SY17-18 and SY18-19. To align with VTSS evidence-based practices, school administrators should ensure that behavioral expectations are clearly communicated; clearly communicated expectations will remove the subjectivity within the referral determination process.

Implication 7

School administrators should determine the reasons for the decrease in short term OSS during SY17-18 (Associated with Finding 7). As noted in Finding 7, Black, Hispanic, and male students, along with students with a disability experienced a decrease in short term OSS in SY17-18. School administrators should examine the rates of infractions to determine whether they are similar to the previous year and then determine whether the decrease in short term suspension was due to the implementation of VTSS practices. Additionally, school administrators would then be able to examine the increase of short term suspensions during SY18-19 to determine whether the increase was a result of decreased fidelity in implementing VTSS practices.

Suggestions for Future Studies

The results of this study may not provide a clear indication of the connection that change existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligned academics, behavior, social-emotional wellness into one decision-making framework. Future research would benefit from the following considerations.

1. This study could be replicated in another three years in the same division. Doing so would provide information as to the time period necessary to fully implement with fidelity a multitiered system of support in a large urban school division.

2. This study could be incorporated into a mixed method study, to explore principal's perceptions of VTSS implementation regarding office discipline referrals and suspensions of students by race, gender, and those with a disability.
3. This study could be replicated at the state level.
4. Researchers could investigate whether the implementation of VTSS effectively decreases office discipline referrals and suspensions and its effect on decreasing chronic absenteeism.
5. Researchers could expand the quantitative scope of this study to determine whether statistical significance exists relative to the changes in office discipline referrals and suspensions.
6. Researchers could examine whether the distribution of suspension outcomes is the same for all student subgroups.
7. Researchers could examine whether the type of suspension outcome is independent of the various student subgroups.
8. Researchers could tier schools based on their level of VTSS implementation to determine whether office discipline referrals and suspension outcomes are independent of VTSS implementation tier.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine what change, if any, existed in the number and percentage of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligned behavior, social-emotional wellness, and academics into one decision-making framework. This research used quantitative data with a nonexperimental descriptive design. This study found that the proportion of students receiving ODRs was not reduced by the implementation of a multitiered system of support. Additionally, the number of ODRs increased for most subgroups over the period of the study. However, the study did find that the disproportionality for SWD decreased for ODRs, ISS, and OSS. The study also found that the gap in proportions between Black students receiving ISS and White students receiving ISS increased. Despite the growing disparity between Black and White students, disproportionality for SWD receiving ISS decreased. Conversely, the proportion of Black students receiving OSS decreased over the 3-year period of the study. In conjunction to the

findings related to ISS, the disproportionality of SWD receiving OSS decreased during this study period. Finally, the study found that the proportion of female students receiving LTS increased over the 3-year period of the study. This study did not include an analysis of the critical features of a multitiered system of support.

Reflection

This study has given the researcher firsthand knowledge of the scholarly research process as well as an investigation into the disproportionate discipline sanctions imposed on students of color. Going into this process, the researcher anticipated that with the implementation of a multitiered framework, a reduction of ODRs and OSS would be the outcome. Reductions were not the findings wholly. The researcher found that policy adoptions, historic practices, and the absence of evidence-based approaches in discipline decision-making have exacerbated this complex education issue—discipline disproportionality.

Since reflecting on this study and the process used, the researcher would make the following changes if the study were to be repeated.

1. Disaggregate the analyzed data by race, gender, and students with disabilities, grouped by elementary, middle, and high school.
2. Add a qualitative component to seek an understanding of what escalating behaviors/events are triggering ODRs.
3. Take a closer look at transition grades (i.e.-5th-6th; 8th-9th).

This study has taught me that you cannot manage what you do not monitor. It is imperative that education leaders continue to progress-monitor implemented practices around student discipline to ensure that there is fidelity in the process, free of inequity. Moreover, it is of utmost importance that school divisions ensure that policies are free from bias to protect the safety and welfare of all of our children. My next steps will be to build upon this work and contribute to the depth of expertise of education.

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Appendix A
CITI Program Certificate



Completion Date 08-Oct-2020
Expiration Date 08-Oct-2023
Record ID 38851225

This is to certify that:

Jaraun Ransome

Has completed the following CITI Program course:

Social & Behavioral Research (Curriculum Group)
Social & Behavioral Research (Course Learner Group)
1 - Basic Course (Stage)

Not valid for renewal of certification through CME. Do not use for TransCelerate mutual recognition (see Completion Report).

Under requirements set by:

Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University (Virginia Tech)



Verify at www.citiprogram.org/verify/?w668f27cb-801c-409e-9569-2ca9d4b677eb-38851225

Appendix B

IRB Approval from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University



Division of Scholarly Integrity and
Research Compliance
Institutional Review Board
North End Center, Suite 4120 (MC 0497)
300 Turner Street NW
Blacksburg, Virginia 24061
540/231-3732
irb@vt.edu
<http://www.research.vt.edu/sirc/hrpp>

MEMORANDUM

DATE: January 7, 2021
TO: Carol S Cash, Jaraun Montel Ransome
FROM: Virginia Tech Institutional Review Board (FWA00000572, expires October 29, 2024)
PROTOCOL TITLE: Discipline Disproportionality in an Urban School Division within the Commonwealth of Virginia
IRB NUMBER: 20-1046

Based on the submitted project description and items listed in the Special Instructions section found on Page 2, the Virginia Tech Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) has determined that the proposed activity is not research involving human subjects as defined by HHS and FDA regulations.

Further review and approval by the Virginia Tech Human Research Protection Program (HRPP) is not required because this is not human research. This determination applies only to the activities described in the submitted project description and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made you must immediately submit an Amendment to the HRPP for a new determination. Your amendment must include a description of the changes and you must upload all revised documents. At that time, the HRPP will review the submission activities to confirm the original "Not Human Subjects Research" decision or to advise if a new application must be made.

If there are additional undisclosed components that you feel merit a change in this initial determination, please contact our office for a consultation.

Please be aware that receiving a "Not Human Subjects Research" Determination is not the same as IRB review and approval of the activity. You are NOT to use IRB consent forms or templates for these activities. If you have any questions, please contact the Virginia Tech HRPP office at 540-231-3732 or irb@vt.edu.

PROTOCOL INFORMATION:

Determined As: **Not Human Subjects Research**
Protocol Determination Date: **January 7, 2021**

ASSOCIATED FUNDING:

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

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An equal opportunity, affirmative action institution

Appendix C
Research Authorization Form

Mr. Jaraun M. Ransome
Researcher
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University

January 7, 2021

Supervisor
Public Schools

Dear

I am writing to seek approval to conduct research in the _____ Public School _____ Division. _____ applied and was approved to receive grant funding from the Virginia Department of Education to adopt and implement the Virginia Tiered Systems of Supports (VTSS). The VTSS provides a framework for school divisions that aligns academics, behavior, and social-emotional wellness. When implemented with fidelity, the framework's outcome is intended to create learning environments that lead to positive results for all students by providing needed support for students and school staff.

The _____ Division Leadership Team established an outcome to decrease discipline referrals, in-school suspensions, and out-of-school suspensions in order to increase instructional time in the classroom through the implementation of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS); the behavioral lens of the VTSS framework. Since the implementation of VTSS, the school division has been able to see: a decreased percentage of incidents resulting in removal from instruction, a decreased rate of recidivism for suspensions, a decrease in disproportionality for students with disabilities (SWD), and a consistency in the number of suspension days across all subgroups.

The purpose of this study is to determine what difference, if any, exists in the number of student discipline referrals and exclusionary discipline practices of students by race, gender, and those with disabilities after the introduction of a division-wide, systematic approach to discipline that aligns academics, behavior, and social-emotional wellness into a single decision-making framework. If granted permission to conduct this research, the data obtained will provide meaningful information for our _____ Division Leadership Team's decision-making regarding the implementation of VTSS regarding our outcomes, practices, and systems.

Sincerely,

Jaraun

Appendix D

Permission from School Division to Conduct Study

DATE: January 13, 2021
TO: Jaraun Ransome
FROM: Research Authorization Committee
SUBJECT: Research Authorization Request, Virginia Tech, IRB #20-1046
TITLE: Discipline Disproportionality in an Urban School Division within the Commonwealth of Virginia

Thank you for submitting your research authorization request to [redacted] Public Schools. After a thorough review of your request and accompanying documentation, I am pleased to inform you that your study has been approved for data collection.

Please note that the standard conditions of approval made by [redacted] Public Schools are:

- a) Conduct the study strictly in accordance with the proposal as submitted, including any amendments or revisions made to the proposal as required by [redacted] Public Schools;
- b) Make submission for approval of amendments to the approved study before implementing such changes;
- c) Provide [redacted] Public Schools with an executive summary upon completion of the study;
- d) Advise [redacted] Public Schools in writing if the study is discontinued.

Additionally, please note the [redacted] Public Schools does not provide research assistance, and cannot assist with contacting administrators, teachers, and/or students pursuant to your study.

APPROVAL NUMBER: SY2021-06

Appendix E1

SY16-19 Unduplicated Count and Percentage of Students Receiving Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs)

Subgroup	2016-2017					2017-2018					2018-2019				
	Students w/ Referrals		Student Enrollment		Referral Percentage	Students w/ Referrals		Student Enrollment		Referral Percentage	Students w/ Referrals		Student Enrollment		Referral Percentage
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion		Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion		Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	
Race															
American Indian or Alaska Native	14	0.2%	70	0.3%	20.0%	15	0.3%	86	0.3%	17.4%	17	0.3%	79	0.3%	21.5%
Asian	49	0.8%	672	2.5%	7.3%	29	0.5%	660	2.5%	4.4%	32	0.5%	606	2.3%	5.3%
Black or African American	4,118	70.7%	14,245	53.0%	28.9%	4,198	70.5%	14,229	53.2%	29.5%	4,429	70.2%	14,371	53.8%	30.8%
Hispanic	563	9.7%	3,427	12.7%	16.4%	590	9.9%	3,501	13.1%	16.9%	647	10.2%	3,653	13.7%	17.7%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	6	0.1%	84	0.3%	7.1%	10	0.2%	91	0.3%	11.0%	10	0.2%	97	0.4%	10.3%
Two or More	264	4.5%	1,683	6.3%	15.7%	275	4.6%	1,760	6.6%	15.6%	317	5.0%	1,814	6.8%	17.5%
White	813	14.0%	6,699	24.9%	12.1%	838	14.1%	6,442	24.1%	13.0%	861	13.6%	6,114	22.9%	14.1%
Gender															
Female	2,125	36.5%	13,234	49.2%	16.1%	2,172	36.5%	13,185	49.3%	16.5%	2,281	36.1%	13,063	48.9%	17.5%
Male	3,702	63.5%	13,646	50.8%	27.1%	3,783	63.5%	13,584	50.7%	27.8%	4,032	63.9%	13,671	51.1%	29.5%
Disability Status															
No	4,607	79.1%	23,837	88.7%	19.3%	4,747	79.7%	23,451	87.6%	20.2%	5,067	80.3%	23,399	87.5%	21.7%
Yes	1,220	20.9%	3,043	11.3%	40.1%	1,208	20.3%	3,318	12.4%	36.4%	1,246	19.7%	3,335	12.5%	37.4%

Appendix E2

SY16-19 Unduplicated Count and Percentage of Students Receiving In-School Suspension (ISS)

Subgroup	2016-2017						2017-2018						2018-2019					
	Students w/ ISS		Student Enrollment		Suspension Percentage	Students w/ISS		Student Enrollment		Suspension Percentage	Students w/ ISS		Student Enrollment		Suspension Percentage			
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion		Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion		Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion				
Race																		
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	0.1%	70	0.3%	4.3%	4	0.2%	86	0.3%	4.7%	1	0.0%	79	0.3%	1.3%			
Asian	25	1.2%	672	2.5%	3.7%	6	0.3%	660	2.5%	0.9%	15	0.7%	606	2.3%	2.5%			
Black or African American	1,453	70.4%	14,245	53.0%	10.2%	1,507	72.9%	14,229	53.2%	10.6%	1,469	72.1%	14,371	53.8%	10.2%			
Hispanic	208	10.1%	3,427	12.7%	6.1%	211	10.2%	3,501	13.1%	6.0%	216	10.6%	3,653	13.7%	5.9%			
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	4	0.2%	84	0.3%	4.8%	4	0.2%	91	0.3%	4.4%	2	0.1%	97	0.4%	2.1%			
Two or More	98	4.7%	1,683	6.3%	5.8%	73	3.5%	1,760	6.6%	4.1%	94	4.6%	1,814	6.8%	5.2%			
White	273	13.2%	6,699	24.9%	4.1%	262	12.7%	6,442	24.1%	4.1%	240	11.8%	6,114	22.9%	3.9%			
Gender																		
Female	763	37.0%	13,234	49.2%	5.8%	755	36.5%	13,185	49.3%	5.7%	733	36.0%	13,063	48.9%	5.6%			
Male	1,301	63.0%	13,646	50.8%	9.5%	1,312	63.5%	13,584	50.7%	9.7%	1,304	64.0%	13,671	51.1%	9.5%			
Disability Status																		
No	1,641	79.5%	23,837	88.7%	6.9%	1,646	79.6%	23,451	87.6%	7.0%	1,607	78.9%	23,399	87.5%	6.9%			
Yes	423	20.5%	3,043	11.3%	13.9%	421	20.4%	3,318	12.4%	12.7%	430	21.1%	3,335	12.5%	12.9%			

Appendix E3

SY16-19 Unduplicated Count and Percentage of Students Receiving Out-of-School Suspension (OSS)

Subgroup	2016-2017					2017-2018					2018-2019				
	Students w/ OSS		Student Enrollment			Students w/ OSS		Student Enrollment			Students w/ OSS		Student Enrollment		
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	Suspension Percentage	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	Suspension Percentage	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	Suspension Percentage
Race															
American Indian or Alaska Native	5	0.2%	70	0.3%	7.1%	4	0.1%	86	0.3%	4.7%	9	0.3%	79	0.3%	11.4%
Asian	13	0.4%	672	2.5%	1.9%	13	0.4%	660	2.5%	2.0%	12	0.4%	606	2.3%	2.0%
Black or African American	2,371	76.4%	14,245	53.0%	16.6%	2,287	74.8%	14,229	53.2%	16.1%	2,356	73.9%	14,371	53.8%	16.4%
Hispanic	238	7.7%	3,427	12.7%	6.9%	254	8.3%	3,501	13.1%	7.3%	290	9.1%	3,653	13.7%	7.9%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	0.1%	84	0.3%	2.4%	6	0.2%	91	0.3%	6.6%	4	0.1%	97	0.4%	4.1%
Two or More	124	4.0%	1,683	6.3%	7.4%	147	4.8%	1,760	6.6%	8.4%	152	4.8%	1,814	6.8%	8.4%
White	349	11.3%	6,699	24.9%	5.2%	346	11.3%	6,442	24.1%	5.4%	363	11.4%	6,114	22.9%	5.9%
Gender															
Female	1,036	33.4%	13,234	49.2%	7.8%	1,049	34.3%	13,185	49.3%	8.0%	1,111	34.9%	13,063	48.9%	8.5%
Male	2,066	66.6%	13,646	50.8%	15.1%	2,008	65.7%	13,584	50.7%	14.8%	2,075	65.1%	13,671	51.1%	15.2%
Disability Status															
No	2,341	75.5%	23,837	88.7%	9.8%	2,329	76.2%	23,451	87.6%	9.9%	2,422	76.0%	23,399	87.5%	10.4%
Yes	761	24.5%	3,043	11.3%	25.0%	728	23.8%	3,318	12.4%	21.9%	764	24.0%	3,335	12.5%	22.9%

Appendix E4

SY16-19 Unduplicated Count and Percentage of Students Receiving Long Term Suspension (LTS)

Subgroup	2016-2017					2017-2018					2018-2019				
	Students w/ LTS		Student Enrollment			Students w/ LTS		Student Enrollment			Students w/ LTS		Student Enrollment		
	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	Suspension Percentage	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	Suspension Percentage	Count	Proportion	Count	Proportion	Suspension Percentage
Race															
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%	1	0.4%	79	0.3%	1.3%
Asian	2	0.8%	672	2.5%	0.3%	1	0.4%	660	2.5%	0.2%	2	0.7%	606	2.3%	0.3%
Black or African American	174	72.8%	14,245	53.0%	1.2%	215	81.7%	14,229	53.2%	1.5%	207	76.1%	14,371	53.8%	1.4%
Hispanic	20	8.4%	3,427	12.7%	0.6%	19	7.2%	3,501	13.1%	0.5%	19	7.0%	3,653	13.7%	0.5%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0.0%
Two or More	11	4.6%	1,683	6.3%	0.7%	9	3.4%	1,760	6.6%	0.5%	14	5.1%	1,814	6.8%	0.8%
White	32	13.4%	6,699	24.9%	0.5%	19	7.2%	6,442	24.1%	0.3%	29	10.7%	6,114	22.9%	0.5%
Gender															
Female	67	28.0%	13,234	49.2%	0.5%	79	30.0%	13,185	49.3%	0.6%	90	33.1%	13,063	48.9%	0.7%
Male	172	72.0%	13,646	50.8%	1.3%	184	70.0%	13,584	50.7%	1.4%	182	66.9%	13,671	51.1%	1.3%
Disability Status															
No	183	76.6%	23,837	88.7%	0.8%	198	75.3%	23,451	87.6%	0.8%	198	72.8%	23,399	87.5%	0.8%
Yes	56	23.4%	3,043	11.3%	1.8%	65	24.7%	3,318	12.4%	2.0%	74	27.2%	3,335	12.5%	2.2%

Appendix E5

SY17-19 Change in Frequency of Office Referrals for Race, Gender, and Disability Status

Subgroup	SY1718		SY1819	
	Incident Change	Percent Change	Incident Change	Percent Change
Race				
American Indian or Alaska Native	+7	+22.6%	+19	+38.0%
Asian	-31	-53.4%	+18	+23.7%
Black or African American	+612	+4.6%	+1,255	+8.6%
Hispanic	+79	+5.6%	+210	+13.1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	+9	+52.9%	-2	-13.3%
Two or More	+71	+8.8%	+30	+3.6%
White	+430	+19.1%	-153	-7.3%
Gender				
Female	+348	+6.1%	+502	+8.1%
Male	+829	+6.8%	+875	+6.7%
Disability Status				
No	+1,108	+8.2%	+873	+6.1%
Yes	+69	+1.6%	+504	+10.3%

Appendix E6

SY17-19 Changes in Frequency of In-School Suspensions and Out-of-School Suspensions for Race, Gender, and Disability Status

Subgroup	SY1718				SY1819			
	All ISS		Short-Term OSS		All ISS		Short-Term OSS	
	Suspension Change	Percent Change	Suspension Change	Percent Change	Suspension Change	Percent Change	Suspension Change	Percent Change
Race								
American Indian or Alaska Native	+3	+100.0%	-3	-33.3%	-4	-66.7%	+7	+116.7%
Asian	-20	-64.5%	+2	+10.0%	+12	+109.1%	-1	-4.5%
Black or African American	+168	+6.9%	-239	-5.4%	-154	-5.9%	+364	+8.7%
Hispanic	+3	+0.9%	-20	-5.2%	-19	-5.8%	+103	+28.1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	+1	+25.0%	+4	+200.0%	-2	-40.0%	-1	-16.7%
Two or More	-40	-24.5%	+33	+15.3%	+28	+22.8%	+2	+0.8%
White	+22	+5.4%	+21	+3.7%	-96	-22.2%	+11	+1.9%
Gender								
Female	+38	+3.3%	+38	+2.2%	-87	-7.3%	+183	+10.4%
Male	+99	+4.5%	-240	-6.1%	-148	-6.4%	+302	+8.2%
Disability Status								
No	+131	+5.1%	-92	-2.3%	-216	-7.9%	+304	+7.6%
Yes	+6	+0.8%	-110	-7.1%	-19	-2.5%	+181	+12.6%

Appendix E7

SY17-19 Change in Frequency of Long-Term Out-of-School Suspension for Race, Gender, and Disability Status

Subgroup	SY1718		SY1819	
	Suspension Change	Percent Change	Suspension Change	Percent Change
Race				
American Indian or Alaska Native	0	+0.0%	0	+0.0%
Asian	-1	-50.0%	+1	+100.0%
Black or African American	+33	+17.9%	+6	+2.8%
Hispanic	-1	-5.0%	0	+0.0%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0	+0.0%	0	+0.0%
Two or More	-1	-9.1%	+6	+60.0%
White	-13	-40.6%	+11	+57.9%
Gender				
Female	+13	+19.4%	+19	+23.7%
Male	+4	+2.2%	+7	+3.8%
Disability Status				
No	+13	+6.9%	+8	+4.0%
Yes	+4	+6.6%	+18	+27.7%