

**THE ROLE OF ELECTED DEANS AND SCHOOL SUSPENSION PRACTICES ON  
SUSPENSION RATES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

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Throughout this report I refer to “we” because this study required the collective effort of many people. Jeff White, Maxine Swan, Latasha Hutcherson, Jennifer Pavelka, Chris Coggins, Nikki Orn, Ali Fahmy, and Alice Gualpa contributed to the completion of this study. They each deserve more thanks than can fit into this sentence.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	i
Table of Contents .....	ii
List of Tables .....	iii
List of Figures .....	iv
Executive Summary .....	v
Introduction .....	1
Methodology .....	2
Involvement of Elected Deans .....	9
School Practices and Policies For Reducing Suspension Rates .....	20
Awareness of the Modified Consent Decree and Data .....	35
Discussion of Findings and Future Considerations .....	39
Appendix A: Samples of School Progressive Discipline Forms .....	43
Appendix B: Sample Copy of “Student Passport” .....	45

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Suspensions by Schooling Level and Special Education Status, 2004-05 .....	3
Table 2: Average School Characteristics and Suspension Rates for Secondary Schools, by Level and Study Inclusion .....	5
Table 3: Average School Characteristics and Suspension Rates for Study Schools, by Level and Suspension Rate Classification .....	6
Table 4: Use of Elected Deans .....	10
Table 5: Dean Job Approval and Desired Change in Selection Process .....	12
Table 6: Dean Interaction with Other Stakeholders in the Discipline Process .....	14
Table 7: Dean Independence in the Discipline Process .....	16
Table 8: Components of School Discipline Culture .....	21
Table 9: Use of Alternatives to Suspension and Progressive Discipline .....	26
Table 10: Perceived Effectiveness of Behavior Support Plans .....	33
Table 11: Awareness of the Modified Consent Decree .....	36
Table 12: Awareness and Use of Discipline Data .....	38

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Analysis of a School’s Discipline Process .....	8
Figure 2: Suspension Rates by Special Education Coordinator Involvement in the Decision to Suspend Students with Disabilities .....	18
Figure 3: Suspension Rate for Schools with Decreased Dean Independence .....	19
Figure 4: Risk Ratio by School Use of a Differentiated System for Students with Disabilities .....	23
Figure 5: Suspension Rates by Evidence of School Culture Components .....	25
Figure 6: Suspension Rate for Schools that Started Using In-School Suspensions .....	27
Figure 7: Practices Reported to Improve Student Behavior, Middle Schools .....	29
Figure 8: Practices Reported to Improve Student Behavior, Senior High Schools .....	29
Figure 9: Reported Areas in Need of Improvement, Middle Schools .....	31
Figure 10: Reported Areas in Need of Improvement, Senior High Schools .....	32

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

In his year-end report for 2004-05, the Independent Monitor for the Modified Consent Decree (MCD) expressed concern about the lack of progress the district made in reducing suspensions for students with disabilities. In the 2005-06 Annual Plan for the Modified Consent Decree, the LAUSD Division of Special Education requested that the Program Evaluation and Research Branch (PERB) conduct a study of school suspension practices as a central district action step. For the study, PERB conducted three separate in-person interviews at each of 50 LAUSD secondary schools to address the following research questions:

1. What is the role of elected deans in the determination and implementation of suspension practices?
2. What specific practices and policies implemented by schools result in lower or higher suspension rates for special education students?
3. Are deans and other administrators aware of the Modified Consent Decree, and of the special education suspension data at their school?

The analysis presented in this report provides insight into the role of the elected dean and the discipline process at secondary schools in LAUSD.

### ***Research Question 1: What is the role of elected deans in the determination and implementation of suspension practices?***

In most schools deans are the primary point person for making the day-to-day discipline decisions, including suspension, for students. However, many schools have practices and policies in place to temper the influence of the elected dean. Most deans have regular interaction with the principal/assistant principal and/or the special education coordinator. Furthermore, more than half of the deans share discipline decision-making for students with disabilities with an administrator.

In 56 percent of the schools, the special education coordinator reported a higher degree of involvement than the dean in discipline decision-making for students with disabilities. Special education coordinators in low suspending schools had more influence, on average, than their peers in high suspending schools. Additionally, schools that reduced the dean's independence this year had a large reduction in the suspension rate for students with disabilities.

While there may be some circumstances where elected deans contribute to high suspension rates, we found little evidence to suggest this is a manifestation of the election process. Half of the principals said they would like to have more influence in the dean selection process. However, the vast majority of principals and special education coordinators said their dean(s) were meeting their expectations.

***Research Question 2: What specific practices and policies implemented by schools result in lower or higher suspension rates for special education students?***

Schools with discipline policies conducive to a proactive and differentiated discipline approach typically had lower suspension rates, especially among senior high schools. The use of alternatives to suspension, particularly in-school suspension, was more prevalent among low suspending schools. Furthermore, schools that started using in-school suspension this year experienced a dramatic reduction in the suspension rate for students with disabilities. There was little evidence to suggest that behavior support plans, as currently being used, were associated with reduced suspension rates.

***Research Question 3: Are deans and other administrators aware of the Modified Consent Decree, and of the special education suspension data at their school?***

Most deans and administrators only had a surface level awareness of the Modified Consent Decree, indicating that they must be “more cautious about suspending than we used to be.” Deans had less awareness of the MCD, on average, than principals and special education coordinators. With the exception of middle school deans, greater awareness was expressed by those in low suspending schools.

Schools typically had some awareness of data related to discipline, although the actual use of data to inform practice was low. The differences in data awareness across low and high suspending schools were mixed.

***Conclusions***

The district should consider incorporating the following recommendations into district and school discipline policies:

- Create a coherent discipline process that requires deans to share discipline decision-making for students with disabilities with other stakeholders, such as the special education coordinator.
- Create a coherent discipline plan that details specific progressive discipline steps and a differentiated process for students with disabilities.
- Create a coherent discipline plan that details the range of alternatives to suspension, including in-school suspension, available to schools for different levels of misconduct.
- Monitor the use of alternatives to suspension to ensure students with disabilities continue to access the general curriculum.

- Work with schools having difficulty lowering their suspension rate for students with disabilities to identify necessary strategies and needed resources.
- Provide professional development to principals, deans, and special education coordinators on the legal and practical reasons to have a differentiated discipline process for students with disabilities.
- Provide professional development to teachers on classroom management and progressive discipline processes.
- Provide professional development to key school site staff on the relevance of the MCD to their day-to-day practices and student achievement.

## INTRODUCTION

In 2003, the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) entered into the Modified Consent Decree (MCD) in order to address 18 outcome areas specific to students with disabilities. By June of 2006, the district is expected to achieve each of these outcomes. Outcome 5 specifically addresses the fact that students with disabilities are suspended at a disproportionately higher rate and for more days per year than general education students. In his year-end report for 2004-05, the Independent Monitor expressed concern about the lack of progress the district has made in reducing suspensions for students with disabilities. In the 2005-06 Annual Plan for the Modified Consent Decree, the LAUSD Division of Special Education requested that the Program Evaluation and Research Branch (PERB) conduct a study of school suspension practices as a central district action step. The PERB initiated the study in January 2006. This report presents the findings from the study.

The Independent Monitor questioned whether “deans may be elected by teachers precisely because they are willing to take a ‘hard line’ and suspend students” and “may, in some circumstances, contribute to high suspension rates” in the 2004-05 year-end report. As a result, this study focused on the influence of elected deans on a school’s use of suspensions but also sought to identify the school practices and policies that mediate elected dean practice. The following research questions guided this research:

1. What is the role of elected deans in the determination and implementation of suspension practices? Does this role differ in the following two subsets of schools:
  - Schools suspending a relatively *high* percentage of students with disabilities.
  - Schools suspending a relatively *low* percentage of students with disabilities.
2. What specific practices and policies implemented by schools result in lower or higher suspension rates for special education students?
3. Are deans and other administrators aware of the Modified Consent Decree, and of the special education suspension data at their school?

The report is organized into five sections. The following section describes the methodology and data collection. The next three sections address each of the research questions in order. The last section summarizes the findings and discusses areas for future consideration.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The underlying reason for this study was to identify best practices and investigate barriers to meeting Outcome 5 of the Modified Consent Decree. Outcome 5 consists of three sub-outcomes:

- a. Reduce the percent of students with disabilities suspended six or more cumulative days to 2.0 percent of the total suspensions of students with disabilities (long-term suspension rate).
- b. Reduce the risk of suspension for the population of students with disabilities to a rate lower than 10.3 percent (suspension rate).
- c. Reduce disproportionality in the districtwide rate of suspension of students with disabilities in comparison to their non-disabled peers to a relative risk ratio of no more than 1.75 times discrepant (risk ratio).

Table 1 shows the status of Outcome 5 at the end of the 2004-05 school year by schooling level. The source of suspension data is the Student Information System (SIS), which relies on individuals inputting accurate and complete suspension information at the school level. Data available in SIS include student ID, location (school) code, suspension type, and suspension length. Note that the suspension rate is based on the number of suspended students, as opposed to the number of suspensions. In other words, the rate equals the number of suspended students divided by the number of students.

**Table 1: Suspensions by Schooling Level and Special Education Status, 2004-05**

	Number Students Enrolled	Number Students Suspended	Percent Students Suspended	Percent Long-Term Suspension	SE/GE Risk Ratio
Elementary Schools					
General Education	366,099	6,584	1.8%	3.8%	
Special Education	37,440	1,718	4.6%	5.4%	2.55
Middle Schools					
General Education	137,605	17,879	13.0%	7.1%	
Special Education	18,436	4,276	23.2%	11.9%	1.79
Senior High Schools					
General Education	163,641	14,852	9.1%	4.6%	
Special Education	19,543	3,673	18.8%	8.4%	2.07

Note: Suspension rates based on year-end 2004-05 SIS suspension data and December 2004 SIS enrollment data. These rates may not directly match those reported by the Division of Special Education.

### ***Sample Selection***

Since elementary schools do not use elected deans and suspensions are a greater problem in middle and senior high schools, this study only examined secondary schools. A sample of 50 schools was selected based on the 2004-05 suspension rate for students with disabilities (high or low) and schooling level (middle or senior). The selected schools had to have at least 30 students with disabilities enrolled in December 2004. The district ratio of middle schools to senior high schools is roughly 3 to 2. As a result, we selected 30 middle schools and 20 senior high schools that represented the highest and lowest suspending schools at each schooling level:

- 15 middle schools with relatively *high* suspension rates for students with disabilities.
- 15 middle schools with relatively *low* suspension rates for students with disabilities.
- 10 senior high schools with relatively *high* suspension rates for students with disabilities.
- 10 senior high schools with relatively *low* suspension rates for students with disabilities.

We chose a targeted sample of low and high suspending schools to increase the chances of capturing significant differences in practice.

Table 2 summarizes the school characteristics in Fall 2005 and suspension data at the end of 2004-05 for all secondary schools with at least 30 students with disabilities, and the 50 study schools. The school characteristics are very similar between all secondary schools and the study schools, with one notable exception. The study middle schools enrolled a disproportionately greater number of African American students, on average, compared to all middle schools in the district. The suspension data are also similar between study schools and all schools, although the study schools had slightly higher suspension rates on average.

The same information is reported by low and high suspending study schools in Table 3. The high suspending schools had, on average, a greater proportion of African American students, English Learners, and students participating in the free/reduced meals program. It is interesting to note that the high suspending schools averaged slightly fewer students enrolled than the low suspending schools.

By design, the suspension rate for students with disabilities was higher in the high suspending schools. The high suspending middle schools had a special education suspension rate of 36.9 percent compared to 13.4 percent in the low suspending middle schools. The high suspending senior high schools had a special education suspension rate of 29.2 percent compared to 9.9 percent in the low suspending senior high schools. The high suspending schools also had a higher long-term suspension rate for students with disabilities, but a lower risk ratio.

**Table 2: Average School Characteristics and Suspension Rates for Secondary Schools, by Level and Study Inclusion**

School Averages	Secondary Schools			Study Schools		
	All	Middle	Senior	All	Middle	Senior
Number of Schools	124	73	51	50	30	20
Number of Students	2,540	2,013	3,294	2,516	1,950	3,366
Gender (%):						
Female	49.4%	49.1%	49.8%	49.1%	49.1%	49.2%
Male	50.6%	50.9%	50.2%	50.9%	50.9%	50.8%
Race/Ethnicity (%):						
Asian	4.2%	4.0%	4.5%	2.6%	2.5%	2.9%
African American	13.4%	12.5%	14.8%	18.2%	20.9%	14.3%
Hispanic	69.9%	71.6%	67.5%	70.2%	68.4%	72.8%
White	9.4%	9.0%	9.9%	6.6%	6.7%	6.4%
Other	3.1%	2.9%	3.3%	2.4%	1.6%	3.6%
Language Classification (%):						
English Only	30.7%	29.8%	31.9%	32.5%	34.8%	28.9%
IFEP	7.9%	8.3%	7.3%	7.0%	7.1%	6.8%
RFEP	32.9%	31.4%	35.0%	31.2%	28.1%	35.8%
English Learner	28.5%	30.4%	25.8%	29.4%	30.0%	28.4%
Pct. Free/Reduced Meals	72.2%	75.3%	67.6%	73.5%	74.9%	71.4%
Pct. Students w/ Disabilities	11.5%	11.9%	11.1%	11.9%	12.3%	11.3%
Suspension Rate (2004-05):						
Special Education	21.2%	23.2%	18.4%	22.9%	25.2%	19.6%
General Education	11.7%	13.3%	9.4%	13.4%	15.5%	10.2%
Risk Ratio	1.93	1.84	2.05	1.86	1.73	2.05
Long-Term Susp. Rate (2004-05):						
Special Education	8.9%	10.1%	7.1%	11.4%	12.0%	10.4%
General Education	5.3%	6.3%	3.9%	6.6%	7.3%	5.4%

Notes: School characteristics based on Fall 2005 SIS data; Suspension rates based on year-end 2004-05 SIS suspension data and December 2004 SIS enrollment data. Schools with less than 30 students with disabilities enrolled were excluded.

**Table 3: Average School Characteristics and Suspension Rates for Study Schools, by Level and Suspension Rate Classification**

School Averages	Study Middle Schools			Study Senior High Schools		
	All	Low Susp	High Susp	All	Low Susp	High Susp
Number of Schools	30	15	15	20	10	10
Number of Students	1,950	2,082	1,817	3,366	3,580	3,153
Gender (%):						
Female	49.1%	48.7%	49.4%	49.2%	49.1%	49.2%
Male	50.9%	51.3%	50.6%	50.8%	50.9%	50.8%
Race/Ethnicity (%):						
Asian	2.5%	4.1%	0.8%	2.9%	4.0%	1.8%
African American	20.9%	13.7%	28.1%	14.3%	12.3%	16.3%
Hispanic	68.4%	68.4%	68.4%	72.8%	67.7%	78.0%
White	6.7%	11.5%	1.8%	6.4%	10.0%	2.7%
Other	1.6%	2.3%	0.8%	3.6%	6.0%	1.3%
Language Classification (%):						
English Only	34.8%	33.4%	36.2%	28.9%	31.9%	25.9%
IFEP	7.1%	9.2%	5.0%	6.8%	8.8%	4.9%
RFEP	28.1%	30.1%	26.1%	35.8%	35.1%	36.5%
English Learner	30.0%	27.3%	32.6%	28.4%	24.2%	32.7%
Pct. Free/Reduced Meals	74.9%	71.7%	78.2%	71.4%	68.5%	74.3%
Pct. Students w/ Disabilities	12.3%	11.9%	12.7%	11.3%	11.0%	11.7%
Suspension Rate (2004-05):						
Special Education	25.2%	13.4%	36.9%	19.6%	9.9%	29.2%
General Education	15.5%	8.2%	22.7%	10.2%	4.8%	15.7%
Risk Ratio	1.73	1.79	1.67	2.05	2.24	1.86
Long-Term Susp. Rate (2004-05):						
Special Education	12.0%	7.5%	16.4%	10.4%	6.9%	13.9%
General Education	7.3%	4.2%	10.5%	5.4%	2.3%	8.5%

Notes: School characteristics based on Fall 2005 SIS data; Suspension rates based on year-end 2004-05 SIS suspension data and December 2004 SIS enrollment data.

### ***Data Collection***

To address the three research questions, we conducted in-person interviews of school personnel at each of the 50 schools. At each school, three individuals were interviewed separately:

1. Elected Dean (Dean) – if the school did not use elected deans we interviewed the person with the responsibilities typically covered by an elected dean (e.g., grade level counselor). If a school used more than one elected dean, we sought to speak with the most senior dean.
2. Principal or Assistant Principal over Discipline (Principal).
3. Special Education Coordinator (Sp. Ed.) – the interviewee was often the special education coordinator but could also have been the bridge coordinator or AP over special education depending on who had the most involvement with the discipline of students with disabilities.

Different interview protocols were designed for the dean, principal, and special education coordinator interviews. Most of the questions were open-ended, with prompts to guide the conversation. The interviews were conducted from February through April 2006. Each interview typically took 30 to 45 minutes to complete. Schools and individual interviewees were assured of confidentiality for their participation in the study. If the interviewee gave permission, the interview was tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim.

School suspension data were combined with the interview data for the analysis. As mentioned above, the suspension data came from the SIS files. We compiled each school's suspension data for the 2003-04 and 2004-05 school years, as well as through May of the 2005-06 school year. Year-end suspension data for 2005-06 were not available at the time of this report.

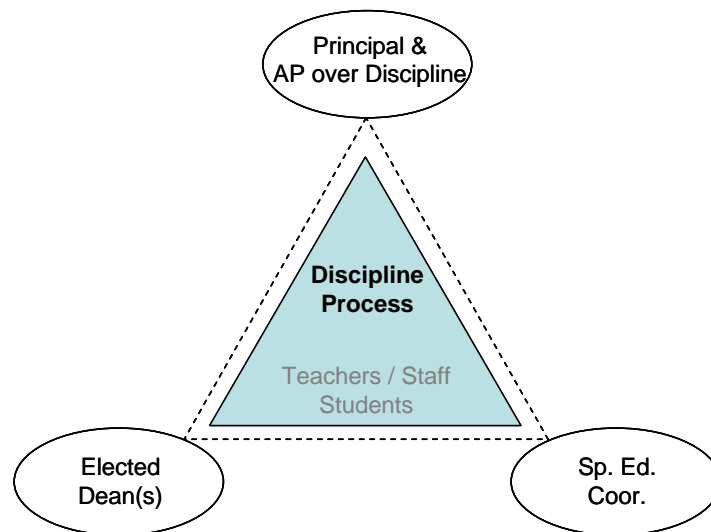
While we based the selection of the high and low suspension study schools on the year-end 2004-05 suspension rate for students with disabilities, some schools exhibited significant changes in their suspension rate this year. As a result we reclassified high and low suspending schools for the analytic portion of this report based on the school's suspension rate as of May 2006. This ensures that our classification of schools matches the time period for which we collected the interview data. Six schools originally

identified as low suspending were reclassified as high suspending schools and six schools originally identified as high suspending were reclassified as low suspending.

### ***Analytic Approach***

With data from three different individuals at each school, we sought to characterize the discipline process and culture at each school, and the involvement the three positions have in the determination to suspend a student. Figure 1 characterizes the overall framework used to conceptualize the analysis. Under this framework, each of the three positions interviewed is a potential focal point in a school’s discipline process. The principal role oversees the overall discipline policy at the top, while elected deans and special education coordinators comprise the foundation for discipline. Within this process, but not explicitly part of this study, is the integral role of teachers, other school staff, and the students.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Analysis of a School’s Discipline Process**



Each school’s discipline process can differ from this conceptual framework based on the degree to which any of these actors dominate, or are absent from, the process. The impetus for this study comes from the concern expressed by the Independent Monitor that “elected deans may, in some circumstances, contribute to high suspension rates.” Within the conceptual framework it is hypothesized that this concern would most likely

materialize in schools where the elected dean dominates the discipline process.

Conversely, this concern is hypothesized to be minimized in schools where the principal provides strong direction and guidance and/or the special education coordinator is involved in the discipline process for students with disabilities.

We characterized the involvement for each of the three focal points with the interview data. To do so, we coded the interview data around a series of themes related to each of the research questions. Each interview was independently coded, then a “schoolwide” coding was applied for each school based on the full set of interviews at the school. To examine the relationship between specific characteristics of the discipline process and suspensions for students with disabilities, we combined the interview data with the school suspension data reported in SIS.

Throughout this report we rely on the interview data to characterize the school discipline process and practices of school personnel. Our intention was to get an accurate picture of a school by collecting information from the three different focal positions on a campus that are often directly involved in student discipline on a daily basis. It is important to remember that these data are self-reported and we did not have the resources to verify the extent to which they accurately reflect day-to-day operations at the schools.

## **INVOLVEMENT OF ELECTED DEANS**

*It's kind of a quasi administrative position where you just get the junk of everything. You get parents angry at you, teachers angry at you, administrators angry with you and you just don't know who to answer to first.*

- Dean from a low suspending school

The LAUSD collective bargaining agreement for teachers states that if a school has a full-time position for the dean of students, that position must be filled with a teacher elected by the campus faculty. The elected dean serves a one-year term and can be re-elected to five terms. After the fifth term, the elected dean can run for additional terms if s/he receives a two-thirds approval vote in a separate election.

All but four middle schools in the study had an elected dean. The schools without a dean used grade-level counselors to perform the duties a dean is typically responsible for.

Table 4 reports the use of elected deans across the study schools. Seven percent of the low suspending middle schools did not have an elected dean while 20 percent of the high suspending middle schools had no dean. More than two-thirds of the schools had more than one dean. Half of the middle schools had more than one dean, while 90 percent of the senior high schools utilized multiple deans.

**Table 4: Use of Elected Deans**

Percent of Schools	All Study Schools	Study Middle Schools			Study Senior High Schools		
		All	Low Susp	High Susp	All	Low Susp	High Susp
Number of Schools*	50	30	15	15	20	10	10
Use of Elected Deans (%):							
No Dean	8%	13%	7%	20%	0%	0%	0%
One Dean	26%	37%	40%	33%	10%	10%	10%
Two Deans	24%	27%	27%	27%	20%	10%	30%
Three or more Deans	42%	23%	27%	20%	70%	80%	60%
Selection of Dean (%):							
Influenced by Administration	23%	17%	7%	29%	32%	33%	30%
Not Influenced by Admin.	77%	83%	93%	71%	68%	67%	70%
Length of Time as Dean (%):							
Less than Three Years	41%	48%	54%	43%	32%	33%	30%
Three or More Years	59%	52%	46%	57%	68%	67%	70%
Dean's Career Aspirations (%):							
Remain Dean	30%	28%	42%	15%	33%	44%	22%
Return to Classroom	19%	12%	0%	23%	28%	33%	22%
Administrative Position	51%	60%	58%	62%	39%	22%	56%

\* Not all the interviews provided information for each measure so the number of schools represented in each category can be different from the total number of schools in the study.

In about one-quarter of the schools the school administration—primarily the principal or AP in charge of discipline—had some influence over who was elected to the dean position. At the middle schools, this influence was primarily through the decision to fund a full-time position or not. At the senior high level, however, about a third of the schools filled the dean position with someone the principal or AP asked to serve. Administrator influence in the dean selection process did not differ across high and low suspending senior high schools. The difference among middle schools reflected the fact that more high suspending middle schools did not have an elected dean.

Experience may influence a dean's job performance. In 59 percent of the schools, the dean held the position for three or more years.<sup>1</sup> A slightly higher percent of the senior high school deans had three or more years of experience, compared to the middle school deans. No substantive differences existed across high and low suspending schools.

Deans seeking reelection may be more inclined to respond to teacher pressure. When asked about career aspirations, a third of the deans said they wanted to stay in the elected dean position. About half of the deans interviewed expressed a desire to get an administrative position, while 19 percent wanted to return to the classroom. Compared to middle school deans, more of the senior high school deans wanted to return to the classroom rather than take an administrative position. In both middle and senior high schools deans in low suspending schools were more likely to express an interest in remaining dean than their peers in high suspending schools.

***If they don't like the job that we're doing then they need to find somebody else to do it.***

Most of the principals and special education coordinators felt the deans were doing a good job (see Table 5). Overall, 84 percent of the principals and 73 percent of the special education coordinators reported that the dean(s) met their expectations for the dean position. Some of those who stated the dean was not meeting their expectations cited a desire for the dean to involve others in the discipline decision, particularly with regard to students with disabilities. Principals and special education coordinators in the high suspending middle schools had slightly lower approval of the deans than their peers in the low suspending middle schools. At the senior high school level, however, no difference existed between high and low suspending schools.

Despite high approval ratings, most principals and special education coordinators wished to see some changes in the dean selection process. Half of the principals expressed a desire to have more input in who fills the dean position. The types of influence suggested by the principals included: letting the principals appoint the dean; letting the faculty vote on a candidate nominated by the principal (or a pool of candidates); and letting the principal choose a dean from a pool of candidates selected by

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<sup>1</sup> One should note that if a school had more than one dean we asked to interview the most senior dean. As a result, the percent of all LAUSD deans with more than three years of experience is probably lower than what is reported in this study.

the faculty. At both the middle and senior high school levels, principals in the high suspending schools were more likely to want influence in the selection process than principals in the low suspending schools.

Only eleven percent of the special education coordinators felt the school administration should influence dean selection, but 42 percent expressed a desire to have changes that increased the quality of candidates. Suggestions on how to get more qualified candidates included increased pay, dean training/professional development, and more informative campaigns (such as, earlier notice before the election and detailed information about the candidates' qualifications).

**Table 5: Dean Job Approval and Desired Change in Selection Process**

Percent of Schools	All Study Schools	Study Middle Schools			Study Senior High Schools		
		All	Low Susp	High Susp	All	Low Susp	High Susp
Number of Schools*	50	30	15	15	20	10	10
Expectations of Dean Principal (%):							
Dean Meets All	84%	81%	87%	75%	88%	88%	89%
Dean Does Not Meet All	16%	19%	13%	25%	12%	13%	11%
Sp. Ed. Coordinator (%):							
Dean Meets All	73%	69%	75%	64%	78%	78%	78%
Dean Does Not Meet All	27%	31%	25%	36%	22%	22%	22%
Desired Change in Dean Selection Principal (%):							
No Change	19%	25%	29%	21%	10%	20%	0%
Admin. Influence	50%	46%	36%	57%	55%	40%	70%
More Qualified Candidates	19%	18%	29%	7%	20%	10%	30%
Other Change	13%	11%	7%	14%	15%	30%	0%
Sp. Ed. Coordinator (%):							
No Change	44%	32%	33%	31%	60%	70%	50%
Admin. Influence	11%	16%	25%	8%	5%	0%	10%
More Qualified Candidates	42%	44%	42%	46%	40%	30%	50%
Other Change	2%	8%	0%	15%	0%	0%	0%

Note: percentages for desired change in dean selection process may not sum to 100% because more than one response was possible.

\* Not all the interviews provided information for each measure so the number of schools represented in each category can be different from the total number of schools in the study.

The desire for more qualified candidates and the desire for administrative influence in the selection process are tempered by the reality that at many schools few people covet the dean position. A number of schools reported that the deans ran unopposed. At other schools, the administration got involved to ensure the faculty had candidates to select. For example, one dean reported, “It wasn’t something I chose. I was asked to be dean so I accepted, and I’ve continued to do so since then.” Given the small pool of candidates—qualified or otherwise—it may be difficult to “find somebody else to do it.” Furthermore, even if other candidates are available, their practices may not differ much, since most principals and special education coordinators were satisfied with the current dean(s).

***We are colleagues.***

A dean’s job approval and influence on discipline outcomes, such as suspensions, depend upon the extent to which the dean acts independently from other stakeholders in the discipline process. An unqualified or “heavy-handed” dean will have a greater impact on a school’s suspension rate if s/he is the sole decision-maker when it comes to suspensions. Similarly, a dean is less likely to act counter to the best interests of the school if s/he frequently interacts with administrators and faculty and/or involves others in the decision-making process.

Most deans regularly interact with the principal and/or special education coordinators (see Table 6). About three-quarters of the deans interacted with the principal on a regular basis. One principal holds “meetings in order to present information that they need to have in terms of operational issues and concerns.” Others, such as this school principal reported more involvement in the actual discipline process:

*I interact with them every day. ... No child is suspended without my knowing about it. ... I wanna know, with every suspension, what has the teacher done, what have the deans done, and what type of parent contact we’ve had before we go into suspension.*

Some principals reported greater interaction when it comes to students with disabilities:

*I interact with the deans on a daily basis. ... especially in reference to Special Education students. We require a pre-suspension conference prior to any consideration of a suspension.*

**Table 6: Dean Interaction with Other Stakeholders in the Discipline Process**

Percent of Schools	All Study Schools	Study Middle Schools			Study Senior High Schools		
		All	Low Susp	High Susp	All	Low Susp	High Susp
Number of Schools*	50	30	15	15	20	10	10
Dean Interacts with Principal (%):							
Occasionally	24%	28%	40%	14%	20%	20%	20%
Regularly	76%	72%	60%	86%	80%	80%	80%
Dean Interacts with Sp. Ed. (%):							
Occasionally	46%	50%	43%	57%	40%	20%	60%
Regularly	54%	50%	57%	43%	60%	80%	40%
Dean Interacts with Faculty (%):							
Occasionally	69%	67%	75%	58%	72%	78%	67%
Regularly	31%	33%	25%	42%	28%	22%	33%

\* Not all the interviews provided information for each measure so the number of schools represented in each category can be different from the total number of schools in the study.

At the middle school level, regular interaction between the principal and dean was more common in the high suspending schools than the low suspending schools. One explanation for this relationship is that the principals may increase their interaction with deans when suspension rates are high. At the senior high level, no difference in principal-dean interaction existed across high and low suspending schools.

Deans were less likely to regularly interact with special education coordinators as they were with principals, but regular interaction between the two positions was reported in half of the schools. These regular interactions often serve as a way to provide the dean with contextual information and advice about a student with disabilities, as reported by this special education coordinator:

*I usually interact with our dean by consulting with her in regards to the students with Special Ed. programs or services. ... I am assisting her with possible interventions, explaining the IEP and behavior support plan.*

Another special education coordinator said:

*We interact on almost a daily basis regarding both specific students and procedural issues regarding discipline, as it relates to the Special Ed. students.*

Unlike dean-principal interaction, dean-special education interaction was more prevalent among the low suspending schools, particularly among senior high schools.

While 80 percent of the low suspending senior high schools reported regular interaction between deans and special education coordinators, only 40 percent of the high suspending schools reported such interactions. Among middle schools, 57 percent of the low suspending schools reported regular interaction compared to 43 percent of the high suspending schools.

Only about a third of the deans said they regularly interact with the faculty in relation to the discipline process. These interactions tend to have less to do with discipline decisions for specific students—although teachers are usually notified when and how one of their students is disciplined—than with ways to improve student behavior in the classroom. For example, one dean interacts with teachers to help them understand the discipline process:

*I talk with teachers and give steps for progressive discipline. In the summertime we have a one week orientation for new teachers.*

Another dean works with teachers who refer a lot of students to the office:

*I've had meetings with teachers who give me any referrals, and I've tried to work with them, and tried to talk to them, and I let them know what's happening in our office when we get inundated.*

As with the dean-principal interaction, regular interaction between deans and teachers is more common in high suspending schools. This makes sense given that at least some of these interactions are driven by the dean's desire to reduce the number of students referred. One special education coordinator noted that “teachers need to be more cognizant of what the role of a dean is and how to handle their [own] students.”

***We work to ensure that everyone works together as a team.***

Efforts to get “everyone on the same page” typically require more concrete mechanisms than interaction between the dean's office and other campus stakeholders. If the principal and special education coordinator are actively involved in the decision-making process then a school can “enlarge [the dean's] vision of what discipline is,” and when necessary, “reign in [the dean's] overuse of suspensions.” Table 7 reports the degree to which the dean shares the decision-making responsibilities and how involved principals and special education coordinator are in the discipline process.

**Table 7: Dean Independence in the Discipline Process**

Percent of Schools	All Study Schools	Study Middle Schools			Study Senior High Schools		
		All	Low Susp	High Susp	All	Low Susp	High Susp
Number of Schools*	50	30	15	15	20	10	10
Independence in GE Discipline (%):							
Dean is Lone Decisionmaker	57%	55%	50%	60%	60%	70%	50%
Dean Shares Decisionmaking	43%	45%	50%	40%	40%	30%	50%
Independence in SE Discipline (%):							
Dean is Lone Decisionmaker	41%	41%	21%	60%	40%	50%	30%
Dean Shares Decisionmaking	59%	59%	79%	40%	60%	50%	70%
Involvement in GE Discipline (%):							
Dean More Involved Than Prcpl.	36%	33%	40%	27%	40%	30%	50%
Dean and Principal Equal	52%	50%	53%	47%	55%	60%	50%
Prcpl. More Involved Than Dean	12%	17%	7%	27%	5%	10%	0%
Involvement in SE Discipline (%):							
Dean More Inv. Than Sp. Ed.	44%	43%	40%	47%	45%	30%	60%
Dean and Sp. Ed. Equal	36%	43%	53%	33%	25%	20%	30%
Sp. Ed. More Inv. Than Dean	20%	13%	7%	20%	30%	50%	10%

Note: Involvement in the decision to suspend a student was based on a self-rated scale of 1 (none) to 5 (complete) for each interviewee.

\* Not all the interviews provided information for each measure so the number of schools represented in each category can be different from the total number of schools in the study.

Overall, deans had less independence in determining discipline for special education (SE) students than general education (GE) students. In 59 percent of the schools the dean shared decision-making responsibilities for students with disabilities while only 43 percent of the schools had shared decision-making for general education students. This shared responsibility for students with disabilities can be of a collaborative nature. As one dean said, “I make sure with a counselor who’s in charge of Special Ed. to see what other avenues we could take [to avoid suspensions].” A special education coordinator described a more comprehensive type of collaboration:

*It’s definitely a team effort as far as [the dean], myself, and the teacher involved, the student, the parent, the history we have of the student. We really try to get a very clear picture on the unique needs of each child, and respond appropriately with discipline.*

Other schools have a less collaborative process where the dean is not responsible for the discipline of students with disabilities. A special education coordinator described the following process:

*The way it is set up, most of the Special Ed. students, the referrals, are run through me. So I handle most of it. If [the deans] find out that [a student] is a Special Ed. student they will contact me. And they will give me the scenario and then ask me, 'What do you think we should do?' And then at that point, I will make a determination.*

At the middle school level, deans in low suspending schools were more likely to share decision-making than their peers in high suspending schools (79 percent vs. 40 percent). At the senior high school level, the same relationship did not exist; shared decision-making was more prevalent in high suspending schools than in low suspending ones. This counter-intuitive relationship among senior high schools may be driven by high suspending schools where the dean collaborates with others but is still the main determinant of discipline decisions. For example, the principal at one high suspending senior high school said it “depends on the severity of the school violation, and the number of days a student has been suspended, as to whether I’m called in.”

In fact, principal and special education involvement in the decision to suspend a student with disabilities was rated higher, relative to dean involvement, for low suspending senior high schools than high suspending senior high schools (see Table 7).<sup>2</sup> In 10 percent of the low suspending senior high schools, principals reported more involvement than the dean. None of the high suspending senior high school principals reported more involvement than the dean. For special education coordinator, 50 percent of the low suspending senior high schools reported more involvement than the dean, compared to only ten percent of the high suspending schools.

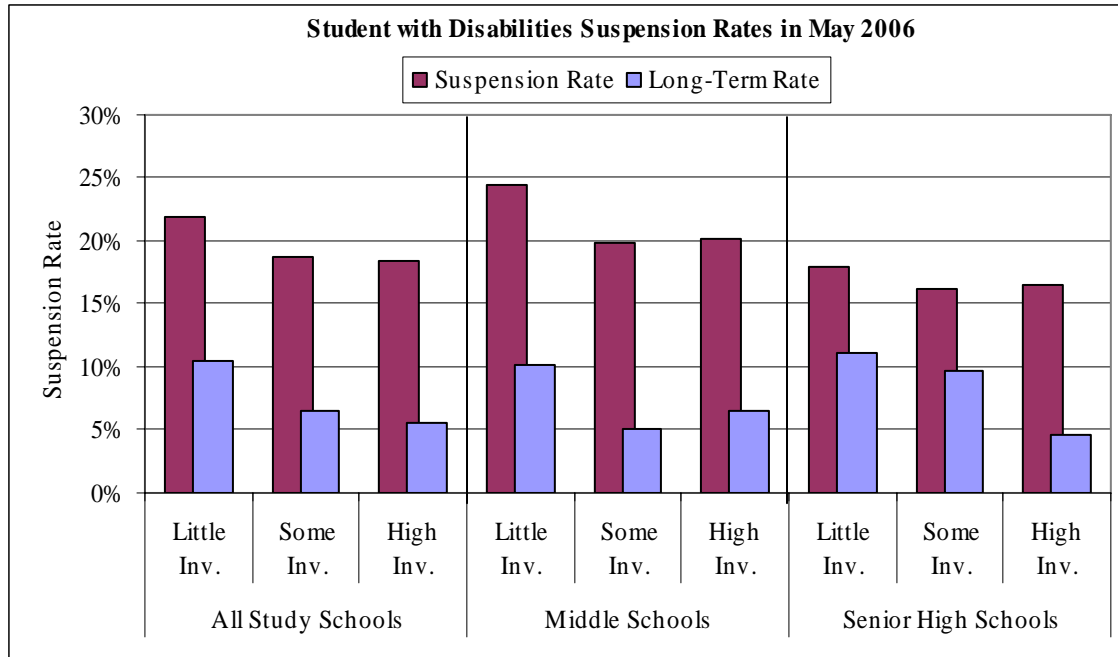
Schools with little involvement from special education coordinators in the decision to suspend students with disabilities had higher suspension rates than schools with some or high involvement from the special education coordinator (see Figure 2). The suspension rate and long-term rate for middle schools with some involvement from the special education coordinator were about five percentage points lower, on average, than in

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<sup>2</sup> Involvement in the decision to suspend a student was based on a self-rated scale of 1 (none) to 5 (complete) for each interviewee.

middle schools where the special education coordinator had little involvement. In senior high schools, the suspension rate was slightly lower when special education coordinators had some involvement, but schools with high involvement had a much lower long-term suspension rate, on average.

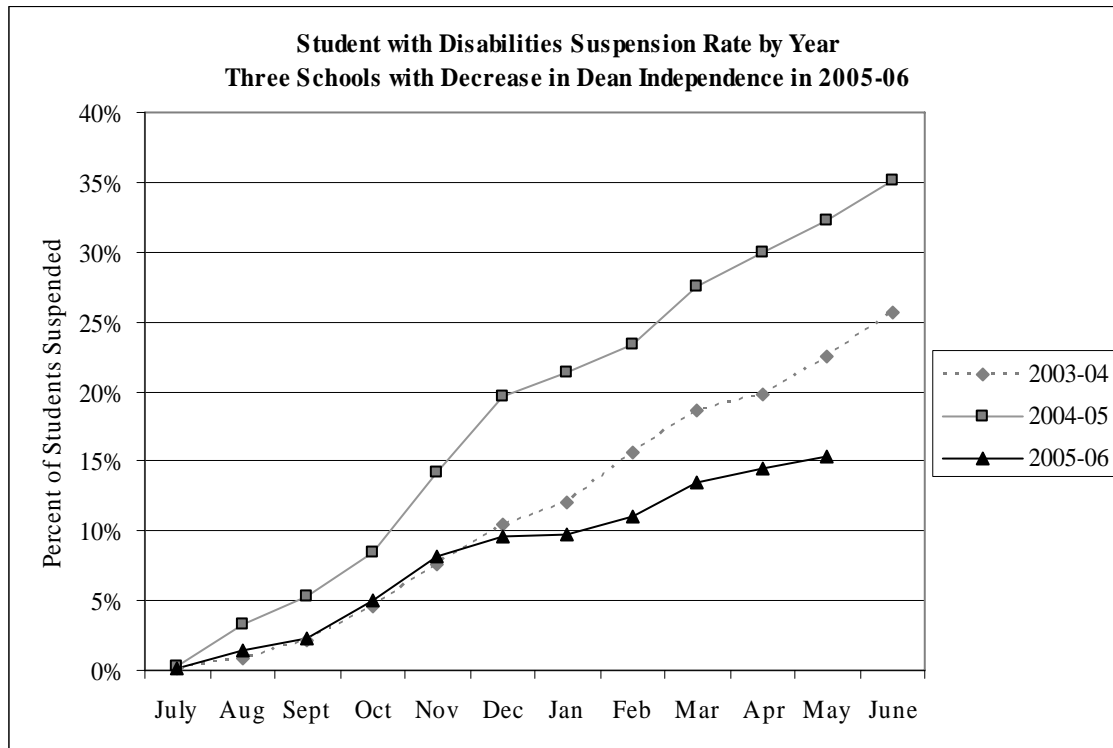
**Figure 2: Suspension Rates by Special Education Coordinator Involvement in the Decision to Suspend Students with Disabilities**



Note: Suspension rates based on May 2006 SIS suspension data and December 2005 SIS enrollment data.

These data suggest greater involvement in the discipline process from the special education coordinator is associated with lower suspension rates for students with disabilities. Another way to test this relationship is to examine any change in the suspension rate over time for schools that decreased the dean’s independence in the decision-making for students with disabilities. Figure 3 plots the student with disabilities suspension rate each month from July 2003 through May 2006 for three middle schools that reported a decrease in dean independence in 2005-06. In these schools, the suspension rate in May 2006 was dramatically lower than the rate in May 2005—when the deans were more independent. Together, these schools had a high suspension rate of 35 percent by the end of 2004-05 but in May 2006 that rate was down to 15 percent.

**Figure 3: Suspension Rate for Schools with Decreased Dean Independence**



Note: Suspension rates based on SIS suspension data and December SIS enrollment data.

While the three middle schools reported on in Figure 3 enacted a number of changes in 2005-06 related to discipline, each school had more involvement from the special education coordinator. At one school the Sp. Ed coordinator made the deans more aware of the proper discipline process for students with disabilities:

*[Last year] students were suspended or disciplined without my knowledge or without the special education teacher's knowledge.... [Now] we are all touching bases, as to looking into Welligent, making sure the IEP is current. If there is an existing behavior plan, maybe it needs tweaking or if there is not one we need to amend the IEP and develop the BSP.*

The other two schools had special education coordinators who stepped in to assume more responsibility over the decision to suspend students with disabilities:

*We had to get them all on the same page because in the beginning we had deans that were suspending. And so that is how I got involved. I said, 'You know what? Hey, stop. From now on, anything that happens to a special education student I need to know about it before you suspend. I will let you know. I will make the determination if we are going to suspend that kid or not. Okay? Fine.' That worked.*

The data presented in this section suggest that a number of schools temper the involvement of elected deans in the determination and implementation of suspension practices. Such influence can come from direct administrative involvement in the dean selection process or through regular interaction/collaboration with the principal and special education coordinator. More involvement from the special education coordinator, in particular, was associated with lower suspension rates for students with disabilities.

### **SCHOOL PRACTICES AND POLICIES FOR REDUCING SUSPENSION RATES**

*Solving these problems is going to take a holistic approach and there is going to have to be a cultural change in the attitude of the staff. It may require that some sort of vision be implemented that the staff can support and believe in that would somehow address the suspensions or address social skills and behavior at the school.*

- Special education coordinator from a high suspending school

The previous section described the role elected deans have in discipline decisions and how that role is mediated through collaboration with principals and special education coordinators. Discipline decisions are further dictated by the overall school attitude toward discipline as set by the policies and practices put in place at the school. This section focuses on the discipline environment deans operate in and the specific mechanisms used to “somehow address the suspensions ... and behavior at the school.”

#### ***I work with the dean to impart my philosophy about our discipline policy.***

We identified three components of a school discipline culture that may reduce the use of suspensions: student supportive climate, proactive discipline approach, and a differentiated system for students with disabilities. Table 8 shows the frequency at which these three components were evident in the study schools.

About a third of the schools had a student supportive climate. Such a climate was formulated through attitudes and practices explicitly stated from the top that emphasize a “whole child approach” and an understanding that harsh punishment is not always in the best interest of the child. As one principal said, “There are no bad kids, they just do bad

things. ...You've got to like them and they've got to feel comfortable talking to an adult." That student supportive statement is in contrast to the attitude expressed by another principal who said, "Special Ed. kids hold us hostage" because they take advantage of the fact that the school has a limited number of days to suspend students with disabilities. A similar number of low and high suspending middle schools had an explicitly stated student supportive climate. At the senior high school level, however, 60 percent of the low suspending schools had a student supportive climate while none of the high suspending schools explicitly stated such a climate.

**Table 8: Components of School Discipline Culture**

Percent of Schools	All Study Schools	Study Middle Schools			Study Senior High Schools		
		All	Low Susp	High Susp	All	Low Susp	High Susp
Number of Schools*	50	30	15	15	20	10	10
Student Supportive Climate (%):							
Explicitly Stated	31%	31%	29%	33%	30%	60%	0%
Not Explicit	69%	69%	71%	67%	70%	40%	100%
Proactive Discipline Approach (%):							
Evident Proactive Efforts	38%	30%	33%	27%	50%	70%	30%
Limited/No Proactive Efforts	62%	70%	67%	73%	50%	30%	70%
Differentiated System for SE (%):							
Promote Differentiation	46%	43%	40%	47%	50%	70%	30%
Minor/No Differences	54%	57%	60%	53%	50%	30%	70%

\* Not all the interviews provided information for each measure so the number of schools represented in each category can be different from the total number of schools in the study.

A proactive discipline approach is often the by-product of a student supportive climate. Overall, 38 percent of the study schools had clearly stated proactive efforts. Almost three-fourths of the schools with a student supportive climate had evident proactive efforts. Schools with significant proactive efforts had relatively heavy use of counseling, mentoring, and/or intervention programs for students with behavior issues, as well as a desire to identify the root of a behavior problem. For example, one special education coordinator said, "If we have to remove a child from the classroom that's one thing, but then put him in a situation where he can get guidance and counseling, versus just sending him home." As with the student supportive climate, no difference existed

between the number of low and high suspending middle schools with a proactive approach, but low suspending senior high schools were more likely to use proactive efforts than the high suspending schools (70 percent vs. 30 percent).

The difference between schools with and without a proactive discipline approach is evident in the following dean statements. When asked about areas in need of improvement, a dean in a school with a proactive discipline approach said, “Every year we try to figure out more ways to get kids involved with positive things rather than figuring out punishments.” A dean in a school without an evident proactive approach addressed the same question by saying, “We need to set the tone of being more authoritarian.” The link between a student supportive climate, a proactive discipline approach and suspensions is exemplified by an anecdote from one of the principals:

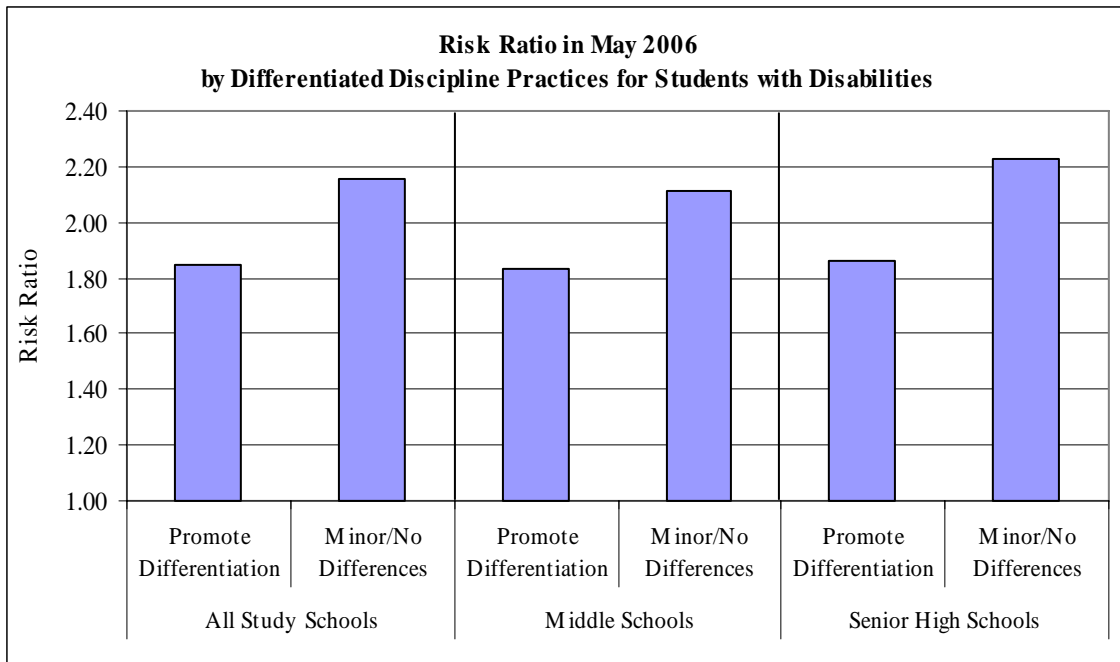
*So this kid was having issues with drugs and mom and what have you, and she didn't like this particular teacher, always ditched ... and so this girl, instead of going to the teacher, said you know, 'My mamma did this yesterday, she got drunk with her boyfriend and he hit her.' So the kid was just going through some awful times. Now, I'm walking with the kid and she's talking to me and she's crying, and the teacher runs out to us, out of her classroom, leaves her class alone, runs out, gets in the kid's face and says, 'You need to get rid of her, I'm tired of her, she's never in my class.' I mean, so the kid turns around and tells her, 'Well, you know what, f--- you, b----.' So that made it worse. Then the teacher looks at me and wanted me to do something. Do you understand? And I didn't do anything, I couldn't. And in reality the kid actually said, 'F--- you, b----, it's none of your business.' She was telling the truth, it was none of her business. I don't think it was more important for that child to be in class than to be seeking some kind of help. ... How can I suspend that kid? How is that suspension going to correct that behavior at that point in time?*

A more concrete method in which schools create a discipline culture that limits suspensions is by setting up a differentiated discipline system for students with disabilities. While most schools reported reviewing a student's IEP to ensure that a behavior problem is not a manifestation of the student's disability, schools that promoted a differentiated system had more significant differences. Such a system is consistent with the notion expressed by some of the interviewees that students should be treated individually and contextual factors taken into account. Just under half of the study schools promoted a differentiated discipline system for students with disabilities. Such a system typically involved greater use of alternatives to suspension and/or interventions

for students with disabilities, as well as the involvement and decision-making of the special education coordinator discussed in the previous section.

As with the other components of a school’s discipline culture, no difference existed between low and high suspending middle schools, while low suspending senior high schools were more likely to have a differentiated system than high suspending schools. To examine the relationship between a differentiated system and suspension rates we also compared the risk ratio across schools. Schools that promoted a differentiated system for students with disabilities had a lower risk ratio, on average, than schools without differentiation (see Figure 4). This was true at the middle and senior high school levels.

**Figure 4: Risk Ratio by School Use of a Differentiated System for Students with Disabilities**



Note: Risk Ratio based on May 2006 SIS suspension data and December 2005 SIS enrollment data.

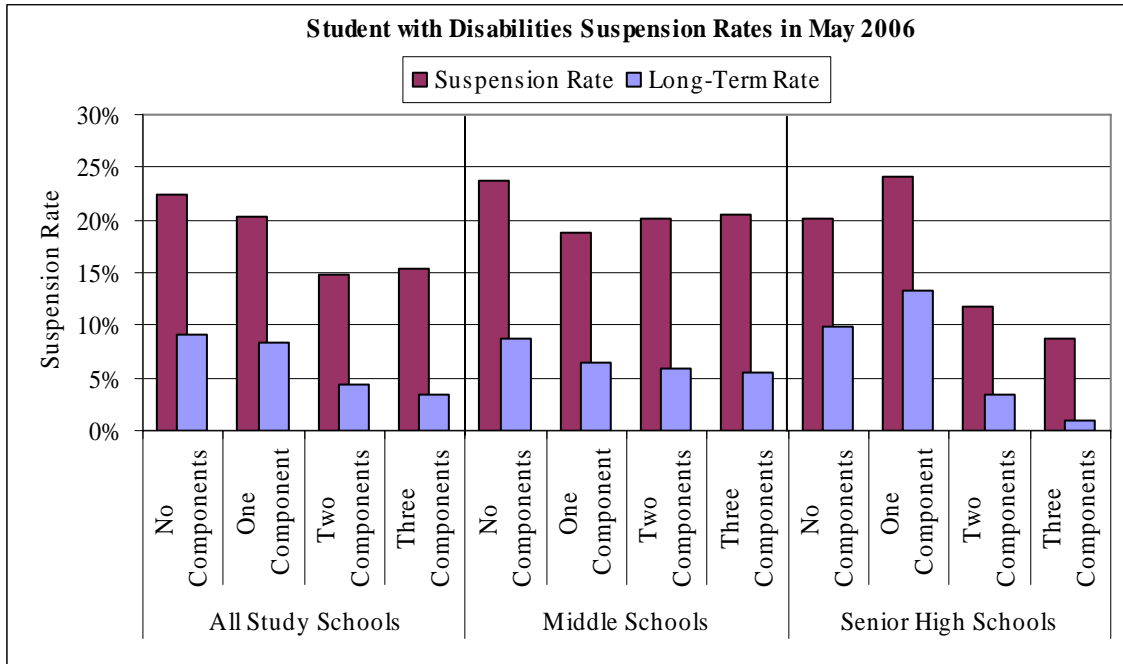
Despite the potential impact of a differentiated system on suspension rates, the interview data indicate that many people “struggle to understand differentiated treatment” or do not feel it is in their “best interest to give uneven discipline.” In part, some of those interviewed perceived a disconnect between trying to include students with disabilities in the general education curriculum yet holding them to different discipline standards. This misperception hinges on understanding that, as one special education coordinator stated,

“Treating two different individuals the same is not necessarily fair.” Or as one principal said, “Fair doesn’t mean equal ... we try to be fair with everybody.”

The disconnect is also evident within some schools. At one school, the dean said, “There is no mechanism to [differentiate GE and SE suspensions],” which is not surprising given that the principal at the school said, “I don’t believe that [suspension decisions should be different for students with disabilities].” While another principal saw the benefit of a differentiated system but said, “It’s hard for me to convince [the dean] that special education kids fit into a different category than regular ed.” Professional development around the legal and practical reasons to create a fair and differentiated system for students with disabilities could help those in resistant schools open the door for greater use of differentiation.

The three discipline culture components discussed do not exist in isolation of one another. Sixty-two percent of the study schools had at least one of the three components and 18 percent had all three. Figure 5 shows the average student with disabilities suspension rate based on how many discipline culture components are evident at the school. Overall, schools with more than one of the components had lower suspension rates than schools with none of the three components. At the middle school level, schools with one component had lower suspension rates than those without a component, but schools with more than one component did not have substantively different rates. Conversely, senior high schools with more than one component had much lower suspension rates than schools with only one component.

**Figure 5: Suspension Rates by Evidence of Discipline Culture Components**



Note: Suspension rates based on May 2006 SIS suspension data and December 2005 SIS enrollment data.

***Suspension is all we have.***

The overall school culture may not translate into lower suspension rates if specific mechanisms are not available for deans and other discipline decision-makers.

Alternatives to suspension and progressive discipline are the most direct mechanisms available to handle discipline without resorting to suspensions. Table 9 shows the frequency to which schools reported using alternatives and progressive discipline.

About a third of the schools reported heavy use of alternatives to suspension, while only 18 percent reported little use of alternatives. These alternatives typically included: parent conferences, community service (i.e., paper pick-up or campus beautification), lunch/nutrition detentions, before/after school detentions, period detentions, Saturday detentions, and in-school suspensions. Over half of the schools reported that in-school suspensions were an option. While low and high suspending schools had similar use of alternatives to suspension, in-school suspension was slightly more prevalent in low suspending schools.

**Table 9: Use of Alternatives to Suspension and Progressive Discipline**

Percent of Schools	All Study Schools	Study Middle Schools			Study Senior High Schools		
		All	Low Susp	High Susp	All	Low Susp	High Susp
Number of Schools*	50	30	15	15	20	10	10
Use of Alt. to Suspension (%):							
Little Use	18%	13%	13%	13%	25%	20%	30%
Some Use	48%	60%	60%	60%	30%	30%	30%
Heavy Use	34%	27%	27%	27%	45%	50%	40%
Use of In-School Suspension (%):							
Use In-School Susp.	55%	53%	60%	47%	58%	67%	50%
Do Not Use In-School Susp.	45%	47%	40%	53%	42%	33%	50%
Use of Progressive Discipline (%):							
Little Use	37%	48%	40%	57%	20%	20%	20%
Some Use	39%	34%	47%	21%	45%	50%	40%
Heavy Use	24%	17%	13%	21%	35%	30%	40%

\* Not all the interviews provided information for each measure so the number of schools represented in each category can be different from the total number of schools in the study.

Many of the interviewees stated that alternatives were a better mechanism to change student behavior than a traditional suspension. They felt students do not consider a day home from school punishment, whereas many of the alternatives to suspension tap into a child’s “exchange rate” by creating a trade-off between bad behavior and what students value, particularly time with their friends. For example, one principal said:

*Most kids in middle school love nutrition and lunch for the socialization. You deny them that, it’s more powerful than sending them home to watch Jerry Springer.*

Another principal echoed that sentiment:

*They don’t like Saturday detention. And they don’t like to have their privileges taken away during nutrition and lunch because they want to be with their friends.*

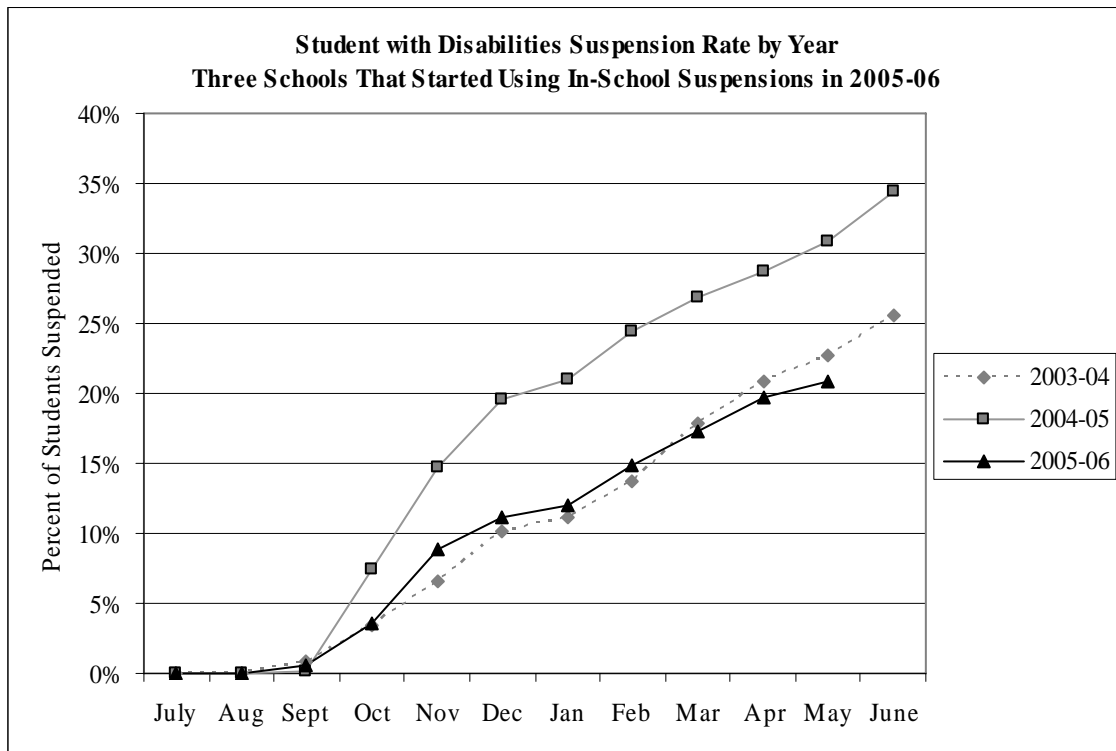
While a dean put it in terms of what students do not like:

*We don’t suspend because kids like to have a day off so we have our in-house community service program where they come to school and then they clean, and most kids don’t like to clean.*

The use of in-school suspensions appears to be associated with decreased use of school suspensions. Figure 6 plots the student with disabilities suspension rate each

month from July 2003 through May 2006 for three schools that reported starting in-school suspension in 2005-06. In these schools, the suspension rate in May 2006 was dramatically lower than the rate in May 2005—when in-school suspension was not an option. Together, these schools had a high suspension rate of almost 35 percent by the end of 2004-05 but in May 2006 that rate was almost down to 20 percent. It is important to note that one of the schools stated that they did not start in-school suspensions until November 2005, which corresponds with marked deviation between the 2005-06 trend and the 2004-05 trend.

**Figure 6: Suspension Rate for Schools that Started Using In-School Suspensions**



Note: Suspension rates based on SIS suspension data and December SIS enrollment data.

Since schools reported increased use of in-school suspensions, the District should look into ways to better monitor how such suspensions are handled. While an in-school suspension may be more productive for a student than simply spending the day at home, and some schools said students receive school work during their suspension, students are still removed from the standard classroom instruction setting. As a result, simply

substituting at-home suspensions with in-school suspensions may not address the intent of Outcome 5.

Many schools used progressive discipline in conjunction with alternatives to suspension. Overall, 37 percent of the study schools reported little use of progressive discipline, while 24 percent reported heavy use. The description of progressive discipline varied somewhat across schools. Some schools mentioned progressive discipline but described a system where less severe behavior problems received less severe discipline (such as detention) and more severe behavior problems received more severe discipline (such as suspension). Cases where discipline was differentiated but progression was not evident were coded as having little use of progressive discipline. A principal at a school identified with heavy use of progressive discipline defined the process as follows:

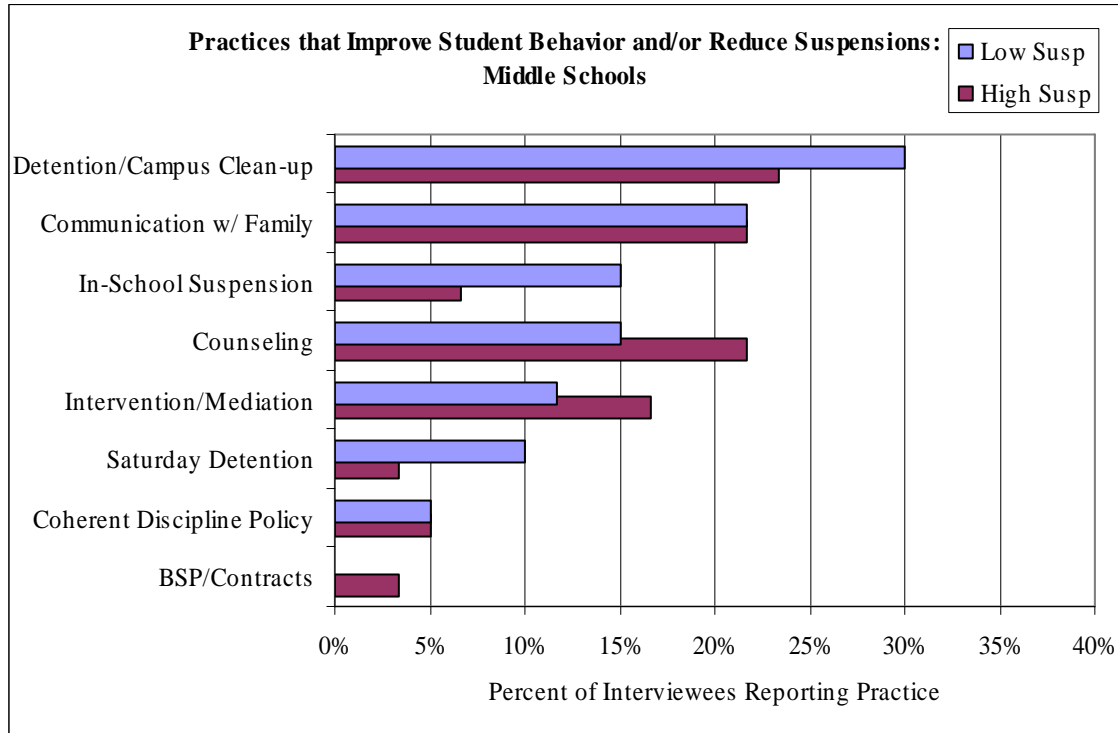
*The first thing the teacher does is he or she conferences with the child. That's the first time. Second time, they contact the parent; try to resolve the issue with a parent. Third time, they send them either to the dean's office or the counselor's office. ... Now, depending upon the problem, determines what we do with them. We might hold them in our office for the remainder of that day. ... Or, we could give the child detention; we have lunch detention and after-school detention. ... We could give them community service when they work after-school with our plant manager. Or, they come in on a Saturday with our plant manager and perform community service.*

At the middle school level, some or heavy use of progressive discipline was more prevalent among low suspending than high suspending schools. At the senior high level no substantive differences existed.

### ***What works and what needs work.***

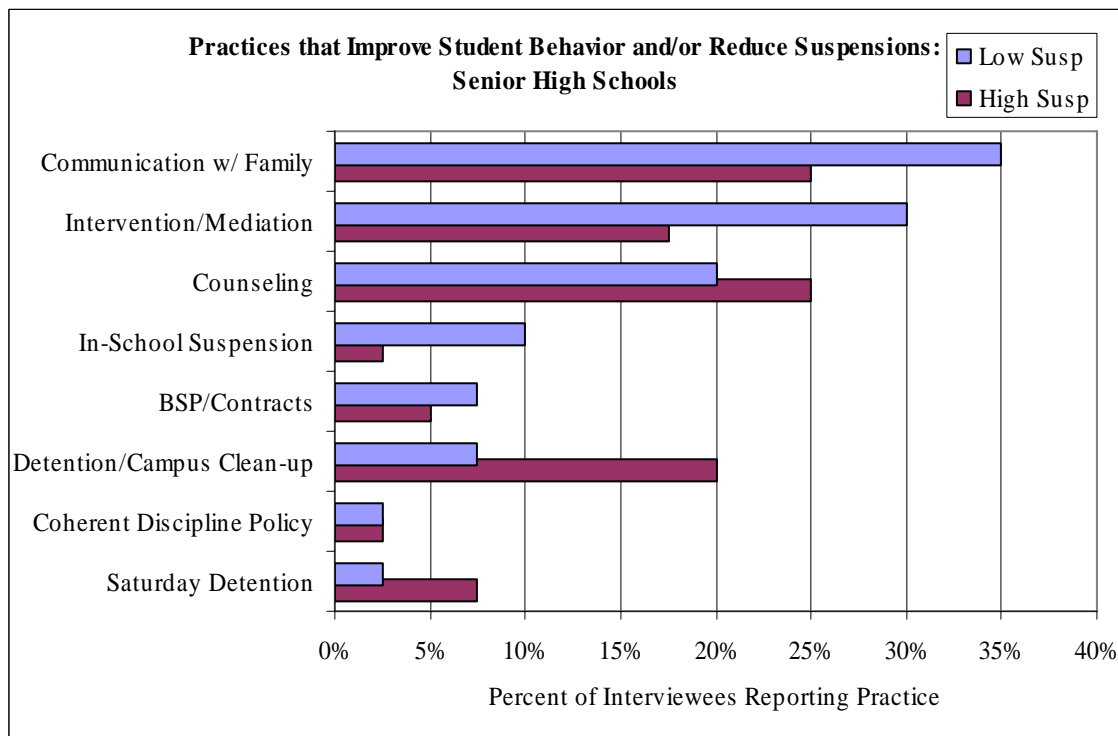
For each interview, we identified the practices cited as helpful in improving behavior and/or reducing suspensions. The most prevalent results are presented in Figures 7 and 8 for middle and senior high schools, respectively. Detention/campus clean-up was the most cited practice among middle schools, followed by communication with family (e.g., parent conferences). Three practices were mentioned more often by low suspending middle schools than high suspending middle schools: detention/campus clean-up, in-school suspension, and Saturday detention. All three of these practices are alternatives to suspension.

**Figure 7: Practices Reported to Improve Student Behavior, Middle Schools**



Note: interviewees could report more than one practice, so percentages do not sum to 100%.

**Figure 8: Practices Reported to Improve Student Behavior, Senior High Schools**



Note: interviewees could report more than one practice, so percentages do not sum to 100%.

Among senior high schools, communication with family, intervention/mediation, and counseling were the most cited practices for low suspending schools. The most cited practices among high suspending schools were communication with family, counseling, and detention/campus clean-up. In contrast to the middle schools, detention/campus clean-up and Saturday detention were more prevalent among the high than low suspending schools.

One category of practice mentioned by some schools warrants discussion even though it was not cited frequently enough to be reported in the figures: minimizing unproductive interaction between students. Some schools said that limiting the time students have to come into contact with each other or wander the halls reduced behavior problems. For example, one principal said:

*We've initiated a very tough and tight tardy policy where we have implemented a Saturday intervention program for those kids who exceed the school policy with regard to tardies. That has been hugely effective in getting kids to get to class on time. The other thing, the two byproducts of the tardy policy is that kids now are so nervous about being caught in a tardy lockout and likely to be signed up for the Saturday intervention program, that they no longer have time to have conflicts with each other, either verbal or physical, and the vandalism on this campus is almost none.*

Another school reduced the number of passing periods by moving to a block schedule, of which the principal commented:

*The climate has changed at this school, and it has everything to do with block scheduling. We don't have nearly [as many] hallway interactions.*

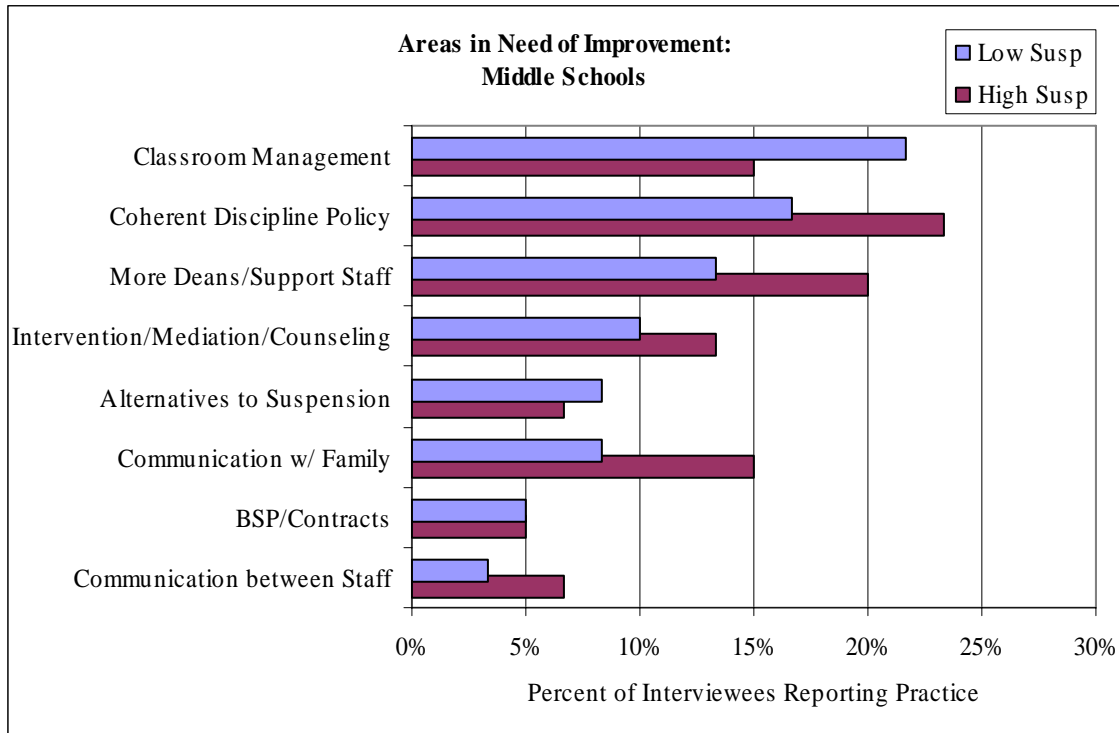
Other ways in which schools limited interaction included: re-arranging class schedules and locations so classes in adjacent periods were in close proximity; separating 6th and 8th graders during lunch or P.E.; and preventing students from walking in groups of three or more.

We also identified the areas interviewees said need improvement. The most prevalent areas are listed in Figures 9 and 10 for middle and senior high schools, respectively. Classroom management was the most cited area for middle and senior high schools. If teachers frequently send students to the dean's office for relatively minor behavior issues it limits the time deans can spend addressing the more serious discipline issues and creates a negative association with the students. Interviewees consistently mentioned

poor classroom management as a reason why some teachers are more likely to refer students to the dean’s office. As one principal said:

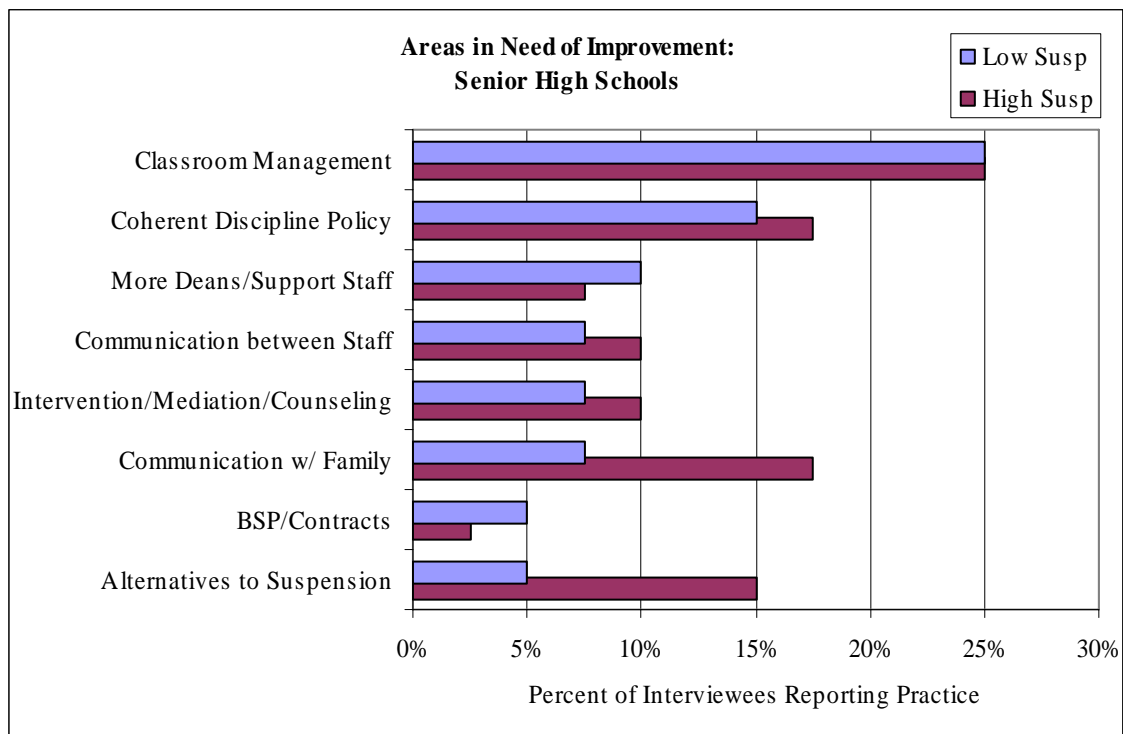
*Sometimes teachers will send out kids for not having a pencil or not having a book and wants us to suspend the kid for chewing gum ... those are things the teachers need to work with in the classroom and not send them out. ...I keep telling the faculty that, bottom line, if a kid knows he’s gonna get sent out for chewing gum he’s gonna make sure he chews gum in your class everyday when he wants to get out.*

**Figure 9: Reported Areas in Need of Improvement, Middle Schools**



Note: interviewees could report more than one practice, so percentages do not sum to 100%.

**Figure 10: Reported Areas in Need of Improvement, Senior High Schools**



Note: interviewees could report more than one practice, so percentages do not sum to 100%.

The need for a more coherent school discipline policy was also frequently mentioned as an area for improvement. Some of the suggested improvements involved better communication of discipline policy to the staff and could be a way to help teachers with their classroom management. One special education coordinator mentioned that “the teachers need to be more cognizant of what the role of a dean is and how to handle their students.” A principal stressed the importance of clarifying the duties of various personnel through a comprehensive discipline policy because:

*Staff need to know where they are to send students if they have a certain behavior. You don't just send them to the dean.*

A few schools used a well defined progressive discipline policy to articulate which behavior issues should be handled by teachers and which should be sent to the counselor or dean. The steps a teacher must take prior to referral are also identified. Samples of school guidelines or referral forms are included in Appendix A. One school created a “student passport” for students with disabilities that summarizes the child’s IEP and Behavior Support Plan (see Appendix B). Each teacher receives a copy of the passport for their students.

A Behavior Support Plan is developed for some students with disabilities as a tool to help teachers deal proactively to prevent behavior problems. Some of the interviewees identified Behavior Support Plans (BSP) as a useful tool or an area for improvement. When asked specifically about the BSP, interviewees gave mixed opinions about their effectiveness, however. Table 10 reports the degree to which the deans, principals, and special education coordinators perceived the effectiveness of the BSP.

Overall, about 61 percent of the deans said the BSP is effective for some cases or most cases (28 percent and 33 percent respectively). One dean felt, “[The BSP] gives you more of a history of the child so you can understand the behavior of the child to tell you some of the things you can and cannot do.” A similar proportion of the principals felt the BSP is effective for some cases or most cases (41 percent and 19 percent respectively), although they were less likely than the deans to think the BSP is effective for most cases. Special education coordinators were the least likely to say the BSP is effective.

**Table 10: Perceived Effectiveness of Behavior Support Plans**

Percent of Schools	All Study Schools	Study Middle Schools			Study Senior High Schools		
		All	Low Susp	High Susp	All	Low Susp	High Susp
Number of Schools*	50	30	15	15	20	10	10
Dean Perception (%):							
Not Effective, Not Used	25%	32%	31%	33%	13%	0%	29%
Not Effective, Too Limited	15%	8%	8%	8%	27%	38%	14%
Effective for Some Cases	28%	32%	54%	8%	20%	13%	29%
Effective for Most Cases	33%	28%	8%	50%	40%	50%	29%
Principal Perception (%):							
Not Effective, Not Used	13%	15%	18%	11%	8%	25%	0%
Not Effective, Too Limited	28%	40%	36%	44%	8%	25%	0%
Effective for Some Cases	41%	35%	36%	33%	50%	25%	63%
Effective for Most Cases	19%	10%	9%	11%	33%	25%	38%
Sp. Ed. Coord. Perception (%):							
Not Effective, Not Used	26%	20%	13%	27%	35%	30%	40%
Not Effective, Too Limited	26%	20%	13%	27%	35%	50%	20%
Effective for Some Cases	32%	40%	53%	27%	20%	10%	30%
Effective for Most Cases	16%	20%	20%	20%	10%	10%	10%

Note: not all the interviews provided information for each measure so the number of interviewees represented in each category can be different from the total number of schools in the study.

When interviewees stated that the BSP is not effective, they typically reported it was not used properly or the BSP itself was too limited to be effective. A quarter of the deans and special education coordinators felt the BSP is not used correctly. For example, one special education coordinator said:

*In many cases it's either written in such a way that the teachers don't recognize, 'Hey, this behavior goes with that behavior support plan.' So they're not following it to the letter, and they're not saying, 'Hey, that was a violation.'*

Only 13 percent of the principals said the BSP was not used properly, but 28 percent felt it was too limited to be effective. Fifteen percent of the deans and 28 percent of the special education coordinators said the BSP is too limited. One dean did not think “targeting one behavior and focusing on that one behavior is gonna help a kid with multiple behavior problems; it’s too global.” A special education coordinator stated:

*I think it's a piece of paper. ... The new system in which you just fill in the blanks was helpful to get them done but not for the purposes of use. I think they're very vague and doesn't really tell you the whole picture. ... I would rather it be more personal like the rest of the IEP.*

No consistent pattern in perceived BSP effectiveness existed across the low and high suspending schools.

A few school practices related to lower suspension rates for students with disabilities were identified in this section. Schools with a discipline culture containing a proactive discipline approach and/or differentiated system for students with disabilities had lower suspension rates, on average, than schools lacking those components—particularly among senior high schools. Additionally, the existence of a differentiated system was associated with having a lower risk ratio. Suspension rates were also lower, on average, at schools who implemented in-school suspensions. Among middle schools, interviewees in low suspending schools were more likely than those in high suspending schools to mention alternatives to suspension (such as detention and in-school suspension) as a practice that reduces suspensions.

## **AWARENESS OF THE MODIFIED CONSENT DECREE AND DATA**

*Could you go over [the outcomes related to the suspension of students with disabilities] with me? ... I know the general gist of it.*

- Dean from a low suspending school

Schools in LAUSD are in the third year of the Modified Consent Decree (MCD). By June of 2006, the district is expected to meet the three targets in Outcome 5: (a) a long-term suspension rate of 2.0 percent for students with disabilities; (b) a suspension rate of 10.3 percent for students with disabilities; and (c) a risk ratio of 1.75. This section focuses on the extent to which the critical school personnel are aware of Outcome 5 and the data related to it.

### ***The Modified Consent Decree is discussed a lot more this year.***

Awareness of the MCD was determined based on responses to a series of open-ended questions. These questions asked about the outcome areas related to the suspension of students with disabilities, ways in which you receive and distribute information about the MCD, and implementation of the Division of Special Education's Action Plan steps. Each interview was then coded as documenting no awareness, minor awareness, some awareness, or good awareness based on the overall response to those questions. Table 11 presents the results of dean, principal, and special education coordinator awareness of the MCD.

About a third of the deans had no awareness of the MCD. While most of these deans expressed an awareness that the MCD existed, they did not articulate that an outcome addresses the disproportionately high suspension rate for students with disabilities. Another third of the deans demonstrated minor awareness of the MCD by making an association between the MCD and a need to reduce suspensions for students with disabilities. The remaining third of deans had some awareness or good awareness of the MCD. These deans were able to discuss at least one of the outcome areas related to the suspension of students with disabilities and/or elaborate on how the school works to meet the MCD. For example one dean said:

*We had a Dean's meeting for all of ... District 2. We went over [the MCD] with all the Special Ed people, you know, because they got all the, you know, the*

*bulletins, you know, we go over them. We have meetings about once a week just, in house meetings here, amongst ourselves, and we cover all of these things. And, then, you know, as you can see we're down [the hall] from the Special Ed. office so we have any questions they come over and talk to [us].*

Principals had more awareness of the MCD than the deans. Nine percent of the principals had no awareness of the MCD, but 64 percent expressed some awareness or good awareness. Awareness of the MCD was greatest among the special education coordinators, who all had at least minor awareness of Outcome 5. Still, only 39 percent of the special education coordinators articulated good awareness.

**Table 11: Awareness of the Modified Consent Decree**

Percent of Schools	All Study Schools	Study Middle Schools			Study Senior High Schools		
		All	Low Susp	High Susp	All	Low Susp	High Susp
Number of Schools*	50	30	15	15	20	10	10
Dean Awareness of MCD (%):							
No Awareness	32%	33%	40%	27%	30%	30%	30%
Minor Awareness	32%	37%	40%	33%	25%	20%	30%
Some Awareness	22%	23%	13%	33%	20%	10%	30%
Good Awareness	14%	7%	7%	7%	25%	40%	10%
Principal Awareness of MCD (%):							
No Awareness	9%	3%	0%	7%	17%	22%	11%
Minor Awareness	28%	24%	27%	21%	33%	11%	56%
Some Awareness	43%	55%	67%	43%	22%	22%	22%
Good Awareness	21%	17%	7%	29%	28%	44%	11%
Sp. Ed. Awareness of MCD (%):							
No Awareness	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Minor Awareness	17%	18%	8%	27%	17%	10%	25%
Some Awareness	43%	46%	46%	47%	39%	30%	50%
Good Awareness	39%	36%	46%	27%	44%	60%	25%

Note: not all the interviews provided information for each measure so the number of interviewees represented in each category can be different from the total number of schools in the study.

Among the senior high schools, a greater proportion of interviewees at the low suspending schools had a good awareness of the MCD relative to the high suspending schools. Among the middle schools, however, this relationship was only true for the special education coordinators—where 46 percent of those in a low suspending middle

school had good awareness compared to 27 percent for high suspending schools. Still, awareness may be met with opposition, as one special education coordinator said:

*I still don't care about any of those [outcomes] because when students need to be suspended, they need to be suspended. And that's what I deal with; I deal with people. I don't deal with numbers.*

These data suggest that most schools have only a surface level understanding of what would be required to meet Outcome 5. One common misconception had to do with the long-term suspension rate. Some thought it dealt with six consecutive days of suspension instead of six cumulative days during the school year. Others referenced the ten day limit on suspensions of students with disabilities when the long-term suspension rate was brought up. Additionally, very few interviewees were able to articulate how the school implemented the action plan steps from the Annual Plan. Even if they mentioned some of the action steps during the interview, they did not make a connection to the Annual Plan.

#### ***We watch the number of suspensions.***

Schools typically had some awareness of data related to discipline, although the actual use of data to inform practice was low. Just over a third of the deans expressed minor awareness of data related to discipline (see Table 12). These deans either simply mentioned they have seen the “data from the district” or frankly stated that they do not use data. Twenty-two percent of the deans demonstrated some awareness of discipline data but little use to inform practice. For example, one dean said, “[We get data on the number of students suspended] just to let us know what we’re doing. That’s all we use it for, for clarification of what we already know.” The 22 percent of deans who described good awareness and use of data were generally knowledgeable about the aggregate data on suspensions as well as individual data for a student’s history (e.g., attendance, grades, or referrals). One dean summarized their use of data by saying:

*The reports from the district that tells us how many people we suspended for what reason tell us to look at the data to make sure we’re on target or are we misusing anything. So we take everything from the district site counselor, and everything we’re receiving from the principal, and try to put it together to be successful in here.*

Deans at high suspending schools articulated better awareness and use of discipline data, in general, than those in low suspending schools. The proportion of middle school deans with minor data awareness was 40 percent in low suspending schools and 27 percent in high suspending schools. For senior high school deans the proportions were 50 percent in low suspending schools compared to 22 percent in high suspending schools. The differences in awareness among principals and special education coordinators were mixed.

Principals had slightly better awareness and use of discipline data than the deans, while special education coordinators had similar awareness but less use of data. About a third of the principals reported good awareness and use of data. Whereas 46 percent of special education coordinators expressed some awareness but little use of data and none of the special education coordinators demonstrated good awareness and use.

**Table 12: Awareness and Use of Discipline Data**

Percent of Schools	All Study Schools	Study Middle Schools			Study Senior High Schools		
		All	Low Susp	High Susp	All	Low Susp	High Susp
Number of Schools*	50	30	15	15	20	10	10
Dean Awareness of Data (%):							
Minor Awareness	35%	33%	40%	27%	37%	50%	22%
Some Awareness, Little Use	22%	20%	13%	27%	26%	20%	33%
Some Awareness and Use	20%	30%	40%	20%	5%	0%	11%
Good Awareness and Use	22%	17%	7%	27%	32%	30%	33%
Principal Awareness of Data (%):							
Minor Awareness	13%	19%	29%	8%	5%	0%	10%
Some Awareness, Little Use	32%	33%	29%	38%	30%	50%	10%
Some Awareness and Use	21%	15%	14%	15%	30%	10%	50%
Good Awareness and Use	34%	33%	29%	38%	35%	40%	30%
SPED Awareness of Data (%):							
Minor Awareness	24%	23%	0%	38%	27%	40%	20%
Some Awareness, Little Use	46%	45%	56%	38%	47%	60%	40%
Some Awareness and Use	30%	32%	44%	23%	27%	0%	40%
Good Awareness and Use	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

Note: not all the interviews provided information for each measure so the number of interviewees represented in each category can be different from the total number of schools in the study.

Overall, awareness of the MCD and discipline data is fairly low—particularly considering that this is the third year under the Decree. At most schools the understanding of Outcome 5 does not go beyond a need to be “more cautious about suspending than we used to be.” Some schools noted benefits of the MCD, such as making “sure we were aware of BSP and the importance in identifying if a student who is referred for discipline is a Special Ed. student.” A handful of interviewees had an adversarial attitude toward the MCD, however. For example one special education coordinator said, “The district is only concerned with the numbers and is not concerned with the people behind the numbers. So, I’m not concerned with their issues.” School personnel with no investment in meeting Outcome 5 are not likely to seek or accept changes in policy aimed at reducing suspension rates.

## **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS AND FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS**

The analysis presented above provides insight into the role of the elected dean and the discipline process at secondary schools in LAUSD. Our results are primarily based on self-reported information from a sample of secondary schools that represent the extremes of suspension in the district (low and high). As a result, we cannot confirm the extent to which the results presented in this report reflect general practice across all secondary schools in the district. Furthermore, the qualitative and cross-sectional nature of the study limit our ability to accurately test the statistical strength of observed relationships or isolate the impact of specific practices. Despite these limitations, the analysis is suggestive of many findings related to the research questions.

### ***Research Question 1: What is the role of elected deans in the determination and implementation of suspension practices?***

In most schools deans are the primary point person for making the day-to-day discipline decisions, including suspension, for students. However, many schools have practices and policies in place to temper the influence of the elected dean. Most deans have regular interaction with the principal and/or the special education coordinator.

Furthermore, more than half of the deans share discipline decision-making for students with disabilities with an administrator. In 56 percent of the schools, the special education coordinator reported a higher degree of involvement in the discipline decision-making for students with disabilities than the dean.

While there may be some circumstances where elected deans contribute to high suspension rates, we found little evidence to suggest this is a manifestation of the election process. Half of the principals said they would like to have more influence in the dean selection process. However, the vast majority of principals and special education coordinators said their dean(s) were meeting their expectations.

Efforts aimed at improving the quality of the dean position through training, a strong school-wide discipline process, and shared decision-making are more likely to reduce suspension rates. For example, special education coordinators in low suspending schools had more influence, on average, than their peers in high suspending schools. Additionally, three schools that reduced the dean's independence in 2005-06 had a dramatic reduction in the suspension rate for students with disabilities.

***Research Question 2: What specific practices and policies implemented by schools result in lower or higher suspension rates for special education students?***

Schools with discipline policies conducive to a proactive and differentiated discipline approach typically had lower suspension rates, especially among senior high schools. The use of alternatives to suspension, particularly in-school suspension, was more prevalent among low suspending schools. Furthermore, schools that started using in-school suspension this year experienced a large reduction in the suspension rate for students with disabilities. There was little evidence to suggest that behavior support plans, as currently being used, were associated with reduced suspension rates.

Efforts aimed at creating clear school discipline policies centered around progressive discipline, a differentiated process for students with disabilities, and alternatives to suspension may result in lower suspension rates. However, the District should monitor the use of alternatives, such as in-school suspension, to ensure its use does not run counter to the intentions of the Modified Consent Decree. In particular, the district should

make sure alternatives to suspension provide students with disabilities more access to the curriculum than traditional suspensions.

Many of those interviewed cited classroom management and the lack of a coherent discipline policy as an area in need of improvement. Therefore, it may also be beneficial to conduct professional development for school staff, especially deans and teachers, focused on the legal and practical reasons for a differentiated system and the use of progressive discipline as it pertains to discipline within the classroom. If schools can provide support for teachers to handle minor discipline issues and counselors to facilitate proactive discipline efforts, then deans will have more time to address the more serious behavior issues on campus in more detail.

***Research Question 3: Are deans and other administrators aware of the Modified Consent Decree, and of the special education suspension data at their school?***

Most deans and administrators only had a surface level awareness of the Modified Consent Decree, indicating that they must be “more cautious about suspending than we used to be.” Deans had less awareness of the MCD, on average, than principals and special education coordinators. With the exception of middle school deans, greater awareness was expressed by those in low suspending schools.

Schools typically had some awareness of data related to discipline, although the actual use of data to inform practice was low. The differences in data awareness across low and high suspending schools were mixed.

The district may benefit from efforts to increase the degree of school-site ownership and perceived relevance of the MCD. For example, instead of providing uniform action steps for schools, the district should target schools in need of assistance and work with the schools to develop action steps that fit the needs of the school. The district should articulate the necessity of each action plan step to the school—making a connection to the MCD and to educational attainment—and provide examples of successful implementation in similar schools. Such efforts should go beyond the principal and/or special education office to engage the deans and faculty. Without buy-in from school personnel, implementation of discipline policies aimed at meeting Outcome 5 may be compromised.

## *Conclusions*

The district should consider incorporating the following recommendations into district and school discipline policies:

- Create a coherent discipline process that requires deans to share discipline decision-making for students with disabilities with other stakeholders, such as the special education coordinator.
- Create a coherent discipline plan that details specific progressive discipline steps and a differentiated process for students with disabilities.
- Create a coherent discipline plan that details the range of alternatives to suspension, including in-school suspension, available to schools for different levels of misconduct.
- Monitor the use of alternatives to suspension to ensure students with disabilities continue to access the general curriculum.
- Work with schools having difficulty lowering their suspension rate for students with disabilities to identify strategies and needed resources.
- Provide professional development to principals, deans, and special education coordinators on the legal and practical reasons to have a differentiated discipline process for students with disabilities.
- Provide professional development to teachers on classroom management and progressive discipline processes.
- Provide professional development to key school site staff on the relevance of the MCD to their day-to-day practices and student achievement.

This study found a number of schools, and school personnel, putting forth the energy and time to improve the discipline process and reduce the use of suspensions. These schools appeared open to clarification and direction from the District. If nothing else, the district should promote communication between schools and district staff to facilitate information sharing, innovation and problem solving.

## APPENDIX A: SAMPLES OF SCHOOL PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE FORMS

### PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES

(Teacher, Counselor, Dean's responsibilities)

*Revised 11/15/05*

**Teachers:** In order to maintain high expectations and to maximize student achievement, please follow the progressive discipline policy for minor behavior problems. Please, document (keep log) of actions taken.

1. Warn
2. Conference with Student
3. Discuss w/ Instructional. Family
4. Contact Parent
5. Assign Reflection Paper
6. Assign Detention
7. Provide Incentives
8. Hold Parent Conference
9. Parent Observation

After having exhausted all the interventions listed above, the student may be referred to his/her counselor or dean depending on STAGE of Discipline. (described below). Please, document student's infractions, dates, and actions taken. Send copy of documentation when referring student. (teachers may want to discuss specific students w/ counselor/dean before exhausting interventions.)

#### Stage I Discipline Problems (Teacher's Responsibilities)

No book/materials	Talking out	Mild disobedience
Profanity	Not doing work	Cheating
Out of seat	Attendance/Tardiness	Horseplay
Eating	Lack of Attention	Grooming

#### Stage II Discipline Problems (Counselor's Responsibility)

1. All Stage I problems not resolved by classroom teacher's interventions.
2. Work Collaboratively with deans to deal with serious repeated offenses.

#### Stage III Discipline Problems (Dean's Responsibility)

- Intervention by teachers and counselors have been exhausted
- Serious act (examples given below)

Fighting	Setting False Alarms
Weapons	Possession of Alcohol/Drugs
Smoking	Habitual Disobedience
Fireworks	Damage to Property
Stealing, robbery	Profanity (directed at teacher)
Off Campus	Serious infraction of any school rule not mentioned.

Stage III students may receive in house suspension, home suspension, OT, Expulsion, and/or other severe consequence.

**APPENDIX A: SAMPLES OF SCHOOL PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE FORMS**

**Office Discipline Referral**

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Rec \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_  
 Staff Member: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Issue of Concern:**

- Level 1 (Counselor's Office)**
- Abusive Language
  - Harassment
  - Defiance/Insubordination
  - Tardiness
  - Use/Possession of Combustible Items
  - Habitual Classroom Disruption
  - Forgery

**Level 2 (Dean's Office)**

- Vandalism
- Arson
- Assault
- Bomb Threat/False Alarm
- Endangering Safety
- Serious Bodily Injury
- Use/Possession of Alcohol
- Use/Possession of Tobacco
- Use/Possession of Weapons
- Fight/Physical Aggression

**Detailed Description of Behavior**

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**Location**

- Cafeteria
- Classroom
- Quad
- Boys' Gym
- Girls' Gym
- Building: \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Others Involved**

- Peers
- Staff
- Teacher
- Other(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**Previous Actions for Same Problem**

- Phone Call Home \_\_\_\_\_
- Student/Teacher Conference \_\_\_\_\_
- Parent/Teacher Conference \_\_\_\_\_
- Detention \_\_\_\_\_
- Office Referral: \_\_\_\_\_

**Date**

**Administrative Action:**

- Teacher Call Home Date(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Student/Teacher Conference Date(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Parent/Teacher Conference Date(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Student/Counselor Conference Date(s): \_\_\_\_\_
- Dean Action Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Detention Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Saturday School Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- In-School Suspension (ISS) Beginning: \_\_\_\_\_ Ending: \_\_\_\_\_
- Off Campus Suspension (OCS) Beginning: \_\_\_\_\_ Ending: \_\_\_\_\_
- Resource Coordinating Team (RCT) Date: \_\_\_\_\_
- Student Support Team (SST) Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student Signature: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Administrator Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Copy: Administrator's      Dean's      Counselor's

**APPENDIX A: SAMPLES OF SCHOOL PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE FORMS**

**SCHOOL STUDENT REFERRAL FORM**

Student \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Track \_\_\_\_\_ Room # \_\_\_\_\_

Referral written by: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Dean**

- Constantly Disruptive in Class
- Defiant/Disobedient
- Fighting/Harassing others
- Smoking, Drugs/Alcohol
- Possessed Weapons
- Vulgar /profane language
- Defacing school property

**Counselor**

- Homework
- Other Academic Matters
- Social /Emotional Problems

**Attendance Coordinator**

- Poor Attendance
- Continued Tardies (# \_\_\_\_\_)
- Chronic Truancies (# \_\_\_\_\_)

Comments required for all checked items: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**ACTION TAKEN BY TEACHER PRIOR TO REFERRAL (Progressive Discipline)**

- Warning given to the student Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_
- Had conference with the student Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_
- Consulted counselor \_\_\_\_\_
- Changed student seat \_\_\_\_\_
- Assigned detention after parent contact Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_
- Telephone conference with parents Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_
- Held a parent conference Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_
- Sent notice of behavior home Date(s) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

Comments required: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**ACTION TAKEN:**

- Verbal Warning/Reprimand
- Phone call to parent
- Letter to parent
- Paper Pick-Up Assigned
- Detention Assigned
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

- Suspended from Class
- Suspended from School
- Saturday School Assigned
- Behavior Contract
- Referred to \_\_\_\_\_

**OTHER ACTIONS TAKEN:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of person handling referral: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE COPY OF "STUDENT PASSPORT" (FRONT PAGE)

## Confidential Passport

To: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Student: \_\_\_\_\_

Birth date: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Area (s) of disability: \_\_\_\_\_

Student is a  visual  tactile (manipulation by hand)  auditory  
 Kinesthetic (whole body involvement) Learner.

**Approximate (independent) functioning levels based on testing:**  
reading decoding \_\_\_\_\_ reading comprehension \_\_\_\_\_  
written language/spelling \_\_\_\_\_ math application \_\_\_\_\_ math computation \_\_\_\_\_

**Some information you should know about this student:**

- works independent  gives up easily  needs help with organization
- works best within a structured classroom routine
- needs extra time on class work  needs to move about occasionally
- tends to be impulsive  has a hard time keeping hands to self
- is easily distracted by sounds, talking, others, etc...
  - should be:  in front of room  in back of room
  - near a window  away from window
  - near friends  away from friends
  - near teacher  away from teacher
- best instructional environment:
  - working alone  working with one other student
  - working with peers  working within a team
  - working with an adult  varied environments

IEP Goals and Objectives (summaries only):

1. Area:

Goal:

Objective:

Objective

2. Area:

Goal:

Objective:

Objective:

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE COPY OF "STUDENT PASSPORT" (BACK PAGE)

**The following are areas of strength or weakness for this student:  
(S=strength/W=weakness)**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> copying from the board                               | <input type="checkbox"/> creative projects           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> copying from overhead                                | <input type="checkbox"/> journal or creative writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gaining information from text/handouts               | <input type="checkbox"/> reports                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gaining information from charts, graphs or audiotape | <input type="checkbox"/> spelling                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gaining information from lecture or audiotape        | <input type="checkbox"/> reading aloud               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> gaining information from film or video               | <input type="checkbox"/> math facts                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> oral expression and communication skills             | <input type="checkbox"/> hands-on tasks              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> parent involvement/support                           | <input type="checkbox"/> computer work               |

**Instructional adaptations/modifications**

- |  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> extended time                         | <input type="checkbox"/> assignment modifications | <input type="checkbox"/> textbook modifications |
| <input type="checkbox"/> alternative assessment                | <input type="checkbox"/> test modifications       | <input type="checkbox"/> grading modifications  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> TSA assistance (one to one assistant) |   |   |

Description/Explanation:

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**Test adaptations/modifications:**

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> extra time _____ longer                   | <input type="checkbox"/> use calculator                                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> take test in another room                 | <input type="checkbox"/> use a vocabulary list (for fill-in)              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> test read aloud to student                | <input type="checkbox"/> use a vocabulary list (for essay questions)      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> questions explained (reworded)            | <input type="checkbox"/> second try on wrong choices/answers              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> use textbook (open book)                  | <input type="checkbox"/> use notebook and notes (study guide, worksheets) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> write on test/instead of Scantron         | <input type="checkbox"/> use formulas and diagrams                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> choose from narrowed-down list of answers | <input type="checkbox"/> work with a partner on the same test             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> answer orally                             | <input type="checkbox"/> other: _____                                     |

**Other comments/concerns/suggestions:**

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