

# Teaching the Social Curriculum: School Discipline as Instruction

RUSS SKIBA AND REECE PETERSON

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*Russ Skiba is an associate professor in the Department of Counseling and Educational Psychology in the School of Education and director of the Institute for Child Study at Indiana University, Bloomington. Reece Peterson is a professor in the Department of Special Education and Communication Disorders in the Teachers College at the University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Authors' Note: The research on which this article was based was supported in part under Grant #H325N990009 from the Office of Special Education Programs, U.S. Department of Education. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent the policy of the Department of Education, and no endorsement by the federal government should be assumed.*

**ABSTRACT:** Though less explicit than the academic curriculum, the expectations, rules, and consequences that form the social curriculum of schools are no less important in determining school success. Methods of discipline that emphasize school removal have not yielded evidence of effectiveness in teaching appropriate behavior or ensuring safe and effective school climates. In contrast, reviews have consistently identified preventive, collaborative, and instructional methods as effective or promising in reducing school violence or disruption. One effort to increase the implementation of effective instructional methods of school discipline and the promising results from the 1st year of implementation are described. First-year results from that program provide some evidence that school discipline need not be equated with punishment and exclusion.

**Key words:** at-risk students, interventions, school discipline, social curriculum, student behavior

**D**iscipline. Its most typical current meaning seems to be most associated with the notion of bringing children into line. It conjures up long-standing associations with not sparing the rod. More recently, discipline is often viewed as synonymous with zero tolerance—punishing all misbehavior severely in order to send a message to potential troublemakers. School suspension is in fact the most commonly used form of school discipline (Skiba & Knesting, 2002), and the use of suspension and expulsion has increased substantially since the advent of zero tolerance (Brooks, Schiraldi, & Ziedenberg, 2000). Thus, discipline in common parlance seems to involve the use of punishment, most often school exclusion, to enforce student conformance with established standards, as expressed by school discipline codes.

Yet the derivation of the term discipline suggests a meaning far different from our common understanding. The word discipline comes from the same Latin root as the word disciple: *discipere*, to teach or comprehend. Thus it makes sense to examine the effectiveness of school discipline as an instructional method. How well do suspension, expulsion, and the preventive alternatives proposed in place of those measures actually teach appropriate behavior in schools? Do students learn new, prosocial behavior or better comprehend how to conform their behav-

ior to school standards as a result of the application of school discipline? In this article we examine school discipline as an instructional method. Before that review, however, it may be useful to explore the subject matter that discipline intends to teach, the social curriculum.

### What Is the Social Curriculum?

In every school and classroom, there is a social curriculum that acts as a guide for student behavior throughout the school day. Though rarely as explicit as the written materials that constitute the academic curriculum, it is no less important in determining whether a student succeeds. As shown in Figure 1, schools and teachers constantly make their expectations known to students through verbal explanations, rules, and consequences. Verbal explanations of expectations are an important source of information for stu-

dents, and effective teachers spend a good deal of time at the beginning of the school year clarifying their expectations (Emmer, Evertson, & Anderson, 1980). Classroom and school rules, especially when written, function as an explicit outline for students of classroom expectations (Emmer & Stough, 2001). Finally, students learn about teacher expectations on a daily basis through the responses they receive for positive and inappropriate behavior (Sprick & Nolet, 1991). In a well-run classroom, these three components work together to teach students how they should behave in order to succeed in the classroom. In hundreds of interactions a day, the correspondence between expectations, rules, and consequences allows students to learn each classroom's unique social curriculum.

In less well-managed classrooms and schools, inconsistency among expecta-

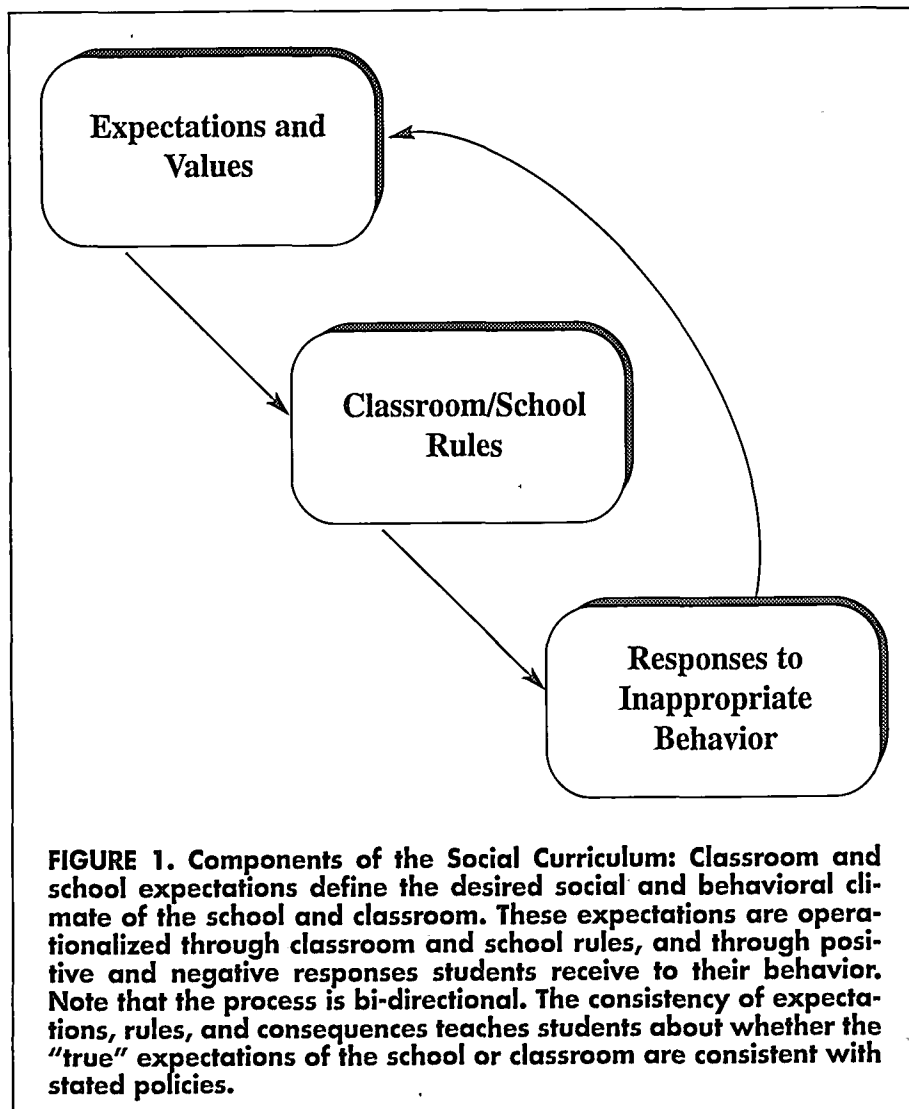
tions, rules, and consequences provides less opportunity for learning the implicit expectations of the social curriculum and may even give students conflicting messages about the appropriate way to behave in a given classroom or school situation. Teacher expectations that the classroom will be an engaging learning environment stressing student initiative may be contradicted by an authoritarian or demeaning disciplinary style. Disciplinary responses that are inconsistent with written rules or are unfair to certain students (see section on minority disproportionality in discipline) may give students the message that what those in authority say is not as important as what they do.

For students who are sufficiently good observers, even consequences that are inconsistent with stated rules provide valuable instruction about the "real rules" of the classroom. The first author once observed a resource room with the posted rule, "Raise hand before speaking." Yet the teacher in that room also appreciated spontaneous discussion, and as the discussion became more animated she would allow students to speak freely without first raising their hands. When the discussion became unruly, however, she reminded students of the rule, at which point they returned to raising their hands. In contrast to the written rule, then, the implicit rule that students had apparently learned was, "Raise hand before speaking, unless we are having a really good discussion, in which case you don't need to raise your hand, at least until things get out of hand, in which case return to raising your hand."

### Who Needs Instruction in the Social Curriculum?

Which students are likely to benefit from instruction in the social curriculum? The brief answer is that although there are clearly some children who need extensive social instruction, all children may need some social instruction regarding some issues.

The majority of students come to school with the ability to recognize teacher expectations and succeed in adapting their behavior to fit the classroom, regardless of how well those expectations are presented. Social learning theorist Walter Mischel (1973) sug-



gested that most of us have a very finely developed sense of how unstated social rules change from situation to situation, and we can make the subtle shifts necessary to match our responses to those changes. He argued that this situation-specificity of behavior is in fact a hallmark of adaptive behavior.

For students who exhibit behavior problems, however, learning the social curriculum is by no means an automatic process. These students come into the classroom with perceptions and beliefs that have grown out of their experience that may leave them less capable of recognizing and responding to the typical social curriculum of schools. The literature in the field of conduct disorders illustrates how this process might operate. First, children who display noncompliant, aggressive, or antisocial behavior are often the victims of coercive interchanges in their family (Patterson, 1992) that have taught them that the most effective way to avoid abuse is to become increasingly abusive themselves. Second, in the face of extreme parental inconsistency, some children learn to act out to establish the limits, even if it means exposing themselves to harsh punishment (Wahler, Williams, & Cerezo, 1990). Third, perhaps as a result of unsafe or threatening home and community conditions, children with conduct disorders develop an antisocial cognitive set, striking first and asking questions later (Dodge, 1993). Finally, well-documented links between antisocial behavior and academic underachievement (Hinshaw, 1992) suggest that, as the difficulty of academic material increases, students with behavior problems will turn to off-task and disruptive behavior in order to escape from academic demands (Center, Deitz, & Kaufman, 1982).

It is not hard to see how exposure to these risk factors could leave a child with a very different understanding of "how the world works." Students who have experienced coercive family cycles may view a teacher request for compliance as just the beginning of a long battle that they need to resist as quickly and firmly as possible. When faced with unstructured classroom situations, children from inconsistent home environments may act out in order to understand the limits of their environment. Students who experi-

ence a daily personal threat in their home or community may strike out first in ambiguous social situations in order to avoid becoming the victims of aggression. Finally, in school settings where academic performance is the yardstick of worth, students with a history of academic failure may strive not to complete work, but to avoid any situation that may expose them to others as "dumb."

Thus, the experiences of students at risk for behavior problems leave them with social perceptions that are a poor fit with the standard expectations of most school environments. Arising from these experiences and perceptions, the behavior of these students appears disruptive, irresponsible, or incomprehensible to teachers and administrators. But to the student whose experience has yielded a different set of social expectations, these behaviors may seem perfectly sensible, and in fact the only alternative. Our consequences, however rational they may appear to us, may seem highly unfair to those students, because they are acting in the only way they can, in accord with the only world they know. Without explicit instruction in the expectations of the social curriculum, it is highly likely that these students will fail both socially and academically.

Although some students have a particular need for explicit instruction in social competencies, it is probably also true that all students need some instruction in some skills at some point. The violence that pervades our culture through the media has been linked with increased levels of negative and aggressive interactions among both children and adolescents (Paik & Comstock, 1994). Surveys of high school students reveal a startlingly high proportion who are unaware of effective methods for solving social conflict (Opatow, 1991). Instruction for all students in the social curriculum may thus help address widespread misconceptions among today's youth about the nature of conflict and problem solving.

### **How Well Does Disciplinary Removal Work?**

In this light, it is appropriate to ask how effective disciplinary removal is in teaching students the behaviors they need to succeed in school. There is a growing

body of literature on the effects of suspension and expulsion. The following sections briefly summarize that literature in the areas of treatment integrity and consistency, nondiscriminatory practice, and outcomes.

#### *Treatment Integrity*

The extent to which an intervention is implemented as planned has been labeled variously *treatment integrity* (Noell, Gresham, & Gansle, 2002), *quality of implementation* (Gottfredson et al., 2000), and *treatment fidelity* (Elliott, Hatot, Sirovatka, & Potter, 2001). Unless an intervention can be implemented with some degree of consistency, it is impossible to attribute any changes in school climate or student behavior to that intervention.

For traditional disciplinary interventions, the most important indicator of quality of implementation is most likely consistency, the extent to which disciplinary removal is based on student behavior. Although one can assume that discipline policies will vary somewhat from school to school, it is also reasonable to expect that students will be disciplined primarily in response to their behavior, not because of characteristics of their school or classroom, such as ineffective classroom management or school climate.

Although student behavior and attitudes do contribute to disciplinary decisions (Tobin, Sugai, & Colvin, 1996; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982), it is clear that student characteristics tell only part of the story of school suspension. Certain classrooms are more likely to be responsible for a disproportionate share of referrals to the office (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997). A number of school factors also contribute to rates of school suspension. Wu et al. (1982) reported that school characteristics, such as overall suspension rate, teacher attitudes, administrative centralization, quality of school governance, teacher perception of student achievement, and racial makeup of the school appear to be more strongly predictive of school suspension than student attitudes and behavior.

It is not surprising, then, that studies across schools in a single district (Massachusetts Advocacy Center, 1986; Skiba et al., 1997) have found that the extent of disciplinary removal is extremely incon-

sistent from school to school. Given the previously noted contributions of school and classroom characteristics to the rate of suspension and expulsion, school factors probably account for some if not most of this inconsistency. Ultimately, then, one must assume that the quality of implementation of school exclusion as a disciplinary tool is low.

#### *Nondiscriminatory Practice*

Both special education regulations and federal education policy prohibit discrimination in the application or outcomes of educational interventions. The right not to be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, or national origin is explicitly guaranteed by the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Browne, Losen, & Wald 2002).

Yet disciplinary exclusion has consistently led to school punishments that fall disproportionately on students of color. For over 25 years, in national-, state-, district-, and building-level data, students of color have been found to be suspended at rates two to three times that of other students, and similarly overrepresented in office referrals, corporal punishment, and school expulsion (Skiba, Michael, Nardo, & Peterson, in press). These disparities cannot be accounted for by the lower economic status of minority students: Minority overrepresentation in school punishment remains significant, for example, even after statistically controlling for socioeconomic status (Skiba et al., in press; Wu et al., 1982). Furthermore, there is no evidence that African American students somehow "deserve" disproportionate rates of discipline because of higher rates of misbehavior. African American students have been found to be punished for less severe rule violations than White students (Shaw & Braden, 1990), or punished more severely than others committing the same offense (McFadden, Marsh, Price, & Hwang, 1992). Skiba et al. (in press) found that office referrals of African American middle-school students tended to be based more on behaviors requiring a higher degree of subjective judgment (e.g., loitering, disrespect).

It would thus be hard to argue that disciplinary removal constitutes nondiscrim-

inatory practice. Rather, these findings appear to fit the criteria that Wu et al. (1982) proposed as evidence of racial discrimination in discipline: "either (1) a disciplinary practice that is favorable to one group and unfavorable to another (e.g., regarding hat wearing by Black males as disrespectful behavior: an ethnocentric view of cultural difference), or (2) unequal treatment of the same behavior" (p. 268). Together with findings that racial disproportionality in suspension increases in schools that use suspension more (Massachusetts Advocacy Center, 1986), these data make a case that the use, and especially the overuse, of disciplinary removal carries with it an inherent risk of racial bias.

#### *Outcomes of Disciplinary Removal*

Disciplinary removal could be judged an effective educational or behavioral intervention if it led to improvements in either (a) individual rates of disruptive or violent behavior or (b) overall school safety or school climate. As yet, there is no evidence that disciplinary removal meets either of these criteria. Indeed, what we know about the effects and effectiveness of school exclusion raises acute concerns regarding its efficacy.

*Improved student behavior?* Studies of suspension have consistently documented that a high proportion of students suspended from school are repeat offenders (Bowditch, 1993; Costenbader & Markson, 1994; Massachusetts Advocacy Center, 1986), suggesting that this segment of the school population is decidedly not "getting the message" that disciplinary removal intends to teach. Tobin et al. (1996) concluded that, for some students, "suspension functions as a reinforcer . . . rather than as a punisher" (p. 91). In the long term, school suspension is associated with increased rates of school dropout (Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack, & Rock, 1986). Indeed, some schools appear to use suspension for "pushout"—suspending certain students repeatedly as a means of cleansing the school of persistent troublemakers who challenge school authority (Bowditch, 1993; Fine, 1986). For the at-risk or challenging students most often targeted for disciplinary removal, then, suspension and expulsion seem primarily

to increase the risk of disruption, and eventually dropout and delinquency.

*Improved school climate?* Rather than making a contribution to school safety, the increased use of suspension and expulsion seems to be associated with student and teacher perceptions of a less effective and inviting school climate. Schools with higher rates of suspension have been reported to have higher student-teacher ratios and a lower level of academic quality (Hellman & Beaton, 1986), spend more time on discipline-related matters (Davis & Jordan, 1994), and pay significantly less attention to issues of school climate (Bickel & Qualls, 1980). Wu et al. (1982) found that less satisfactory school governance was a significant predictor of the probability of a student being suspended at least once in his or her school career.

#### *Summary: The Instructional Ineffectiveness of Disciplinary Removal*

Thus, the answer to the question "Is disciplinary removal an effective method for teaching students the social behaviors they need to succeed in school?" is a clear and resounding no. Without consistent and quality implementation, it is highly unlikely that disciplinary exclusion could be effective in changing student behavior. Furthermore, zero tolerance suspensions and expulsions consistently yield racial disproportionality that may violate students' rights to nondiscriminatory educational practice. Finally, far from improving student behavior or ensuring school safety, disciplinary exclusion appears to be associated with a host of negative outcomes for both students and the school climate.

#### **Are There Effective Alternatives to Disciplinary Removal?**

Clearly, school administrators do not remove students from school because they enjoy doing so. Rather, schools and school districts that suspend and expel more students than they wish to probably do so simply because they do not know what else to do.

In fact, however, there are a number of preventive alternatives that have been found to be effective in improving school discipline and reducing school disruption and violence. These studies have been

conducted by government panels or individual reviewers using highly rigorous criteria (e.g., Elliott, Hatot, Sirovatka, & Potter, 2001; Gagnon & Leone, 2002; Gottfredson, 1997; Mihalic, Irwin, Elliott, Fagan, & Hansen, 2001; Thornton, Craft, Dahlberg, Lynch, & Baer, 2000). The results of these reviews have been remarkably consistent in identifying those programs that appear to have the strongest empirical support for their effectiveness. The results of three of those reports are presented below.

### *Preventing Crime: What Works, What Does Not, What Is Promising?*

As part of an independent evaluation of all federally supported crime prevention efforts, Gottfredson (1997) reviewed 149 studies of school-based prevention programs. On the basis of criteria of at least two studies finding positive effects and the weight of evidence in a positive direction, Gottfredson concluded that the most effective strategies were programs that

- Build the school capacity to initiate and sustain innovation;
- Establish and consistently enforce school rules, particularly when positively framed, and communicate norms through schoolwide campaigns;
- Teach social competency skills (e.g., self-control, social problem solving, communication skills), especially over a long period of time.

A second set of studies were regarded as promising, including smaller groupings of students (e.g., "schools-within-schools"), behavior modification procedures, and teaching "thinking skills" to high-risk youth. To encourage increased implementation of effective programs, the researchers recommended increased attention to building a theory base for school-based prevention, and building a better understanding of the school factors that impede the implementation of prevention strategies.

### *Blueprints for Violence Prevention*

The Blueprints for Violence Prevention Initiative (Mihalic et al., 2001), supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the U.S. Office for Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

(OJJDP), has sought to identify and encourage replication of effective programs for youth violence prevention. The initiative relied on a panel of national experts in the field of violence prevention to identify 11 model programs or "Blueprints." The panel used a number of criteria to select programs, including evidence of a deterrent effect, as shown with a strong research design, an effect lasting at least 1 year beyond treatment, at least one successful replication, and data on the program's cost effectiveness. Among the programs that met the criteria to be identified as Blueprint programs were schoolwide bullying prevention (Olweus & Limber, 1999), mentoring through Big Brothers and Big Sisters (McGill, Mihalic, & Grotper, 1998), and the Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies program (Greenberg, Kusche, & Mihalic, 1998)—a school-based program to promote emotional competence.

Currently, the Blueprints Initiative is assisting in the dissemination of these programs, and documenting barriers to implementation in 112 sites involving 290 schools (Mihalic et al., 2001). Early results have identified four factors that are important in ensuring treatment fidelity, including a local needs assessment, adequate buy-in at the local level, adequate resources to support training and material needs for the program, and a strong local commitment to high quality and complete implementation.

### *Youth Violence: Report of the U.S. Surgeon General*

At the urging of Congress and the Clinton administration, the U.S. Surgeon General requested the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Institutes of Health, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration to prepare a report on youth violence in the United States. The resulting report (Elliott et al., 2001) summarizes the current status of knowledge in the field of youth violence.

The Surgeon General's report reviewed the findings of a number of previous reports to identify best practices in youth violence prevention—"what works, what is promising, and what doesn't work." Standards used in judging the quality of programs included rigor of experimental

design, replication of the results, extent of statistical significance, and long-term changes in individual competencies, environmental conditions, and patterns of behavior. Among the programs identified as effective or promising by the Surgeon General were the Seattle Social Development project combining teacher and parent training (Hawkins, Von Cleve, & Catalano, 1991), and interpersonal problem solving training for students (Shure & Spivack, 1982).

### *Summary: What Works in Teaching Appropriate Behavior*

The effective strategies and programs identified by the previously mentioned researchers, such as improved classroom management and instruction in social competencies, represent the emergence of a new perspective on school discipline and violence prevention. In contrast to what we know about suspension and expulsion, these strategies have produced solid evidence of success in improving student behavior and school climate. Many of the most effective strategies have provided some evidence concerning treatment fidelity, although further study of school-based implementation is clearly needed. Finally, in contrast to disciplinary removal, at least some of these strategies have been shown to be effective in improving outcomes in urban, predominantly minority settings (Hammond & Yung, 1991).

### **The Safe and Responsive Schools Project: Schoolwide Planning for Instruction in the Social Curriculum**

If discipline can be defined as teaching students the behaviors that they need in order to succeed socially in school, disciplinary removal has proven to be an ineffective tool for reaching that goal. Rather, an alternate perspective, stressing instruction and prevention, appears to hold greater promise for teaching students appropriate prosocial behavior. The challenge in putting that perspective into practice is to find effective methods of implementing research-based practices in school discipline and school violence prevention.

The Safe and Responsive Schools project (SRS), funded by a 3-year grant from the U.S. Department of Education Office

of Special Education Programs, has sought to enable schools and school districts to develop a broader perspective on school safety, stressing comprehensive planning, prevention, and parent and community involvement. The goals of the project have been to increase the knowledge base of teachers and administrators concerning what works in discipline and violence prevention and to develop a comprehensive model of systems change in school discipline. Working from a three-tiered primary prevention model, the SRS project has been implemented in rural, suburban, and urban schools in two states to assist them in developing school safety plans.<sup>1</sup>

Over their 1st year of involvement in the project, participating schools formed Safe and Responsive School Teams that engaged in a year-long needs assessment process, surveying students, teachers, and parents, and conducted an inventory of their available resources and strategies for violence prevention. At the same time, teams reviewed the knowledge base concerning best practice in discipline and violence prevention in schools, including fact sheets on a variety of topics prepared by project staff. By the end of their 1st year, the teams used the information they had gathered to engage in a strategic planning process culminating in the development of a comprehensive Safe and Responsive School Plan. Those plans were implemented and evaluated in the 2nd and 3rd year of the project. As can be noted in Table 1, the plans developed by participating schools showed remarkable diversity, reflecting the unique needs of each school.

Evaluation data after 1 year of implementation of the school plans are highly encouraging. Table 2 shows that among the first five pilot schools in the state of Indiana, out-of-school suspensions for the entire school showed a decline ranging from 40% to 60%. Gains extended as well to students with disabilities. One middle school showed a drop from 39 suspensions for students with disabilities in 1999–2000 to 0 in 2000–2001.

It is instructive to highlight the experience of one participating school: Owen Valley High School in rural Spencer, Indiana. During its planning year, the team identified as one of its major problems the

**TABLE 1**  
**New Programs Implemented in SRS Schools**  
**as a Result of Project Participation**

School	Key components of safe and responsive schools plan
Owen Valley High School	<i>Intervention Room</i> —Students are referred to the Intervention Room for classroom behavior problems prior to office referral <i>Classroom Management Training</i> —Workshop in August (before school year) for all faculty members featuring national school discipline expert
Owen Valley Middle School	<i>Safe Schools TV Show</i> —Videotaped role plays and lessons broadcast over school's closed circuit television system, including anger management and conflict resolution; based on "Second Step: A Violence Prevention Curriculum" <i>Parent Newsletter</i> —Newsletter sent home once a month detailing activities and events, especially pertaining to school safety
McCormick's Creek Elementary	<i>Lifeskills</i> —Faculty generated list of 10 key social skills taught to students once per week during class; rewards provided for students who display the lifeskill of the week <i>Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) Curriculum</i> —Nationally validated conflict resolution curriculum taught to all students once a week during class
Edgewood High School	<i>Civility Themes</i> —School activities and events revolve around a selected theme; currently under development <i>Alternatives to Out-of-School Suspension</i> —Coordinated with local juvenile justice agency; habitually suspended students attend alternative placement during suspension rather than being suspended to home
Edgewood Junior High School	<i>The Code</i> —Consists of four principles to guide student behavior; students exhibiting code-following behavior are nominated by teachers and receive schoolwide recognition, including a postcard sent home and writing their name on the "Wall of Fame" <i>Civility Curriculum</i> —Curriculum being taught to all students during Home Economics; developed to uphold principles of the Code
Beatrice High School	<i>Out of Classroom Intervention (OCI)</i> —cool-down time for students instead of office referral; students complete problem-solving form <i>Beatrice After School Education (BASE)</i> —Behavior management program for students chronically in contact with school discipline
Cedar and Lincoln Elementary Schools	<i>Bullying Prevention</i> —Nationally renowned bullying expert presented several workshops on the topic of bullying; distributed bullying survey; bullying prevention and awareness week at each school
Stoddard and Paddock Lane Elementary Schools	<i>Resource Book</i> —Collection of community resources including information on health care, support agencies, and hotlines; copies available at each building <i>Mentoring Program</i> —High school students paired with elementary students who may benefit from a mentoring relationship; support and training provided to mentors

**TABLE 2**  
**Total Number of Suspensions for Participating SRS Schools:**  
**1999–2000 and 2000–2001 School Years<sup>a</sup>**

School	1999–2000	2000–2001
Spencer Owen		
Owen Valley High School	397	171
Owen Valley Middle School	1,293	687
Richland Bean Blossom		
Edgewood High School	205	179
Edgewood Junior High School	577	42

<sup>a</sup>These data are based on the Suspension Report submitted each year to the Indiana Department of Education.

tremendous numbers of referrals to the office, especially for minor misbehavior. School staff commented on a line of chairs outside the office in which students lined up to see administrators for their referrals. To respond to this issue, the school team developed an innovative new program called the Intervention Room. Staffed by both a general education teacher and a special education teacher, the Intervention Room functions in part as a resource room for students with disabilities who need academic assistance, but more importantly, as an option for teachers for disruptive students, both disabled and nondisabled, prior to office referral. Students referred to the intervention room for behavioral issues first meet with the intervention room teachers. Sometimes a simple problem, such as lack of materials, can be solved and the student can return immediately to his or her classroom. In cases of more substantial conflict, intervention room teachers process the incident with the student, attempt to help the student take responsibility for his or her behavior, and assist the student in returning to the classroom with a plan for avoiding future problems. SRS team members at Owen Valley High School attribute many of the changes in their disciplinary data to the Intervention Room and note that there is no longer a row of chairs lined up outside the main office. Finally, these improvements reflect a relationship between positive discipline and academic excellence: In the 2001–2002 school year, Owen Valley High School was one of six schools in the nation that won the prestigious New

American High School Award from the U.S. Department of Education in recognition for its reform efforts and increased academic excellence.

### Conclusions

These data provide a hopeful sign that it is possible to develop a system of discipline that is not dependent on cessation of educational opportunity through disciplinary removal, but relies instead on prevention, instruction, and an appropriate continuum of effective responses. The data are also consistent with findings of national panels whose rigorous criteria identified programs that rely on instruction, collaboration, and prevention rather than exclusion and punishment.

An instructional approach to school discipline reflects the consistent findings of behavioral and cognitive psychology concerning which procedures are most likely to be effective in producing student learning. Extensive study of negative consequences has shown that punishment, especially punishment alone, cannot teach new behavior (Council for Exceptional Children, 1991; Skinner, 1953). In order to be effective, punishment requires a degree of control of situational variables that is unlikely to be achieved in most school settings. Without such control, the side effects of punishment—escape, habituation, and counter-aggression (Axelrod & Apsche, 1983)—will in all likelihood swamp any possible behavioral gains. In contrast, process-product research has identified a host of instructional and management strategies that are associated with posi-

tive academic outcomes. There is no reason why effective instructional strategies such as advanced organizers, direct instruction, or feedback and corrections (Slavin, 2000) that have been shown to improve academic outcomes cannot also be used to instruct students in the social expectations of classrooms and schools. In short, teaching the social curriculum is simply drawing upon our best knowledge in order to teach our children the behaviors they need to be successful in school and in life.

### NOTE

<sup>1</sup>Further information about the project can be found on the Safe and Responsive Schools website: [www.indiana.edu/~safeschl](http://www.indiana.edu/~safeschl).

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SOURCE: Prev Sch Failure 47 no2 Wint 2003

WN: 0334901133004

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