

Excerpted from
A Notion at Risk: Preserving Public Education as an Engine for Social Mobility,
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7.

UNEQUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS: DISCIPLINE THAT WORKS

PAUL E. BARTON

Of all the commonly acknowledged reasons for inequality among American schools, policymakers often underemphasize the significance of student behavior. Schools in poor neighborhoods generally have higher levels of disorder, disruption, and fear, all of which impede the learning of low-income students. This chapter is about those behaviors: what they are, how they impact learning, what approaches are being tried to change them, and with what results.

EXTENT OF THE PROBLEM

Murder and Violence

Recently, the nation's attention has been riveted on media reports about serious injury and murder of students and teachers at school. In the combined school years of 1992–93 and 1993–94, the last time specific data on these events were collected, sixty-three students were murdered at

school, an average of 31.5 per year. In addition, there were twenty-nine nonstudent personnel who met violent deaths, or 14.5 per year. Longer-term trend data are not available.¹

During the 1996–97 school year, 12 percent of middle schools and 13 percent of high schools reported to police that a physical attack or fight with some type of weapon had taken place on school grounds. In 1993, 7.9 percent of twelfth-graders reported carrying some kind of weapon to school. This number declined to 5.7 percent in 1996. In 1994, just over 3 percent reported carrying a gun to school, about the same as in 1996.²

These incidents are horrifying and rightly warrant the attention of the education and policy communities. However, they are relatively infrequent for a country with some of the highest rates of violence in the developed world, one in which 99 percent of all child homicides occur off school grounds. The terrible acts of violence cited above certainly affect learning when they occur; in the case of the tragedy in Columbine, Colorado, the last two months of school were largely wiped out. But this chapter focuses on the problems that remain unseen and that affect the learning climate day-in and day-out. It is the less serious behaviors that are widespread—and growing—that have the largest adverse impact on students' learning.

Fear

The question beyond how much physical injury occurs is how much fear is engendered by the environment in schools. In 1996–97, about one in five middle and high schools—rising to over a third for city middle schools and almost half of city high schools—reported to police that “serious violent incidents” had occurred.³ In 1996, 7 percent of male and 3 percent of female twelfth-graders reported that they had been injured with a weapon at school; 18 percent of males and 10 percent of females had been threatened with a weapon; another 13 percent of males and 11 percent of females had been injured without a weapon; and 27 percent of males and 17 percent of females had been threatened with injury. That adds up to two-thirds of males and two-fifths of females being threatened or injured. These figures have not changed much over the past twenty years. Such high levels of actual violence and weapons-carrying are bound to make students fearful for

their safety. Street gangs also are a fact of life for a great many students. In 1989, 15 percent of twelve- to nineteen-year-old students reported that street gangs were present at their school, rising to 28 percent by 1995. For urban schools, the figure was 40 percent in 1995. While the number of students carrying weapons to school is down or stable, the presence of gangs has risen, and these are bound to contribute in some degree to the level of fear, tension, and distraction in schools.⁴

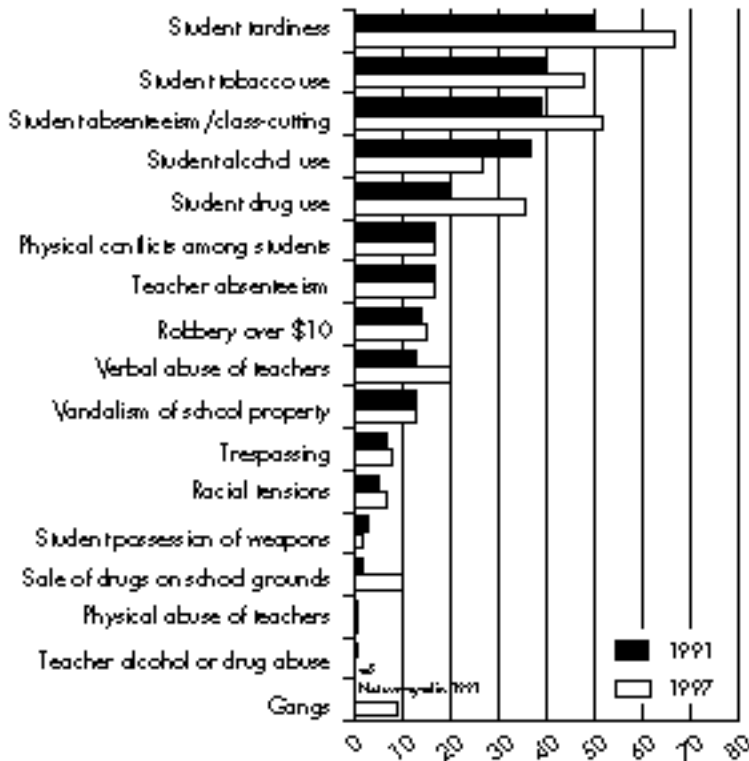
By all conventional measures, fear is rising in the nation's schools. In 1989, 6 percent of all twelve- to nineteen-year-old students reported fear of physical violence at school, and 4 percent feared going to and from school. These percentages had risen to 9 and 7 percent, respectively, by 1995. A similar percentage of students reported that they avoided one or more places in school out of fear. The percentages are considerably higher for minorities and students in urban schools. For black students in suburban schools, the figure is one in six who avoided places in school.⁵

Fear in urban schools parallels fear in the neighborhood. In a 1998 MetLife Survey, 44 percent of urban students said they were worried "about being physically attacked in or around" school, compared with 28 percent of suburban or rural students. Similarly, 45 percent of urban students were worried about the level of crime in their neighborhoods, while just 29 percent of suburban or rural students were.⁶

Disruption and Distraction

While murder, injury, and fear create disruption and distraction in schools and classrooms, many day-in and day-out student behaviors have an even greater impact on the teaching and learning processes. In Figure 7.1 (page 226), seventeen behaviors are arrayed by the degree to which public school principals believed the behaviors were serious problems in their schools. Student tardiness tops the list of disruptive behaviors, with half of the principals describing it as a serious or moderately serious problem in their schools in 1990–91. This figure rose to two in three in 1996–97. The more serious behaviors of absenteeism and cutting class were the second most frequently cited in 1996–97, identified by half the principals, and up from two in five from the previous period. Student use of tobacco, alcohol, and drugs

FIGURE 7.1. PERCENTAGE OF PUBLIC SCHOOL PRINCIPALS REPORTING THAT VARIOUS DISCIPLINE ISSUES WERE SERIOUS OR MODERATE PROBLEMS IN THEIR HIGH SCHOOLS, 1990–91 AND 1996–97

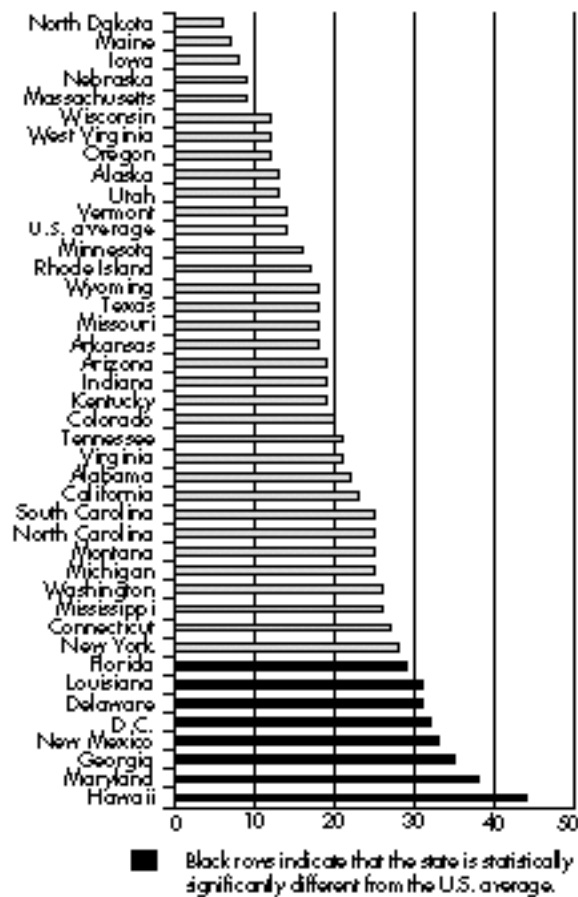


Source: Paul E. Barton, Richard J. Coley, and Harold Wenglinsky, "Order in the Classroom: Violence, Discipline, and Student Achievement," Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.J., October 1998 [based on NCES, 1998].

are also high on the list, with a statistically significant increase in drug use from 1990–91 to 1996–97 (although alcohol use declined). There also was a significant increase in principals identifying drug sales on school grounds as a problem from 1990–91 to 1996–97. One in five principals identified verbal abuse of teachers as a problem in 1996–97, a significant increase from the prior period. The other ten behaviors showed no statistically significant differences between the two periods.

These national averages hide the considerable variation around the nation. To illustrate, Figure 7.2 shows the state-to-state variation in schools reporting that physical conflicts are a serious or moderate problem. Within the United States average of 14 percent, there was a low of 6 percent in North Dakota and a high of 44 percent in Hawaii. Of

FIGURE 7.2. PERCENTAGE OF EIGHTH-GRADERS WHOSE SCHOOLS REPORT THAT PHYSICAL CONFLICTS ARE A MODERATE OR SERIOUS PROBLEM IN THEIR SCHOOL, 1996



Source: Paul E. Barton, Richard J. Coley, and Harold Wenglinsky, "Order in the Classroom: Violence, Discipline, and Student Achievement," Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.J., October 1998 [based on *NAEP 1996 Mathematics Assessment*].

course, these are the schools' perceptions of the degree of the problem; there also may be variation in the degree to which principals view identical incidence of conflict as a problem.

It is not encouraging that in this decade of emphatic education reform, improvement was found only in the use of alcohol at school from 1990–91 to 1996–97. In terms of disruption in schools and classrooms, most negative behaviors are not trending in the right direction.

Concentration in Poorer Schools, Inner Cities, and Minority Populations

Most of the statistics provided above are averages for the United States or whole states. However, these disruptive behaviors are more severe in inner cities and in schools with high concentrations of minority students and students from low-income backgrounds.

There is great disparity between these less advantaged schools and their more advantaged counterparts in the most serious kind of violence. In the school years 1992–93 and 1993–94, the number of deaths by murder and suicide at school varied widely according to race. Of all murders and suicides, 50 percent were black and 25 percent were Hispanic. In inner-city public schools in 1993–94, 24 percent of teachers reported that they were either physically attacked or threatened with injury by a student, compared with only 13 percent for rural areas.⁷

In 1995, for ages twelve to nineteen, 16 percent of Hispanic students and 13 percent of black students feared being attacked or harmed at school. Only 6 percent of white students had the same fear. Fourteen percent of Hispanic, 13 percent of black, and 4 percent of white students reported such fear going to and from school.⁸ And 13 percent of Hispanic, 12 percent of black, and 7 percent of white students avoided going to one or more places within their schools.

As noted before, street gangs became more prevalent from 1989 to 1995. While 23 percent of all twelve- to nineteen-year-old students reported street gangs in their school in 1995, 54 percent of urban Hispanics and 48 percent of suburban Hispanics reported their presence, as did 42 percent of urban blacks and 33 percent of suburban blacks. Older students were much more likely to report gang activity at school than younger students: 31 percent of nineteen-year-olds compared to 19

percent of twelve-year-olds. Among urban nineteen-year-olds, 54 percent reported street gangs.⁹

In reports from public schools of a composite of seventeen discipline issues in 1996–97, there was considerable disparity in incidence by school size, minority enrollment, and income of the surrounding areas. Of schools with fewer than three hundred students, 10 percent reported one or more discipline problems, compared to 38 percent of schools with one thousand or more students. This disparity existed irrespective of whether schools were in an urban, suburban, or rural area. Minority enrollment made a significant difference as well: schools that had minority levels at 50 percent or more were over twice as likely to report discipline problems as were schools that were less than 5 percent minority. Low income, defined by the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-price lunches, affected discipline levels in rural areas and in the urban fringe.¹⁰

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DISCIPLINE AND ACHIEVEMENT

The late Albert Shanker used to say that if there is no discipline in the classroom there is no learning. Almost all teachers would likely agree. It is important, however, to examine the extent to which this is really true, as well as for what kind of behaviors it is true and how much changes in these behaviors improve or worsen student achievement. And, more specifically, how does disruptive behavior in schools and classrooms affect inner-city and minority youth, where the lags in achievement are the greatest?

Unfortunately, there have been no large-scale, national research studies specifically designed to answer these questions. One large study of school disorder was conducted in 1978 by the National Institute of Education, in response to a request by Congress. It found extensive problems of disorder in schools. There were, however, no corresponding measures of student achievement, so there is no way to explore the relationship between disorder and achievement through these data.

In 1998, Harold Wenglinsky of the ETS Policy Information Center specifically addressed disorder as it relates to achievement.¹¹ He analyzed the National Educational Longitudinal Survey,¹² which measured achievement and had extensive questionnaires about student behaviors and the policies that schools use to affect these behaviors. The survey

was administered first in 1988, in the eighth grade, and then again in the tenth and twelfth grades. Wenglinsky ended up with usable information from 13,626 students. The frequency of both serious and non-serious offence was found to be negatively related to academic achievement in all four subject areas studied (mathematics, science, reading, and social science). The results from his analysis are summarized in Table 7.1.

Another critical issue is the role discipline and student behavior play in (1) whether people decide to go into teaching, (2) whether teachers move to other teaching locations, and (3) whether teachers leave the profession. While few data are available on the first two questions, a fair amount of information is available regarding teachers who leave the profession. Also, some data are available about the views of current teachers.

A first concern of teachers is the amount of disciplinary control they have over the classroom. In 1993–94, in the National Center for Education Statistics School and Staffing Survey,¹³ teachers were asked specifically about areas over which they feel they have control. For the public school teachers surveyed, only 38 percent “thought that they had a great deal of influence on setting discipline policies.” This is about the same degree of control they felt they had over the classroom curriculum. Meanwhile, more than 6 percent of teachers believed they had little or no influence. These statistics suggest that teachers have a considerable feeling of powerlessness in dealing with problems. But the public school data contrast sharply with that from private school teachers, of whom almost six in ten (the reverse) said they had a great deal of influence over discipline.

There is not a great deal of variation in the answers about discipline among teachers from central cities, urban fringes and large towns, and rural areas. However, school size does make an enormous difference, within each of these geographical categories. The percentage saying that they have influence over discipline in schools with fewer than 150 students is double the percentage who say this in schools of 750 or more (although much of this difference is due to the fact that many of the smaller schools are elementary schools, where teachers consistently say they have considerably more influence).

Given only one question asked in the survey about control, it is hard to interpret the results. Are teachers referring only to policies, such as the authority they have to deal with particular situations, or

TABLE 7.1. BETWEEN-SCHOOL COMPARISONS: THE NEGATIVE CORRELATION BETWEEN DELINQUENCY AND ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

	SERIOUS	NONSERIOUS	DRUGS
MATH			
Urban		3	3
Nonurban	3	3	
Public	3	3	
Private			3
READING			
Urban	3		
Nonurban	3	3	
Public	3	3	
Private	3		
SOCIAL SCIENCE			
Urban		3	
Nonurban	3	3	
Public	3	3	
Private			
SCIENCE			
Urban		3	3
Nonurban	3	3	
Public	3	3	3
Private			3

Note: 3 indicates a negative correlation.

Source: Paul E. Barton, Richard J. Coley, and Harold Wenglinsky, "Order in the Classroom: Violence, Discipline, and Student Achievement," Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.J., October 1998 [based on Wenglinsky, unpublished tabulations derived from NELS:88].

are they speaking more broadly about the degree of control they are given? We need to know more about what they believe accounts for their lack of control.

Analysis of the School and Staffing Survey data leads to a firm conclusion that discipline does make a difference in whether teachers leave. Researchers at the American Institutes for Research and at the National Center for Education Statistics performed a statistical analysis with the

data to identify factors associated with turnover (those factors were within the school, whether the exiting individual remained within the district, moved to another school elsewhere, or left education altogether). In each case, the turnover resulted in a decrease in teaching staff for the particular school.¹⁴

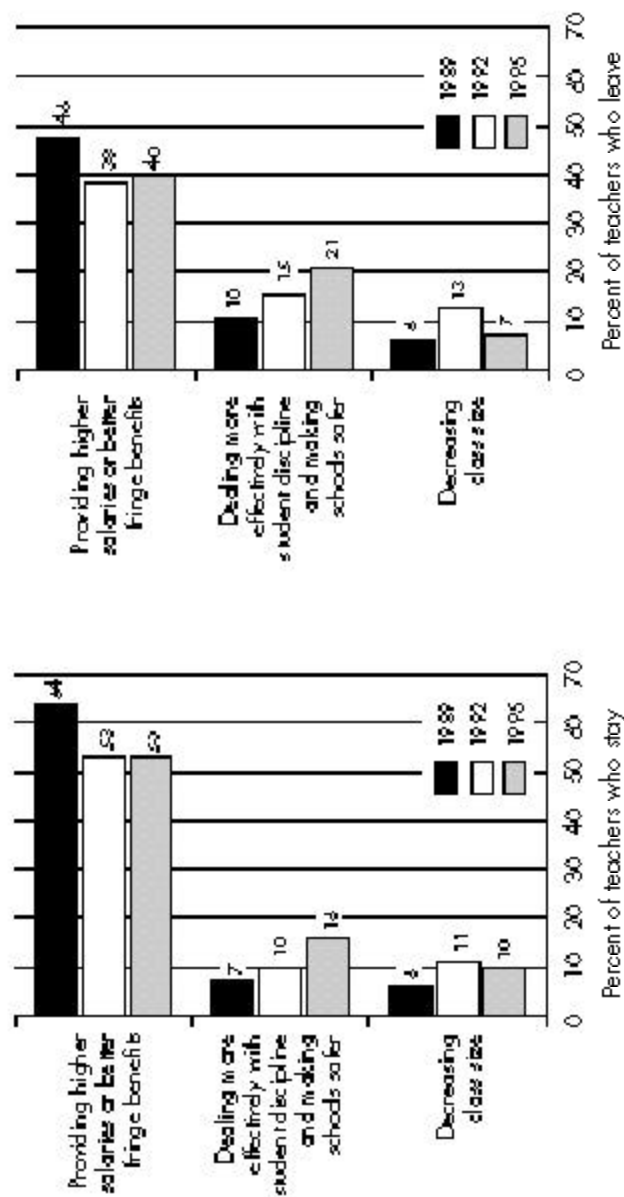
Differences in the rates of turnover were analyzed across different types of schools, including: “key characteristics of schools [such as size]; the level of poverty or affluence of the population served by the school (recipients of free lunch in public schools, tuition levels in private schools); some key demographic characteristics of the school faculty (levels of education, training, experience, and race); basic elements of faculty compensation packages; and important aspects of working conditions in schools.” Two aspects of the working environment were found to be significant. Turnover rates in schools where teachers reported lower levels of control and influence were “distinctly” higher. Also, “higher levels in reported student discipline problems were associated with distinctly higher levels of turnover.”

It is encouraging that the characteristics of being poor and urban themselves did not result in differences in turnover rates. Teacher control and student behavior contributed most. This suggests that we can keep more teachers if we can deal with the specific problems of student behavior, in inner cities as well as in suburbs.

When former teachers are asked why they left the profession, the four most common reasons are retirement, pregnancy/child rearing, pursuing another career, and a family or personal move. “Dissatisfied with teaching as a career” is the fifth most common reason, accounting for 9 percent of teachers leaving the profession in 1988–89 and 5 percent in 1994–95.¹⁵ This figure is the same for teachers leaving both public and private schools. While many of the causes of turnover would be hard to alter, reviewing the causes of dissatisfaction could reveal avenues for reducing it.

Of those teachers who leave for reasons of dissatisfaction, how many are dissatisfied because of problems with student discipline and behaviors? In 1994–95, 18 percent of teachers leaving because of dissatisfaction attributed their departure to “student discipline problems,” double the percentage in 1988–89. In addition, 18 percent cited “poor student motivation to learn,” about the same as in 1988–89.¹⁶ The relative importance of discipline problems also is revealed by teachers’ responses to what steps they thought would be “most effective to encourage teachers to remain in teaching.” Figure 7.3 shows that the

FIGURE 7.3. PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHER OPINIONS ON EFFECTIVE STEPS TO ENCOURAGE TEACHERS TO REMAIN IN TEACHING, 1988-89, 1991-92, AND 1994-95



Source: Summer D. Whitener et al., *Characteristics of Stayers, Movers, and Leavers: Results from the Teacher Followup Survey, 1994-95*, NCES 97-450 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 1997), p. 17.

discipline problem falls between salaries/fringe benefits and decreasing class size in importance. Given the strong public interest in decreasing class size as a means to raise achievement, it is revealing that teachers think—at least from their own standpoint—that discipline is a more important matter. Moreover, the percentage citing discipline as important doubled from 1988–89 to 1994–95, both among teachers who stayed and among those who left.

The 1999 MetLife Survey sheds some light on where these concerns are most concentrated. The MetLife survey asked teachers, “How much of a factor would you say the problem of violence in your school is on teachers leaving your school—a major factor, a minor factor or not a factor?” Only 2 percent of teachers said it was a major factor, and 17 percent said a minor factor (81 percent said it was not a factor). But there was some variation. Most significantly, where the quality of education was judged only fair to poor, 18 percent called the problem of violence a major factor and 33 percent said it was a minor factor. Meanwhile, where many or all of the students were minority, 5 percent said violence was a major factor and 27 percent said it was a minor factor, roughly the same as when many or all of the students came from low-income families.¹⁷

APPROACHES TO DISCIPLINE

There is considerable variation in the methods used to improve discipline and reduce classroom disruption, ranging from statewide approaches to individual school district initiatives. Because many of these initiatives are new or not part of a research design, there is currently little scientific evaluation of them. However, some have been evaluated, and there is much anecdotal evidence about others.

New State Laws

Under the Constitution, the individual states are responsible for education. And in the last two decades, states have been very active in “education reform.” In the 1980s, they required students to take more rigorous courses to graduate, and in the 1990s, they instituted “standards-based” reform, which spelled out what students should know and then subjected them to

relentless standardized tests. But comprehensive approaches to school violence and discipline generally have not been part of the reform effort, and when there has been action taken, it is *safety* that has been the focus, not the day-in, day-out, disruptive behaviors that interfere with teaching and learning.

In the latter half of the 1990s, Texas and West Virginia enacted statewide laws that not only address safety but also give greater control to the classroom teacher. West Virginia passed the Productive and Safe Schools Act in 1995, specifying a wide range of disruptive behaviors and identifying who in the school system is responsible for correcting them. The law also included a zero tolerance policy for guns, violence, and drugs on school grounds and at school events. Students in violation of this policy could receive one-year mandatory suspension or expulsion.¹⁸ Texas passed the Safe Schools Act, also in 1995. Under this law, school districts established codes of conduct that students could be removed from the classroom or the school for violating. These codes also specified the conditions for suspension or expulsion. The law gave legal authority to teachers to remove students from the classroom for unruly, disruptive behavior.

The American Federation of Teachers played a critical role in shaping these laws by polling and surveying teachers and by pressuring the state legislatures. The teacher surveys in particular disclosed strikingly high incidences of problem behaviors in classrooms and hallways before the laws were enacted. West Virginia teachers were surveyed in 1994, before the passage of the law, and then again after, in 1997. A major finding of the survey was that, in 1994, only 7 percent of teachers were satisfied with the discipline policies, and in 1997, 71 percent were satisfied. The proportion of teachers reporting that discipline policies had improved was 67 percent, weapons incidents were down 70 percent, assaults on teachers were down 50 percent, and threats of violence were down 41 percent.¹⁹ Serious concerns among the teachers still existed, however. Seventy-five percent of teachers still said that they experienced some level of classroom disruption on a typical day, and 25 percent said that alternative education is not available in their county for students who must be removed from regular schools.

The Texas Federation of Teachers also surveyed teachers in 1993 and 1996. After the passage of the Safe Schools Act, there were reductions in threats of violence to students and teachers, in assaults on students and teachers, in abusive language directed to teachers, and in

theft.²⁰ However, a troubling finding from the 1996 survey in Texas was that only 34 percent of teachers said that their school district had tried to enforce the Safe Schools Act, while 36 percent said it had not, and 30 percent were not sure. Still, it is impressive and encouraging to find that teachers in both states believe the situation is improving as a result of these laws.

Classroom Management

The media today talk a lot about the teaching skills of teachers: what their average SAT scores were when they applied to college compared to people going into other fields, how many are not certified, and how many are “teaching out of field.” We hear little about the very difficult job they have of managing classroom behavior to ensure that students learn the subject matter being taught. In fact, almost all of standards-based reform is about subject matter content and standardized tests, but effective teaching and student learning involves a lot more.

Brenda Williams of the Broward Teachers Union of Broward County, Florida, summarizes the situation as follows:

A teacher who has mastered these [classroom management] skills keeps students constructively engaged and learning from the moment they enter the room. Everything that occurs in the classroom is planned, from the seating arrangement to the instructions for students who finish their work early. To the untrained eye, a teacher’s management skills may appear to be more art than science, leaving the impression that effective classroom management is instinctive rather than a learned craft. But let me assure you that effective classroom management can be taught and with time and effort, teachers can—and do—become more effective as managers.²¹

Williams describes the requirements for a complete classroom management approach, starting with districtwide codes covering discipline and containing “clear and precise language with specific examples of behaviors that will result in disciplinary action.” The next steps, as outlined by the Alliance of Quality Schools (AQS) in Broward County, are consistent enforcement of the discipline code at the school level,

ensuring that students learn how to correct their behaviors before they become ingrained, establishing alternative education sites for chronically disruptive and violent students, and wide-scale support for these policies in the broader community. The AQS is a comprehensive research-based model focusing on the interrelated areas of reading, writing, mathematics, parental involvement, and social behaviors. It has operated in Title I schools in Broward County, Seattle, and Cincinnati. To qualify for an AQS program, 80 percent of a school's teachers must vote for it to ensure that the effort has satisfactory support.

In 1994, twenty-five schools in the Ft. Lauderdale-area district were listed as "critically low performing." Now, "after intensive reform through the homegrown AQS program and an infusion of extra cash, all twenty-five low-performing schools are off the list."²² This local effort was modeled after several nationally acclaimed programs, such as Success For All. Each school in the AQS is assigned a former teacher as a coach for half the week to help teachers develop the skills they need. This approach is viewed by the AQS as more effective than retreats or workshops.

Another program to deal with discipline and classroom behavior is Consistency Management and Cooperative Discipline (CMCD) in Houston, Texas.²³ CMCD is a classroom management program that incorporates a shared responsibility between teachers and students for learning and classroom organization. It is designed to "help students prepare for success, achieve self discipline, and develop responsibility . . . through an emphasis on prevention rather than intervention, shared responsibility, and cooperation between teacher and student, value based discipline, increased communication with parents, and effective instruction." Professor H. Jerome Freiberg has reported on the results of ten years of research and evaluation of CMCD, describing reductions in referrals to the principal's office, gains in student and teacher attendance, increases in student achievement, and improvements in classroom climate as reported by students, teachers, and principals.

Character Education and the Curriculum

The approaches described above are almost always in addition to the regular school curriculum designed to impart academic knowledge. But there is a substantial movement in the United States to include

instruction within the curriculum that would build character and thereby change student behavior. American education took on the task of developing character when public schools began, and such directed effort reemerged in the 1980s under the terminology of moral development.

The idea of a curriculum approach to developing character gained momentum at the 1992 Aspen Conference on Character Education, which produced the Aspen Declaration. The declaration contained eight points and addressed society as a whole, not just the schools; one of its points states: "Character education is, first and foremost, an obligation of families; it is also an important obligation of faith communities, schools, youth, and other human service organizations." This declaration led to the Character Counts!TM approach and the Character Counts Coalition. This coalition is the product of the Josephson Institute of Ethics and combines national and regional education organizations, national youth development and service organizations, and community organizations. The goal of the coalition is to instill the right values in students, leading to the students becoming responsible citizens at school and in the community.

Another initiative is the Fund for the Improvement of Education, a division of the U.S. Department of Education, which since 1995 has administered the Character Education Partnership Grant in the amount of \$10 million a year. These grants are made to partnerships of state education agencies and local schools, which together compete for the grants. So far, awards have been made in thirty-two states.

All programs must incorporate the following six elements of character: caring, civic virtue and citizenship, justice and fairness, respect, responsibility, and trustworthiness.²⁴ The state-school partnerships take many different approaches to advancing character education. Evaluation is emphasized in each program in order to help the states determine the most effective curricula.

The state of Maryland has completed a comprehensive evaluation covering the first year of its character education program, carried out with a Character Education Partnership Grant from the U.S. Department of Education. There was a dramatic improvement in school climate for all five districts participating. The large differences in perceptions between teachers and students narrowed during the year. Interestingly, school personnel saw the improvement in teacher-student relations as mainly coming from student improvement, the students

saw it coming mainly from teacher treatment, and parents saw it in a safer school community.²⁵

An important organization in the field of character education is the Character Education Partnership (CEP), a national nonprofit coalition of more than six hundred organizations and individuals. CEP is working to place character education at the top of the nation's agenda and to help create a new generation of "character educators" in schools throughout the country. CEP activities and projects include annual school and district awards for exemplary programs; a National Resource Center and website (www.character.org); a compilation of research studies, assessment surveys, and self-help materials; and advocacy for teacher preparation in character education.

Some Partners that Help

The programs described thus far are largely located in the school and run by the school administration, although outside organizations sometimes develop the approaches and assist the school in carrying them out and evaluating their effectiveness. But there are also programs that are run primarily by an outside organization.

COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING AND SCHOOL-TO-CAREER. Dr. Ann Southworth, the principal of Putnam Vocational Technical High School in Springfield, Massachusetts, was the driving force in reshaping her school. She describes her school before its improvement as "a school in danger of losing accreditation, wrought with violence and gang activity, with low attendance (70 percent) and high dropout rates." Now the school is described as safe and nonviolent; its students are in the National Honor Society and take advanced placement courses; the attendance rate is 93 percent; and students are "engaged, learning more, working in teams, respecting themselves and wanting to stay in school."²⁶

Putnam combines community service projects (called Community Service Learning) with partnerships with employers in school-to-work programs (called School-to-Careers), utilizing the whole community for student learning and experience. The community projects include long-term activities, such as the rejuvenation of the Campanile, Springfield's bell tower, which was destroyed by fire ninety years ago.

This project was started by an honors English class that held a fund-raising drive, and students have been responsible for all phases of the project. Other projects include a comprehensive school-based health center and building a replica of a nineteenth-century trolley and trolley barn. In School-to-Careers, the teachers work with private and public employers to create integrated curriculum and internship opportunities.

A SCHOOL POLICE FORCE. The Los Angeles Union School District (LAUSD) has its own, independent, school police force that cooperates with the regular police force. It costs \$27 million per year to maintain its 312-member police department, which is paid out of the school budget. Los Angeles schools have had some form of security service for fifty years, but a school police department was not created until there was state authorizing legislation in 1984.²⁷

The rate of violence in the LAUSD has fallen in recent years. Yet rather than focus on the incidence of violence, School Police Chief Wesley Mitchell says it is more prudent to focus “on the emotional security of students, staff, and the community. . . . It is the fear of violence that does the most harm to our educational system.” In addition to normal policing duties and attendance at student functions, the school police do a variety of things, including speaking to classes, counseling teachers on working with students, and counseling students. They also provide counseling to parents. Officers rarely are hired from regular police departments in order to avoid hiring people with bad habits learned elsewhere; Los Angeles is looking for “individuals who want to make a difference in the lives of children rather than those who simply want to be police officers.” So far there has been no specialized training available for the school policemen, but the National Organization of Black Executives has begun the development of a special curriculum.

BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS WITH LOCAL SCHOOLS. Boys and girls clubs operate throughout the United States and have a positive track record in efforts to reduce crime and raise educational achievement. They also can partner with the schools. In Delaware, fifty young people who were about to be expelled or to quit school enrolled in the local club’s educational program. Based on tests from before and after enrollment, 67 percent improved their grades and 68 percent showed improvements in their self-esteem.²⁸

A Public Health Viewpoint

There are a number of lenses through which we can view student violence and classroom disruption. The media have highlighted the approach of building character through teacher initiatives, conflict resolution, school uniforms, and myriad other ways. But these problems also can be viewed as a public health issue: how to prevent injury due to violence.²⁹

Four questions are commonly addressed in a public health approach: What is the problem? (called *surveillance*); What are the causes? (called *risk factor research*); What works to help prevent the problem? (called *intervention evaluation*); and, How do you do it? (called *program implementation*). However, while this is the desired sequence of action, it isn't always followed, according to Mark Rosenberg of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "Violence among our youth is an urgent problem. Sometimes, the urgency of a problem forces us to take action before we have time to complete all the steps, and we must learn as we go how to refine our efforts and to provide the science base for our programs that others are implementing."

Based on the research that has been performed, Rosenberg identifies the following risk factors, or causes of violence among students:

- u Individual factors: history of early aggression, beliefs supportive of violence, attributing hostility to others, and social cognitive deficits
- u Family factors: problematic parental/caregiver behavior, low emotional attachment to parent/caregiver, poor monitoring and supervision of children, exposure to violence, and poor family functioning
- u Peer/school factors: negative peer influences, low commitment to school, academic failure, and school environment problems such as undisciplined classrooms
- u Environment/neighborhood factors: high concentrations of poor residents, high levels of transience, high levels of family disruption, low community involvement/participation, diminished economic opportunity, and access to firearms

This list illuminates the acute risk of school violence in central cities, where there are high rates of poverty and concentrations of minorities who have been deprived of supportive environments.

In 1993, Congress provided the Centers for Disease Control with \$6.9 million to determine what interventions work to prevent violence among youth. Thirteen projects were carried out in thirteen cities and one county. Their primary targets were urban, high-risk youth. The principal findings of these projects were that (1) effective strategies emphasize the development of problem-solving skills, communication skills, and anger management; (2) in environments that are chaotic, where the administration does not support the efforts at intervention, and where communications are unclear, even otherwise sound approaches do not succeed; (3) outcomes vary across age groups, and it is important to match the intervention to the appropriate age and gender of the students; and (4) the interventions need to be intensive and have a long duration of student exposure. A few examples of current projects are provided below.

- u *Peace Builders in Tucson, Arizona*, works in elementary schools, using counselors and other specially trained instructors to teach students to interact socially in a positive way.
- u In *Chicago and Aurora, Illinois*, the University of Michigan is evaluating a three-tiered approach. The first level increases awareness and knowledge about factors that influence peer and other social relationships, the second tier adds training in small group environments, and the third tier adds family intervention. This approach has resulted in reduced aggressive behavior.
- u *The Youth Violence Prevention Program* in Richmond, Virginia, is a sixteen-session curriculum that teaches sixth-graders how to deal with violence and anger. The effort has resulted in substantial reductions in fights, weapons possession, suspensions, and threats to teachers, and in improvements in self-esteem.
- u *Self Enhancement, Inc.*, in Portland, Oregon, has provided adult mentors, as well as programs that have included approaches such as conflict resolution, social skills training, violence prevention skills, recreational opportunities, and academic tutoring. After two years

of the program there have been reductions in weapons possession and school fights, with no changes noted in the control group.

The Centers for Disease Control advocates a rigorous scientific approach. Del Elliott, author of *Violence in American Schools*, puts it this way: “When their costs are high or there are alternatives that are known to be effective, the absence of any evidence of effectiveness is a sufficient basis for challenging the use of these programs or policies. If there are no alternatives known to be effective and the costs are modest, a case can be made for using untested prevention programs for a time, pending careful evaluation.”

Better Instruction, Better Behavior?

So far this chapter has looked at student behavior and achievement from the standpoint of how disruptive behaviors interfere with instruction and achievement. Another approach takes just the opposite view: that the way to improve student behavior is to engage students constructively through better methods of education. According to this theory, good instruction keeps students' attention, thus reducing disruptive behaviors, which are caused by boredom. Bad instruction produces bad behaviors, which undermine achievement. While there is some evidence to support this theory, not enough research has been done to provide conclusive results.

Several recent reports on major, national reform programs have demonstrated the potential behavioral effects of improving education. A study of the Accelerated Schools Project, which has about seven hundred participating schools, reported positive effects across the country. For example, suspensions dropped 50 percent in a participating Massachusetts middle school, and in one Missouri elementary school referrals to the principal's office dropped from ninety per year to just twenty-one.³⁰ There have been similar responses from school districts participating in the Coalition for Essential Schools, which report reductions in suspensions and discipline referrals and increases in attendance rates. After a long period of restructuring, Jefferson County, Kentucky, a participant in the coalition, reported improvements in attendance, parental and student satisfaction, and parental involvement.

The state of Kentucky has been undertaking a complete revamping of its education system since the early 1990s. While there has been no research directly examining the effects of this project, because it is the most serious, comprehensive, and sustained effort at education improvement in the country, it is useful to consider it in the context of this section.

Sample-based data available from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) provide relevant statistics.³¹ In 1992, 39 percent of Kentucky's schools reported that student absence was either a serious or a moderate problem. There was no improvement in 1998. This figure is higher than the 22 percent reported in 1998 for the nation as a whole, which also had little change over the same period. Meanwhile, from 1996 to 1998 the percentage of Kentucky schools reporting that 6 percent or more of their students were absent on an average day rose from 23 to 39 percent, while little changed in the nation's figures.

In 1992, 17 percent of Kentucky schools said that student tardiness was a serious or moderate problem, as did 13 percent in 1996, rising to 28 percent in 1998. Again, the figures in the same years in the nation as a whole were relatively stable. Reports in Kentucky of physical conflicts and negative attitudes toward academic achievement showed little change. In a new question for 1998, schools were asked about physical conflicts between students and teachers; 43 percent of Kentucky schools reported having such conflicts, compared with 19 percent of the nation's schools. Finally, 42 percent of Kentucky schools reported that student misbehavior was a serious or moderate problem in 1996, similar to the 47 percent that said so in 1998. On this count, the nation held steady at just over 30 percent.

In terms of student achievement, Kentucky has shown some improvement on NAEP math scores. While substantial improvement was initially reported in reading scores, analyses of students excluded from the test has raised questions about the validity of that report. Kentucky's own achievement tests would be a better measure for achievement, but they have changed over the decade, making it hard to measure trends in achievement.

In conclusion, the statistics show that on a statewide basis, we cannot assume that the reform approaches being carried out will be accompanied by improvements in the student behaviors that can retard achievement. Instead, more attention needs to be concentrated directly on disruptive behaviors.

School Codes of Behavior

Codes of behavior are common, although their application, adherence, and the extent to which they are actually applied nationally is unknown. Recently, the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) identified several school codes it thought were exemplary. One was in the Cincinnati school system. The entire code was reproduced in "Order in the Classroom: Violence, Discipline, and Student Achievement," published by the ETS Policy Information Center in 1998. The AFT also has singled out two schools in Toledo, Ohio, as well as the Oklahoma City Alternative Middle School.

The Cincinnati, Ohio, code of behavior covers matters such as time out of class, in-school suspension, supervision, expulsion, permanent exclusion, disorderly conduct, profanity, sexual harassment, smoking, and defacement of property, among others. It also spells out due process procedures to be followed and the rights of parents.

Alternative Schools

The state laws referred to earlier and the codes of behavior just described often state that disruptive students will be removed from the classroom and placed in "alternative schools," alternative classrooms, or special sections in regular schools. Descriptions of programs also suggest that the students are not always placed in adequate learning environments when they are removed from regular classrooms and schools. No statistics are available on how many alternative learning environments exist and how many students occupy them. If programs that depend on removing disruptive students are to work, there must be alternative arrangements that are conducive to learning for the students who are placed there.

The AFT supports alternative schools for students "who are violent and chronically disruptive." It believes that "both students who come to schools willing and ready to learn and those who are chronically disruptive benefit from such an arrangement."³² It points out that costs per student are higher for students in alternative settings because smaller class sizes are required. The AFT estimates that the average cost per student in an alternative school is \$7,000 per year, or 25 percent more than the national average. The cost varies considerably in different states and

communities. It also has estimated that the benefits from increased time for learning that would otherwise have been lost and from reduced grade repetition would result in a total savings of over \$20,000 per student.

One example of an alternative school is the Later Elementary Alternative Program (LEAP), created about fifteen years ago in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The LEAP school takes students with behavioral problems in grades four through six who have been recommended by their teachers. A group of ten students is assigned to one teacher and one full-time child care worker. LEAP attempts to return students to regular schools within three months. After studying the LEAP effort on behalf of the National Education Association, Elizabeth Metcalf urged Congress to support the creation of such alternative schools.³³

Collective Bargaining

Another route to defining codes of behavior is collective bargaining contracts between teacher unions and school systems. These will, of course, vary from place to place. One example was reproduced in *Order in the Classroom*. It was the contract language of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers #0059. The contract specifies authority to design a "Behavior Plan" to promote positive student behaviors, removing students from the classroom temporarily, expulsion for violent behavior, conferences with parents, and review panels to resolve questions about disciplinary actions.

Conflict Resolution

Since the early 1980s there have been programs to teach students how to deal with conflict. The state of Illinois now requires school districts to provide conflict resolution or violence prevention education to fourth-through twelfth-grade students. This service is provided through the Illinois Council for the Prevention of Violence.³⁴ Other efforts are under way in school districts in Minnesota, New York City, and Dayton, Ohio. These programs are described in "Youth Violence: A Policymakers Guide," published by the Education Commission of the States in 1996.

The Illinois law led to the creation of the Illinois Council for the Prevention of Violence to help the schools in the state teach the

techniques of conflict resolution. In Minnesota, its Office of Community Collaboration issued a guide for the schools to follow. Dayton, Ohio, created the Positive Adolescents Training Program (PACT); a General Accounting Office study found less fighting and court referrals among PACT participants than in a control group. The New York City program is carried out in collaboration with Educators for Social Responsibility; the program has been in operation since 1985.

School Security Measures

There are a number of measures that schools have taken to control student movement and make schools safer. In 1996–97, based on a study of schools nationwide:

- u almost all schools required visitors to sign in;
- u four in five schools had a policy of not allowing students to leave the school grounds for lunch;
- u over half of schools controlled access to the school building, and one-fourth to the school grounds;
- u 1 percent of schools used metal detectors daily, and 4 percent used random metal detector checks; and
- u 6 percent of schools had law-enforcement personnel in the schools thirty hours or more per week, and 4 percent had them for between one and twenty-nine hours.³⁵

These ordinary measures can reduce problematic student behaviors, as was shown in the Wenglinsky study discussed earlier in this chapter.³⁶

Limited, National-Level Analysis

The large-scale survey research approach is one way of elucidating both the prevalence of particular practices and their relative impact on behavior and achievement. The Wenglinsky study discussed above attempted to

do this with data collected in 1990 and 1992 from the National Education Longitudinal Survey.³⁷ Based on the questions formulated at that time, Wenglinsky was able to draw conclusions about punishment. He found that the severity of the punishments used and preventative measures taken affected both serious and nonserious student offenses. For example, the more schools strictly monitor the movement of students during the school day, the less students are tardy or absent. Wenglinsky did not find any effect resulting from such policies as the use of uniforms or outlawing gangs. While the Wenglinsky analysis does not cover the breadth of approaches now in use, his research gives us good reason to believe that even fairly routine countermeasures can produce results.

Comparison of Different Approaches

With the incomplete information now available, it is not possible to say which approaches hold the most promise of being effective. Not only may some approaches produce more measurable gains than others, but some may work better with different student population groups, or in different school cultures. For example, the “conflict resolution” program may work better in inner-city schools than in rural areas. And aside from objective comparative effectiveness, localities likely will find differences in which approaches best fit their local culture and preferences. For example, a large police force may produce the most order but be judged unacceptable by the community. More research also is necessary to determine relative costs. A large-scale, national evaluation is recommended to address these issues.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This chapter has highlighted an important problem in education that has not been given sufficient attention. Schools, districts, and statewide systems have instituted a variety of programs to help student achievement through improved student behavior, but more widespread action is still needed. The following steps are recommended:

- u The national preoccupation with the isolated school shootings that have occurred, as horrible as they are, needs to be balanced

with concern about the constant disorder and disruption that interferes with instruction in America's schools every day. Shootings and weapon possessions are becoming less prevalent in America, but disruption and disorder are increasing.

- u The widespread standards-based education reform effort has focused on standards and standardized testing. It has virtually ignored student behaviors, which evidence has clearly shown to impede instruction and learning. In addition to subject matter content standards and large-scale testing, we need standards-based behavior goals to improve achievement.
- u The situation is even more troubling and prevalent in inner-city schools, and the rate of problem behavior varies widely among the states. Changing student behaviors may be the principal opportunity to improve the learning environment in many locations. A change in student behavior may not be the single key to a large-scale turnaround, but it can lead to improvements, such as the willingness of capable people to enter and continue in the teaching profession or to teach in inner cities.
- u There also is a need for more systematic knowledge of both student behaviors and their relationship to policy approaches and to student achievement. The last comprehensive survey on this topic was done in 1978 by the National Institute of Education. Not only is it now outdated, but that survey did not obtain information about student achievement. An updated survey should be done.
- u There is, even without a new survey, more information that can be gathered about the effectiveness of some programs. All thirty-two grants made to states for character education have an evaluation component. While many of these grants are recent, some have been in place for several years. The evaluations should be collected and synthesized.
- u Beyond survey research, we also need more controlled experiments, similar to those run by the Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation (MDRC), which has, over the past couple of decades, run large-scale experiments with control groups based on random

assignment, in order to test program approaches in welfare, training, and youth employment.

While the recommendations and program approaches described may not tell a school superintendent, school board, or governor the best course of action to follow, they show the many options available. After considering these options, discretionary judgment is needed, using as much information as possible. School administrators and executives need to investigate more fully what we know. Many people now have experience with programs to improve discipline and behavior, and they can make informed recommendations as to what will work best and what would be acceptable. At the same time, those making the decisions are professionals with diverse training and substantial experience. They need to come to conclusions of their own as to what will work best in their communities, what their students most need, what their communities will accept, and what they can afford.

While there remain many unanswered questions, we do know that the problem of disruptive student behavior is greatest in school settings with poor or inner-city children, and it is there that the achievement gap is the largest and continues to grow. The need to act is urgent, and the resource levels applied need to be substantial.