Corporal Punishment in Florida Schools

Trends in Reactive, Punitive, and Ineffective Approaches to Youth Behavior

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Preface

It happens about every 20 minutes during the school day in Florida: A child is paddled to punish misbehavior.[1] And it's the youngest, most impressionable children – elementary students – who are most often subjected to corporal punishment.

"It's awkward because they're already crying before you hit them – I hate to use that word – before you administer licks," one K-8 administrator said of the practice. "But you have to go through with it."

This belief that corporal punishment is a difficult, but necessary practice continues to persist in a minority of Florida school districts. It persists, even as administrators who support it say they are aware of its potential to damage children and that it may spark lawsuits. It persists even though corporal punishment has been found to increase youth hostility, antisocial behavior, and the likelihood that a child will drop out of school.

And it persists despite the National Education Association (NEA) categorically opposing corporal punishment, noting that it "is more than ineffective – it is harmful." The NEA is not alone in its condemnation of paddling. Expert organizations in the fields of law, medicine and human rights have opposed and discredited the practice as well. The American Bar Association, in fact, says it "should be considered a form of child abuse."

Yet, every day in Florida schools, there are children being taught that it is sometimes appropriate to use violence to resolve a problem. In some Florida school districts, nearly 10 percent of the student population has felt the sting of a paddle.

This report examines the use of corporal punishment in Florida through three original studies that show a more effective approach is needed to address student behavior. The first study sought to better understand where corporal punishment is used and which students are most affected. The second study examined school administrators' perspectives on why and how they use discipline. The third explored the use of positive and proactive approaches to student discipline.

The end result was clear: *Florida schools should no longer use corporal punishment*.

The pressure to paddle often comes from the pull of tradition and the appeal of a practice rooted in seemingly simpler times. Administrators interviewed for this report described supporting corporal punishment out of a belief that "sparing the rod can spoil the child." Even administrators who disagreed with corporal punishment reported feeling pressure to use it. As this report notes, there are some parents who encourage administrators to "tear my kid's tail up" if they misbehave.

The research, however, shows that there are better, more effective ways to promote good student behavior.

It is time for schools to abandon practices that we now know cause more harm than good – and to use the best, evidence-based methods available to help students succeed.

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Introduction

Schools greatly influence students' academic and social development.[2] Students thrive in school environments where they feel safe and know that their academic and social-emotional needs will be met. Those who feel a sense of belonging in school have lower rates of depression, social rejection, and other school-related problems than those who do not.[3] Additionally, feeling "connected" to school is associated with fewer violent behaviors and greater academic achievement.[4,5] Nurturing school environments and positive relationships with both peers and educators are especially important to marginalized student populations such as those with disabilities, those who live in poverty, students of color, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and questioning (LGBTQIQ) youth.[6, 7, 8]

Positive relationships with educators are a key factor in students feeling that school is a nurturing and safe place. Students reporting good relationships with at least one teacher have better grades than students who feel alienated at school.[9] When assessing their relationships with educators, students particularly value fairness and demonstrations of caring. Fairness and caring are often conveyed through teachers' implementation of successful, proactive classroom management procedures.[10] Such positive procedures include the uses of Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), social-emotional learning, and restorative justice. Conversely, reactive and punitive school practices can damage these important relationships.[11]

Punitive Discipline Practices and Student Outcomes

Even though incidences of violence in schools have decreased since the early 1990's,[12] fear is a powerful factor that has resulted in calls for zero tolerance policies in schools, which include swift, severe, punitive, and reactive approaches to student misbehavior. In contrast to more effective proactive approaches, which focus on teaching and reinforcing appropriate behavior, reactive approaches respond to student misbehavior after the incident and focus on punishing the inappropriate behavior. For example, schools rely on out-of-school suspension (OSS) or corporal punishment to punish student behavior. Schools have also increased reliance upon school-based police to punish students for infractions at school, resulting in citations and involvement with the juvenile justice system for often minor offenses, resulting in a situation commonly referred to as the "school-to-prison pipeline." For example, over 12,500 Florida youth were arrested for school-based infractions during the 2011-2012 school year, with two-thirds of those being for misdemeanors.[13] Students punished punitively have lower rates of school completion, implicating punitive school discipline policies in decreased productivity in the labor force, as well as increased reliance on the social safety net by these high school dropouts.[14,15] In this monograph, we focus specifically on one of those methods of punitive school-based discipline: corporal punishment (CP).

School-based Corporal Punishment

School-based CP is "a discipline method in which a supervising adult deliberately inflicts pain upon a youth in response to the youth's unacceptable behavior" (p. 1).[16] The 31 states (and the District of Columbia) that prohibit corporal punishment in schools typically do so on the grounds that children should be afforded the same rights to bodily

protections that other citizens are afforded. For example, the California Legislature found it reasonable that the safeguards to the integrity and sanctity of students' bodies should be at least equal to that afforded to other citizens.[17] As a society we must be concerned with those states that do not afford similar rights to students. Nineteen states, primarily those in the south and mid-west of the United States, continue to use corporal punishment.[18]

To understand the philosophy of states concerning CP, it is helpful to consider the description by Benjet and Kazdin (2003) who identify three broad orientations toward the use of CP in schools.[19] First, the "anti-corporal punishment" view posits that the use of CP in schools has harmful effects that include implicitly modeling and teaching that violence is an effective approach to solving problems. Moreover, this philosophical view supports the notion that CP has negative effects on youth and is ethically problematic. Another view of CP is that it serves an important behavioral option, if it is appropriately regulated. In addition to regulation of its use, this view holds that CP can have positive consequences depending on a given context (e.g., student age, ethnicity). Finally, the third philosophy regarding the use of CP is that if schools do not use CP, it will actually lead to youth behavior problems of greater frequency and intensity. In this orientation, the view of "spare the rod, spoil the child" dominates and it is seen as a disservice to youth if CP is not used. Clearly, the second and third philosophies align with the sanctioned use of CP. Our philosophy throughout this monograph aligns with the first philosophy.

In this monograph, we focus on one state, Florida, and the use of CP in public schools. Florida still recognizes corporal punishment as a way to manage student behavior and ensure the safety of all students in their classes and schools. As defined by the Legislature, "corporal punishment" is the moderate use of physical force or physical contact by a teacher or principal as may be necessary to maintain discipline or enforce school rules.[20] However this definition of corporal punishment is distinct from situations in which force is used by a teacher or principal when used as a necessary method of self-protection or to protect other students from violent peers.[21] Florida identifies specific guidelines for the use of CP in schools within state statutes:

"(1)   In accordance with this section and within the framework of the district school board's code of student conduct, teachers and other instructional personnel shall have the authority to undertake any of the following actions in managing student behavior and ensuring the safety of all students in their classes and school and their opportunity to learn in an orderly and disciplined classroom:

(a)-(j) [omitted]

(k)   Use corporal punishment according to school board policy and at least the following procedures, if a teacher feels that corporal punishment is necessary:

1.   The use of corporal punishment shall be approved in principle by the principal before it is used, but approval is not necessary for each specific instance in which it is used. The principal shall prepare guidelines for administering such punishment, which identify the types of punishable offenses, the conditions under which the punishment shall be administered, and the specific personnel on the school staff authorized to administer the punishment.

2.   A teacher or principal administer corporal punishment only in the presence of another adult who is informed beforehand, and in the student's presence, of the reason for the punishment.

3.   A teacher or principal who has administered punishment shall, upon request, provide the student's parent with a written explanation of the reason for the punishment and the name of the other adult who was present" (p. 1).[22]

Although permitted by law statewide, each school district has the option whether or not to enforce corporal punishment within their district.[23] In those school districts that do opt to enforce a policy permitting corporal punishment, each individual school principal has the final say in whether or not to enforce the policy on his/her respective campus.[24] Once a principal has approved corporal punishment, a teacher that has received authorization by the school principal does not have to receive permission for each particular incident.[25] However those authorized must follow guidelines for administering the punishment as set by the principal.[26] The guidelines shall identify the types of punishable offenses, the conditions under which the punishment shall be administered and the specific school personnel who are authorized to administer the punishment.[27] According to the Florida Department of Education, the use of CP has been reduced by nearly 89% between 1991 and 2011.[28] Nevertheless, during the 2010-11 school year, 27 of Florida's 74 school districts used corporal punishment at least once for a combined total of 3,146 incidents.[29]

Corporal Punishment in the 21st Century

Given the broader goal of improving student positive prosocial behavior, the approach taken in this publication aligns with the "anti-corporal punishment" view that CP is of moral concern in that it inappropriately and implicitly models and teaches that violence is an effective approach to solving problems.[30] Further, this orientation recognizes the longstanding concerns that negative effects result from CP.[31] Our approach is consistent with expert organizations in the field of education, psychiatry, psychology, counseling, law, and medicine, as well as human rights organizations. In Table 1 we list the policy statements of leading organizations that reject the need or value of CP in schools. As noted in organization statements and by other researchers, CP has negative effects on students and may actually result in greater student aggression. However, for many, "The practice of hitting children as part of discipline is deeply embedded in religious beliefs, cultural views, government, law, and social policy" (p. 198).[32] In fact, 62% of adults and 61% of parents with small children view spanking as acceptable.[33] These views regarding spanking in the home have been applied to discipline within schools. While it should be acknowledged that CP is a longstanding tradition, we must give greater credence to the research on its negative effects in school discipline and develop policies and practices that are based on scientific research, rather than tradition.

Table 1: Positions Against Corporal Punishment

Organization	Statement on Corporal Punishment
American Bar Association	"The American Bar Association opposes the use of corporal punishment in institutions where children are cared for or educated" (p. 594). "Institutional corporal punishment of children should be considered a form of child abuse that is contrary to current knowledge of human behavior and sound educational practices" (p. 594).[34]
American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry	"The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry opposes the use of corporal punishment in schools."[35]
National Association of Elementary School Principals Position Statement	"The NAESP believes that the practice of corporal punishment in schools should be abolished. Therefore, NAESP urges all educators, in cooperation with parents and other concerned citizens and associations, to promote legislation that would prohibit all forms of corporal punishment in schools and would provide resources for the development of positive alternatives for disruptive students."[36]
National Association of Secondary School Principals	"NAASP believes that the practice of corporal punishment in schools should be abolished and that principals should use alternative forms of discipline" (p. 2).[37]
American Academy of Family Physicians	"The American Academy of Family Physicians is opposed to corporal punishment in schools. The Academy supports alternative methods of behavior management and modification in the school environment which enhances a student's optimal learning" (p. 1).[38]
National Association for the Education of Young Children	"Prohibit corporal punishment in schools and all other programs" (p. 3). "The institutional use of corporal punishment should never be condoned" (p. 4).[39]
National Association of School Nurses	"It is the position of the National Association of School Nurses that corporal punishment should be legally prohibited in all states and that alternative forms of student behavior management be utilized in the school setting" (p. 1). "The school nurse, as an advocate for the health and well-being of students, must take the position that corporal punishment places students at risk for negative outcomes, including increased aggression, antisocial behavior, mental health problems and physical injury" (p. 1).[40]
American Academy of Pediatrics, Committee on School Health	"The American Academy of Pediatrics urges parents, educators, school administrators, school board members, legislators, and others to seek the legal prohibition by all states of corporal punishment in schools and to encourage the use of alternative methods of managing student behavior" (p. 345).[41]

American Psychological Association	"The American Psychological Association opposes the use of corporal punishment in schools, juvenile facilities, child care nurseries, and all other institutions, public or private, where children are cared for or educated" (p. 1).[42]
Center for Family Policy and Research	"Corporal punishment should be banned in all public schools" (p. 2). "School districts should adopt positive school discipline policies" (p. 2). 'School personnel should be trained in alternative methods to handle inappropriate student behavior" (p. 2)[43]
Council for Exceptional Children	"The Council for Exceptional Children supports the prohibition of the use of corporal punishment in special education. Corporal punishment is here defined as a situation in which all of the following elements are present: an authority accuses a child of violating a rule and seeks from the child an explanation, whereupon a judgment of guilt is made, followed by physical contact and pain inflicted on the child. The Council finds no conditions under which corporal punishment so defined would be the treatment of choice in special education (p. H-20).[44]
Society of Adolescent Medicine	"The Society of Adolescent Medicine concludes that corporal punishment in schools is an ineffective, dangerous, and unacceptable method of discipline" (p. 391).[45]
Association for Childhood Education International	"Advocate for legislation that promotes the growth of a democratic and peaceful society, beginning with the ban of corporal punishment in schools" (p. 1).[46]
American Medical Association	"Ban the use of corporal punishment in schools, juvenile facilities, child care facilities, and all other public or private institutions where children are cared for or educated" (p. 23).[47]
National Education Association	"NEA categorically opposes the use of corporal punishment as a school discipline technique. It is more than ineffective - it is harmful" (p. 1).[48]
National Association of Secondary School Principals	"NASSP believes that the practice of corporal punishment in schools should be abolished and that principals should use alternative forms of discipline" (p. 1).[49]

In addition to broad concerns of the negative effects of CP, we must also be aware of how certain groups of students are disproportionately affected by such policies and practices. For example, as compared to other ethnicities and females, African American males are consistently more likely to receive reactive and negative behavioral consequences that may include office disciplinary referrals, CP, OSS, and expulsion.[50] Researchers also noted that African American students were more likely than their

White counterparts to get an office disciplinary referral for behaviors that are more subjectively interpreted (i.e., excessive noise or disrespect, as opposed to smoking, vandalism, or obscene language).[51]

Serious concerns also exist with regard to the use of CP with vulnerable youth, including those students who have experienced abuse or neglect, and students with disabilities. For example, in Florida, "more than 1 million children are victims of child abuse and neglect each year" (p. 1).[52] The use of violence as an approach to behavior management for youth who have experienced abuse and neglect is unconscionable. Students with disabilities are another group that are disproportionately affected by CP policies.[53] To understand the gravity of using CP with students with disabilities, we must consider the characteristics of students with emotional disturbance (ED). Youth with ED are classified as such due to their significant problem behaviors that affect their learning. However, these youth also have experiences and psychiatric disorders that make CP wholly inappropriate. For example, teachers reported that 38% of students classified as ED had experienced physical or sexual abuse, 41% were neglected, and 51% were emotionally abused.[54] Moreover, 45% of students with ED have problems with drug abuse.[55] The fact that these youth do not typically receive high quality psychological support further complicates the issue because punishment is even less likely to help them change behaviors without appropriate mental health support.[56] Using CP on youth who have had such difficult experiences and mental health problems is not supported by research.

There are additional concerns that in schools with a higher than average percentage of low socioeconomic status (SES) students, poverty and a lack of resources may result in more frequent uses of punishments including CP.[57] In fact, researchers have noted greater use of punishment in high poverty schools.[58] The disproportionate use of CP and other punishments with students, intentionally or inadvertently, in relation to their ethnicity, special education status, or SES is indefensible.

Moving Beyond Corporal Punishment in Schools

A reduction in the acceptability and use of CP in schools requires changes in public policy. However, additional information and analysis is critical to effectively promote appropriate alternatives. A three-pronged approach is needed to understand and address the dilemma of using CP in public schools and should include: (1) an analysis of school discipline data across student and school characteristics to understand where CP is most used and which students are most affected; (2) in-depth discussions with Title 1 middle school administrators concerning their views of and responses to student behavior to understand the use of CP; and (3) identification of the current school-level behavioral policies and practices and the extent of alignment with effective behavioral programs. Each component of our data collection and analysis addresses the questions specifically for the state of FL. In our first study, we look broadly across all FL public schools to identify trends in school discipline, including variables that may affect the frequency of certain types of punishments (e.g., CP, OSS).[59] Our second study focuses on Title I middle schools, the places where punitive discipline is most often used.[60] This study deepens our understanding of corporal punishment and other discipline strategies by capturing administrators' perspectives on why and how they use discipline. Importantly, administrators' perspectives about discipline have been linked to their rates of disciplining students.[61] Our third study also looks at Title 1 schools and the extent to which policies and practices exist that align with a positive and proactive approach to student discipline.[62] For punitive approaches, such as CP, to be reduced, we must understand gaps in current school-level approaches to student discipline. Once identified, ongoing and comprehensive professional development and support will assist schools in reorienting their behavioral approaches. For each study, we refer readers to our research-based article for a full description of the study methods.

Analysis of Florida School Discipline Data[63]

The purpose of the first study was to identify the following for Florida schools in 2010-2011: (a) general demographics; (b) total number of students registered and percentage of students who experience CP in districts that use it; (c) association between the number of different types of punishments and student, school, and community characteristics; (d) relationship between school characteristics, school district characteristics, and number of suspensions enforced in a school within a given school district after controlling for relevant variables (i.e., percentage of special education students, school locale, school type/grade levels, percentage of students that receive free or reduced lunch, percentage of African American students, whether the school district allowed for corporal punishment or not); and (e) relationship between school level characteristics and number of instances of corporal punishment.

To maintain consistency and ensure comprehensive datasets, we used publicly available data for the state of Florida for 2010-2011. Below, we summarize the results and implications of each research question.

1. What are the student (i.e., % gender, % race, % grade level), school, (i.e., Mean % special education, Mean % free or reduced lunch, % locale) and district level (i.e., % allow or do not allow corporal punishment) characteristics?

It is interesting that FL averages for three groups who typically experience more punishments are greater than national averages. The percentage of U.S. students with disabilities is approximately 9% and FL has more than double the national average (20%).[64] Also, 16.8% of students in the U.S. are African American compared to about 23% in FL.[65] Lastly, compared to the national average of 48%, there are more students in FL (61%) who receive free or reduced lunch.[66] (See Table 2 for results).

Table 2: FL Student, School, and District Characteristics 2010-2011*

Student Characteristic	%, Number (Mean, Standard Deviation Where Applicable)
Total Registered Students	2,644,218

Gender
    Male
    Female
	
	51.41% (n = 1,359,468)
	48.59% (n = 1,284,750)

Ethnicity
    Caucasian
    African American
    Hispanic or Latino
    Asian
    Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander
    American Indian or Alaska Native
    Two or More Races
	
	43.05% (n = 1,138,439)
	22.96% (n = 607,242)
	28.02% (n = 741,001)
	2.46% (n = 64,981)
	0.11% (n = 2,980)
	0.39% (n = 10,356)
	3.00% (n = 79,219)

Grade Level
    Pre-kindergarten through 5th
    6th through 8th grade
    9th through 12th
	
	47.45% (n = 1,254,687)
	22.86% (n = 604,489)
	29.69% (n = 785,042)

School Characteristics	**%, Number (Mean, Standard Deviation Where Applicable)**
School Enrolment (n = 3,300 schools)	Per School: Mean = 783.7 (SD = 545.79)
Students Classified as Special Education	Per School: Mean = 20.33% (SD = 14.04)
Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch	Per School: 60.65% (SD = 23.50)

School Locale
    Rural
    Town
    Suburban Area
    City Center
	
	18.91% (n = 615)
	6.52% (n = 215)
	47.55% (n = 1,569)
	27.03% (n = 829)

School Type
    Adult
    Combined (e.g., combination elementary & secondary)
    Elementary (K-5)
    Middle/Junior High (6-8)
    Senior High (9-12)
	
	0.12% (n = 4)
	10.73% (n = 297)
	
	52.12% (n = 1720)
	17.36% (n = 573)
	19.67% (n = 649)

District Characteristics	**%, Number**

Corporal Punishment
    Don't Allow
    Allow
	
	62.16% (n = 46)
	37.84% (n = 28)

Note. * = Information in table was provided by the Florida Department of Education and is publicly available.

2. For districts that allow CP, what is the total number of students registered and what is the percentage of students who experience CP?

In Table 3, we summarize information on student population and use of CP for those FL districts that allow CP. There were eight districts where less than 1% of students experienced CP. In seven districts the percentage of students experiencing CP exceeded 4%. The widely varied use of CP makes evident the importance of our second and third studies. In our second study, we solicit administrators' views and ask them to explain their approaches to student behavior and rationale. In our third study, we examine the existence of current policies and practices that effectively promote positive student behavior rather than relying on the reactive and punitive approach of CP.

Table 3: FL Districts that Allow CP: Student Population and % of CP per Student 2010-2011

District	# Students Enrolled	% of Students Experiencing CP
Madison	2553	9.90
Holmes	3332	9.36
Washington	3485	8.66
Gulf	1520	6.25
Jackson	7070	5.06
Gilchrist	2636	4.74
Lafayette	1157	4.06
Suwannee	5403	3.81
Calhoun	2248	3.42
Walton	7290	3.30
Liberty	1263	2.69
Union	2255	2.26
Hardee	5036	1.94
Hendry	6795	1.81
Wakulla	4817	1.61
Santa rosa	24381	1.46
Baker	5004	1.43
Levy	5499	1.20
Hamilton	1667	1.07
Dixie	2018	1.04
Glades	1163	0.77
Franklin	1350	0.44
Desoto	4533	0.39
Putnam	11211	0.26
Highlands	11936	0.25
Clay	35510	0.22
Nassau	11054	0.18
Marion	41455	0*

* = Although statistically 0%, corporal punishment was used in the district

3. Is there an association between the numbers of different types of punishments (i.e., corporal punishment, suspension, expulsion, restraint, change of placement) enforced and grade level (i.e., K-5, 6-8, 9-12)?

We wanted to look broadly at various punishments to ensure an appropriate context for the specific use of CP. Overall, OSS was enforced more frequently than other punishment types after controlling for group size difference. We also observed that the total number of punishments administered was greatest for the 6th grade through 8th grade, followed by 9th grade through 12th grade, and K through 5th grades (after controlling for group size difference). Compared to the expected frequency, we also found the following to be true: (a) CP was enforced more frequently in the K through 5th grade, (b) expulsion was enforced more frequently in 9th grade through 12th grade, and (c) restraint was enforced more frequently for K through 5th grades and less frequently for the 6th grade through 8th grade.

We can conclude that administrators typically rely on specific punishment type(s) for certain grade ranges. As such, we must be careful that simple changes in policy and practice to reduce one specific punishment type (e.g., CP) do not inadvertently result in an increase of another reactive and ineffective punishment type. For example, while administrators in elementary grades schools may use CP more than those in middle/junior high schools, we should be cautious that a reduction in use of CP at the earlier grades does not simply result in greater usage of OSS. Similarly, due to its existing overuse, there has been a recent push to reduce use of OSS, in the middle grades.[67] However, simply reducing the frequency of middle/junior high school suspensions may result in an increase of CP unless more positive and proactive behavior management policies and practices are developed and implemented consistently and with fidelity.

4. Is there an association between the number of different types of punishments enforced and students' race (i.e., Caucasian, African American, Hispanic or Latino, other)?

The total (weighted) number of punishments that African American students were involved in was greater than any other particular race, by far. Results also indicated that there was a significant association between the type of disciplinary actions and race with Caucasian students receiving CP comparable to the expected weighted frequency. Hispanic and African American students received CP less frequently than their expected weighted frequency. Hispanic and Latino students received restraint less frequently, and students of other races received restraint more frequently, than expected.

While there is variation across racial groups, perhaps the most salient point is that punishments are much more common for African American youth, a group that has higher representation in FL schools than the national average. Other researchers have noted similar concerns with the overrepresentation of African American students, particularly males, with regard to office disciplinary referrals and other punishments.[68]

5. Is there an association between the number of different types of punishments enforced and the gender of students?

Results indicated that there is a significant association between the type of disciplinary actions and gender. Male students received CP and expulsion more frequently than

females. These results are not unexpected as there is a longstanding history of males receiving frequent punishment in school.[69] While a comprehensive discussion of gender issues is beyond the scope of this report, we should be cognizant of the need for gender specific as well as gender-neutral proactive behavioral interventions, such as PBIS, social emotional learning programs, and restorative justice practices.[70]

6. Is there a relationship between school level characteristics (i.e., school type/grade ranges K-5, 6-8, 9-12; % special education students; school locale; % that receive free or reduced lunch; percentage of African American), school district level characteristics (i.e., allowance of CP) and number of suspensions per student after controlling for school and district level variables?

Results indicated that a 1% increase in special education students is associated with a statistically significant increase of OSS enforced per student within the same school district. Also, compared to elementary students attending combined schools, students in elementary schools receive significantly less OSS within the same school district (event ratio rate of .0382, p = .000). Compared to students in combined schools, both middle/ junior high school students and senior high school students receive significantly more OSS within the same school district (event ratios of 2.406, p = .000; 2.581, p = .000, respectively). A 1% increase in the percentage of students that receive free or reduced lunch, as well as a 1% increase in the percentage of enrolled African American students, are also associated with an increase in the number of incidents of OSS enforced per student (event ratio rate of 1.014, p = .000 and 1.004, p = .018, respectively). Finally, results indicated that on average schools located in districts that allow corporal punishment enforce more OSS compared to schools located in districts that do not allow corporal punishment (event ratio rate of 1.346, p = .002).

It is noteworthy that OSS, like the combined category of punishments (i.e., CP, OSS, expulsion, restraint, change of placement) is used more in middle/junior high and with African American students. Also, an increase in students who receive free or reduced lunch and classified as special education are also associated with greater suspension rates. As noted, FL schools have higher percentages of African American students, youth with disabilities, and youth receiving free or reduced lunch than national averages. When reviewing the data, what emerges is a complicated picture of increased punishment: (a) for African American students, (b) for special education students, (c) in schools that have high poverty; and (d) in middle/junior high schools.

7. Is there a relationship between school level characteristics, and number of corporal punishments enforced in schools within a district that allows corporal punishment?

For schools within a single school district that allows corporal punishment (and holding every other element constant in the model), a 1% increase in special education students or percentage of African American students is associated with decreased probability of enforcing CP at least once (with the odds ratios of 0.925; p = .046 and 0.962; p = .000, respectively). Note that our analysis focused on schools within a given district and analysis could not be accurately completed looking across districts for this question. Moreover, among the schools that enforced CP at least once and schools located in

the school districts that allow CP, compared to combined schools, elementary schools and senior high schools enforced less CP (with event ratio rates of 0.535; p = .020 and 0.454; p = .043, respectively).

The data reveal two important results. First, African American and special education students actually receive less than expected CP. At face value, we could assert that the situation is better for African American youth. However, we must also look at the broader context wherein African American students overwhelmingly received more punishments overall (if we include CP, OSS, expulsion, restraint, and change of placement). Moreover, given the data specific to suspensions noted above, we must be careful not to assume that low levels of CP for African American and special education students are indicative of positive trends in punishment for these groups. As mentioned previously, analysis of CP data must take into account the larger picture of punishment. Elimination of CP is positive only insofar as proactive and positive behavior plans are put into place and the rate of other punishments are at least maintained, and at best, reduced. Second, there are concerns with regard to the use of CP in middle/junior high schools. We should note that the analyses are somewhat limited due to our need to compare each of the three grade level ranges with "combined schools." Although we cannot assert that middle/junior high schools use more CP than elementary or senior high schools (we did not run a statistical significance test to compare those sample means), we can identify that broad concerns exist related to the frequency of CP in middle/junior high schools. Additionally, trends showing that the total number of punishments enforced was greatest for the 6th grade through 8th grade, underscores concerns with the negative approaches to student behavior at this level.

Why Florida Schools Use Corporal Punishment[71]

We undertook an investigation of Title I middle school administrators' decision-making in order to understand the justification for the use of CP and other exclusionary discipline, as well as to learn about other local prevention efforts and responses currently in use. In this study (as in Study 3), our analysis focused on Title 1 schools. While Study 1 looked solely at the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch, classification as a Title 1 schools is often recognized as a clear indicator of high poverty and provided an appropriate criterion for choosing schools. Specifically, we wanted to know how school administrators explained their approaches to student behavior, with a particular focus on when, why, and how they use CP. Nineteen districts that use CP agreed to let us talk with school administrators who are in charge of handling student discipline at Title I middle schools. We recruited 27 administrators at 25 different schools to participate in a 60-90 minute telephone interview. During each interview we asked about how they made decisions concerning student discipline, specifically with regard to corporal punishment. The following themes emerged and explain why and how administrators use CP in schools.

> **What emerges is a complicated picture of increased punishment: (a) for African American students, (b) for special education students, (c) in schools that have high poverty; and (d) in middle/junior high schools.**

Administrators' Descriptions of Corporal Punishment

CP requires the administration of "licks" or "swats," typically given using a paddle and with the child standing up and leaning over a desk or chair. Administrators used CP differently and no consensus existed regarding the appropriate number of licks or how to gauge the force to be used. Nevertheless, some similarities emerged among our sample. Districts often regulate the number of licks that children are to receive for different offenses, though administrators have discretion in determining specific consequences. CP typically consists of giving one to four licks to a child after explaining to the child what is about to occur. Each time CP is used, administrators give licks in front of a witness. Although, in contrast to state law, principals reported that those witnesses do not always know why they are being asked to witness the event or what the child has done to merit the consequence. After the licks, some administrators describe talking to the student before he or she goes back to class.

In schools that allow corporal punishment, administrators typically saw its level of severity as equivalent to or less than in-school suspension, which, when available,

is used interchangeably with CP. Although Florida law does not require districts to obtain parental consent to use CP, some districts do. CP is never mandated as the only consequence to an offense, as some parents do not consent to its use. Frequently, CP is an option for responding to behavior such as talking back to a teacher, persistent classroom disruption, or not complying with a teacher's request. Usually it is not used in the case of a first offense unless that offense is considered somewhat serious. OSS, rather than CP, is used as a response to the most serious offenses. If a student has committed a minor offense repeatedly and the administrator believes that OSS is not warranted, the student and/or parent may be allowed to choose CP instead of suspension.

How Students Respond to Corporal Punishment

We asked administrators how students respond to CP. Administrators identified the purpose of CP as changing the student's behavior, which happens as a result of the pain caused by the licks. Even older students may resist receiving licks. One administrator stated, "The middle school kids are usually more cooperative, but a few will fight it. But if they do, we put the board up and call the parents and say we have to do something else. So if they don't receive CP, we go to out-of-school suspension." They explained that some students prefer CP to other punishments because it is over quickly. Students also know that if they receive OSS, those absences can count against them with regard to compulsory attendance laws, as well as in terms of their academic performance.

The Role of Parents in Choosing Corporal Punishment

Although Florida law does not stipulate that districts must have parental consent to use CP, many districts require that parents be contacted in advance of administrators' use of this consequence. The reason that many administrators give for using CP is that parents have requested it. Regarding the use of CP, one administrator explained, "The parent population here expects *that* and are supportive of *that*." Parents who support CP sometimes will encourage administrators to "tear my kid's tail up" if that child demonstrates behavior judged to be disrespectful.

Often, the alternative to CP is OSS. Parents may consider that if a student is suspended, he/she must be monitored while at home. For parents whose jobs will be put in jeopardy if they stay home with their suspended child, OSS may be less desirable than CP. Just like with students, CP is likely incentivized for parents as an immediate consequence that minimizes the times students spend out of class.

How Administrators Feel About Using Corporal Punishment

The decision to use CP is made by either district-level administrators or the principal, though even if the district has permitted its use, the principal sets the tone regarding the use of CP. Some administrators within a given school choose to use CP differently, with some paddling more often than others. Of our sample of 27 participants, (a) 16 administrators said that they philosophically agreed with the use of CP and use it as a consequence with students; (b) four said that they disagreed with its use but have to use it as part of their job; (c) one disagreed with its use and does not paddle students, though the other administrator at that school does; (d) four said that their school does not allow its use; and (e) two did not state their positions.

Of the administrators who philosophically agreed with the use of CP and practice it, they seemed to agree with local parents' positions that spanking children works and that "sparing the rod can spoil the child." These administrators typically grew up in communities where corporal punishment was commonly used, sometimes in the very same community where they currently work. They did not see CP as abuse, but believed that it can effectively deter undesirable behavior. One stated, "If I think you'll

learn more or remember it more if I take a paddle to you, then I'll take the paddle to you." Others emphasized the need for having trusting relationships with the child in order for CP to be effective.

These administrators did not believe that CP should be administered in anger and often talk about the need to follow legal rules in order to avoid lawsuits. Even the administrators who agreed with the use of CP understood its potential for being misused, for damaging children, and for attracting litigation. One had even been sued in the past. Nevertheless, they believed that its potential for curbing challenging behaviors outweighed the drawbacks for some children.

Of the administrators who disagreed with CP but felt that they had to use it, they felt that it may be okay to spank their own children but not someone else's. These administrators feared hurting a child, upsetting a child who may be suffering abuse outside of school, or subjecting themselves to legal ramifications. Even though the use of CP makes these administrators uncomfortable, they felt pressured to use it.

Parental expectations that educators use CP sometimes puts administrators in an awkward position in which their personal beliefs, professional beliefs, and community expectations come into conflict. One administrator explained:

> I only use corporal punishment if a parent requests it. I never suggest corporal punishment. ...So we do use corporal punishment. Like I had it used on me several times growing up and I think it worked just fine. But we do not live in the world that I grew up in either. With corporal punishment there's a fine line. Either it does the trick or it adds fuel to the fire. And I just don't think in today's society that it is as effective a tool as it once was.

For this group of administrators, being required to use CP as part of their jobs prevented them from being able to implement punishments with which they are more comfortable or that align more closely with their professional beliefs.

Why Administrators think Corporal Punishment Works

In contrast to research and expert views, administrators who agreed with and used CP did not see it as an act that could damage a relationship with a child. In fact, the opposite seemed true, in that CP was considered a way to promote boundaries, respect, and communication that are important to shaping the child. Administrators talked about their own experiences with receiving CP in those terms and also said that kids whom they have paddled in the past ended up being appreciative. As one administrator expressed above, the administration of CP is often talked about as part of an interaction that includes talking to the student, helping them to learn from the situation, and making sure they have a chance to compose themselves before

> "We do, we do use corporal punishment here in this school district. I know a lot of school districts have done away with corporal punishment but we do it here um, and it's always with parent consent...you know a lot of times it does make a difference for that child because they don't want to be back up here to get the licks again ...they know what it feels like and what they have to do to keep from being sent to the office again and so sometimes the corporal punishment works."
> — Assistant Principal

returning to class. Most of our participants, whether or not they personally used CP, believed that CP does "work" with some children. These findings suggest the need to expose all educators to professional development opportunities that reflect the research and positions of professional organizations in order to empower educators with healthier, more effective discipline strategies. We conducted our next study to examine the existing policies and practices related to positive and proactive approaches that promote appropriate behavior in Florida's schools.

"Elementary kids, the first thing they do before you lay the board on them, they start crying. It's awkward because they're already crying before you hit them—I hate to use that word—before you administer the licks, but you have to go through with it." –Administrator at a K-8 grade school

Survey of Principals in Title 1 Schools: School-Level Approaches to Youth Behavior[72]

Schools are faced with the problem behaviors of students on a daily basis. To address issues of order and safety in light of scarce resources and time, many schools ignore structure- and process-oriented changes that may aid in prevention of most problem behavior in lieu of negative and reactive approaches, such as CP and OSS.[73] PBIS is one alternative that includes, but does not solely rely on, disciplinary sanctions. Currently, more than 18,000 schools are implementing PBIS across the United States.[74]

PBIS is a systems-based approach that has a growing body of research support.[75] Broadly, PBIS is a proactive, pro-social model for school-wide behavior management that involves general themes of prevention, data based decision making, and support at multiple tiers (see pull-out box for details of the tiers). This study involved data collection by way of a survey that focused on the existence of school policy and practice aligned with the multi-tier PBIS approach. We surveyed principals in those FL Title 1 schools that included grades 7-8. The focus on Title 1 schools and the middle/junior high schools was based on trends in our study of publicly available data previously discussed that indicated an association between frequency of punishment and schools with high poverty and in the middle grades.[76]

Our primary research questions included: (a) Do schools' behavior approaches align with a three-tiered system of supports and what processes for organizational development are in place to support implementation of effective behavioral practices? (b) To what extent does each school reduce and eliminate reactive, punitive, and exclusionary strategies in favor of a positive, proactive, preventive, and skill-building orientation? (c) In those schools that have a school-wide leadership team, who is

> "I'm happy not using corporal punishment. My children are my children. I'll use it at home, that's my decision, but I'm not comfortable using it on someone else's child, even if they sign off. I'm glad I'm not in that position…I can see how that would be a quick way to handle discipline, though. I've had parents when I call home say, "Can't you just tear his tail up." I say, "No, ma'am, we've never done that here.'"
> —Assistant Principal

involved and what is their role? (d) Do positive school-wide behavioral expectations exist and if so, how are they communicated, taught, and student learning assessed? (e) How is behavioral data collected and used? (f) How is fidelity assessed to ensure the behavior plan is implemented as intended? and (g) Do schools' members of the leadership team have opportunities to view other schools that effectively implement PBIS?

Prior to discussing the results of this study, it is noteworthy that not all principals answered every question. As such, totals for each response may vary. Also, where number and percentages are reported, respondents chose one of several options to answer a question. However, in instances where respondents were allowed to "choose all that apply" from a list of possible answers to a question, no percentages are reported.

Overall, there were 150 responding principals, most schools were regular public schools (n = 104, 70.3%), followed by charter schools (n = 24, 16.2%) and alternative schools (n = 20, 13.5%). The grades included at each school were grade 6 (n = 137), grades 7 and/or 8 (n = 147), any of grades 1-5 (n = 51), and any of grades 9-12 (n = 45).

Below we discuss the survey results and implications for each research question.

1. Do school behavior approaches align with a three-tiered system of supports and what processes for organizational development are in place to support implementation of effective behavioral practices?

Many principals identified that their school used a PBIS approach (n = 115, 77.2%), although the existence of key organizational policies and practices that align with the use of PBIS were more varied. For example, only 41.4% (n = 60) identified that their school has a multi-year prevention-based action plan for student behavior. Also, 74.8% (n = 110) identified using written procedural guidelines for decision-making regarding school behavior policies frequently or always.

Organizational development also includes several training steps that are recommended to promote consistent use of effective behavioral interventions with students. In this regard, principals reported using professional development opportunities (n = 123); developing a plan for continuous improvement and training (n = 91); designating school-based or local coaches to guide implementation (n = 71); seeking consultation to build and sustain effective behavior practices (n = 53); selecting evidence-based programs (n = 53); identifying personnel and coaching functions for school-based and district or regional coaching supports (n = 51); and seeking membership in a group or network that builds and sustains school-wide use of effective behavior practices (n = 41).

It is encouraging that a relatively large percentage of schools acknowledged using PBIS. However, the variability in key aspects of planning and organizational development points to a need for a more well developed approach within and across schools. For example, having a multi-year prevention-based action plan for student behavior is seen as a critical aspect of implementing and sustaining PBIS.[77] Also, while most principals reported using professional development activities, few did so on an ongoing basis and even fewer were focused on using evidenced-based programming. To experience the full benefit of PBIS, it is recommended that each aspect of organizational development be integrated into each school's system.

2. To what extent does each school reduce and eliminate reactive, punitive, and exclusionary strategies in favor of a positive, proactive, preventive, and skill-building orientation?

At the school level, most schools used systems: (a) of reinforcement (n = 128), (b) of sanctions (n = 94), (c) that rely on student removal from class (n = 80), and (d) that focus on cognitive or social skills training (n = 55). Note that respondents could choose more than one answer to this and the next question. With regard to approaches for students who do not respond to the school behavior plan, schools primarily used one or more supplementary systems of reinforcement (n = 88), removal from class (n = 83), system of sanctions for selected youth (n = 68), and cognitive or skills training programs (n = 63). For students who require individualized behavior programming, respondents noted the single most frequent approach, the most common of which was individualized reinforcement (n = 22, 29.3%), followed by a system that relies on cognitive skills training programs for individual youth (n = 20, 26.7%), removal from class (n = 13, 17.3%), or individualized sanctions (n = 7, 4.7%). Also, 14.7% (n = 11) of principals noted that no specific individualized interventions were used.

The data indicate that most schools do, in fact, have school-wide systems for reinforcement and cognitive or social skills training, but also rely on negative sanctions and removing students from class. Due to the limit in the number of questions on the survey, it is possible only to understand the existence of each system but not the frequency that it is used. However, it is possible to say that greater use of cognitive and social skill interventions would be helpful in avoiding student misbehavior. Also, fewer principals reported using specific approaches with students who do not respond to school level systems and students who need individual plans. For example, 128 principals responded that they use reinforcement within their school-wide plan. However, only 22 principals noted using individualized systems of reinforcement. This data may indicate that the secondary and tertiary interventions are less positively oriented and perhaps, less developed.

3. In those schools that have a school-wide leadership team, who is involved and what is their role?

For those schools that have a school-wide behavior team, teachers and other educational staff (n = 132) and counselors (n = 112) most commonly have representation

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PBS as a three-tiered model for preventing student behavior problems:

"The first level of supports is referred to as 'primary,' or universal. Systems at this schoolwide level are designed to meet the needs of all students. Teaching and reinforcing schoolwide expectations of all students is an example of primary support."

"The second level of support is referred to as 'secondary,' or individualized, because specific services and supports are provided for particular students with identified needs. Targeted interventions, such as social skills groups, school counseling programs, peer tutoring, after-school homework clubs, are typically provided for these students."

"The final level of supports is referred to as 'tertiary' or comprehensive, and represents approximately 5% of a student body. Students at this level have significant, well-established needs that require comprehensive, individualized supports."[78] (p.194)

on the team. Fewer schools involve any security personnel (n = 69), parents (n = 42), students (n = 39), or community members (n = 24). Typically, the behavior support team meets once per month (n = 72, 49%) with 23.8% (n = 35) meeting less than once per month, and 17% (n = 25) meeting more than once per month. Similarly, these teams typically report to staff once per month (n = 55, 36.7%).

The adoption process for school rules is rarely based on decisions by the PBIS leadership team (n = 53, 48.2%).

Within the PBIS approach, it is recommended that there be representation from all stakeholders involved and includes teachers, administrators, school staff, school resource officers, and parents.[79] While the frequency of meetings is reasonable, it is disconcerting that the leadership team rarely participates in the process for adopting school rules.

4. Do positive school-wide behavioral expectations exist, and if so, how are they communicated, taught, and learning assessed?

Almost all respondents noted a common set of expectations for students at their school (n = 137, 92.6%) and that these expectations were stated positively (n = 130, 89%). To remind students of rules and consequences (reported separately in the parentheses that follow), in some schools, they are not posted (n = 9, n = 47). However, they are commonly posted in the following areas: (a) classrooms (n = 138, n = 84); (b) administrative offices (n = 91, n = 64); (c) media centers (n = 90, n = 35); and (d) in nonacademic areas (n = 79; n = 34). Principals were also asked about the approaches to teaching behavioral expectations at their school. Common responses included teaching behavior expectations at the beginning of school year or when new students enroll (n = 123); teaching behavioral expectations in class (n = 113); and providing behavioral expectations to students in written form (n = 106). There were two formal methods used to assess student understanding of behavioral expectations: via paper and pencil test (n = 32 and formal (oral) recitation (n = 23). However, 101 principals reported that staff only informally assesses students and 41 principals noted that students are not assessed at all for understanding related to behavior expectations.

In terms of clearly identifying, posting, and teaching school rules, schools consistently followed appropriate practice. Yet, it is concerning that assessment for understanding school rules was used less and only informally. It is important for schools to ensure student understanding, particularly for students with disabilities, who are at greater risk for receiving certain punishments.

5. How is behavioral data collected and used?

The school discipline referral form involves data collection on most key components: student name and grade (n = 139), date and time (n = 140), referring staff (n = 142), identified problem behavior (n = 140), location of behavioral violation (n = 136), persons involved (n = 125), and administrative decision (n = 136). However, probable motivation (n = 51) and recommendations for remediation (n = 72) are less frequently included. Principals also identified a variety of data sources to develop school-wide or individual behavior plans, including: observation of students (n = 137), teacher-reported assessments of student behavior (e.g., behavior rating scale; n = 117), student and/or teacher interview (n = 106), review of student records (n = 105), and psychological

assessments or screening (n = 91). Lastly, principals reported using discipline data to adjust policies to improve implementation (n = 118), revise the behavior plan (n = 93), and design a behavior plan (n = 83).

Principal reports indicate that, for the most part, appropriate behavior data is being collected and used. Again, there are some concerns at the more individualized level, with indications that student motivations and designing and revising behavior plans are less frequently based on data than school-wide plans. Given the importance of understanding the reasons or functions of student behavior to develop appropriate plans, collection and analysis of these data is in need of improvement.[80] Moreover, individual student discipline data is critical for developing appropriate interventions for youth at high risk and those with significant behavioral issues.

6. How is fidelity assessed to ensure the behavior plan is implemented as intended?

Most principals use direct observation of staff to verify the use of the behavior plan (n = 107), but principals also review disciplinary data (n = 104) and reward/reinforcement data (n = 69). Principals also question staff regarding behavioral policies and procedures (n = 57).

Only 30.3% (n = 44) of participants responded that there was any type of formal audit(s) of effectiveness, relevance, and implementation of school-wide behavioral programming to refine school behavior policies.

Generally, the use of observation is an appropriate method to identify if staff are implementing the behavior plan. However, review of both disciplinary and reinforcement behavioral data provide a much broader picture and can help identify trends concerning the situation in which students' behavior is appropriate or inappropriate (e.g., with whom, at what times, and in which settings positive and inappropriate behavior occurs).[81] While the information could be used to identify students' needs for individualized plans, it could also be a general indicator of the degree to which the plan is being followed.

7. Do schools' leadership team members have opportunities to view practices at other schools that effectively implement PBIS?

Only 45.6% (n = 69) of principals reported that opportunities existed for the leadership team to view other schools that effectively implement PBIS. In light of concerns with various aspects of PBIS implementation noted in the aforementioned data, it would be of value to provide leadership teams with examples of schools that have a comprehensive system for implementation.

Maintaining Order and Safety, Promoting Learning, and Respecting Student Rights

Our primary goal for this report was to assert and support the abolishment of CP. However, our support intentionally moved beyond a mere statement that CP is harmful to students. Rather we also set out to better understand the use of punishment, and more specifically, CP, in FL schools. To do so, we reported on three original studies. First, to make valid and useful recommendations, it was necessary for us to understand broad state-level data on punishment and factors that are associated with certain types of punishments. Second, we also needed to understand the administrator perspective, as they are the professionals charged with correcting student misconduct, reinforcing appropriate behavior, and ensuring safe schools. Third, for us to make recommendations that will supplant the use of CP, we collected and analyzed data on current school-level behavioral policies and practices in order to identify strengths and areas of need for schools to implement positive and proactive approaches to student behavior consistent with a multi-tiered approach.

While the following recommendations are based on data concerning the state of FL, we assert that there are likely similarities with other states that also allow CP. For example, the disproportionate punishment of males, African American students, and special education students are certainly not unique to FL. As such, we believe that sufficient justification exists in the report for other states to also abolish the use of CP, while also pursuing a more effective and proactive approach to student behavior. Lastly, our recommendations are for concerned citizens, policymakers, and civil leaders within FL. However, we would also encourage action in other states and at the federal level to abolish CP and promote research-based approaches to student behavior in our schools.

Recommendations

1. Discontinue the use of CP in FL schools immediately. Based on research and the opinions of experts and professional organizations across disciplines, the abolishment of CP should be undertaken at the federal, state legislative, school district, and school levels. Legally prohibiting the use of CP is necessary to support and enforce a cultural shift away from practices based on tradition and toward evidence-based, child-centered approaches to discipline. In our interview study, principals made it clear that they fear harming children with the use of CP. As we have reported, these principals are correct in their understanding that CP has negative effects on students of all ages.

2. Continue to collect, analyze, and act on data related to the disproportionate use of other punishments with subgroups of students even after the discontinuation of CP. There are concerns that certain schools and students are disproportionately affected by punishment. For example, schools that use CP also use OSS more often than schools that do not. These schools may have developed a culture of reaction and punishment and a reorientation is needed to a proactive and positive approach to student behavior. Also, the results of our first study indicate that subgroups of students are experiencing greater punishment than would be expected. For example, African Americans receive considerably more punishments. Although males receive more CP, students with special needs and African American students actually receive less than expected. However, it is also important to consider the frequency that they are punished in other ways. In fact, students with special needs, African American students, youth receiving free or reduced lunch, and middle/junior high school students receive higher levels of OSS. During and following the abolishment of CP, schools, districts, and the state must maintain a watchful eye on how certain students may be adversely affected by receiving other ineffectual punishments.

Specifically, we recommend that data on the use of CP and other forms of punishment be collected annually and reported to the public in a format that is easy to access and understand.[82] Reporting should include disaggregated data that show how student subgroups are impacted by school discipline strategies. Specifically, these data should reveal impacts by race, gender, socioeconomic status, disability, and grade level. A summary report should be released and posted on the Department of Education website.[83] This analysis and reporting is particularly critical for FL, given that there are greater than the national averages of students who are African American, have special needs, and receive free or reduced lunch.

3. Develop policies and interventions to address school discipline in a proactive and positive manner for all groups of students.
This recommendation is based on the finding from Study 2 that administrators use CP for lack of a more positive approach. Within Study 3, more than three-fourths of principals reported using a PBIS approach. However, when we look at how PBIS was actually implemented, we see that there is a great need for a more comprehensive approach to student behavior.

The implementation of a culturally responsive multi-tiered behavior plan, such as PBIS, shows promise for reducing instances of exclusionary discipline, as well as

the discipline gap between Caucasian students and students of color.[84] Our studies suggest that many educators currently use some PBIS strategies and yet CP and other ineffectual punitive discipline strategies continue to be used. For a multi-tier system such as PBIS to be effective, some of the critical aspects commonly missing from FL schools are the need to:

- Rely on a representative leadership team to develop a multi-year plan for addressing student behavior, as well as agreed upon school-wide expectations and consequences.
- Formally assess student understanding of expectations and consequences and provide follow-up instruction, as needed.
- Rely on evidenced-based interventions, including cognitive and social skills training.
- Focus on secondary and tertiary interventions in addition to a comprehensive universal/school-wide plan. Researchers have reported limitations in the effectiveness of programs that rely solely or primarily on interventions delivered solely at the universal level.[85] Currently, there are concerns that more targeted interventions are not developed and implemented. For those secondary and tertiary interventions that do exist, there is evidence that they may not be based on individual student behavior data.
- Use disciplinary data as a proxy for identifying teachers who may have difficulties implementing the behavior plan with fidelity. A teacher who refers a large number of students for office disciplinary referrals or punishments may need support implementing the behavior plan and/or opportunities for professional development.
- Rely on outside sources for support when developing and implementing the behavior plan, such as other schools that are successfully implementing a PBIS model.
- Consider additional practices for promoting social and emotional learning (SEL).[86] For example, restorative justice holds promise as an approach to positively and successfully address students' challenging behaviors.[87]

4. Provide ongoing professional development (PD) to help educators, school staff, and administrators implement evidence-based alternatives to CP and other ineffectual punishments.

In Study 3, relatively few principals reported using continuous improvement and training related to student behavior. It is important that teachers, school staff, and administrators are provided PD related to student behavior that is of extended duration, and includes active learning and collective participation.[88] Researchers have also identified the importance of PD that facilitates opportunities to reflect, discuss, and problem solve, particularly with members of the leadership team.[89]

Another valid PD approach is the use of "coaches." Instructional coaching is a form of PD in which an expert educator/administrator works one-on-one with a novice or less-skilled educator to provide job-embedded support for implementing evidence-based practices.[90] The use of coaches may be particularly useful to administrators given that in Study 2 they identified using CP because they were unaware how to implement other effective approaches.

While the coaching model has been widely applied to address teachers' curricular and instructional needs, less research has been completed with regard to classroom management and student discipline. We suggest that such a model could provide the necessary support to prevent the substitution of CP with other detrimental practices.[91] Coaches are one integral piece in the comprehensive and ongoing professional development necessary to transform educators' practice.

5. Promote collective leadership teams (CLT) among principals focused on addressing student behavior.

In this context, CLTs are professional collaborative communities that could be characterized by principals sharing ownership of and solutions for difficulties with student behavior.[92] A CLT model can reduce isolation and promote a necessary exchange of ideas and approaches to student behavior.[93] CLTs can serve as a cross-school structure that allows for collaborative discussion and efforts that include "discussion of policy and practice, methods for implementation, and accountability for program effectiveness" (p. 40).[94]

6. Include discipline data in school evaluations.

Currently, evaluation of FL schools is achieved via evaluating students' academic outcomes, primarily through standardized test scores.[95] However, the disproportionate use of CP and other exclusionary discipline strategies impact both academic and social-emotional outcomes. In light of the information summarized in the above recommendations, Florida schools should be evaluated based upon the reduction of negative practices and the implementation of evidence-based discipline policies and practices.[96]

Final Thoughts

Though educators and administrators struggle with how to handle students' challenging behaviors and frequently employ negative and reactive strategies, appropriate alternatives exist. However, first we must acknowledge that our understanding of human behavior and value of human dignity require the immediate end to the use of CP in our schools. Next, we must recognize that CP is simply one of a number of ineffectual punishments (e.g., OSS) that are used in our schools. An end to CP must also be coupled with close scrutiny of the disproportionate use of other punishments with subgroups of the student population. Finally, we must provide comprehensive approaches to student behavior, such as the multi-tiered PBIS program, that promote positive prosocial behavior, while also holding students appropriately accountable for their behavior. The use of research-based approaches to student behavior requires comprehensive PD and collaborative efforts among school administrators. Well-meaning and dedicated educators and administrators require these supports in order to maximize their effectiveness and improve students' academic and social-emotional outcomes.

ENDNOTES

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