Understanding School Leaders' Perspectives on Behavior and Discipline Survey
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We surveyed 1,080 public school principals across the U.S. in November 2021 using RAND's nationally representative Understanding School Leader Panel. Here we present results from questions on student behavior and discipline. The results shown have survey weights applied and can be interpreted as representative of the national population of public school principals. [1]

We report results by school level (elementary versus secondary) and by school racial/ethnic composition. Note that we obtained only limited information about school context from principals due to the sensitivity of other information collected in the survey. [2] Thus, our school racial/ethnic composition variable is categorical with three groups: "Mostly Black," "Mostly White", and "Neither" (where the "Neither" category represents schools that are neither majority Black nor majority white).[3] (Due to rounding, column totals may not sum to 100.)

Survey Sample Demographics

	Sample Size (N)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Unweighted	1,080	56%	44%	8%	58%	34%
Weighted	1,080	52%	48%	9%	56%	35%

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[1] Due to how principals are recruited to RAND's American School Leader Panel, survey weights can be produced such that, when applied, survey results can be generalized to the national population of public school principals. For more information about the ASLP, including its sampling and weighting methods, please see Robbins and Grant (2020).

[2] In this survey, we also replicated the "Two Strikes" survey experiment designed by Jason Okonofua and Jennifer Eberhardt to measure racial bias in school discipline decision-making and asked respondents potentially sensitive questions about their racial attitudes. To ensure that individuals could not be identified in our survey data, we obtained only limited information about schools' student demographics and contexts.

[3] Because "Mostly Black" schools represent a small share of U.S. public schools, we note that our sample sizes for this subgroup are smaller than for the other subgroups. Thus, we encourage readers to interpret these results with some caution. While we do not know the specific racial/ethnic breakdown among students in the schools categorized as "Neither," we estimate this group is comprised of roughly half schools that are majority Latino and half schools in which none of these racial/ethnic groups comprise a majority based on patterns we observe among the national population of U.S. public schools in NCES' Common Core of Data.

Question 1. Do your school's discipline policies include any zero tolerance policies? Zero tolerance policies require mandatory penalties for students who break certain school rules.

	Total (N=1,075)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Yes	62	58	68	71	62	61
No	38	42	32	29	38	39

Question 2. In which of the following areas does your school have a zero-tolerance policy?[4]

	Total (N=651)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Guns	98	98	99	98	99	98
Knives	80	83	77	74	82	80
Other weapons	17	14	20	22	16	17
Illegal drugs	85	85	86	84	87	84
Fighting	32	22	41	41	31	31
Willful defiance	6	4	7	7	7	3

Question 3. In your school, can students be suspended for willful disobedience or defiant or disruptive behavior?

	Total (N=1,075)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Yes	76	70	84	84	85	60
No	24	30	16	16	15	40

Question 4. Does your school currently engage in any of the following activities focused on behavior management, student discipline, and/or improving school climate?

	Total (N=1,075)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS)	78	84	72	82	76	81

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[4] Note that this question was only presented to principals who said their school had a zero-tolerance policy in place in 2021–2022 (i.e., those who answered yes to question 1).

	Total (N=1,075)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Restorative Justice or Restorative Practices	62	58	65	58	57	68
Social and Emotional Learning programs	70	77	64	59	70	76
Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS)	77	82	72	77	76	79
Student school climate surveys	73	68	77	71	68	78
Staff school climate surveys	76	74	77	74	73	79
Other	11	11	12	9	13	11
No formal behavior management, student discipline and/or school climate activities	2	1	2	0	2	2

Question 5. Are you the individual primarily responsible for disciplinary decisions that result in suspensions and expulsions?

	Total (N=1,075)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Yes	77	84	69	67	79	76
No	23	16	31	33	21	24

Question 6. What information do you use in deciding on an appropriate disciplinary response to problem behavior? Please allocate 100 points among the following 9 items, based on their importance to you when making a disciplinary decision.

	Total (N=1,071)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Severity of behavior	33	32	34	36	33	32
Context of the incident	15	15	14	15	14	16
History of behavior	12	12	13	12	13	12
The reliability of the information about the behavioral incident	10	10	10	10	10	10
The student's disciplinary history	10	10	11	11	11	10
How the student responded to prior disciplinary actions or approaches	8	8	8	7	9	8

	Total (N=1,071)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Your relationship with the specific student(s) involved	7	8	6	5	7	8
Your relationship with the specific student(s)'s parents	3	3	3	3	3	3
Other	1	1	1	1	1	1

Question 7. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.[5]

I feel it is critical to work with parents before suspending a student from school. (1)

	Total (N=1,071)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Strongly Agree	37	45	29	30	38	38
Agree	41	38	45	43	41	41
Neither agree nor disagree	16	13	18	23	15	14
Disagree	5	3	7	3	5	5
Strongly Disagree	1	1	1	2	1	1

The primary purpose of discipline is to teach appropriate skills to the student who misbehaved. (2)

	Total (N=1,070)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Strongly Agree	43	51	37	42	45	43
Agree	38	30	44	45	36	37
Neither agree nor disagree	8	8	9	11	10	6
Disagree	7	7	7	3	6	10
Strongly Disagree	3	4	3	0	3	5

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[5] These items were adapted from the Disciplinary Practices Survey developed by Russell Skiba and Heather Edl.

Certain students lack motivation and disrupt the learning environment of their peers. Suspension and expulsion for these students is justified to preserve the learning environment for students who wish to learn. (3)

	Total (N=1,070)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Strongly Agree	3	3	3	4	2	3
Agree	16	14	19	15	17	15
Neither agree nor disagree	20	19	23	25	21	20
Disagree	34	34	34	37	36	31
Strongly Disagree	27	31	21	19	24	32

I need additional resources to increase my school's capacity to reduce and prevent troublesome behaviors. (4)

	Total (N=1,070)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Strongly Agree	16	17	15	22	14	16
Agree	38	35	40	34	36	42
Neither agree nor disagree	21	21	22	22	22	21
Disagree	18	20	17	12	21	16
Strongly Disagree	6	7	6	10	6	6

There is really nothing a school can do if students are not willing to take responsibility for their behavior. (5)

	Total (N=1,071)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Strongly Agree	1	1	0	0	1	0
Agree	6	5	7	8	5	6
Neither agree nor disagree	7	8	6	10	6	7
Disagree	45	39	50	42	46	43
Strongly Disagree	41	48	36	40	42	44

Most, if not all, discipline problems come from inadequacies in the students' home situation. (6)

	Total (N=1,071)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Strongly Agree	1	1	2	1	1	1
Agree	11	13	10	9	12	11
Neither agree nor disagree	26	25	27	23	28	23
Disagree	40	38	44	45	39	42
Strongly Disagree	21	24	17	23	19	22

Suspension and expulsion do not really solve discipline problems. (7)

	Total (N=1,071)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Strongly Agree	26	33	19	29	26	28
Agree	43	42	43	44	42	42
Neither agree nor disagree	18	16	20	15	18	19
Disagree	11	6	17	9	13	9
Strongly Disagree	2	3	1	3	1	3

Suspension makes students less likely to misbehave in the future. (8)

	Total (N=1,071)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Strongly Agree	0	1	0	2	1	0
Agree	12	10	15	11	13	12
Neither agree nor disagree	31	28	37	32	32	31
Disagree	38	38	35	30	38	38
Strongly Disagree	18	23	12	25	16	19

I believe suspension and expulsion allow students time away from school that encourages them to think about their behavior. (9)

	Total (N=1,071)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Strongly Agree	1	2	1	3	1	2

	Total (N=1,071)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Agree	11	10	12	17	9	13
Neither agree nor disagree	27	23	33	26	28	28
Disagree	36	37	34	34	40	29
Strongly Disagree	24	29	20	21	23	29

Teachers at my school are for the most part adequately trained by their teacher-training program to handle problems of misbehavior and discipline. (10)

	Total (N=1,071)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Strongly Agree	3	3	3	3	3	2
Agree	33	32	33	21	37	29
Neither agree nor disagree	21	21	21	18	20	23
Disagree	33	34	31	38	31	34
Strongly Disagree	11	10	12	19	9	11

I believe suspension is unnecessary if we provide a positive school climate and challenging instruction. (11)

	Total (N=1,071)	Elementary	Secondary	Mostly Black	Mostly White	Neither
Strongly Agree	10	11	9	14	8	12
Agree	32	36	28	28	33	32
Neither agree nor disagree	27	28	25	21	27	27
Disagree	26	22	32	32	29	22
Strongly Disagree	4	3	6	5	3	7