



School-wide Findings: Student Behavior, Support Needs, and School Climate



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Introduction

- Office discipline referrals (ODR) are an index of the school-wide social and behavioral culture of schools and have been used to measure school climate, referral patterns, and outcomes of school-wide interventions (Irvin et al., 2004; Sprague et al., 1999).
- Current research/evaluation using ODRs relies on narrowly defined samples (to assure comparability across schools).
- Further, the validity of research/evaluation using ODRs is a function of the data collection and implementation systems.
- A nationally representative sample of school discipline referral data would provide descriptions of schools—in terms of discipline referral patterns and school climate—and help generalize ODR research/evaluation findings.

Research Questions

- Are the demographic data from the School-wide Information System sub-sample comparable to the demographics of the most recent national sample reported by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES)?
- If the demographic data are comparable, can we infer that office referral patterns will be comparable? How will these patterns vary for elementary, middle, and high schools across rates of referral, types of problem behaviors, locations of incidents, and administrative consequences for office referrals?

Method

- Referrals were gathered from schools using the School-wide Information System (SWIS; May et al., 2003), a web-based computer application that provides systematic ODR data collection and facilitates data-based decision making across multiple levels of school support.
- All schools agreed to share data for research purposes, implemented SWIS for the entire 2005-2006 school year, and were included in the NCES database.
- Exclusions: alternative and pre-K schools, minor incidents

SWIS Schools = 1,709 SWIS Referrals = 921,764

- Elementary: 1,066 Elementary: 275,764
- Middle: 336 Middle: 356,858
- High: 110 High: 184,567

Comparison of SWIS with NCES

- Compared SWIS demographics to NCES demographics using most current NCES school data (n = 91,054):
 - Grade: Elem (62/ 52%), Middle (20/ 14%), High (6/ 14%)
 - Size: distribution similar for all grade levels (3-10% differences across size categories)
 - Location: Elem and Middle (<= 3% diff), High (<= 6% diff)
 - SES: Elem (<= 10% diff), Middle (<= 8% diff), High (<= 16% diff)
 - Gender: < 1% differences for all grade levels
 - Race/ ethnicity: all grade levels < 4% differences for schools reporting non-white enrollment in categories of 10% or more
- Demographic variables are comparable for SWIS and NCES datasets, particularly for elementary and middle schools. For high schools, sample is smaller and school-wide supports less prevalent.

Patterns of Behavior in Schools

- Referral rates: Average ODR/ 100 students/ day (for comparability across schools)
- Elementary (0.37), Middle (1.05), High (1.35)
 - Overall SWIS rates are stable across academic years.
 - Of all referrals in schools, 37-54% are accounted for by students receiving 6 or more referrals.

Mean % Students Receiving Referrals

	0 or 1	2 to 5	6 or more
K-6	88.84	8.24	2.92
6-9	72.80	17.08	10.13
9-12	66.73	20.69	12.58
K-8/12	76.27	15.72	8.01

Mean % Referrals Accounted for by Students

	0 or 1	2 to 5	6 or more
K-6	24.31	42.19	37.10
6-9	14.03	35.60	51.83
9-12	14.05	35.20	53.67
K-8/12	16.88	39.09	47.56

Types of Problem Behavior

	K-6		6-9		9-12	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Fighting	89,286	32.4	41,935	11.8	5,638	3.1
Defiance	79,920	29.0	111,500	31.2	44,717	24.2
Disruption	29,481	10.7	64,917	18.2	17,191	9.3
Language	18,956	6.9	22,018	6.2	9,537	5.2
Other	17,406	6.3	24,769	6.9	11,107	6.0
Harassment	16,317	5.9	12,883	3.6	1,823	1.0
Theft	6,378	2.3	3,612	1.0	1,159	.6
Tardy	5,626	2.0	31,056	8.7	44,338	24.0
Property	3,164	1.1	2,049	.6	577	.3
Lying	3,030	1.1	2,917	.8	1,327	.7
Truancy	2,178	.8	25,477	7.1	39,383	21.3
Weapons	1,481	.5	1,105	.3	369	.2
Vandalism	1,212	.4	1,401	.4	384	.2
Unknown	613	.2	1,140	.3	297	.2
Combustible	351	.1	463	.1	151	.1
Dress Code	215	.1	7,280	2.0	3,025	1.6
Bomb Threat	109	<.0	102	<.0	36	<.0
Drugs	93	<.0	956	.3	1,109	.6
Tobacco	73	<.0	977	.3	1,962	1.1
Arson	45	<.0	63	<.0	26	<.0
Alcohol	21	<.0	238	.1	411	.2
Total	275,955	100	356,858	100	184,567	100

Administrative Decision

	K-6		6-9		9-12	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Student conf.	39,428	14.3	29,899	8.4	23,231	12.6
Detention	36,661	13.3	93,397	26.2	52,475	28.4
Loss privileges	36,155	13.1	4,604	1.3	954	.5
Parent contact	33,285	12.1	17,199	4.8	8,060	4.4
Time in office	29,927	10.8	9,748	2.7	3,633	2.0
OSS	28,955	10.5	62,515	17.5	26,083	14.1
ISS	28,219	10.2	86,201	24.2	34,876	18.9
Other	16,683	6.0	28,361	7.9	13,978	7.6
Unknown	14,383	5.2	2,704	.8	3,196	1.7
Bus suspension	6,898	2.5	5,331	1.5	754	.4
1:1 Instruction	2,747	1.0	2,143	.6	644	.3
Restitution	1,326	.5	538	.2	189	.1
Saturday school	1,067	.4	13,349	3.7	16,104	8.7
Expulsion	221	.1	869	.2	390	.2
Total	275,955	100	356,858	100	184,567	100

Location of Problem Behaviors

	K-6		6-9		9-12	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Classroom	128,517	46.6	225,541	63.2	118,208	64.0
Playground	46,836	17.0	4,699	1.3	657	.4
Hall	23,489	8.5	39,247	11.0	16,525	9.0
Bus	22,381	8.1	14,735	4.1	2,077	1.1
Cafeteria	16,079	5.8	13,128	3.7	3,560	1.9
Other	9,297	3.4	14,269	4.0	13,383	7.3
Gym	8,126	3.0	14,734	4.1	4,394	2.4
Restroom	7,096	2.6	3,741	1.0	949	.5
Library	3,241	1.2	1,856	.5	907	.5
Bus zone	2,928	1.1	2,491	.7	436	.2
Office	2,489	.9	10,467	2.9	11,229	6.1
Commons	2,171	.8	5,738	1.6	3,838	2.1
Unknown	1,494	.5	4,057	1.1	6,120	3.3
Assembly	1,320	.5	1,204	.3	521	.3
Parking lot	491	.2	950	.3	1,763	1.0
Locker Rm			1	<.0		
Total	275,955	100	356,858	100	184,567	100

Conclusions

- Problem behavior changes from peer-directed (aggression) in elementary to adult-directed (defiance) in middle school. Tardiness and skipping become problems in high school.
- Between 47% and 64% of all problem behaviors occur in the classroom. Elementary students have problems on the playground, whereas middle and high school students have more problems in the hallways.
- Suspension is the primary consequence for students in middle (68%) and high (61%) school. Consequences for elementary students are more evenly distributed.
- Systematic data collection and management (e.g., SWIS) can provide an index for administrators to predict and shape the culture of their schools.
- Future research/evaluation should explore referral data to better predict relations among variables, including multilevel variability and interactions with other educational outcomes.

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