

# **National Study of Delinquency Prevention in Schools**

## **Chapter 3 Activities to Create and Maintain Safe and Orderly Schools**

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# Activities to Create and Maintain Safe and Orderly Schools

The public expects today's schools to do many things. Among these are the implementation of a wide variety of approaches to reducing problem behavior, improving discipline, and promoting safer schools. In this chapter, we undertake the task of describing what schools do to prevent problem behavior. We examine the range of what is undertaken and how much activity is undertaken. First, we put the contemporary requirement that schools improve youth behavior in historical context by describing the extension of schooling to a large percentage of youths who would not have received much schooling in the past.

## The Press for Delinquency Prevention Activity in Schools

At one time, the family was the main source of occupational learning (Coleman, 1972). As recently as 1930, 70% of children lived in two-parent farm families (Hernandez, 1994). In 1940, 10% of children lived with a mother in the paid labor force, but by 1990 60% of children had a mother in the labor force. In 1900, the number of high school graduates as a percentage of the 18-year-old population stood at about 6%; by 1970 this had reached 78% (Carter, 1976). G. Gottfredson (1981) documented changes over time that imply a decreased involvement of young people with work roles and with adults outside of school, and an increased involvement of ever larger proportions of youth in school for ever larger numbers of days per year. In 1870 the average length of school terms was 132 days and the average number of days of school attended was only 78 days (President's Science Advisory Committee on Youth, 1973). Today school terms are usually 180 days. Even in large urban school districts that are notorious for attendance problems, average daily attendance rates of about 80% are reported (Council of Great City Schools, 1994), and in some school districts average daily attendance is 95% or more (South Carolina Department of Education, 1997). This means that students today attend school an average of 144 to 171 days. Between 1940 and 1996 the percentage of the population aged 25 to 29 years that had completed 4 years of high school or more increased from 38% to 87% (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998b).<sup>1</sup> In short, a strikingly larger range of today's youths are involved in school and attend school much more of the time than was true in the past.

Along with this shift away from family as a source of occupational learning and the participation of a greater range of young people in schools have come, not surprisingly, calls for schools to do more things. Schools are called upon to go beyond the development of traditional

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<sup>1</sup>By 1996, four years of high school had been completed by 93% of the White non-Hispanic population, 86% of the Black non-Hispanic population, and 61% of the Hispanic population aged 25 to 29 years. The Black high school completion rate in 1996 was about equal to the White completion rate in 1975; the Hispanic completion rate in 1996 was about equal to the White completion rate in 1956. Although the race/ethnic group disparity in high school completion remains alarming, the proportions of persons in schools that are Black or Hispanic have shown large historical increases (see National Center for Education Statistics, 1998b).

academic or intellectual skills to the development of vocational skills, decision-making skills, skills for coping with employers and organizations, skills required to avoid undesirable social pressures from others, and competencies in making long-range plans and delaying gratification. Schools are called on to play a role in the socialization of the young for participation in an orderly civil society and in their own orderly education. Now, the vast majority of youths are expected to complete high school. Dropping out (leaving school before completing high school) even for youths who do not do well in school, do not like school, or who do not behave well in school is usually seen as an undesirable outcome.

The public appears to want schools to do a better job of discipline. In occasional opinion polls conducted between 1970 and 1998, the percentage of respondents indicating that lack of discipline is a major problem facing the local public schools has ranged from 14% to 27% (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998b; Rose & Gallup, 1998). In the most recent Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll, 20% of public school parents cited fighting, violence, or gangs as the most important problems facing the schools.

All of these developments have led schools to attempt a wide variety of approaches to reducing problem behavior, improving discipline, and promoting safer schools. Developing a description of the delinquency and other problem behavior prevention activities of schools required first that we develop definitions of the activities we sought to describe and second, that we develop a classification that would provide a system and a vocabulary for discussing these activities. Ultimately, these definitions and the taxonomy will be useful if they contribute to an understanding of which kinds of activity are helpful and which are not. These definitions and the development of a taxonomy of prevention activity are described next.

## **Definitions**

A prevention program is defined as an intervention or set of interventions put in place with the intention of reducing problem behavior in a population. Such activities include—but are not limited to—policies, instructional activity, supervision, coaching, and other interventions with youths or their families, schools, or peer environments. Problem behaviors include criminal behavior; alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use; and risky sexual activity. Prevention programs may target these problem behaviors directly, or they may target individual or social characteristics believed by program advocates to be precursors of problem behavior. These individual and social characteristics include, but are not limited to, poor social competency and related skills, impulsiveness, academic failure, limited parental supervision, harsh or erratic discipline, poor classroom management, or ineffective school or community guardianship. Because we are concerned with what schools are doing, we limited the search to school-based prevention activity. By this we mean activity that is primarily located in a school building or that is implemented by school staff or under school or school-system auspices. Kindergarten, elementary, and secondary school levels are included. Elaboration of our definitions and rationales for them are provided in Appendix D.

## **Development of a Taxonomy of Practices, Programs, and Arrangements**

To conduct research on what schools do to prevent delinquent and other problem behavior and to promote a safe and orderly environment, we required a useful classification of school activities or programs and a classification of program objectives. Classifications are useful because they organize related activities together, make communication about activities easier, aid in recall, and distinguish unlike activities or objectives by classifying them separately (Sokol, 1974).<sup>2</sup>

A first step in developing the classification was to conduct a search to identify the full range of activities that would have to be classified (Womer, 1997, provided an earlier account of this effort). We scoured the scientific and practitioner literatures to learn about the universe of prevention programs and practices. A search of existing school-based prevention strategies was conducted to discover the full range of prevention activities in schools and to ensure that the taxonomy to be used in this research was as comprehensive as possible. This search revealed a wide variety of programs including well-known and widely disseminated programs and practices such as Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.), Law Related Education (L.R.E.), and Midnight Basketball programs. This search also discovered programs that used unusual prevention methods such as lacrosse, clown troupes, or planting trees to combat violence and drug use.

This section describes the method of program retrieval for this activity and the taxonomy of programs, practices, and arrangements that emerged from this activity.

### **Sources Used to Obtain Leads**

An initial search located 513 school-based prevention programs sponsored by government agencies, foundations, and school systems. Table 3.1 displays the variety of sources that were used to obtain leads to specimens of program or activities. Among these sources were lists of federal and state grant recipients including those from the National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (CSAP), and Community Schools grantees. Foundation grants lists were also obtained from the University of Maryland's Office of Research Advancement and Administration, *Youth Today*, the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, and the William T. Grant Foundation. Additional sources include published literature and technical assistance resources from various agencies and publishers and

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<sup>2</sup>Prevention activities can, in principle, be categorized in many ways. Some of these are the age or grade of the target population, the specific problem behavior in which they focus, their intermediate objectives, or the nature of the activity undertaken.

source materials cited in secondary accounts. Referrals from persons contacted were a final source for leads.

Table 3.1

*Sources Used to Obtain Leads*

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Federal and State Grant Recipients

- C Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
- C Community Schools
- C National Institute of Drug Abuse
- C National Institute of Justice

Foundation Grants Lists

- C University of Maryland's Office of Research Advancement and Administration
- C *Youth Today*
- C W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- C William T. Grant Foundation

Technical Assistance Resources Searched

- C Administration on Children, Youth, and Families
  - C Appalachian Educational Laboratory
  - C Carnegie Council of New York
  - C Center for Disease Control
  - C Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
  - C Center for Research in Educational Policy
  - C Center for Substance Abuse Prevention
  - C Drug Strategies
  - C Educational Development Center
  - C National Criminal Justice Research Service
  - C National School Safety Center
  - C North Carolina Center for the Prevention of School Violence
  - C Northwest Regional Education Laboratory
  - C Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
  - C South Eastern Regional Center for Drug-Free Schools and Communities
  - C South Eastern Regional Vision for Education
  - C U.S. Department of Agriculture
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**Methods Used to Obtain Information About Programs or Activities**

Telephone calls were the primary method of obtaining information from program sources. Phone calls were made for approximately four months to all organizations and agencies identified as operating prevention programs. The calls requested written program descriptions,

evaluation reports, implementation manuals, or other materials describing their school-based program. After four months of phone calls, letters were mailed to each agency which had not been reached by phone or from which written information was not yet received. These letters explained the purpose of the study and requested a written description of their program.

Program materials were reviewed to determine whether they met our selection criteria. Inclusion criteria required that a program take place within the school building or under school auspices and that the program be intended to prevent problem behavior or promote school safety. Each program meeting the criteria was coded for discrete program activities according to the classification of school-based prevention activities developed for this project.

### **What Happened When Materials Were Sought**

Written materials were obtained for 35% of the 513 leads. Of the 178 program descriptions that were obtained, 78% ( $N = 139$ ) met the selection criteria. The remaining 39 programs did not fit our definition of "school-based" or were too vague to classify and were, therefore, not included in the final sample.

Most prospects identified by searching the lists and technical assistance reports led to dead ends. There are several reasons why the majority of leads resulted in a dead-end. In many cases the person responsible for disseminating information about the program could not be reached. In some instances the program was no longer in existence or the contact person did not have written materials. Over one dozen request letters were returned due to incorrect or unknown addresses. Finally, program materials were simply not received in one-third of the cases where program contacts agreed to send them.

The materials uncovered by using the foregoing method, together with program materials we had acquired or knew about as a result of working in the delinquency prevention area for many years, were used to construct a classification of program types. Many programs have multiple components that resemble more than one category in a classification.

### **The Taxonomy**

This work helped to develop a comprehensive classification of prevention activities in schools consisting of 24 categories and nearly 300 subcategories. We sought to provide a category to describe each important aspect of any problem-behavior-prevention program (in other words, to provide an exhaustive set of categories). Our aim was to provide a set of descriptors for prevention activities each of which falls in one and only one category (exclusiveness). The taxonomic principles or rules for identifying an activity as an instance of a type were spelled out in a brief statement, so that identifying a program or activity by category name should provide an efficient method for communicating about the program's characteristics. The development of the taxonomy involved an iterative process as we tried to identify instances of specific prevention activities using the emerging classification.

We wished to distinguish the *objectives* of an activity or program from the characteristics of the activity or program itself. Therefore, a separate classification of potential objectives was developed. The complete taxonomies for activities and for objectives are shown in Appendix D. Table 3.2 summarizes the classification of activities by listing the major categories. Both of these classifications can be supplemented by other classifications – e.g., age or ethnic group of target population.

Table 3.2

*A Classification of Prevention Activity*

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0	Information
1	Prevention curriculum, instruction, or training
2	Use of cognitive-behavioral or behavioral modeling methods of training or instruction
3	Behavioral or behavior modification interventions not specified above
4	Counseling/social work/psychological/therapeutic interventions not specified above
5	Individual attention interventions not specified above
6	Recreational, enrichment and leisure activities not specified above
7	Referral to other agencies or for other services not specified above
8	Interventions that change instructional or classroom management methods or practices not specified above
9	Interventions that change or maintain a <i>distinctive culture or climate</i> for inhabitants' interpersonal exchanges – or communicate norms for behavior
10	Intergroup relations and interaction between the school and community or groups within the school
11	Rules, policies, regulations, or laws about behavior or discipline or enforcement of such
12	Interventions that involve a school planning structure or process – or the management of change
13	Reorganization of grades, classes, or school schedules
14	Security and surveillance interventions within school and boundary – except school uniforms
15	Interventions that exclude weapons or contraband, except rules disallowing weapons or contraband
16	Interventions to alter school composition
17	Family interventions (other than home-based reinforcement)
18	Training or staff development intervention not specifically directed at an intervention specified above
19	Removing obstacles or providing incentives for attendance
20	Architectural features of the school
21	Treatment or prevention interventions for administration, faculty, or staff – or employee assistance programs
22	Other intervention not specified above
23	Not specified intervention

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The taxonomies of activities and objectives were constructed to provide for the classification of programs that were observed, not just theoretical programs. For this reason they allow for the classification of activities that may have little or no plausibility as approaches to reducing problem behavior. For example, there is scant reason for believing that the provision of a modest amount of recreational activity will take a big bite out of crime. But there are many such programs being operated that are regarded by those who operate or support them as delinquency or drug prevention programs. Similarly, there is little evidence that would suggest that targeting low self-esteem or alienation will be fruitful approaches to the prevention of problem behavior (D. Gottfredson, Harmon, Gottfredson, Jones, & Celestin, 1999). But many who operate programs believe that (a) their programs will increase self-esteem and (b) that this is a useful route to the prevention of problem behavior. To study such activities, they must be classified, and so they are included in our taxonomy.

The relation of some categories in the taxonomy to problem behavior is obvious. For instance, instruction in ways to avoid problem behavior, behavior modification, or the use of rules and disciplinary practices are linked to the prevention or reduction of problem behavior in an obvious way. But we know from making presentations about this research in progress that some persons are puzzled by some of the categories in the classification, so it is useful to consider briefly how some activities that fall within the categories are related to the prevention of problem behavior. Criminologists sometimes ask why improvements to classroom management or instruction might be related to delinquency. One answer is that disorderly classrooms provide opportunities for students to get into trouble, that school safety and classroom orderliness are correlated (G. Gottfredson, 1984/1999). Disorderly classrooms may also contribute to the development of patterns of delinquent behavior by making disruptive behavior salient and providing visible social rewards for such behavior. Interventions to improve instruction or classroom management have been found in some research to produce reductions in problem behavior (D. Gottfredson, 1997; D. Gottfredson et al., in press).

Criminologists also sometimes ask why school reorganization could be related to delinquency. Educators sometimes arrange schools into smaller units, for example forming schools within a school or separating the grade levels in different parts of the school or on different floors, to help reduce problem behavior. It is common, also, for some middle schools to have separate stairways for students in the different grades, and many believe that this reduces problem behavior. One rationale sometimes offered for such practices is that the smaller groups produced bring each adult into continuing contact with a smaller number of students, whom they can more easily recognize and who may become more attached to the adults. Class schedules are sometimes arranged to give students less time between classes, more time between classes, or have different groups of students in the hallways, playgrounds, or eating areas at different times, thus reducing opportunities or provocation for fighting or other problem behavior. Such arrangements may reduce problem behavior (D. Gottfredson et al., in press).

Architectural design features of schools may be related to school safety and the prevention of problem behavior in part because of the opportunities they provide for surveillance of activity in

the school. Some schools are designed so that all persons entering the school are easily visible from the school office, and all of the hallways can be observed from a point near the office door. Others are built with multiple entrances not visible from the office; some schools are built with four stories and a rectangular arrangement of hallways so that observing all hallways would require 8 observers. Efficient architectural arrangements for promoting security were described by Bentham in 1791 (*Panopticon or the Inspection House*) and 1798 (*Proposal for a New and Less Expensive Mode of Employing and Reforming Convicts*) (see Bentham, 1995, and Sample, 1993). In central cities where school enrollment has declined, some schools wall off portions of the building to prevent unobserved access to unneeded space by students or others.

Finally, reflection will imply that arrangements that alter the composition of the studentry are obvious ways to influence school safety and levels of problem behavior. Some schools are selective, admitting only students who meet certain academic or behavioral criteria. Others (such as some alternative schools or schools for delinquent youths) are intended to serve students who display a great deal of problem behavior. Some schools accept the enrollment of students who are not wanted in other schools in order to keep their enrollments (and thus staffing levels) up.

The taxonomy was developed in part by collecting descriptions of programs and practices in the manner described earlier in this chapter. The first application of the taxonomy is in describing what programs were gleaned through this process. This provides a way of summarizing the characteristics of programs that are “marketed” by technical assistance organizations, government agencies, and others. This description is presented next.

### **Most Common Program Types Marketed**

The 139 marketed program descriptions obtained as a result of our requests (described earlier) were classified using the full taxonomy. Programs were coded according to their major activities, and each program could be assigned multiple codes if it incorporated activities falling in several categories. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of the programs in this sample use group instruction, making it the most commonly promoted program feature. Group instruction involves teaching students factual information, and sometimes attempts to increase students' awareness of negative social influences and prepare them to respond appropriately to harmful situations. These programs are often conducted in a classroom setting with teacher lectures, group discussions, and demonstrations. Workbooks, worksheets, textbooks, audiovisual materials, etc. are often used. Although marketed programs use a variety of program strategies, the predominant feature is the prevention curriculum. As will become apparent in a following section, this type of activity is also the most commonly used prevention activity in the nation's schools. The marketed programs retrieved in our harvest are described more fully in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3  
*Percentage of Marketed Programs Using Various Program Features*

Program Features	Percentage Using Feature	Program Features	Percentage Using Feature
Group Instruction	67	Cognitive Behavioral Training	18
Communication of Norms	29	Behavior Modification	11
Counseling	26	Referral to Other Agencies	9
Recreational Activities	25	Staff Training & Development	9
Rules & Regulations	24	Changes to School Management	7
Individual Attention	22	Security & Surveillance	7
Family Management Strategies	21	Providing Attendance Incentives	4
Changes to Classroom Management	19	Exclusion of Weapons & Contraband	1
		Alteration of School Composition	1
Interaction Between School & Community	19	Reorganization of Grades/Classes	1

Note.  $N = 139$ . Percentages do not sum to 100 because activities were sometimes classified into multiple categories.

## Prevention Activities in the National Sample of Schools

This section describes the distribution and extent of prevention activities and arrangements to reduce or prevent problem behavior or promote a safe and orderly environment in the national sample of schools. We obtained initial information about these activities from principals in our Phase 1 surveys. Principals completed a screening questionnaire to elicit information about activities and arrangements of all types. For fourteen categories of activity, principals were asked to name the activity or program and to designate one or two individuals who could provide further information. In Phase 2 surveys we obtained additional detailed information from the designated individuals about a sample of those programs. The 14 types of activities about which we sought detailed information from designated individuals in Phase 2 are more “program-like” than the activities, practices and arrangements from which we sought information only from the principal. Activities in these 14 categories tend to be more discretionary in nature than the school-wide arrangements about which we asked only the principal to report. For example, a school may have or not have counseling or a planning team, but all schools have rules, a physical environment, and ways of handling discipline.<sup>3</sup> We regarded the principal as the best source of

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<sup>3</sup>Some things about which we asked only the principal are also discretionary. Of course it is possible for schools to elect not to provide any information about drugs or safety, for example. But we elected not to obtain detailed information from designated individuals about the provision of information.

information about most school-wide activities and arrangements such as school rules, discipline policies, and architectural arrangements. We asked the principal about these arrangements in the Phase 1 and 2 questionnaires.

This section begins by describing school-wide activities and arrangements that are presumed to be pertinent in all schools and about which our information is derived from principal questionnaires. Then information about the 14 kinds of “discretionary” activities which may or may not be applied in schools is summarized. This section focuses on how much activity occurs. The following section begins to address the issues of program quality and intensity.

### **School-wide Activities and Arrangements**

We asked about certain school-wide activities and arrangements in the Phase 1 Principal Screening Questionnaire (completed in Spring, 1997), which asked the principal what activities and arrangements to reduce problem behavior or create a safe and orderly environment were applied in the school. For example, principals reported on the use of practices that influence student composition, scheduling practices, and architectural arrangements. The information presented here in narrative form is based on data from the 848 schools participating in Phase 1. Tables detailing the percentage of schools using each of these practices, usually by school level and location, are shown in Appendix H. Characteristics of school disciplinary practices were described by principals in the Phase 2 Principal Questionnaire (completed in Spring, 1998). Results are based on data from the 636 schools for providing information in Phase 2. Tables are shown in Appendix H.<sup>4</sup>

*Provision of information.* Between 78% and 92% of schools at all levels report providing isolated information about alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs. The detailed percentages are shown in Appendix Table H3.1. Although research has usually failed to produce evidence of effectiveness of the isolated provision of information, the high percentages of use of this approach are not surprising given the obvious permeation of schools and the media with anti-drug messages. Smaller percentages of schools provide information about violence (62%) or accidents (56%). Information about risky sexual behavior is provided by 30% of elementary schools, 70% of middle schools, and 79% of high schools.

*Reorganization of grades, classes, or school schedules.* Principals reported using a number of organizational arrangements to prevent problem behavior or promote school orderliness. Education researchers sometimes call these arrangements “school organization” characteristics. Table H3.2 shows which are often employed with the intent of preventing problem behavior and which are less often employed.

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<sup>4</sup>Appendix tables show confidence intervals or standard errors that take the complex sample design into account. Readers should place more dependence on the standard errors or confidence intervals reported in the tables than on significance levels.

The most frequently used school organizational arrangement is what educators call “heterogeneous grouping,” that is, placing students who differ in conduct or ability together. Heterogeneous grouping, which 69% of schools report using to prevent behavior problems, is viewed by many educators and educational researchers as desirable because it avoids putting all difficult to manage or educate students together in groups, and it allows low achieving or behavior problem students access to their faster learning peers and more orderly classrooms. Despite this, 30% of schools report that they *do* group by ability and 13% *do* group by effort or conduct with the intention of preventing problem behavior. Some evidence implies that more (rather than less) problem behavior may occur when youths displaying relatively high amounts of problem behavior are grouped together (Dishion, McCord, & Poulin, 1999).

Particularly in middle schools, principals report extensive use of “houses” or “teams” which generally means that a group of teachers is expected to have more familiarity and contact with a subset of students in the school. The use of a school-within-a-school – also more common in middle schools than in schools at other levels – is also an arrangement intended to provide smaller, more intimate, environments. Such arrangements may reduce problem behavior (D. Gottfredson et al., in press).

Incongruously, 30% of principals report the use of stringent criteria for grade-to-grade promotion and 13% report relaxed promotion criteria as a way of reducing problem behavior. Among high schools, 43% of principals indicate that stringent promotion criteria are used to reduce or prevent problem behavior. Previous research implies that considerable dropout occurs in the early high school years, and that the behavior of the students who remain in school tends to be better than those who leave (G. Gottfredson, 1981). In middle school grades, where dropout is usually technically illegal, relaxing promotion criteria, which is reported by 26% of these schools’ principals, may be a way of promoting students who display problem behavior on to a high school. Fewer high school principals (8%) report relaxing promotion criteria.

Nearly a third of principals indicate that they decrease class size as a way of reducing problem behavior. This suggests that problem behavior is costly, because small class sizes mean more classrooms and more teachers. Although not common, some schools segregate students by sex to reduce problem behavior.

*Altering school composition.* One way for a school to avoid problem behavior is to avoid having students who are likely to engage in it. Conversely, one likely way to increase the level of problem behavior in a school is to concentrate youths whose behavior has proven troublesome in that school. In the Phase 1 principal questionnaire we asked principals to indicate which of several activities or arrangements influence who attends their school. Some of these arrangements would tend to attract academically-oriented students or students with good behavior, and others would tend to attract students who have displayed problem behavior in the past. Table 3.4 shows the percentage of schools employing each of 11 practices that influence student body composition. The most common practice cited by principals is, not surprisingly, attempting to have attractive educational programs, which was cited by 27% of principals.

Table 3.4  
*Percentage of Schools Using Each of Several Activities or Arrangements That Influence Student Population*

Practice	%	95% CI	<i>n</i>
Specialization in attractive educational programs such as science, music, technology	27	24.0 - 31.0	833
Assignment of students with academic or learning problems <i>to this school</i>	23	20.0 - 26.8	837
Assignment of students with educational or behavioral problems to <i>other schools</i>	22	19.1 - 25.6	835
Admission fees or tuition	21	17.9 - 24.6	837
Assignment of students with behavior or adjustment problems <i>to this school</i>	19	16.3 - 22.6	837
Student recruitment programs	14	11.5 - 16.9	839
Selective admissions practices (e.g., high test scores, good conduct, high grade average, or other entry requirements)	14	11.5 - 16.6	836
Preference for students of a particular religion, faith, culture, ethnicity, or political inclination	12	9.4 - 15.0	841
Scholarships or tuition waivers	12	9.4 - 14.8	839
Assignment of students under court or juvenile services supervision <i>to this school</i>	10	7.7 - 11.8	834
Another practice or arrangement that influences the composition of the school's student population	11	8.6 - 13.5	823

*Note.* % = weighted percentage; 95% CI = 95% confidence interval; *n* = unweighted number of respondents.

Almost equal percentages of principals report that problem students are referred *to* the school and *from* the school to other schools (19% to 23% of principals report these practices).

A fifth (21%) of schools charge admission fees or tuition, and this practice is much less common in middle schools (8%) than among elementary (20%) or high (32%) schools. Details shown in Appendix Table H3.3 reveal that middle schools less often use student recruitment or selective admissions practices than do schools at other levels.

To assess the extent to which schools are selective in their recruitment or admission of students or to which they are repositories for problem children, we composed two scales from

items in our first principal questionnaire. A Selectivity scale is based on reports that schools actively recruit students, have selective admissions practices, prefer students of particular religion or other characteristics, have admission fees or tuition, or make use of scholarships or tuition wavers. A Problem Student Magnet scale is based on reports that students with behavior or adjustment problems are assigned to the school, students under court or juvenile services supervision are assigned to the school, or students with academic or learning problems are assigned to the school. The scores are expressed as T-scores (mean = 50 and standard deviation = 10 for schools), and detailed information about the distribution of selectivity is displayed in the top panel of Appendix Table H3.4. Urban and suburban high schools earn high scores on this index on average and tend to have a high standard deviation on the index. In other words, it is relatively common for urban and suburban high schools to attempt to influence the composition of their student membership by engaging in selective practices, but there is considerable variability in this practice among such schools.

Selectivity is not a win-win proposition for schools. Schools that are unable to be selective or that do not attempt to be selective may tend to develop student populations who engage in higher levels of problem behavior. Variability among schools, particularly high schools, in selectivity may help to explain some of the variability in school disorder. Appendix Table H3.4 does not reveal a particularly steep gradient by level or location for the Problem Student Magnet scale, however.

*Treatment or prevention interventions for administration, faculty or staff.* A moderately large percentage of schools seek to prevent problem behavior and promote a safe environment by providing treatment or prevention services for administrators, faculty, or staff. Appendix Table H3.5 shows estimates that alcohol, tobacco, or other drug treatment or prevention services are provided by 59%, anger management or self control training by 51%, and other health or mental health services by 62% of urban middle schools.

*Architectural features.* A class of arrangements that involve architectural or structural features of the school are also involved in school efforts to promote safety and reduce problem behavior. Table 3.5 shows that food service facilities dominate this category. (Details are shown in Appendix Table H3.6 for practices that may differ by both level and location.) This is not surprising, because during lunch periods large numbers of youths are apt to congregate in a single area and seek food at the same time. Kenney & Watson (1996) have described an intervention in which multiple lunch lines were put in place to reduce conflict in a single line. Among urban elementary schools, 54% use gates, fences, walls or barricades outside the building to promote safety or prevent problem behavior. In contrast, 25% of rural middle schools and 27% of rural high schools use gates, fences, walls, or barricades (see Appendix Table H3.6). Secondary schools, in particular, sometimes close or block off sections of the school building; 21% of middle schools and 28% of high schools engage in this practice.

Table 3.5

*Percentage of Schools Using Architectural Design or Structural Features to Prevent Problem Behavior or Promote School Orderliness, by School Level*

Design or structural feature	Elementary ( <i>n</i> = 273-285)		Middle/Junior ( <i>n</i> = 272-283)		High ( <i>n</i> = 257-269)		Total ( <i>N</i> = 802-837)	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
Food service facilities or arrangements that promote safety or orderliness	67	61-73	68	62-74	57	50-63	64	61-68
Physical arrangements for regulating traffic flow within the building	41	35-46	45	39-51	36	30-43	40	36-44
Gates, fences, walls, barricades outside the building <sup>a</sup>	43	38-49	29	24-35	32	26-38	39	35-43
Activity space or facilities designed to prevent problem behavior	27	22-33	35	29-41	30	24-37	29	26-33
Closed or blocked off sections of the building <sup>b</sup>	11	7-15	21	16-26	28	23-34	17	14-20
Other architectural or physical design features	5	2-8	11	7-14	7	4-11	6	4-8

<sup>a</sup> Percentages differ by both location and school level at the nominal  $p < .01$  level of significance.

<sup>b</sup> Percentages differ by school level at the nominal  $p < .01$  level.

## School Discipline

In the Phase 2 Principal questionnaire, we asked for reports about school rules, policies, regulations, laws, and enforcement. We asked about these activities in considerably more detail than we asked about other school-level activities because prior research (G. Gottfredson and Gottfredson, 1985; G. Gottfredson, 1984/1999) indicates that clarity of school rules and consistency in their enforcement is related to the level of school disorder. Also, national media attention has focused recently on certain school policies and practices thought by some observers to be effective for reducing drugs, violence and disorder. These include uniforms (Wingert, 1999), metal detectors (Aleem & Moles, 1993), drug searches (Davis & Wilgoren, 1998), and so-called “zero tolerance” policies (Associated Press, 1999; Breckenridge, 1998; Churchill, 1998; Gabor, 1995). There is little or no useful research on the extent or usefulness of these practices.<sup>5</sup>

Less media attention has focused on some of the more routine or mundane things schools do to regulate student behavior, such as recognizing or praising students for desirable behavior or using ordinary social controls – often minor forms of punishment – to discourage misconduct. In this section, we first review information about formal school rules, regulations, and responses to student conduct. Then we review information about ordinary social responses to student conduct.

### School Rules

Nearly all schools have formal written rules or policies about the time for student arrival at school, drugs, and weapons, as Table 3.6 shows. In addition, 75% or more of the schools have such written policies related to dress, visitor sign-in, students leaving campus, and hall wandering or class-cutting. Dress codes and rules about student mobility are less common at the elementary school level. Rules about carrying items or wearing clothing in which drugs or weapons could be concealed are more common at the middle school level. Visitor sign-out is a written policy far less often than visitor sign-in, and the requirement that visitors sign out is less common in high schools and is more common in suburban areas (Appendix Table H3.7). Twenty-six percent (26%) of the nation’s schools report having formal written policies about uniforms, but uniform policies are found in a much smaller percentage of rural schools than in urban and suburban schools. For example, 48% of urban elementary but only 8% of rural

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<sup>5</sup>A report by Murray (1997) purports to assess the impact of school uniforms on school climate. The report provides no useful information, however, because it simply compares one school requiring uniforms and one not requiring uniforms that also differ in many other ways. For example they also have different principals, different counselors, etc. The largest difference between the two schools ( $ES = .39$ ) was for a scale which contains items such as “teachers or counselors help students with personal problems” and “teachers and counselors help students plan for future classes and for future jobs.” If differences between the two schools were to be interpreted as effects of uniforms, it is not clear why uniforms would have their largest effect on students’ ratings of counseling.

Table 3.6  
*Percentage of Schools with Formal Written Rules or Policies About Discipline by School Level*

Formal written policy about:	Elementary ( <i>n</i> = 206-219)		Middle/Junior ( <i>n</i> = 213-222)		High ( <i>n</i> = 179-194)		Total ( <i>N</i> = 605-633)	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
Time for student arrival at school	98	95-99	98	95-99	97	94-99	98	96-99
Drugs	92	88-97	100	98-100	98	95-100	95	92-98
Weapons	94	89-98	98	96-100	93	88-97	94	91-97
Dress Code <sup>a</sup>	82	76-87	92	88-95	93	89-96	86	82-89
Visitor sign-in and registration	86	81-92	88	82-94	78	72-85	85	81-88
Students leaving the campus during school hours (e.g., at lunch) <sup>a</sup>	71	65-78	95	91-97	94	89-97	80	76-84
Hall wandering or class cutting <sup>a</sup>	62	54-68	95	88-100	95	90-98	75	70-79
Visitor sign-out <sup>b</sup>	74	67-80	74	67-81	55	48-63	69	64-74
Carrying items or wearing clothing in which drugs or weapons could be concealed <sup>c</sup>	39	32-46	62	56-69	42	35-50	43	38-48
Uniform	28	23-35	21	14-28	21	14-27	26	21-30

*Note.* 95% CI = 95% confidence interval. *n* = unweighted number of respondents.

<sup>a</sup> Elementary differs from middle and high, *p* < .01.

<sup>b</sup> High differs from elementary and middle, *p* < .001.

<sup>c</sup> Middle differs from elementary and high, *p* < .001.

elementary schools report having uniform policies. Finally, the number of these written rules or policies also varies by school level (refer to Appendix Table H3.8), with middle schools reporting the more kinds of written rules than elementary or high schools.

It is important not only to have clear rules about student behavior, but also to communicate these rules to all relevant parties. The vast majority of schools report distributing printed copies of the schools' disciplinary policy to teachers (99%), students (96%) and parents (96%). Parents of high school students are less often provided with printed discipline policies, as are rural parents (see Appendix Table H3.9). The main exception to nearly universal distribution of printed policies is the 13% of high schools who report not providing parents with printed copies of school discipline policies in the current year.

The phase 2 principal questionnaire asked for information about the current use or development of a variety of sound disciplinary procedures or practices. These included the maintenance of records, communication of rules or consequences, use of printed forms or other mechanisms for identifying and recording rule violations, use of specific methods for documenting due process, a system for investigating student circumstances, active specification of consequences for behavior, active development or modification of a discipline code, and student involvement in discipline. The majority of schools report the use of most of these procedures or practices. For example, 92% of schools report maintaining records of student conduct using forms, files, or computers. And, 72% of principals report that their discipline policies are under active development. The only practice about which we inquired that is not used by the majority of schools in the active involvement of students in the development of school discipline policies and procedures – reported by 46% of schools. Elementary schools less often report involving students in the development or modification of school rules, rewards, or punishments than do middle and high schools. Details are presented in Appendix Table H3.10. Notable differences in practices are not generally observed across school location, but rural schools less often reported using forms or other systems for identifying and recording rule violations when they occurred.

### ***Responses to Student Behavior***

*Desirable behavior.* Although some educators focus on rules and responses to misconduct when thinking about establishing and maintaining school safety and reducing problem behavior, it is generally also useful to consider arrangements or practices that tend to increase desirable behavior. Accordingly, the Phase 2 principal questionnaire asked for reports about the use of a range of potential responses to desired student conduct. Table 3.7 shows that the vast majority of schools – 81% to 96% – report the use of most of the social, activity, and materials reinforcers about which the questionnaire inquired. Many (61%) also reported using token reinforcers, which are coupons, tokens, or scrip that can be redeemed for backup reinforcers. (Appendix Table H3.11 shows details about the percentage of schools at different levels using each of a variety of responses to desirable student conduct.) The use of most types of positive reinforcers for desirable behavior is considerably less common at the senior high level. For example, 93%

of elementary schools report use of activity reinforcers (access to games, free time, library, playground) compared to 83% of middle schools and 64% of high schools. Only 8% of schools use money as a reward, although 18% of middle schools report the use of this reinforcer.

Table 3.7  
*Percentage of Schools Using Specific Responses to Desirable Student Conduct*

Response	%	95% CI
Informal recognition or praise (e.g., happy faces, oral praise, hugs)	96	94-97
Formal recognition or praise (e.g., certificates, awards, postcard to the home, non-redeemable tokens)	95	92-97
Job or privilege reinforcers (e.g., allowing student to erase chalk board, help the teacher, decorate a class)	87	85-90
Activity reinforcers (e.g., access to games, free time, library, playground)	84	81-87
Social rewards (e.g., lunch with a teacher, parties, trips with faculty)	82	78-85
Material rewards (e.g., food, toys, supplies, etc.)	81	77-85
Redeemable token reinforcers (e.g., coupons, tokens, or paper "money")	61	56-65
Other response to desirable behaviors	42	33-51
Money	8	6-11

*Note.* Unweighted number of respondents ranges from 624 to 626. 95% CI = 95% confidence interval for percentage.

*Undesirable behavior.* Schools also employ a variety of responses to *undesirable* student conduct, and percentages are reported in Table 3.8. The most commonly reported responses to misconduct are mild forms of social control such as notifying parents (100%), talking to the student (100%), conference with parents (100%), oral reprimand (99%), brief exclusion from class (94%), and short-term withdrawal of a privilege (93%). More punitive responses such as suspension from school (reportedly used by 89%), restitution (86%), after-school detention (72%), and work assignments (70%) are also very common. Among the least common responses schools make are corporal punishment (17%) and Saturday detention (25%). Appendix Table H3.12 shows detailed results.

The use of most kinds of responses tends to be reported more often in middle schools, most likely as a response to the higher level of discipline problems observed there. For example, the long-term (more than 5 days) withdrawal of a privilege (e.g., riding the bus, playground access, participation in athletics, use of the library) is reported by 57% of elementary schools, 91% of middle schools, and 80% of high schools.

Some approaches to discipline about which there appears to be current interest among educators and delinquency prevention professionals are used by relatively few schools. Peer

mediation was reportedly used by 51% of schools, community service by 46%, and student court by 6% of schools.<sup>6</sup>

Table 3.8  
*Percentage of Schools Using Specific Responses to Undesirable Student Conduct*

Response	%	95% CI
Notifying parents about student's behavior	100	–
Conference with a student	100	–
Conferences with student's parents/guardians	100	–
Oral reprimand	99	98-100
Brief exclusion of students from attendance in regular classes (e.g. in-school suspension, cooling off room)	94	92-96
Short-term (5 days or less) withdrawal of a privilege (e.g., riding the bus, playground access, participation in athletics, use of the library)	93	90-95
Suspension from school (the exclusion of students from membership for periods of 30 days or less)	89	86-93
Restitution (requiring a student to repay the school or a victim for damages or harm done)	86	82-89
Sending student to school counselor	85	81-89
Written reprimand	81	77-85
Probation (a trial period in which a student is given an opportunity to demonstrate improved behavior)	75	71-80
Calling or notifying the police	74	70-79
Brief exclusion from school not officially designated suspension (e.g., sending students home with permission to return only with a parent)	74	70-78
After-school detention	72	67-77
Work duties, chores, or tasks as punishment	70	66-74
Long-term (more than 5 days) withdrawal of a privilege (e.g., riding the bus, playground access, participation in athletics, use of the library)	67	62-72
Writing assignments as punishment	62	58-67
Transfer to one or more different classes within the school	61	57-66
Expulsion from school (the exclusion of students from membership for periods of time over 30 days)	57	53-62
Peer mediation	51	46-56

*continued . . .*

<sup>6</sup>In the phase one principal survey even smaller percentages of schools reported prevention activities involving youth regulation of misconduct. Different questions produce different estimates, but they nevertheless converge in implying that these approaches are not used as widely as are others.

Table 3.8 (continued)  
*Percentage of Schools Using Specific Responses to Undesirable Student Conduct*

Response	%	95% CI
Charging student with a crime	51	46-55
Court action against student or parent	48	43-52
Community service	46	41-50
Mandatory participation of <i>student</i> in a special program	44	39-48
Transfer to another school	37	33-42
Saturday detention	25	21-28
Other method of removal of students displaying problem behavior from the school	24	20-28
Corporal punishment (e.g., paddling, spanking, striking)	17	13-20
Mandatory participation of <i>parent</i> in a special program	15	11-18
Other response to misbehavior	10	7-13
Student court	6	4-8
Informal physical responses (administration of discomfort through rubbing, squeezing, pulling, or the like)	2	1-3

*Note.* Unweighted number of respondents ranges from 622 to 632. 95% CI = 95% confidence interval for percentage.

In general, more severe responses (e.g., expulsion from school, Saturday detention, and calling the police) are used more often in secondary than elementary schools. Corporal punishment is reported much more often in rural (27%) than in suburban (6%) or urban (9%) schools. It is used least in Catholic schools and most in private schools.<sup>7</sup>

*Suspension and expulsion.* Schools suspend or expel students for misconduct ranging from truancy to possession of a weapon. For each of a range of offenses, principals were asked to indicate if they suspend or expel students automatically, usually after a hearing, or not usually. Results are displayed in Figure 3.1 (detailed tabulations are contained in Appendix Table H3.13). Schools are very likely to suspend or expel a student for possession of a gun, drugs, alcohol, or a knife. Suspension or expulsion occurs automatically or usually (after a hearing) in 91% or more of schools in response to these offenses. Suspension or expulsion for physical fighting, possession of tobacco, and use of profane or abusive language are also common, but are not usually “automatic.”

<sup>7</sup>Although the sample contained only small numbers of Catholic ( $n = 46$ ) and private ( $n = 50$ ) schools that provided information on corporal punishment, private schools used more corporal punishment than public ( $p < .04$ ) and Catholic ( $p < .001$ ) schools. No Catholic school reported the use of corporal punishment. Among the 35 responding private high, vocational or comprehensive schools, 15 (unweighted) reported the use of corporal punishment.

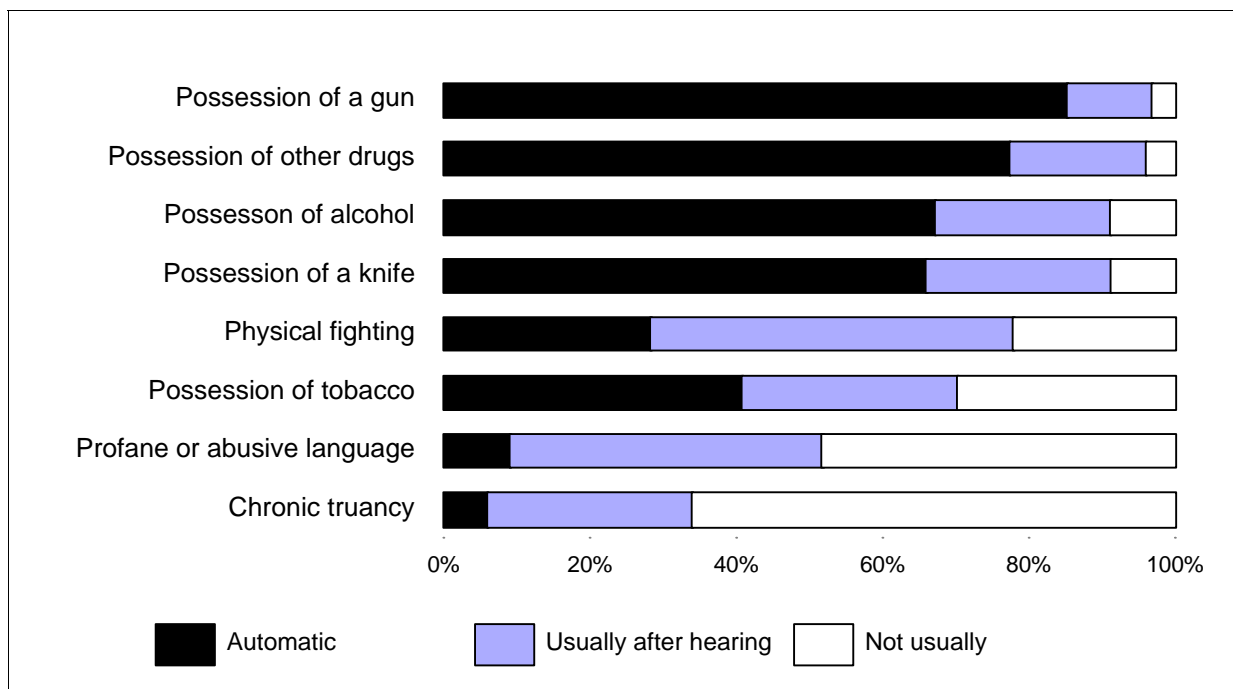


Figure 3.1 School Use of Suspension or Expulsion in Response to Specific Behaviors

As with most disciplinary responses, use of suspension or expulsion tends to be reported by larger percentages of middle schools than elementary or high schools. But Figure 3.2 shows that while secondary schools report responding to fighting and chronic truancy with suspension or expulsion more than do elementary schools, they report responding with suspension or expulsion to the possession of tobacco less than do elementary schools.

The large percentage of schools reporting the “automatic” suspension or expulsion of students is surprising. United States Supreme Court decisions in *Wood v. Strickland* (1975) and *Goss v. Lopez* (1975) imply that some degree of due process is required even for short-term out-of-school suspensions. Hearings for brief suspensions need not be elaborate or formal, but students must be notified of what they are accused of having done, told what evidence or information led the administrator to determine that the student violated a school rule, and be given an opportunity to respond. In the case of suspensions for over 10 days or of expulsions, hearings must be more formal. Written, specific, and timely notice of the charges and of a hearing were found to be required by the Supreme Court of Kansas in *Smith v. Miller* (1973). The Supreme Court of Montana also found that the charges must be specific in *Board of Trustees of Billings School District No. 2 of Yellowstone County v. State of Montana* (1979). In these more formal hearings, a student has a limited right to confront or cross-examine witnesses, according to the U. S. District Court for Arkansas in *Dillon v. Pulaski County Special School District* (1978).

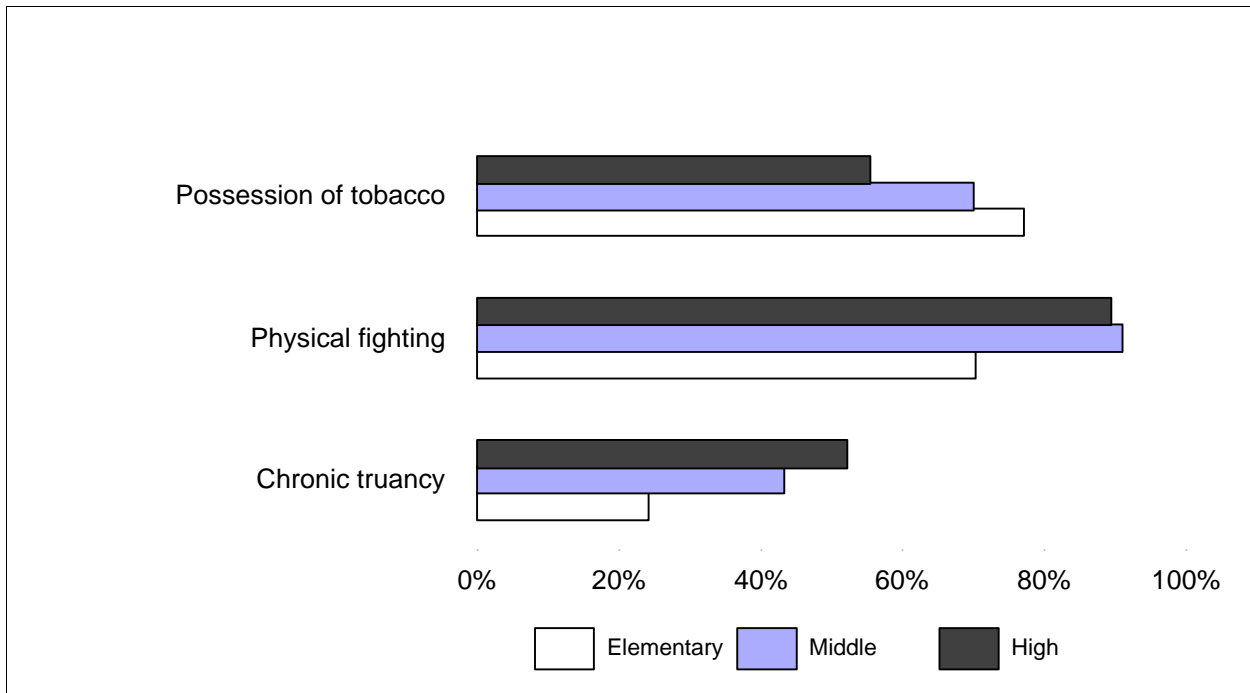


Figure 3.2 Percentage of Schools Reporting Use of Suspension or Expulsion for Specific Behaviors, by School Level

Further clarification of what responding principals mean by “automatic” suspension or expulsion would be helpful. Response options presented to respondents in the principal survey included “usually after hearing,” which would suggest that when the “automatic” option was selected respondents are indicating that the response occurs without a hearing. Many school districts now post student handbooks or district policies on a Web site, so it is possible to examine what these documents say about suspension or expulsion for various offenses. These documents (e.g., New Lebanon Middle School, 1999; Tremont Community Schools District 702, 1999) usually do seem to call for appropriate levels of due process. They indicate that suspension or expulsion may result from violation of certain rules, and they spell out due process procedures for suspension or expulsion. It is possible to find evidence of more casual approaches to suspension in examining *school* handbooks. The Mount View Middle School (1997) student handbook makes no mention of a hearing. It states, “If the principal determines that a student is in possession of a weapon, the principal will secure the weapon, suspend the student, notify the respective Director and notify the police. . . . The student will be referred by the principal to the Superintendent for expulsion from the Howard County School System.” In contrast the County Discipline Policy (Howard County Public Schools, 1999) states, “Disciplinary action will be taken . . . in accordance with Policy 3431, Discipline. Students who violate this policy may be suspended or expelled.” Policy 3431 contains the usual *Goss v. Lopez* prescription for informal and expedited due process.

The Supreme Court's opinion in *Goss v. Lopez* (1975) makes it clear that a *hearing* is required, that the hearing need not be elaborate, and that it should not be delayed.<sup>8</sup> "Due process requires, in connection with a suspension of 10 days or less, that the student be given oral or written notice of the charges against him and, if he denies them, an explanation of the evidence the authorities have and an opportunity to present his side of the story. The [Due Process] Clause requires at least these rudimentary precautions against unfair or mistaken findings of misconduct and arbitrary exclusion from school" (p. 582)

It is evident from the large percentages of principal reporting "automatic" suspension or expulsion, rather than "usually after a hearing" that existing laws do not seem to be tying the hands of school administrators in removing students from school for a range of offenses. The evidence suggests that building-level administrators may treat due process requirements casually. In *Goss v. Lopez* the Supreme Court noted, "Students whose presence poses a continuing danger to persons or property or an ongoing threat of disrupting the academic process may be immediately removed from school. In such cases, the necessary notice and rudimentary hearing should follow as soon as practicable" (p. 582). It is hard to understand how possession of tobacco would pose such an ongoing threat that it would require suspension first and hearing later, yet two-thirds of schools indicate that suspension without hearing occurs for this offense.

### **Discretionary Programs**

Certain kinds of prevention activity were the subject of more scrutiny than the school-wide arrangements and disciplinary practices examined so far. These are activities that tend to be

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<sup>8</sup>The court was concerned with fundamental fairness:

"The prospect of imposing elaborate hearing requirements in every suspension case is viewed with great concern, and many school authorities may well prefer the untrammled power to act unilaterally, unhampered by rules about notice and hearing. But it would be a strange disciplinary system in an educational institution if no communication was sought by the disciplinarian with the student in an effort to inform him of his dereliction and to let him tell his side of the story in order to make sure that an injustice is not done." (p. 580)

"There need be no delay between the time "notice" is given and the time of the hearing. In the great majority of cases the disciplinarian may informally discuss the alleged misconduct with the student minutes after it has occurred. We hold only that, in being given an opportunity to explain his version of the facts at this discussion, the student first be told what he is accused of doing and what the basis of the accusation is" (p. 582)

"In holding as we do, we do not believe that we have imposed procedures on school disciplinarians which are inappropriate in a classroom setting. Instead we have imposed requirements which are, if anything, less than a fair-minded school principal would impose upon himself in order to avoid unfair suspensions. . . . We stop short of construing the Due Process Clause to require, country wide, that hearings in connection with short suspensions must afford the student the opportunity to secure counsel, to confront and cross-examine witnesses supporting the charge, or to call his own witnesses to verify his version of the incident. (p. 583)

more discrete and program-like. They are often considered “programs” by school personnel, and they may have names – although not all are named. These activities fall in fourteen of the categories or subcategories of the classification summarized in Table 3.2 and detailed in Appendix D. The “discretionary” activity types about which detailed information was sought are: (a) prevention curriculum, instruction, or training (including the use of cognitive-behavioral modeling methods of training or instruction); (b) behavioral or behavior modification interventions; (c) counseling, social work, psychological or therapeutic interventions; (d) individual attention interventions; (e) recreational, enrichment, and leisure activities; (f) interventions that change instructional methods or practices; (g) interventions that change classroom management methods or practices; (h) use of external personnel resources for classroom management and instruction; (i) interventions to change or maintain a distinctive culture or climate for interpersonal exchanges, or to communicate norms for behavior; (j) intergroup relations and interaction between the school and community or groups within the school; (k) formal youth roles in regulation and response to student conduct; (l) interventions that involve a school planning structure or process, or the management of change; (m) security and surveillance interventions, including efforts to exclude weapons and contraband; and (n) family interventions.<sup>9</sup>

### *Nature and Extent of “Discretionary” Programs*

The 14 kinds of “discretionary” prevention activities were the subject of greater scrutiny than other activities or arrangements described so far. Principals were asked to name up to five different program activities of each type that were currently underway and that were aimed at reducing problem behavior or creating a safe and orderly school environment. These reports (from the Phase 1 Activity Booklet accompanying the Phase 1 Principal Questionnaire for Program Identification), allow us to report not only the number of different types of “discretionary” prevention activities underway, but also how many different distinct activities of these types are in place. The information presented here is based on data from the 874 schools for which we had a response in Phase 1. Principals in these schools named 17,110 prevention activities. The next chapter of this report will describe the *quality* of these activities.

On average, principals reported 9 of the 14 different types of discretionary prevention activities currently underway in their schools. Middle/junior high schools reported more types of activities than elementary or high schools, and rural schools reported fewer types of activities than suburban or urban schools. Means by level and location are shown in Appendix Table H3.14.

The median number of different prevention activities named by principals within the 14 discretionary types about which a detailed inquiry was made was 14. The distribution of the

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<sup>9</sup>In Appendix D, list item (h) is a subcategory of interventions that change classroom management methods or practices, list item (k) falls under rules, policies, and regulations about discipline and their enforcement, and list item (a) occupies two categories.

number of activities named is positively skewed, with from 0 to 66 named per school. This median is the number of *unique* prevention activities *named* by the principal. So, for example, a principal may have listed a D.A.R.E. program under both the prevention curriculum and the use of external personnel resources categories. But D.A.R.E. is counted only once for the school. Appendix Table H3.15 details the median number of different prevention *activities* identified by school level and location. Middle/junior highs reported more activities (*Mdn* = 16) than did high schools (*Mdn* = 11); the elementary school *Mdn* = 14. Rural schools reported fewer activities (*Mdn* = 11) than did urban schools (*Mdn* = 15); the suburban school *Mdn* = 14. These figures do not count “additional” programs principals claimed, but which they did not name. For each program category in the Activity Detail Questionnaire, principals were asked to indicate how many additional programs they had if they ran out of spaces on the data collection form, which provided five spaces per category. Counting these claimed but unnamed activities added an average of four programs per school. Amazingly, one school reported 264 program activities when these unnamed activities are counted.

The percentages of schools employing at least one activity in each of the 14 types of discretionary programs are shown in Table 3.9. Not surprisingly, the most popular type of discretionary prevention program in elementary schools entails prevention curriculum, instruction, or training. At the elementary level, 80% of schools report using a curricular or instructional approach to preventing problem behavior. The percentage is lower at the high school level, where 66% of schools report using such an approach. The average school uses 2.0 distinct instructional or curricular activities to prevent or reduce problem behavior. Although the percentage of schools employing an instructional approach is relatively high, we note that almost a quarter of schools (and almost a third of high schools) are *not* using this approach. Evidence implies that cognitive-behavioral social skills training can produce modest reductions in problem behavior (D. Gottfredson et al., in press), so there appears to be potential for broader application of effective approaches to preventing problem behavior.

Counseling, social work, psychological, or therapeutic interventions are also very common, reported by 75% of schools. A somewhat higher percentage of middle schools (83%) reported using this form of intervention to prevent problem behavior than did elementary or high schools (each 74%), but the confidence intervals for these percentages overlap slightly. (Details of the percentages of schools reporting the use of each type of discretionary program are shown in Appendix Tables H3.16 and H3.17, along with confidence intervals for the percentages and the average numbers of activities reported.) There is a tendency for most discretionary program types to be represented in a larger percentage of middle schools than of schools at other levels. For example, 70% of middle schools but 65% of elementary and 57% of high schools use behavior modification or behavioral programming to prevent or reduce problem behavior, and 55% of middle schools but 36% of elementary and 42% of high schools report involving youths in regulating and responding to student conduct. An exception to the observation that larger percentages of middle schools than other schools report use of activities is that the percentage of elementary schools reporting the use of prevention curricula and external personnel resources are higher than corresponding percentages for secondary schools – significantly higher than the percentages for high schools. This may be due to the more extensive use of classroom aides in

Table 3.9  
*Percentage of Schools Using Each Type of Discretionary Prevention Activity, by School Level*

Type of prevention activity	Percentage for:			Total N=874	
	Elem. n=301	Middle n=301	High n=272	%	Mean Number
Prevention curriculum, instruction, or training (including the use of cognitive-behavioral modeling methods of instruction)	80	77	66	76	2.0
Counseling, social work, psychological or therapeutic interventions	74	83	74	75	1.4
Use of external personnel resources for classroom management and instruction	76	73	63	72	1.4
Interventions to change or maintain a distinctive culture or climate for interpersonal exchanges, or to increase adherence to norms	66	74	59	66	1.6
Behavioral or behavior modification interventions	65	70	57	64	1.2
Recreational, enrichment, and leisure activities	61	73	66	64	1.7
Interventions that change instructional methods or practices	64	66	54	62	1.3
Individual attention interventions, e.g., mentoring/tutoring	55	64	63	58	1.1
Intergroup relations and interaction between the school and community or groups within the school	56	68	54	57	1.5
Interventions that change classroom management methods or practices	59	63	51	57	1.0
Interventions that involve a school planning structure or process, or the management of change	57	67	52	57	1.1
Security and surveillance interventions, including efforts to exclude weapons and contraband	51	66	57	55	1.2
Family interventions	59	60	42	55	1.0
Formal youth roles in regulating and responding to student conduct	36	55	42	40	.6

*Note.* *ns* are unweighted number of respondents. Table shows percentages reporting at least one activity for each type of activity.

elementary schools as well as the more frequent presence of Drug Abuse Resistance Education or other curricula in elementary schools.

For some types of activities, smaller percentages of rural schools than of urban schools report using the activity (see Appendix Table H3.17). For example, a smaller percentage of rural schools than of urban schools report having mentoring programs to prevent or reduce problem behavior (50% versus 69%), activities to promote intergroup relations or interaction between the school and community (49% versus 66%), and security or surveillance programs (46% versus 61%).

*Summary: Discretionary Programs.* A very large percentage of the schools use each type of “discretionary” prevention activity. The percentages range from 40% for programs involving youth in the regulation of student conduct to 76% for prevention curricula.

### ***Multi-component and “Packaged” Programs***

Multi-component programs are those that include more than one type of prevention activity (e.g., a prevention curriculum in combination with activities to change school norms; or tutoring along with a behavior modification intervention). “Packaged” programs are “off-the-shelf” or “canned” programs that are marketed to schools. Multi-component programs are of special interest because there are multiple “risk factors” or statistical predictors of problem behavior. Therefore there is reason to believe that multi-component programs may address causal factors more comprehensively than do interventions directed at single risk factors (see Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group, 1999a, 1999b). Packaged programs are of special interest because (a) they may be held out to consumers as products that are effective in reducing problem behavior, (b) development work may have gone into producing a product that is easy to implement, (c) they may make it easier for local implementers to apply standardized programs, or (d) they may be difficult to adapt to fit local conditions. It can be argued that without adaptation, the feasibility or appropriateness of canned programs may be limited. Conversely, it can be argued that adaptation may introduce changes that limit program effectiveness. Because they are of special interest, information about multi-component and packaged programs is described in this section.

*Multi-component programs.* All told, principals named 17,110 prevention activities in the Activity Detail Questionnaires. Of these, 17% were multi-component programs. Reviews of school-based prevention programs (Elias et al., 1994; Hawkins et al., 1998) have suggested that programs targeting several risk factors for problem behavior and programs targeting several different domains of student life can be expected to be more potent. Of the nearly 3,000 (2,871) multi-component programs named in the present survey,<sup>10</sup> most (65%) combined only two different types of activities, but this number ranged up to seven. Certain types of activities tend to be “stand-alone” activities. For example, only 5% of security activities and 6% of recreation

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<sup>10</sup>A multi-component program is a named activity that was listed by the principal under more than one of our 14 discretionary activity types.

activities were also associated with another activity type. Other types tend to be part of a multi-component program: 41% of activities involving youths in the regulation of student conduct were also associated with another type of activity. Appendix Table H3.18 shows the percentage of all activities named in each category that were listed as an activity in at least one other category. Chapter 5 will examine the relative quality of activities implemented as part of multi-component programs compared with similar “stand-alone” activities.

*Packaged programs.* An activity or program was regarded as “packaged” if it was mentioned by a large number of persons completing the activity booklet. Several easily recognized or trademarked programs were identified in this way. Table 3.10 shows the 11 packaged programs identified in this manner and the percentage of schools whose principals reported using each of these programs. Note that the table lists standardized or structured programs, such as D.A.R.E., and G.R.E.A.T., as well as programs which may have relatively heterogeneous content – such as peer mediation and conflict resolution, because a variety of different packages with this designation are marketed by commercial vendors or by school districts. The most widely applied of these programs is clearly D.A.R.E., with 34% of all schools and 48% of elementary schools reporting its use. Peer mediation and conflict resolution programs are the second and third most widely used packaged programs adopted by schools to prevent or reduce problem behavior. The percentage of schools reporting the use of these packaged programs differs by school level: High schools are far less likely to make use of these “canned” programs than are elementary and middle schools. Only 37% of high schools compared to 65% and 67% of middle and elementary schools use these programs. The greater use of packaged programs in elementary schools is due largely to D.A.R.E. Middle/Junior high schools are more likely than others to use peer mediation, with 36% of middle schools compared to 11% of elementary and 13% of high schools reporting the use of peer mediation.

The results summarized in Table 3.10 imply that most elementary and middle schools and many high schools use at least one packaged program, i.e., a program that was developed outside the school and marketed to it in some manner. Chapter 5 will contrast the quality of implementation for these packaged programs with “home grown” programs.

In the Phase 1 Principal Questionnaire and Activity Detail Booklet, principals were asked to name prevention activities in each of 14 categories. The categories under which principals listed specific packaged programs provides some insight into how they view the programs operating in their schools. Different principals listed specific packaged programs in different categories. In addition, a principal sometimes listed a specific packaged program in multiple categories. Table 3.11 shows how principals listed each of the 11 packaged programs. For example, 47% of the listings for Assertive Discipline were under the category “improvements to classroom organization and management” (which is, incidentally, how we would have classified it), and 33% of the listings for Assertive Discipline were under the behavior management category (which also makes sense). Some principals listed this program under prevention curriculum, culture or climate change, or improvements to instructional practices. The observation that 9% listed Assertive Discipline under prevention curriculum suggests that either some principals do not have thorough information about what the program entails, or that their schools implement it in an unusual way. In general, the principal’s descriptions of the packaged programs in Table

Table 3.10  
*Percentage of Schools Using Each Packaged Program, by School Level*

Packaged Program	Elementary (n=301)		Middle/Junior (n=301)		High (n=272)		Total (N=874)	
	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI	%	95% CI
Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.)	48	42-54	21	16-26	8	4-13	34	31-38
Peer Mediation	11	8-15	36	30-41	13	9-17	15	12-17
Conflict Resolution	16	12-21	15	11-19	9	5-12	14	12-17
Cooperative Learning	7	5-11	10	7-14	6	3-9	7	5-9
Assertive Discipline	8	5-12	3	1-4	4	1-6	6	4-9
Red Ribbon	4	2-7	6	3-9	4	2-7	5	3-6
Here's Looking at You, 2000	5	3-8	1	0-3	0	0-2	3	2-5
Quest	2	1-5	6	4-9	1	0-3	2	1-4
Students Against Drunk Driving (S.A.D.D.)	0	0-2	2	1-4	5	2-8	2	1-3
Gang Resistance Education Training (G.R.E.A.T.)	1	0-3	5	3-8	0	0-1	1	0-2
TRIBES	2	1-4	1	0-3	0	0-1	1	0-2
Any Packaged Program	67	62-72	65	59-71	37	31-43	59	55-63
Mean number of different Packaged Programs	(1.5)	(1.3-1.7)	(1.5)	(1.3-1.6)	(.7)	(.5-.8)	(1.3)	(1.2-1.4)

Notes. Information comes from the Phase 1 "Activity Detail Questionnaire" and short form. 95% CI = 95% confidence interval for percentage. *n* = unweighted number of schools providing information.

Percentages for urban, suburban, and rural schools are as follows

D.A.R.E.:	Urban	34	Peer mediation:	Urban	21
	Suburban	31		Suburban	19
	Rural	37		Rural	9

Table 3.11  
*Percentage of Listings of Packaged Programs in Each Category of Prevention Activity*

Category	Packaged Program										
	Assertive Discipline (N=57)	Conflict Resolution (N=179)	D.A.R.E. (N=304)	G.R.E.A.T. (N=24)	Quest (N=34)	HLY, 2000 (N=21)	Peer Mediation (N=308)	Coop. Learning (N=72)	S.A.D.D. (N=25)	Red Ribbon (N=47)	T.R.I.B.E. (N=13)
Prevention curriculum, instruction or training	9	25	37	54	79	90	14	0	36	17	23
Behavioral programming or behavior modification	33	4	1	0	0	0	4	1	0	0	8
Counseling, social work, psychological, or therapeutic	0	4	4	8	3	10	9	0	16	4	0
Mentoring, tutoring, coaching, or apprenticeship	0	1	0	0	0	0	3	0	4	0	0
Recreation, enrichment, or leisure	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Improvements to instructional practices	5	1	0	0	6	0	2	94	0	0	46
Improvements to classroom organization and management	47	1	0	0	0	0	0	4	0	0	15
Culture or climate change, norm change	5	6	10	0	3	0	6	0	44	72	8
Intergroup relations, interaction between school and community	0	13	5	12	6	0	8	0	0	2	0
Use of external personnel resources in classrooms	0	1	39	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Youth roles in regulating and responding to student conduct	0	41	2	0	0	0	54	0	0	0	0
Planning structures or process	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Security or surveillance	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0
Services to families	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Note.* N=1086 packaged program descriptions. Information comes from the Phase 1 “Activity Detail Questionnaire” and short forms. Table entries are unweighted percentages of all mentions of each packaged program that were in each prevention category.

3.11 show convergence with the intended design of each program, despite a considerable amount of divergence or misclassification. Conflict resolution and peer mediation programs are classified in more heterogeneous ways than the other packaged programs. This suggests that these labels stand for different combinations of activities – possibly reflecting variability in content or process across the different “brands” of peer mediation and conflict resolution that are marketed or “disseminated” to schools. Heterogeneity implies that it may be difficult to accumulate meaningful information about the effectiveness of interventions such as conflict resolution and peer mediation without identifying program subtypes when research is conducted.

## **Conclusions About Extent and Nature of Prevention Activity**

The typical school uses many activities and many different kinds of activities to prevent or reduce problem behaviors or promote a safe and orderly environment. Such extensive activity and breadth of coverage may be valuable, because having many different activities is likely to increase the number of risk or protective factors targeted. It is also possible, however, that by attempting so many different activities, schools spread their efforts too thin, diminishing the quality of each effort. Program quality is explored in the next chapter.

Middle and junior high schools generally report more prevention activity underway than do elementary and high schools. This may reflect the higher level of problem behavior experienced in schools serving youths in middle grades.

The broad range of different types of prevention policies, practices, arrangements, and activities used by schools to prevent problem behavior and promote a safe and orderly environment contrasts with some common perceptions about the nature of school-based prevention activities. Popular guides and lists of programs are most often dominated by curriculum packages (e.g., *Drug Strategies*, 1998). And guides pertaining to school safety often focus on security arrangements or identifying troublemakers (e.g., National School Safety Center, 1998; Stephens, 1995). While prevention curricula are widely used in schools, schools are actually using a wide variety of different strategies to try to reduce problem behavior. The degree of effectiveness of most of these activities is unknown.

Some of the strategies schools use to reduce problem behavior and increase safety and orderliness are relatively inexpensive and easy to accomplish (e.g., using heterogeneous grouping, or distributing information, creating grade level houses or teams), while others are costly and difficult to implement (e.g., decreasing class size, employing stringent grade-to-grade promotion standards). Different schools employ different strategies. At present, there is a limited base of dependable information to guide schools in selecting approaches to the prevention of problem behavior. Despite the availability of multiple evaluations of some instructional packages, there is a shortage of useful evaluations of changes in class size or promotion practices on problem behavior. Useful evaluations are lacking for *most* practices employed by schools to promote a safe and orderly environment and to prevent problem behavior. It should be possible, however, to capitalize on the large amount of natural variation in these practices to learn more about their potential to reduce problem behavior.

Schools make substantial use of architectural and structural arrangements to prevent problem behavior or promote school safety. Routine activity theory (Cohen & Felson, 1979; Felson & Cohen, 1980) suggests that manipulating these features may reduce school crime by reducing opportunities for offenders and victims or targets of crime to come together in time and space. Schools use strategies that can be interpreted in the context of routine activity theory or the situational crime prevention perspective as an “opportunity blocking” approach (Clarke, 1995; Eck, 1997). Urban schools are more likely to use gates, fences, walls, and barricades, and to physically block off sections of the building than are schools in other locations. Again, natural variation in the use of these architectural or structural arrangements could be exploited to learn more about their effects.

Most schools report that they have strict rules about dangerous behaviors and the possession of weapons, communicate those rules, and apply severe consequences when these rules are broken. It is unlikely that extreme school violence (such as the highly publicized recent shootings in schools) occurs because of lax rules about carrying weapons in school.

Most schools report that they have systems to keep track of individual student behavior, have a discipline referral system, communicate rules, have a systems for investigating infractions, and have procedures for achieving and documenting due process when they suspend students. Most principals report that their schools have written policies about behaviors they wish to prohibit, and principals report that these policies are communicated in writing to relevant parties.

But schools often fall short in using discipline practices that accord with practices that research has found to be associated with school safety. Principals report that their schools tend to rely on punitive responses to misbehavior more than on positive reinforcement of desirable behavior. They tend to make use of a narrower range of possible reinforcers for both negative and positive student behaviors than is potentially available. There is much room for improvement in the area of school discipline management, but recent calls to make rules for serious behavioral infractions stricter (e.g., Associated Press, 1999; Bush for President, 1999) may overlook other important areas where improvement is needed and possible.

Finally, principals’ reports summarized in this chapter show that many “packaged” programs are being used in the nation’s schools, and that many programs are broad in scope (e.g., part of multi-component efforts).

In the next chapter, we examine the quality of prevention programming in schools, comparing levels of strength and integrity in typical school programs with what has been shown in research to produce desirable outcomes. That chapter also explores the extent to which “packaged” and multi-component programs are implemented with as much strength and integrity as “home-grown” and stand-alone programs.