

AN ANALYSIS OF OUT-OF-SCHOOL SUSPENSIONS IN  
HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

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An Analysis Commissioned by the  
Hillsborough Constituency for Children

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and the Hillsborough Constituency for Children

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## Part I: Project Overview

### History of the Project

The Hillsborough Constituency for Children is a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the lives of children in Hillsborough County. The organization currently has 109 members, the majority of whom are employed by local agencies serving children and families or by the public school system. Since its inception in the early 1980s, the Constituency has been involved in a number of projects, including garnering support for the formation of the Children's Board, conducting a five-year analysis of the Children's Board, and advocating for major children's issues at both local and state levels. Kay Doughty, Director of Family-Centered Substance Abuse Services, is the current president of the Constituency, having been elected to this position in March, 1997. She and Candy Olson, current Chairperson of the Hillsborough County School Board and a member of the Constituency, served as Co-Chairpersons for the Steering Committee directing the current analysis.

This analysis of out-of-school suspensions in the Hillsborough County Public Schools arose from concerns within the community that out-of-school suspensions in the county were excessive. These concerns were first brought to the attention of the Constituency five years ago by the Juvenile Justice Council. At that time, members of the Council noted that when the opportunity was provided for citizens to give public comment at their monthly meeting, at least one parent per month would express concern about out-of-school suspensions. Consequently, the Council asked the Constituency to undertake an analysis of this issue. Shortly before this request was made, however, the Constituency had completed a five-year analysis of the Children's Board which had met with considerable controversy. Thinking that an analysis of out-of-school suspensions was too politically charged to take on at that time, the Constituency declined the Council's request.

The issue was raised again in May of 1996, however, when the Constituency empowered a subcommittee, chaired by Leonard Speed, former First Vice President of the Constituency, to examine issues impacting children in Hillsborough County. This subcommittee decided that out-of-school suspensions were a pressing issue for children in the county and subsequently voted to develop a proposal to examine this issue and apply to the Children's Board for funding.

The original proposal was developed by a subcommittee chaired by Ann Dawson, current Treasurer of the Constituency, approved by Earl Lennard and Randy Poindexter, Superintendent and Assistant Superintendent, respectively, of the Hillsborough County Public Schools, and then submitted to the Children's Board for funding. Linda Raffaele, Assistant Professor, University of South Florida, was selected as the Principal Investigator for the analysis and developed the specific research strategy. The project was approved for funding by the Children's Board for \$20,000 in August, 1997. The Constituency allocated an additional \$5,000 to the project, bringing the final budget to \$25,000. The School Board voted to give approval to the project in September, 1997, and funding began in January, 1998.

From the inception of this project, members of the Constituency agreed that out-of-school suspensions are not a *school* issue but rather a *school, family, and community* issue. In other words, out-of-school suspension is a disciplinary procedure which occurs in schools but is related to a wide variety of forces both within and outside of schools. Issues such as family

support for education, teacher preparation in behavior management, the availability of community resources for children and families, and many other issues are related to rates of suspension. (See Issues and Concerns Regarding Out-of-School Suspension in Hillsborough County below for a more complete list of these issues.) Thus, while this analysis involved a great deal of data collection from the schools themselves, it also involved considerable data collection from community agencies serving children and families and from parents of children who had experienced multiple suspensions. The aim of the project is to gain a greater understanding of factors related to out-of-school suspension and how schools, families, and communities can work together to decrease behavioral problems in the schools. The ultimate goal is to create a plan of action to address the major issues based on insights gleaned from the data collection.

### Hillsborough County and its Public Schools: Demographic Information

This section of the report provides an overview of Hillsborough County and its public school system. The following information is provided to put the current analysis in context by describing the county itself and the children and families served by the public schools.

Hillsborough County, Florida is a growing metropolitan area on the west coast of Florida. It includes the city of Tampa, the city of Plant City, the city of Temple Terrace, and unincorporated Hillsborough County (areas outside of the city limits). Demographic information on the county was obtained for this report from a 1997 report created by the Florida Center for Community Design and Research entitled Hillsborough Today: A Rough Guide to Where We Are ([www.fccdr.usf.edu/projects/hilltoday.htm](http://www.fccdr.usf.edu/projects/hilltoday.htm)). Because the last census in the county was conducted in 1990, some of the information is dated. Wherever possible, updated information is provided. Demographic information on the school system and its students was obtained from the Management Information Systems (MIS) Department of the Hillsborough County Public Schools for the 1996-97 school year.

At the time of the last census in 1990, the total population of Hillsborough County was 834,054. Of this total, 82.9% of the population identified themselves as White, and 13.2% identified themselves as Black. Additionally, 12.8% of the population identified themselves as being of Hispanic origin (which was considered a separate category from race). Thirty-three percent (33%) of Black individuals and 10% of White individuals were reported to live below the poverty line. Seventy-six percent (76%) of adults held a high school diploma, while 20% held a bachelor's degree.

Data from 1994 showed that almost one quarter of the population (24.8%) was between the ages of 0 and 17. At the time of the last census, 19% of all children in the county under the age of 18 lived in poverty. Most children (66%) were reported to live with a married couple, although a sizable minority lived in single parent homes (23%), with other relatives (9%), or outside of the family (3%).

The public school system in Hillsborough County is one of 67 school districts in the state of Florida, all of which are organized by county. Because of the way school districts are organized in Florida, those in major metropolitan areas tend to be quite large. Hillsborough County is the 12th largest public school district in the nation. During the 1996-97 school year, the district served just under 146,000 students in 97 elementary schools, 30 middle schools, 15 high schools,

and several special centers focused on early childhood education, exceptional student education, alternative education, or adult education. For purposes of this analysis, only the 142 regular education schools (most of which had some self-contained exceptional student education classrooms) were included.

Schools in the district vary widely from inner-city schools where over 90% of children receive free or reduced price lunch to schools in suburban areas where the socioeconomic status of families is considerably higher. The district also includes schools in outlying rural areas where a number of students hail from migrant families. During the 1996-97 school year, 81.7% of teachers in the district identified themselves as White (non-Hispanic), 12% identified themselves as Black, and 5.9% identified themselves as Hispanic.

The student body served by the district is ethnically diverse. Table I-A below shows the racial representation among students in the district at the end of the 1996-97 school year. Table I-B shows the breakdown of the student population by gender.

Table I-A: Number and Percentage of Students of Different Ethnic Groups in the Student Population, District Totals, 1996-97

Race	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Indian	Multiracial	Total
Number (Percent)	80,329 (55%)	35,010 (24%)	26,258 (18%)	2,593 (2%)	475 (<1%)	878 (<1%)	145,903 (100%)

Table I-B: Number and Percentage of Males and Females in the Student Population, District Totals, 1996-97

Sex	Males	Females
Number (Percent)	75,025 (51%)	70,878 (49%)

As Table I-A indicates, during the 1996-97 school year, the majority of students in the district (55%) identified themselves as White. Black and Hispanic students also were well-represented, made up 24% and 18% of the student body, respectively. Asian, Indian, and Multiracial students made up less than 3% of the student body combined. The percentages of male and female students were quite similar, as would be expected.

Socioeconomic status of students is often measured by whether a student pays full price for lunch, receives a reduced price lunch, or receives lunch for free. In order to qualify for free lunch, a student's family income can be no more than 130% of the poverty level. For reduced price lunch, it can be no more than 185% of the poverty level. The poverty level is currently defined as \$10,850 for a family of two (with \$2800 added for each additional family member). Thus, if a student is from a family of four, that family's income must be less than \$21,385 for the student to receive free lunch or less than \$30,432 to receive reduced price lunch. Table I-C shows the percentages of students in the district who received free or reduced price lunch during the 1996-97 school year.

Table I-C: Number and Percentage of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch, District Totals, 1996-97

Cost of Lunch	Free Lunch	Reduced Price Lunch
Number (Percent)	62,471 (43%)	9,429 (6%)

As is seen in Table I-C, slightly less than half of school children in Hillsborough County (49%) received free or reduced price lunch during the 1996-97 school year. Considerably more children received free than reduced price lunch.

#### Out-of-School Suspension: A National Perspective

Although the current analysis focuses on the Hillsborough County Public Schools exclusively, it is helpful to consider the literature on out-of-school suspensions from a national perspective to identify some of the issues, concerns, and trends revealed by other investigators. The following discussion summarizes some of the most recent literature on this topic.

Out-of-school suspension is defined as removal from the school environment for a period not to exceed ten days (Florida State Department of Education, 1995). Contrary to popular belief, most out-of-school suspensions across the country are for minor infractions of school rules rather than for dangerous or violent acts (National School Board Association, 1994). One recent study of over 100 secondary administrators (Rosen, 1997) found that the most common reasons for out-of-school suspension were defiance of school authority, not reporting to after school detention or Saturday school, and class disruption.

In 1975, the Children's Defense Fund published a study investigating the merit of out-of-school suspension. Results indicated that out-of-school suspensions were not beneficial to students and had an adverse impact on the educational process. Among the problems noted with out-of-school suspension were: Missed instruction (often by those students who need it most), labeling of suspended students as troublemakers, failure to provide assistance to deal with problems underlying students' misbehavior, and over-representation of minority students among those suspended. Nonetheless, in 1996, 21 years after the Children's Defense Fund was published, out-of-school suspension continued to be one of the most commonly administered forms of discipline in the United States (Dupper & Bosch, 1996). Recently, it was estimated that 1.5 million students miss one or more days of school per year because they have been suspended or expelled (U.S. Department of Education, 1993, cited in Rosen, 1997). The greatest rates of out-of-school suspension occur at the middle school and early high school levels, rising steadily from 7<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grades and peaking in 9<sup>th</sup> grade (Florida State Department of Education, 1995; Massachusetts State Board of Education, 1991; Safer, 1986). Unfortunately, minority students continue to be grossly over-represented when rates of suspension are compared (Dupper & Bosch, 1996; Florida State Department of Education, 1995; Massachusetts State Board of Education, 1991; McFadden, Marsh, Price, & Hwang, 1992; Streitmatter, 1986; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982). Additionally, suspensions often are utilized by students as an escape from the school environment (Henderson & Friedland, 1996; Imich, 1994). Many students who are

suspended repeatedly experience school failure (Goll, 1989) and eventually drop out of school (Velez, 1989).

While it is easy to find fault with school administrators for continuing to utilize out-of-school suspension despite the problems associated with its use, it is much more difficult to find viable alternatives. Many believe that out-of-school suspensions are necessary to maintain the health and safety of staff and students and to reinforce the authority of those who are responsible for order and control in schools (Rosen, 1997). Administrators also may use out-of-school suspension to attempt to force the involvement of parents who have not responded to other attempts by the school to gain their assistance (Children's Defense Fund, 1975; Mellard & Seybert, 1996; Stine, 1989). It is becoming increasingly clear that workable solutions to disciplinary problems in the schools will be found only when school, families, and communities work together.

### Issues and Concerns Related To Out-of-School Suspensions in Hillsborough County

One of the aims of the Constituency in gathering data for this analysis was to be inclusive in soliciting ideas and opinions from members of the larger community. As part of this process, a large meeting was held at Blake High School in October, 1997 to solicit input from community leaders working with children and families regarding issues related to out-of-school suspension. This meeting was attended by approximately 50 individuals from local community agencies and the school district (including several principals, assistant principals, and School Board members). These individuals were divided into several groups, each of which came up with issues to share with the larger group. The meeting resulted in a compilation of issues to be considered in the analysis.

Issues raised at the Fall, 1997 meeting at Blake were numerous. The following list summarizes factors which participants perceived to be related to out-of-school suspensions. The list is divided into factors which concern/affect schools, families, and communities (multiple impact); factors primarily related to students; factors primarily related to community; factors primarily related to parents; factors primarily related to teachers; and factors primarily related to schools.

#### Multiple Impact

- Intervene at the primary level
- Family support services for at-risk and suspended students
- Overcrowded classrooms
- Literacy level
- Communicate problems schools face with unruly students to parents and community
- Understanding cultural diversity
- Transportation
- Reform school concepts
- Family violence
- Appropriateness of offense
- Lack of programs for supervision
- Parents are uninformed of suspension
- Mobility
- Students feel like they do not belong

- Low self-esteem
- Parents' expectations of schools and schools' expectations of parents
- Lack of community
- Incentives for good behavior/behavior management
- Role of student services in work with at-risk students
- Media overstimulation
- Lack of activities after school
- Nutrition/sleep
- Terminal anger
- Substance abuse
- Limited after school sports

### Students

- What about students in exceptional student education programs?
- Students' ability to communicate
- Enforce curfew
- Some students want suspension
- Structured settings
- Gangs
- Students do not learn when they are suspended
- Coping/problem-solving skills of students
- Lack of academic achievement
- Peer pressure

### Community

- Community resources for suspended students
- Protect community
- County/government funding

### Parents

- Parenting skills/training for parents
- Breakdown of family structure
- Breakdown in communication with children
- Lack of supervision
- Quality of parental involvement
- How to make parents more responsible
- Working parents

### Teachers

- Staffing formulas based on school needs
- Teacher training to deal with the modern child

### School

- Appearance of over-reaction
- Suspension contributes to drop-out rate

- Administration/school resource officer (SRO) coordination
- What is a suspendable offense?
- Inconsistency school to school
- Who has the authority to suspend?

Following this meeting, attendees were invited to join a Community Advisory Committee to give input into the analysis. This committee, which also was co-chaired by Kay Doughty and Candy Olson, met four to five times during the early stages of the analysis to give input on the design to the Principal Investigator. Subsequently, a subcommittee including two assistant principals was formed to give input on the design of the School Discipline Survey (see Data Collection below).

### Data Collection

The data for the analysis was gathered in five major phases. These phases are described below.

Phase I (Fall, 1997): The first phase of the project involved obtaining information on out-of-school suspensions from the MIS Department of the Hillsborough County Public Schools. This data, which is routinely collected by the school district, provided information on the percentage of students suspended from each school (the unduplicated count) as well as the number of suspensions at each school (the duplicated count) for the 1996-97 school year. Data on school demographics also was provided by the MIS Department (see Hillsborough County and its Public Schools: Demographic Information above). Some additional data were obtained from the Director of Community Relations and from the Florida Department of Education's website.

Phase II (Fall, 1997): The second phase of the project involved the design and dissemination of the School Discipline Survey (see Appendix A). The purpose of this survey was to gather information from each school in the county on various issues related to discipline and behavior management. The survey was distributed to all schools in the county via school mail in November, 1997. The survey was accompanied by a cover letter from the Assistant Superintendent. The return rate for the survey was 100%.

Phase III (Spring, 1998): The third phase of the project focused on identifying schools with the highest rates of out-of-school suspension. Working with the information provided by the MIS Department, the three elementary schools, six middle schools, and three high schools with the highest rates of out-of-school suspension for the 1996-97 school year (based on the duplicated count adjusted for school size) were identified. A demographic profile was then put together for each of these 24 schools. This profile included the percentage of students receiving free or reduced price lunch; the percentage of White, Black, and Hispanic students at the school; grade levels at the school (e.g., 6<sup>th</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup>) and number of students at the school. All other schools in the county were then examined to see if a demographic match with a significantly lower out-of-school suspension (OSS) rate (defined as at least 25% lower) could be found for each of these 24 schools. In each case, a match was found.

Structured interviews were conducted separately with the individual responsible for discipline and the individual responsible for guidance at each of these 24 schools (see School Discipline Interview Protocol, Appendix B). These interviews were designed to follow up on the School Discipline Survey by gathering more information on the particular challenges faced by these schools and how they were being addressed. All interviews were conducted by graduate

assistants from the School Psychology Program at the University of South Florida. The interviews were double-blind in that neither the assistant conducting the interview nor the individuals being interviewed were aware of the school's classification as a target school (high OSS rate) or a match (low OSS rate).

Phase IV (Spring-Summer, 1998): The fourth phase of the project involved the design and dissemination of a survey to gather information from community agencies on the services they provide to children and families to address school-related behavior problems (see Community Organization Survey and Early Childhood Survey in Appendices C and D, respectively). These surveys were followed up with structured focus groups. These groups were comprised of individuals working with children and families in various organizations that were deemed by members of the Constituency to play an important role in the life of the community (see Community Organization Interview Protocol in Appendix E). The focus groups were led by a member of the Constituency, a graduate student, or the principal investigator. Each group focused on the ways in which these organizations contribute to reducing behavior problems in the schools and ideas for reducing out-of-school suspensions in the county.

Phase V (Fall, 1998): Phase V of the project focused on interviewing parents of students who had experienced multiple suspensions. The original plan for Phase V was to compare students who had been suspended at least two to three times last year with demographically similar peers who had not experienced any suspensions. These comparisons were to be made by interviewing parents to gather information on the life histories of students in the two groups. This plan was changed, however, due to the difficulty of recruiting parents to participate in the interviews. Instead of gathering information from parents of students in the two groups, a decision was made midway through to focus solely on parents of students with multiple suspensions. The following paragraphs provide a chronology of the process followed in Part V:

Step One: In order to identify students whose parents might be interviewed, eight elementary, eight middle, and eight high schools were selected at random. Subsequently, the names of all students who had been suspended from each of these 24 schools last year were requested from the MIS Department. The MIS Department also provided information on each student's grade, sex, and race.

Step Two: From this list, 72 students who had been suspended at least two to three times were selected at random. The address and lunch status (paid, free, reduced) for each of these 72 students was provided by the Director of Administrative Services for the Hillsborough County Public Schools. Demographic matches for these 72 students were then requested from the 24 schools originally selected. To accomplish this, principals were sent individualized letters describing the characteristics of students who would provide an appropriate demographic match for the target students from their schools. They provided the names and addresses of students who matched the target students with regard to grade, sex, race, and lunch status but who had not been suspended last year.

Step Three: Letters were then sent to these 144 parents requesting their participation in an interview on the topic of out-of-school suspensions. Of these 144 letters, 11 were returned by the post office because of various problems with delivery (e.g., family did not provide an apartment number; family had moved and left no forwarding address). Another 19 were returned by parents. One parent of a control student indicated that she did not wish to participate in the

interview. The other 18 parents agreed to be interviewed. Of these, 13 were parents of children with multiple suspensions and 5 were parents from the matched control group. Thus, from this first mailing, 18 of the 133 parents who received a letter (13.53%) agreed to participate.

Step Four: At this point in the analysis, since the response from control parents was minimal and the time remaining for the completion of the study was limited, a decision was made to concentrate additional recruitment efforts on parents of children with multiple suspensions. In order to recruit more parents in this group, two additional strategies were utilized. First, follow-up phone calls were made to the parents in the experimental (i.e., multiple suspension) group who had received letters but not returned them. These phone calls were made by a graduate assistant from the University of South Florida approximately six weeks after the letters were mailed. The follow-up phone calls from the first mailings resulted in three additional interviews.

Second, the principal investigator went back to the original list of students with multiple suspensions and randomly drew another 225 names. Parents of these students were sent the same letter (with some minor changes) as the first 144 parents. Of those letters in the second mailing, 17 were returned by the post office. Twenty-four letters were returned by parents, with 23 agreeing to participate. Thus, of the 208 letters received by parents in the second mailing, 23 (or 11.05%) agreed to participate.

In total, 44 parents agreed to be interviewed. Of these, 27 interviews (25 experimental, 2 control) were completed, although only the 25 experimental interviews were utilized. In two additional cases, parents whose child had been suspended (experimental group) discussed with the interviewer a sibling who had not been suspended instead. These interviews were not utilized. The remaining 15 interviews were not completed because the parent could not be contacted by phone, a mutually convenient time could not be found, or the parent was not at home when the interviewer arrived for the scheduled interview time.

All interviews were completed either by an individual working with children and families in a local community agency or by a team of advanced School Psychology doctoral students (one male, one female) from the University of South Florida. Although it was estimated the interview would take approximately 20 minutes to complete, most interviewers reported that the parents who were interviewed had much to say beyond the standard interview questions, bringing the typical interview to about 45 minutes to 1 hour. Each parent (or set of parents) was paid \$10 as a gesture of appreciation for his or her time and effort.

## Part II: Out-of-School Suspensions in Hillsborough County During the 1996-97 School Year

### Out-of-School Suspensions: A Comparison of Gender and Race

During the 1996-97 school year, there were a total of 33,620 out-of-school suspensions in the Hillsborough County Public Schools. This number takes into account students who were suspended multiple times and is known as the duplicated count. Table II-A shows a breakdown of the duplicated count by gender and race.

Table II-A: 1996-97 Suspensions by Gender and Race (District Totals—Duplicated Count)

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Indian	Multiracial	Totals
Male	9,774	10,296	4,183	184	72	66	24,575
Female	2,958	4,618	1,391	43	24	11	9,045
Total	12,732	14,914	5,574	227	96	77	33,620

The unduplicated count provides information on the number of students who experienced at least one out-of-school suspension. This count does not take into consideration multiple suspensions of any given student. In 1996-97, 16,204 students in the Hillsborough County Public Schools experienced at least one suspension. Table II-B shows a breakdown of the unduplicated count by gender and race.

Table II-B: 1996-97 Suspensions by Gender and Race (District Totals—Unduplicated Count)

	White	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Indian	Multiracial	Totals
Male	4,913	4,340	2,000	101	38	30	11,422
Female	1,739	2,215	780	25	15	8	4,782
Total	6,652 (8.2%)	6,555 (18.7%)	2,780 (10.6%)	126 (4.9%)	53 (11.1%)	38 (4.3%)	16,204 (11.1%)

Note: Numbers in parentheses below each total show the percentage of students within a particular racial group who experienced at least one suspension during the 1996-97 school year. Then, percentages were calculated by dividing the number of students within each racial group who experienced a suspension by the total number of students in that racial group in the district (see Table I-A).

As the numbers in Tables II-A and II-B show, boys were suspended at a much higher rate than girls. While boys made up about 51% of the total school population, they made up 73% of

suspensions (24,575 of 33,620 total suspensions). Girls, on the other hand, made up about 49% of the school population but only 27% of suspensions (9,045 of 33,620 total suspensions).

Black students also were suspended at a much higher rate than students of any other racial group. In 1996-97, Black students made up 24% of the total student population but 44% of suspensions. Sixty-nine percent of these suspensions were of Black boys while 31% were of Black girls. White students, in contrast, were underrepresented in out-of-school suspensions (making up 55% of the total student body but only 37% of suspensions). Seventy-seven (77%) percent of these suspensions were of White boys while 23% were of White girls. Suspension rates for Hispanic students were roughly proportional to their representation in the total student body. They made up 18% of the school population and 17% of suspensions. Seventy-five percent of these suspensions were of Hispanic boys while 25% were of Hispanic girls. Asian, Indian, and Multiracial students, who together made up less than 3% of the student body, were also underrepresented in out-of-school suspensions, making up just over 1% of suspensions.

The unduplicated count in Table II-B shows that 8.2% of White students, 18.7% of Black students, and 10.6% of Hispanic students experienced at least one suspension during the 1996-97 school year. Again, the percentage of Black students experiencing a suspension was considerably higher than that of other racial groups.

It must be noted in examining these data that although it is clear that boys (as compared to girls) and Black students (as compared to other racial groups) are over-represented in out-of-school suspensions, the reasons for this over-representation cannot be determined from these data. It could be, for example, that boys commit greater numbers of infractions typically resulting in out-of-school suspension than girls. The same could be true of Black students (as compared to other racial groups). It also is possible that the over-representation of boys and Black students is due to greater misunderstanding of these students on the part of teachers and administrators, gender and/or racial differences in the way discipline is administered, etc. Additionally, it is true that a greater percentage of Black than White families in the county live in poverty, and socioeconomic status may be related to suspension rates as well. The point here, however, is that the reasons behind the over-representation found in this analysis cannot be determined from these data alone.

In order to determine if the overrepresentation of Black students was found exclusively in out-of-school suspensions or in other types of disciplinary actions/interventions as well, White, Black, and Hispanic students were compared on a number of types of disciplinary-related interventions, defined as follows:

- Out-of-School Suspension—Student is suspended from school for a period not to exceed ten days.
- In-School Suspension—Student is placed in in-school suspension for a period not to exceed ten days.
- Change of Placement—Student is assigned to an alternative school by School Board action following an expulsion hearing or referral from the student's regular school. Assignment is for a specified period of time, although the student may attend for a shorter period if he/she demonstrates appropriate behavior in the alternative setting.
- Expulsion—Student is expelled from school by School Board action following an expulsion hearing. Expulsion may be up to two years according to Florida law, although expulsions of six months to one year are much more common.

- Parent Involvement—School attempts to involve the parent by calling the parent, sending a letter, holding a parent conference, having a parent or guardian pick up the child from school, or suspending the child pending a parent conference.
- In-School Problem-Solving—School attempts to solve the problem via one of several alternatives available at the school, including holding a conference with the student; referring the student to the Child Study Team, the Family and School Support Team, or a similar type of support team; referring the student to Guidance or Human Relations; or changing the student’s schedule or teacher.
- In-School Punishment—School uses one of several in-school punishment measures, including detention, time-out, work detail, corporal punishment, loss of privileges, or probation.
- Bus Privileges Suspended—Student is not allowed to ride the bus to or from school.
- Mediation—Student’s parent or guardian is involved in a mediation hearing.
- Other—Disciplinary action/intervention not further defined by the school.

Table II-C shows the percentages of White, Black, and Hispanic students receiving each type of disciplinary action. In other words, it shows, for example, that of all of the out-of-school suspensions during 1996-97, 38.59% were of White students. It is noted that row totals may be less than 100% because American Indian, Multiracial, and Asian students were excluded from this analysis.

Table II-C: 1996-97 Percentages of White, Black, and Hispanic Students Receiving Each Type of Disciplinary Action/Intervention

Disciplinary Action	Of all disciplinary actions of this type, what percentage were of <b>White</b> students?	Of all disciplinary actions of this type, what percentage were of <b>Black</b> students?	Of all disciplinary actions of this type, what percentage were of <b>Hispanic</b> students?
OSS	38.59	44.10	17.31
ISS	43.61	40.80	15.60
Change of Placement	36.86	44.60	18.53
Expulsion	31.34	49.25	19.40
Parent Involvement	38.98	44.89	16.13
In-School Problem-Solving	40.77	46.01	13.22
In-School Punishment	45.88	35.01	19.11
Bus Privileges Suspended	42.54	42.23	14.23
Mediation	40.59	43.93	15.48
Other	44.02	43.41	12.57

Note: White students made up 55% of the school population, Black students made up 24% of the school population, and Hispanic students made up 18% of the population. If students of each racial group were equally represented in each type of disciplinary action, numbers in the White column would be close to 55%, numbers in the Black column would be close to 24%, and numbers in the Hispanic column would be close to 18%.

What Table II-C shows is that Black students were not only over-represented in out-of-school suspensions, they were over-represented in all disciplinary actions/interventions noted above. Some of these are punitive in nature (i.e., OSS, ISS, in-school punishment) while others focus more on problem-solving (i.e., parent involvement, in-school problem-solving). The key point here is that the over-representation of Black students in out-of-school suspensions is not an isolated finding; rather, it parallels findings of over-representation across disciplinary actions/interventions. As noted above, however, the reasons behind this finding are not immediately clear and merit further investigation.

The data on disciplinary actions/interventions for White, Black, and Hispanic students also were analyzed to answer one other question: “Are different types of disciplinary actions/interventions used more or less frequently depending on the race of the student?” Table II-D shows the results of this analysis.

Table II-D: 1996-97 Percentages of Disciplinary Actions/Interventions Experienced By White, Black, and Hispanic Students

Type of Disciplinary Action	Of all disciplinary actions noted, what percentage were of this type for <b>White</b> students?	Of all disciplinary actions noted, what percentage were of this type for <b>Black</b> students?	Of all disciplinary actions noted, what percentage were of this type for <b>Hispanic</b> students?	Average percentage across White, Black and Hispanic students
OSS	22.38	26.11	25.58	24.62
ISS	16.44	15.70	14.98	15.71
Change of Placement	0.33	0.40	0.42	0.38
Expulsion	0.04	0.06	0.06	.05
Parent Involvement	8.15	9.58	8.59	8.77
In-School Problem-Solving	13.37	15.40	11.04	13.27
In-School Punishment	30.51	23.76	32.37	28.88
Bus Privileges Suspended	4.18	4.34	3.57	4.03
Mediation	0.17	0.19	0.17	0.18
Other	4.42	4.45	3.21	4.03

Note: The numbers in this table are directly comparable across races. Thus, if a disciplinary action/intervention was used with equal frequency across races, the numbers in each row would be similar.

Table II-D shows that across racial/ethnic groups, out-of-school suspension made up an average of 24.62% of disciplinary actions. It was used slightly more often with Black and Hispanic students than with White students. It also was used considerably more frequently than in-school suspension, which made up an average of 15.77% of disciplinary actions across racial/ethnic groups. The table also shows that in-school punishment (e.g., detention, work detail, etc.) was used much more frequently with White and Hispanic students (making up 30.51% and 32.37% of disciplinary actions for these groups, respectively) than with Black students (making up 23.67%

of disciplinary actions for this group). Alternately, in-school problem-solving was used more frequently with Black students than with White or Hispanic students.

Unfortunately, as with the over-representation of Black students in out-of-school suspensions, it is not clear from these data why these racial/ethnic differences emerged. In the absence of specific data linking the type of infraction to the disciplinary strategy chosen (which was not available from the district), it is not clear if these differences emerged because different racial groups commit different types of infractions (meriting different disciplinary strategies) or whether the differences are reflective of inequity in the way discipline is administered.

#### Out-of-School Suspensions: Percentage vs. Rate

When looking at out-of-school suspension rates at individual schools, it is important to consider the number of students at the school. Schools with greater numbers of students are likely to have more out-of-school suspensions. Thus, in order to compare out-of-school suspension rates across schools, it is important to look at the ratio of suspensions to students. Two numbers are of interest: 1) the percentage of students who experienced out-of-school suspension during the year (OSS percentage) and 2) the number of suspensions per 100 students at the school (OSS rate).

The OSS percentage indicates the percentage of students who experienced at least one suspension. In cases where students were suspended multiple times, they are only counted once. Thus, for example, if the OSS percentage for a school is 15%, this means that 15% of the student body experienced at least one suspension. The OSS percentage is related to the unduplicated count discussed above.

The OSS rate, in contrast, takes into account multiple suspensions of one student. If a school had an OSS rate of 60, this would indicate that there were 60 suspensions for every 100 students at the school. (For a school with a total student population of 500, this would mean that there were 300 (or  $60 \times 5$ ) suspensions during the year.) Of course, in this case, one would not know if 300 different students experienced one suspension or if 30 different students were each suspended 10 times. It is noted that an OSS rate of greater than 100 indicates that there were more out-of-school suspensions than students at the school. The OSS rate is related to the duplicated count discussed above.

The following table shows the mean (average) and the range (lowest and highest) for both the OSS percentage and the OSS rate for elementary, middle, and high schools for the 1996-97 school year.

Table II-E: Means and Ranges for OSS Percentage and OSS Rate by Level (Elementary, Middle, High)

	Elementary Schools (N=97)		Middle Schools (N=30)		High Schools (N=15)	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
OSS Percentage	3.3%	0.0% - 14.1%	23.68%	8.4% -48.1%	20.7%	10.6% -33.0%
OSS Rate (Per 100 Students)	5.6	0 - 32.2	52.3	16.6 – 142.0	39.2	15.9 - 70.0

As is evident in Table II-E, the mean rate of out-of-school suspensions across elementary schools (5.6 suspensions per 100 students) is much lower than at the middle and high school levels (52.3 suspensions per 100 students and 39.2 suspensions per 100 students, respectively). Trends in the data indicate that out-of-school suspension rates rise quite dramatically from elementary school to middle school, although it is not clear exactly how much the rate jumps from 5<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade, for example, because suspension rates for individual grade levels were not available. There does appear to be some drop off of suspension rates in high school, a finding that might be related to students with serious behavior problems dropping out of school after 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> grade. Whether this is actually the case, however, is not clear because suspension rates at individual grade levels were not available.

Overall, Table II-E indicates that it is at the middle school level that there is the greatest cause for concern. It was only at the middle school level that any school had more suspensions than students. This occurred in three cases. One school had a rate of 107, another had a rate of 126, and the highest had a rate of 142. Each of these schools had a racially diverse student population without a strong racial majority. They varied in percentage of students receiving free or reduced price lunch from 65% to 81%.

### Reasons for Out-of-School Suspension

The Hillsborough County Public Schools listed 37 different types of offenses for which students were suspended out of school during the 1996-97 school year. Four of these related to bus behavior (i.e., hanging out of window, injurious/objectable articles, not silent at railroad crossing, and throwing objects) and were not included in this part of the analysis. The other 33 ranged from relatively minor offenses such as dress code and parking violations to major infractions such as weapons possession, assault, and arson. To facilitate interpretation of the data, infractions were grouped into seven categories. These categories and the behavioral infractions they represent are listed below:

- 1) Violence Against Persons: Battery, fighting, sexual assault, sexual harassment, sexual offense, threat/intimidation.
- 2) Violence Against Property: Arson, breaking and entering, falsification of records, larceny/theft, motor vehicle theft, parking violation, petty theft, robbery, trespassing, vandalism.

- 3) Substance Possession: alcohol, narcotics (excluding alcohol), non-controlled substance, tobacco.
- 4) Disobedience: Disobedience/insubordination, disorderly conduct, disrespectful, disruptive, dress code violation, inappropriate behavior, noncompliance with assigned discipline, profanity.
- 5) Absent Without Permission: Left class without permission, left campus without permission.
- 6) Weapons Possession: Possession of any type of weapon on campus (e.g., gun, knife, etc.)
- 7) Other Incidents: Incidents coded as "Other" by the district.

Table II-F shows the mean number of incidents of each type by school level (elementary, middle, high) as well as the range (lowest and highest number) for each level.

Table II-F: Means and Ranges for Incident Categories Resulting in Out-of-School Suspension by Level (Elementary, Middle, High)

	Elementary Schools (N=97)		Middle Schools (N=30)		High Schools (N=15)	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
Violence Against Persons	10.3	0 - 94	101.5	4 - 259	75.4	22 - 139
Violence Against Property	1.02	0 - 11	12.9	0 - 33	33.46	11 - 76
Substance Possession	0.1	0 - 3	8.8	0 - 30	88.4	27 - 145
Disobedience	28.5	0 - 164	371.2	48 - 1182	552.26	144 - 1305
Absent Without Permission	0.7	0 - 9	6.3	0 - 42	20.13	0 - 64
Weapons Possession	0.9	0 - 6	2.9	0 - 9	3.2	0 - 9
Other Incidents	0.3	0 - 6	4.0	0 - 18	7.8	0 - 23

Note: When examining these numbers, it must be remembered that schools vary in size and that some of the variability shown in the ranges is related to differences in the size of the student population at various schools.

As Table II-F illustrates, out-of-school suspensions for violence against persons rose dramatically from elementary school ( $\underline{M}$ =10.3 incidents per school) to middle school ( $\underline{M}$ =101.5 incidents per school) and then dropped off slightly in high school ( $\underline{M}$ =75.4 incidents per school). Out-of-school suspensions for violence against property also showed an increase from elementary ( $\underline{M}$ =1.02 incidents per school) to middle school ( $\underline{M}$ =12.9 incidents per school) but then continued to rise higher at the high school level ( $\underline{M}$ =33.46 per school). The same was true for substance possession, disobedience, truancy, weapons possession, and other incidents. Overall, however, this table shows very clearly that disobedience was by far the infraction resulting in the most out-of-school suspensions at every level. Violence against persons was a distant second at every level. A recent article in the St. Petersburg Times (September 16, 1998)

regarding neighboring Pinellas County Schools showed that defiance of authority was the most common infraction resulting in out-of-school suspensions in that county as well.

### **Part III: Results of the School Discipline Survey**

In December, 1997, a School Discipline Survey designed for this investigation was distributed to all schools within the county (see Appendix A). It was requested that the survey be completed by either the principal or the assistant principal. The purpose of the School Discipline Survey was to gather information on:

- how schools promote prosocial behavior and effective discipline,
- how families are involved in the disciplinary process,
- how schools conceptualize and utilize suspension, and
- the resources (both internal and external) that schools have available to promote prosocial behavior.

Although the survey was nine pages long and contained mostly open-ended questions, the return rate was 100%.

An open-ended response format was chosen so that respondents would not be constrained to a few pre-determined options. However, in order for responses to be aggregated across schools, they had to be coded into meaningful categories. This was accomplished by listing all responses from all schools for each question, reading the entire list of responses for emerging themes, generating coding categories, and assigning each response to one of the coding categories. Two graduate assistants from the University of South Florida completed this task.

This part of the report summarizes responses to the School Discipline Survey in table format separately for elementary, middle, and high schools. The title of the table is the original question from the survey, and the left hand column of each table lists the coding categories that emerged from the open-ended responses. Column totals are greater than 100% in most cases because schools gave multiple responses to each question. In cases where column totals are less than 100%, it is because not all schools responded to the question.

#### Promoting Prosocial Behavior and Effective Discipline

This section of the survey focused on broad strategies used by schools to maintain appropriate behavior. Questions addressed the following:

- how schools communicate acceptable behavior to students,
- options available to teachers when they are having difficulty managing a student's behavior in the classroom,
- disciplinary methods utilized and their effectiveness,
- characteristics of teachers who make appropriate and inappropriate referrals to the office, and
- strategies for intervening with teachers who make inappropriate referrals.

Table III-A: How Are Acceptable Behavior And Conduct Communicated To Students?

Strategies	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Strategy	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Strategy	% of High Schools Reporting This Strategy
Rewards/Privileges	51.5%	36.7%	6.7%
Social Skills Training	19.6%	0%	6.7%
Discussions, Presentations, and/or Assemblies	55.7%	66.7%	86.7%
Modeling	12.4%	10.0%	0%
Parent Involvement	26.8%	36.7%	0%
Handbook, Written Information, Grades, Progress Reports	46.4%	60.0%	93.3%
Visuals (e.g., Posters)	23.7%	10.0%	20.0%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

Table III-A shows that the most common means of communicating acceptable behavior and conduct to students are discussions, presentations, or assemblies. Rewards and privileges, which are used by many elementary schools, are used less frequently at the middle school level and almost never at the high school level. Meanwhile, the use of a handbook and/or other forms of written communication of rules become more important as students progress from elementary to middle to high school. Social skills training, which is likely the most intensive means of imparting appropriate conduct to students, is used by a few elementary schools but almost no middle or high schools.\* In general, there is a trend from "teaching and guidance" of acceptable behavior (through modeling, rewards, social skills training, visuals) at the elementary level to "providing information" at the middle and high schools levels as students mature and are expected to take greater responsibility for themselves.

\*Note: This should not be taken to mean that most schools are not engaged in social skills training. What it does mean is that only a few administrators completing this survey stated that they use social skills training to communicate acceptable behavior to students in response to this open-ended question.

Table III-B: What Options are Available to Teachers When They are Having Difficulty Managing a Student's Behavior in the Classroom?

Option	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Option	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Option	% of High Schools Reporting This Option
Discipline Procedures	78.4%	70.0%	46.7%
Conferences/ Workshops	24.7%	36.7%	26.7%
Parent Involvement	32.0%	50.0%	60.0%
Refer/Get Support From Other Staff (e.g., Guidance Team)	73.2%	70.0%	100%
Social Skills Training/Peer Mediation	17.5%	6.7%	20.0%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

As Table III-B shows, elementary, middle, and high schools use similar options when teachers are having difficulty managing a student's behavior in the classroom. Most schools rely on disciplinary procedures or having other staff (such as the guidance team) offer support. The only surprising finding in this table is that a greater percentage of middle and high schools (as compared to elementary schools) reported using parent involvement to intervene in these cases.

Table III-C: What Are The Characteristics Of Teachers Who Make Legitimate Referrals To The Office?

Characteristics	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Characteristic	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Characteristic	% of High Schools Reporting This Characteristic
Consistent	35.1%	16.7%	40.0%
Behavior Management	49.5%	60.0%	73.3%
Tolerant	5.2%	0%	0%
Involves Students/Student-Centered	22.7%	23.3%	26.7%
Involves Parents	21.6%	13.3%	13.3%
Encourages Academics/High Expectations	16.5%	30.0%	33.3%
Warm, Nurturing, Caring	45.4%	43.3%	33.3%
Experienced, Knowledgeable, Professional	16.5%	10.0%	6.7%
Organized/Prepared	26.8%	33.3%	26.7%
Good Teaching Strategies (e.g., Modeling, Communication)	11.3%	10.0%	20.0%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

Table III-C shows that administrators across the three levels believe that teachers who make legitimate referrals to the office have a good behavior management system in place; display characteristics such as warmth, nurturance, and caring; are organized; and are student-centered. Encouragement of academics/high expectations was mentioned more often at the middle and high school levels than at the elementary level.

Table III-D: What Are The Characteristics Of Teachers Who Make Frivolous Referrals To The Office?

Characteristic	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Characteristic	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Characteristic	% of High Schools Reporting This Characteristic
Inconsistent	40.2%	16.7%	13.3%
Lack of Behavior Management	48.5%	50.0%	80.0%
Inexperienced/Lack of Skills/Feels Incompetent	25.8%	20.0%	13.3%
Disorganized	24.7%	30.0%	33.3%
Does not Take Responsibility	9.3%	10.0%	6.7%
Poor Academics/Lack of Focus on Instruction	8.2%	3.3%	6.7%
Subjective, Harsh, Vindictive	48.5%	50.0%	53.3%
Lack of Good Teaching Strategies	9.3%	16.7%	6.7%
Low Tolerance/Unreasonable Expectations	18.6%	13.3%	20.0%
Poor Involvement with Parents	6.2%	13.3%	13.3%
Not Child-Focused	7.2%	13.3%	6.7%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

The strongest finding to emerge from Table III-D is that administrators believe that teachers who make frivolous referrals to the office have poor behavior management skills. Many also believe that teachers who make frivolous referrals are subjective, harsh, and/or vindictive. Disorganization and inexperience (or perceived incompetence) emerged as important factors as well.

Table III-E: What Are The Characteristics Of Teachers Who Fail To Make Referrals When It Would Be Appropriate To Do So?

Characteristic	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Characteristic	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Characteristic	% of High Schools Reporting This Characteristic
Takes Responsibility for Student Failure	23.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Burned Out Feelings	14.4%	20.0%	33.3%
Disorganized	14.4%	23.3%	26.7%
Inconsistent	7.2%	10.0%	20.0%
No Behavior Management Plan	21.6%	46.7%	40.0%
Fear of Being Reprimanded/ Criticized	17.5%	6.7%	13.3%
Lazy, Unaware	36.1%	30.0%	46.7%
Experienced/ Independent/Want Power	15.5%	10.0%	6.7%
Passive/Too Tolerant	100%	100%	100%
Does Not Take Responsibility/ Blames Others	3.1%	3.3%	6.7%
Inexperience/ Insecure/Lacks Confidence	28.9%	6.7%	26.7%
Poor Parent Contact	3.1%	10.0%	13.3%
Too Much Paperwork	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Poor Teaching Strategies	0.0%	16.7%	0.0%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

As Table III-E indicates, all administrators at the elementary, middle, and high school levels believe that teachers who fail to make referrals when it would be appropriate to do so are passive or too tolerant. Lack of a behavior management plan and characteristics such as lazy or unaware also emerged as important factors. Additionally, a sizeable minority of administrators perceive these teachers as being “burned out” and/or disorganized.

**Table III-F: How Do You Believe Administrators Should Intervene With Teachers Who Either Make Frivolous Referrals To The Office Or Fail To Refer When It Would Be Appropriate To Do So?**

Intervention	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Intervention	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Intervention	% of High Schools Reporting This Intervention
Individual Conferences	63.9%	56.7%	66.7%
Training/Workshops/ Suggest Alternatives	52.6%	60.0%	66.7%
Modeling	16.5%	26.7%	26.7%
Classroom Observation/ Evaluation	30.9%	30.0%	26.7%
Disciplinary Measures	1.0%	6.7%	13.3%
Evaluation/Follow-up	4.1%	10.0%	0.0%
Verbal or Other Reminders/ Encouragement	14.4%	6.7%	13.3%
Address Issues School-Wide	11.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Have Teachers Document Referrals and Measures Taken	5.2%	0.0%	0.0%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

As shown in Table III-F, most administrators utilize some type of guidance/training (e.g., individual conferences, trainings/workshops, classroom observation/evaluation, modeling) to intervene with teachers who are not using the referral process effectively. Only rarely are disciplinary measures taken with these teachers, although this practice increases in frequency from the elementary level to the high school level.

Table III-G: Which Of These Methods Do You Use For Repeated Behavioral Offenses?

Method	% of Elementary Schools Reporting Use of This Method	% of Middle Schools Reporting Use of This Method	% of High Schools Reporting Use of This Method
Corporal Punishment	10.3%	16.7%	6.7%
Detention	75.3%	86.7%	100%
In-School Suspension	79.4%*	76.7%*	73.3%*
Out-of-School Suspension	97.9%	100%	100%
Parent Phone Call	100%	100%	100%
Parent Letter	86.6%	83.3%	80.0%
Parent Conference	97.9%	100%	100%
Peer Mediation	54.6%	83.3%	73.3%
Referral to Human Relations	6.2%	60.0%	100%
Referral to Guidance	97.9%	93.3%	100%
Saturday Detention	3.1%	20.0%	53.3%
Student Conference	88.7%	96.7%	86.7%
Warning	90.7%	96.7%	100%
Work Detail	68.0%	90.0%	80.0%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

Overall, the data in Table III-G indicate that methods such as parent involvement (e.g., phone calls, conferences), out-of-school suspension, warnings, and referrals to guidance are employed most often in cases of repetitive behavioral offenses. Among older populations (i.e., middle schools and high schools) several additional methods also are used. For example, detention, work detail, referral to human relations, in-school suspension, and peer mediation are noted as popular choices for dealing with repeated offenses. Of additional note, 53% of high schools reported using Saturday detention. Corporal punishment (i.e., paddling) is seldom used among any of the schools responding to this survey.

It is noted that Referral to Guidance means referral to the guidance counselor. At the elementary school level, the guidance counselor often is engaged in counseling and planning interventions for students. The role of the guidance counselor changes somewhat at the middle and high school levels to include more involvement with scheduling. Referral to Human Relations involves referral to a human relations specialist. There are few of these personnel at the elementary school level. At the middle and high school levels, these individuals are involved in helping to resolve student-to-student conflicts and making referrals for students to outside agencies. Depending on the school, human relations specialists may serve more of a counseling function than do guidance counselors at the middle and high school levels.

\*Not all schools have in-school suspension programs. Those that do tend to fund them using basic unit allocation money. Most typically, a teacher unit is given up so that ISS can be made available. Many schools have a separate staff (e.g., certified teacher) overseeing the program.

Some schools noted that the ISS classroom is staffed by a physical education teacher. In these cases, other P.E. teachers agree to have larger classes. Elementary schools sometimes use office staff to monitor students during ISS or send students to ISS in another classroom. Additionally, some elementary schools have outside grants or use Title I funds to run an ISS program.

**Table III-H: In Terms of Behavioral Improvement, How Effective Are The Following Methods Of Discipline At Your School?\***

Method	Mean Effectiveness Score for Elementary Schools (Percentage Using This Method)	Mean Effectiveness Score for Middle Schools (Percentage Using This Method)	Mean Effectiveness Score for High Schools (Percentage Using This Method)
Corporal Punishment	1.40 (10.3%)	2.20 (16.7%)	1.00 (6.7%)
Detention	2.37 (75.3%)	2.19 (86.7%)	2.00 (100%)
In-School Suspension	2.40 (79.4%)	2.43 (76.7%)	2.55 (73.3%)
Out-of-School Suspension	2.35 (97.9%)	1.95 (100%)	3.00 (100%)
Parent Phone Call	2.43 (100%)	1.59 (100%)	2.20 (100%)
Parent Letter	2.42 (86.6%)	1.71 (83.3%)	1.67 (80.0%)
Parent Conference	2.57 (97.9%)	2.47 (100%)	2.53 (100%)
Peer Mediation	2.32 (54.6%)	2.57 (83.3%)	2.55 (73.3)
Referral to Human Relations	2.20 (6.2%)	1.93 (60.0%)	2.20 (100%)
Referral to Guidance	2.20 (97.9%)	2.50 (93.3%)	1.87 (100%)
Saturday Detention	2.70 (3.1%)	1.86 (20.0%)	2.12 (53.3%)
Student Conference	2.24 (88.7%)	1.96 (96.7%)	2.00 (86.7%)
Warning	2.08 (90.7%)	1.86 (96.7%)	1.93 (100%)
Work Detail	2.27 (68.0%)	1.93 (90.0%)	2.17 (80.0%)

\*Key:

1=Not at All Effective With Most Students

2=Somewhat Effective With Most Students

3=Highly Effective With Most Students

Note 1: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

Note 2: Effectiveness ratings for each method were made only by those schools currently using the method.

As shown in Table III-H, several methods were noted as being highly effective means of reducing behavioral offenses across all grade levels. Among those methods rated as most effective were parent conference, in-school suspension, and Saturday detention. Some variation

across levels was noted. For example, parent phone calls were rated more effective in elementary and high school settings than in middle school settings while referral to guidance was rated as more effective in elementary school settings. Several other disciplinary strategies such as corporal punishment, warnings, and work detail were rated as relatively less effective in improving behavior. Notably, while elementary and middle schools gave moderate ratings to out-of-school suspension, high schools rated it as the most effective strategy.

### Family Involvement in Schools

Given the overwhelming evidence that family involvement in education is associated with students' success in school, a section of the School Discipline Survey was devoted to issues related to family involvement. Specifically, administrators were asked to rate, for students at their school, families' involvement: 1) with their children in general and 2) in their children's education. Administrators also were asked to provide information on the percentage of families attending the last scheduled parent conferences at their schools and the percentage of families volunteering at their schools. Descriptive statistics for these variables are listed in the tables below.

Table III-I: Administrators' Ratings of Families' Level of Involvement With Their Children In General (by Level)

Rating	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
Very Poor	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Poor	12.4%	13.3%	0.0%
Average	35.1%	43.3%	66.7%
Good	38.1%	26.7%	33.3%
Excellent	7.2%	13.3%	0.0%

Table III-J: Administrators' Ratings of Families' Level of Involvement With Their Children's Education

Rating	Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
Very Poor	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Poor	24.7%	20.0%	6.7%
Average	26.8%	40.0%	60.0%
Good	29.9%	26.7%	26.7%
Excellent	7.2%	10.0%	6.7%

As Tables III-I and III-J show, most administrators perceive that among families at their school, family involvement in their children's lives in general and in education is either Average or Good. Only a few administrators perceived family involvement to be Very Poor or, at the other end of the spectrum, Excellent. Notably, however, almost one quarter of elementary school administrators rated family involvement in education at their schools to be Poor. The same was true for one fifth of middle schools.

Table III-K: Mean Percentage and Percentage Range of Families Attending the Last Scheduled Parent Conference and Volunteering at the School (by Level)

Activity	Elementary Schools		Middle Schools		High Schools	
	Mean	Range	Mean	Range	Mean	Range
% Attending Last Scheduled Parent Conference	62.38%	5%-98%	45.29%	10%-95%	35.06%	8%-80%
% Volunteering at the School	23.25%	1%-80%	10.21%	1%-30%	15.84%	1%-35%

Table III-K shows a clear decrease in the percentage of families attending parent conferences from elementary to high school. The percentage of families volunteering at the school at the middle and high school levels also is notably smaller than at the elementary level. These findings are consistent with the parent involvement literature, which indicates that parents tend to be more involved in their children's schooling during the elementary grades than during the secondary grades.

### Family Involvement in School Discipline

The School Discipline Survey also addressed the issue of family involvement in school discipline. In particular, administrators were asked to comment on how families are involved in the disciplinary process, their school's biggest challenges in involving families in the disciplinary process, and the strategies they use when a family cannot or will not come to the school to discuss their child's behavior difficulties.

Table III-L: How Are Families Involved In The Disciplinary Process?

Type of Involvement	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Type of Involvement	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Type of Involvement	% of High Schools Reporting This Type of Involvement
Communication/ Contact (e.g., Phone Calls, Letters, Home Visits, Progress Reports)	71.1%	60.0%	80.0%
Parent Conferences/Pick Up Student	46.4%	60.0%	53.3%
Involvement in PTA, SIT/FASST, or Other Committees	13.4%	20.0%	40.0%
Have Knowledge of Discipline Plan	22.7%	13.3%	13.3%
Have Input into Discipline Plan	21.6%	6.7%	6.7%
Classroom Observation	2.1%	6.7%	0.0%
Contracts	8.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Follow-Up/Follow Through	8.2%	0.0%	0.0%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

Table III-K shows that parental involvement in school discipline is focused mainly in the areas of contact/communication (i.e., schools reporting in-school behavior to parents) and parent conferences (which may include removal of the student from the school). Some schools noted that parents' involvement is through their knowledge of the discipline plan, into which they have input in a minority of schools. Interestingly, the percentage of parents involved in PTA, SIT, and/or FASST teams appears to increase from elementary to high school.

Table III-M: What Are Your School's Greatest Challenges In Involving Families In The Disciplinary Process?

Challenge	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Challenge	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Challenge	% of High Schools Reporting This Challenge
Difficulty Contacting Parents/ Communication Problems	59.8%	33.3%	60.0%
No Follow-Through At Home	23.7%	10.0%	6.7%
Parents Do Not Take Responsibility/ Limited Parenting Skills	9.3%	10.0%	6.7%
Lack of Transportation or Time to Get to School	18.6%	20.0%	6.7%
General Lack of Involvement	11.3%	16.7%	20.0%
Not Supportive of School Policies or School in General	14.4%	13.3%	40.0%
Does Not Show Up for Appointments	2.1%	10.0%	13.3%
School-Related Problems (e.g., Not Developing Acceptable Plans for Parents, Poor Teacher Follow-Through)	3.1%	16.7%	0.0%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

Table III-L shows that by far the greatest challenge in involving parents in the disciplinary process is difficulty in contacting them. Poor follow-through at home and lack of transportation to school also emerged as salient factors at the elementary school level (with the transportation issue also presenting a problem at the middle school level). Significantly, 40% of high school administrators noted that parental involvement in discipline is impeded by parents' lack of support for school policies or for the school in general.

Table III-N: When A Family Cannot Or Will Not Come To School To Discuss Their Child's Behavioral Difficulties, What Other Strategies Do You Use?

Strategy	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Strategy	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Strategy	% of High Schools Reporting This Strategy
Phone Calls/Letters	63.9%	46.7%	60.0%
Conferences	24.7%	13.3%	46.7%
Home Visits	72.2%	60.0%	40.0%
Special Programs/Services	22.7%	10.0%	46.7%
Provide Transportation/Accommodations	11.3%	20.0%	20.0%
Use Discipline	15.5%	16.7%	6.7%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

As shown in Table III-N, most schools utilize phone calls, letters, or home visits when parents cannot or will not come to school to discuss their child's behavioral difficulties. Significantly, 72.2% of elementary schools, 60% of middle schools, and 40% of high schools noted using home visits. Several schools also offer special programs or services and/or provide transportation to the school. Some schools reported using discipline in these cases, perhaps in an attempt to force greater parental involvement or because it was perceived to be the only viable option.

### Issues Related to Suspension

A large portion of the School Discipline Survey was devoted to issues related to suspension. Questions addressed the following areas:

- grade level(s) at which the most out-of-school suspensions occur
- who is involved in making the recommendation and/or the decision to suspend a general education student out of school
- factors considered in suspending a general education student out of school
- how the process of suspending a student out of school changes for students in exceptional student education
- how the length of an out-of-school suspension is decided
- typical length of an out-of-school suspension
- the types of offenses that are always, sometimes, and rarely punished using out-of-school suspension
- how a suspended student is removed from the school building and what must happen before the student can return
- disciplinary measures (other than out-of-school suspension) that are available for students with chronic behavior problems
- if an in-school suspension program is available and, if so, how it is financed and staffed
- the greatest problems with out-of-school suspension

- the most important reason(s) for continuing to suspend children out of school
- common characteristics of students who have been suspended repeatedly
- how out-of-school suspensions could be reduced

Table III-O: In Your Estimation, At What Grade Levels Do You Have The Most Out-Of-School Suspensions?

Grade Level	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Grade Level	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Grade Level	% of High Schools Reporting This Grade Level
K			
1	10.3%		
2	6.2%		
3	15.4%		
4	36.1%		
5	57.7%		
6		6.7%	
7		40.0%	
8		56.7%	
9			100%
10			27.7%
11			0.0%
12			0.0%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

As Table III-O shows, most elementary suspensions occur among the upper grade levels, namely fourth and fifth. The same is true at the middle school level. Most suspensions are of seventh and eighth graders. The opposite was found at the high school level, where most suspensions occur at the lower grades (i.e., ninth and tenth). These findings are consistent with other research. It may be that there are less suspensions at the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades because students who have had chronic disciplinary problems have dropped out of school. These data alone, however, do not provide information on whether this is actually this case.

Table III-P: Who Is Involved In Making The Recommendation And/Or Decision To Suspend A General Education Student Out of School?

Person	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Person	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Person	% of High Schools Reporting This Person
Principal/Assistant Principal	79.3%	86.7%	100%
Teachers	13.4%	3.3%	0.0%
Parents	6.2%	3.3%	0.0%
Students	2.1%	3.3%	6.7%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

As Table III-P shows quite clearly, principals and assistant principals are the major decision-makers in the process of suspending a student out of school. Teachers are more involved in the process at the elementary level than they are at the middle and high school levels. Parent and student participation in this process is negligible at all three levels, although there is a trend for parent participation to decrease from elementary to high school and for student participation to increase.

Table III-Q: What Factors Are Considered In The Decision To Suspend a Student Out Of School?

Factors	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Factor	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Factor	% of High Schools Reporting This Factor
Severity/Frequency of the Offense	54.6%	46.7%	60.0%
Safety of Others or Referred Student	4.1%	6.7%	0.0%
Parental Involvement	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Other Interventions Have Already Been Tried	2.1%	0.0%	6.7%
Follow Discipline Plan	5.2%	16.7%	6.7%
Look at Case Individually	3.1%	6.7%	0.0%

Note: Although some schools provided multiple responses to this question, column totals are less than 100% because not all schools responded to this question.

Table III-Q indicates that the overwhelming majority of schools responding to this question indicated that the most important factors they consider in deciding whether to suspend a general education student are the frequency and/or severity of the offense. Additionally, while a few schools follow a pre-established discipline plan, some elementary and middle schools noted that they make decisions on a case-by-case basis.

In a related question to which only a few schools responded (When Are Alternatives To Out-Of-School Suspension Utilized?—responses to which are not summarized in table format), it was noted by a few elementary schools (5.2%) that out-of-school suspension is not utilized when it is known that the student’s home environment is poor. A few middle schools (6.2%) also noted that they do not use out-of-school suspension when it has been shown to be ineffective for a particular student in the past. Additionally, about one fifth of elementary schools stated that they used out-of-school suspension only as a last resort.

**Table III-R: How Does The Process Of Suspending A Student Out Of School Change for Students in Exceptional Student Education (With Regard To Who Is Involved In Making The Decision, What Factors Are Considered, and When Other Options Are Utilized)?**

Type of Change	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Change	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Change	% of High Schools Reporting This Change
No Change (in at Least One Aspect of the Process)	16.5%	9.9%	13.4%
Consider the Relationship of the Student's Disability to the Offense	78.4%	53.3%	73.3%
Interventions/ Alternatives Tried	22.7%	29.9%	13.3%
Consult ESE Specialist/School Psychologist	13.4%	29.9%	26.7%
Review IEP	7.2%	3.3%	13.4%
Look at Frequency/Severity of Offense	8.2%	6.6%	13.3%
Consider Individual Needs	4.2%	3.3%	0.0%
Parent Conference/Contact	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%

**Note:** Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

As Table III-R shows, when considering an out-of-school suspension for students in exceptional student education, most administrators consider the relationship of the student's disability to the offense, try interventions that might serve as alternatives to suspension, and/or consult with the ESE specialist or school psychologist. In these cases, administrators must, by law, show that the student's disability was unrelated to the offense for which the student is being considered for out-of-school suspension.

Table III-S: How Is The Length of An Out-of-School Suspension Decided?

Criteria for Decision	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Criterion	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Criterion	% of High Schools Reporting This Criterion
Severity/Past History	74.2%	56.7%	40.0%
Individual Basis	8.2%	3.3%	6.7%
Guidelines Followed/School-Wide Plan or Policy	3.1%	33.3%	33.3%
Parent Input	1.0%	0.0%	6.7%
Decided by Principal	2.1%	3.3%	6.7%

Note: Although some schools provided multiple responses to this question, column totals are less than 100% because not all schools responded to this question.

Table III-S shows that the length of most suspensions is decided by the severity of the offense and/or the student's past history. This is particularly true at the elementary school level. At the middle and high school levels, one third of schools reported that they follow particular guidelines set by a school-wide discipline plan or pre-established policy.

Table III-T: What Is The Typical Length Of An Out-Of-School Suspension At Your School?

Typical Length	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Length	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Length	% of High Schools Reporting This Length
One Day	32.0%	0.0%	0.0%
One-Two Days	20.6%	6.7%	0.0%
One to Three Days	24.7%	6.7%	13.3%
Three Days	4.1%	13.3%	26.7%
Three to Five Days	0.0%	16.7%	40.0%
One to Ten Days	3.1%	6.7%	13.3%
Varies Depending on Offense	2.1%	3.3%	0.0%

Note: Column totals are less than 100% because not all schools provided a response to this question.

The trend shown in Table III-T is that the typical length of suspension increases from elementary to high school. While most elementary school suspensions range somewhere from one to three days, by high school, the typical suspension lasts three to five days.

Table III-U: Please Give Three Examples Of Offenses That Are Always, Sometimes, and Rarely Punished Using Out-of-School Suspension.

Offense	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Offense			% of Middle Schools Reporting This Offense			% of High Schools Reporting This Offense		
	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Always	Sometimes	Rarely	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
Sexual Harassment	1.0%	6.2%	0.0%	3.3%	3.3%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Verbal/ Physical Assaults or Threats	85.6%	55.7%	14.4%	83.3%	20.0%	13.3%	86.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Damage to Property (e.g., Arson, Vandalism)	7.2%	9.3%	2.1%	6.7%	3.3%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Unruly, Defiant, Disruptive Behavior/ Profanity	35.1%	87.6%	77.3%	56.7%	96.7%	80.0%	40.0%	93.3%	60.0%
Weapons	57.7%	6.2%	0.0%	60.0%	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	0.0%	0.0%
Theft	4.1%	25.8%	9.3%	3.3%	13.3%	0.0%	6.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Drugs/ Cigarettes	14.4%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	6.7%	3.3%	86.7%	0.0%	0.0%
Absent without Permission/ Tardy	0.0%	0.0%	10.3%	0.0%	10.0%	50.0%	0.0%	13.3%	86.7%
Incomplete Assignments/ No Materials in Class	0.0%	0.0%	38.1%	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Dress Code	0.0%	0.0%	3.1%	0.0%	3.3%	13.3%	0.0%	6.7%	33.3%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

As Table III-U shows, administrators at all three levels were most likely to note that verbal or physical assaults or threats always result in out-of-school suspension. Another offense likely to always result in out-of-school suspension is weapons possession. Possession or use of drugs or cigarettes (which becomes more of an issue as students progress from late elementary to high school) also is likely to always result in out-of-school suspension.

It is notable that there was considerable variability among administrators in terms of how they handle unruly, defiant, or disruptive behavior. Some always suspend, some sometimes suspend, and some rarely suspend for these types of infractions. Behaviors such as incomplete

assignments/no materials in class and dress code violations were noted to rarely result in suspension.

Table III-V: How Are Students Who Are Suspended Out-of-School Removed From The School Building?

Method	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Method	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Method	% of High Schools Reporting This Method
Parents Pick Up	76.3%	93.3%	60.0%
School Resource Officer or School Personnel Take Student Home	1.0%	3.3%	0.0%
Temporary ISS or Holding Area at School for Remainder of Day	4.1%	0.0%	6.7%
Normal Dismissal/Bus or Self-Transportation Home/OSS May Begin Next Day	12.4%	0.0%	26.7%
Parent is Notified by Letter	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Note: Column totals are less than 100% because not all schools provided a response to this question.

As seen in Table III-V, parent pick-up following the determination of out-of-school suspension is the most frequently reported means of the student being removed from the school premises. Two other processes also were noted. One of these involved delaying the start of the out-of-school suspension until the following school day. Thus, the student would follow normal dismissal routines at the end of the day. Twenty-seven percent of high schools and 12.4% of elementary schools reported using this method. The other means entailed retaining suspended students in a holding area or in-school-suspension room until the end of the school day. Approximately four percent of elementary and six percent of high schools reported using this method.

Table III-W: What Must Happen After An Out-of-School Suspension Before A Student Can Return To School?

Requirement	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Requirement	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Requirement	% of High Schools Reporting This Requirement
Parent Conference	86.6%	60.0%	80.0%
Nothing/Student Serves and Returns	1.0%	6.7%	0.0%
Student Meets with Counselor	2.1%	20.0%	13.3%

Note: Column totals are less than 100% because not all schools provided a response to this question.

Table III-W shows that the majority of schools at all three levels require a parent conference prior to allowing a suspended student to return to school. Also of note, 20% of middle schools and 13.3% of high schools require that a suspended student meet with a counselor before he or she can return to classes. Only 6.7% of middle schools have no such requirements and allow suspended students to return to classes once their allotted time has passed.

**Table III-X: For Students With Chronic Behavior Problems, What Disciplinary Measures (Or Strategies) Other Than Out-of-School Suspension Are Available At Your School?**

Strategy	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Strategy	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Strategy	% of High Schools Reporting This Strategy
Other Discipline Methods (e.g., Detention, ISS, Time Out)	62.9%	56.7%	86.7%
Parental Involvement (e.g., Phone Calls, Contact)	12.4%	23.3%	26.7%
Warning	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Contract/Individual Discipline Plan	22.7%	3.3%	6.7%
Peer Mediation	11.3%	13.3%	6.7%
Counseling/Referral to Services	54.6%	36.7%	53.3%
Special Programs/Mentors (e.g., Boys to Men)	10.3%	16.7%	6.7%
Change of Schedule or Placement	16.5%	23.3%	20.0%
Loss of Privileges	6.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Student Conference	3.1%	20.0%	0.0%
Not Applicable	2.1%	6.7%	0.0%

**Note:** Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

Table III-X offers a picture of alternatives to out-of-school suspension for students with chronic behavior problems. The most popular alternatives include counseling, time out, detention, and in-school suspension. Other options such as changing students' schedules or placement were noted as well. Parent involvement (e.g., phone calls, contact) also provided an avenue by which to discipline behavioral offenses. This option was reported most frequently within middle and high schools settings. Discipline plans/contracts were more commonly reported among elementary schools than secondary schools.

**Table III-Y: In Your Opinion, What Are The Three Greatest Problems With Out-Of-School Suspension?**

Problem	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Problem	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Problem	% of High Schools Reporting This Problem
Lack of Supervision at Home or in Community	84.5%	73.3%	80.0%
Students Not Involved in Learning or Socialization	77.3%	70.0%	86.7%
Ineffective in Solving Problems (e.g., Student Sees as Vacation; Leads to More Suspension)	58.8%	76.7%	53.3%
Lack of Parental Response (e.g., Doesn't Discipline Child, Response Puts Child at Risk)	26.8%	16.7%	20.0%
Creates Hardship for Parents	7.2%	10.0%	13.3%

**Note:** Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

Three major problems with out-of-school suspension are noted within Table III-Y. First, a large majority of schools cited lack of supervision as a problematic aspect of out-of-school suspension. The second negative effect of out-of-school suspension to emerge from the data addressed the interruption in the learning and socialization process for suspended students. A third problem that was noted by more than half of schools at each level involved the ineffectiveness of out-of-school suspension as a tool to discourage inappropriate behavior.

Table III-Z: In Your Opinion, What Is The Most Important Reason For Continuing To Suspend Children Out of School?

Reason	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Reason	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Reason	% of High Schools Reporting This Reason
To Ensure Safety of Other Students	37.1%	36.7%	40.0%
To Allow Other Students to Learn and Teachers to Teach	29.9%	53.3%	66.7%
Deterrent to Other Students	10.3%	3.3%	20.0%
To Maintain a Proper School Environment	10.3%	26.7%	20.0%
Forces Parent to Take Responsibility	26.8%	6.7%	20.0%
Punishment/Consequence for Student	15.5%	13.3%	6.7%
Gives School Planning Time to Create Alternatives	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Lack of Other Options	12.4%	6.7%	0.0%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

Table III-Z shows that the two major reasons to continue out-of-school suspension that emerged across levels were: 1) to ensure the safety of other students and 2) to allow other students to learn and teachers to teach. Close to one quarter of elementary and high school administrators also noted that out-of-school suspension forces parents to take responsibility for their children's actions. It also was noted by some schools that out-of-school suspension allows administrators to maintain a proper school environment. Elementary administrators were most likely to note the absence of other options.

Table III-AA: Please Describe The Common Characteristics Of Students Who Have Been Suspended Repeatedly From Your School.

Characteristic	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Student Characteristic	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Student Characteristic	% of High Schools Reporting This Student Characteristic
Low Parental Support/Family Dysfunction	42.3%	40.0%	33.3%
Disrespect for Authority/Poor Attitude	35.0%	43.3%	53.3%
Self-Esteem Problems	10.3%	20.0%	13.3%
Poor Achievement/Not Involved in School	29.9%	43.3%	53.3%
Truancy/Tardies/Inconsistent Attendance	2.1%	6.7%	20.0%
Gang Involvement/Juvenile Delinquency	4.1%	6.7%	0.0%
Behavior and/or Social Problems	53.6%	63.3%	60.0%
Low SES	6.2%	3.3%	0.0%
Substance Abuse	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

Several characteristics attributed to students who experience repeated suspensions are noted in Table III-AA. Most notably, more than half of schools at each level described these students as displaying behavior and social problems. Similarly, more than one-third of the respondents characterized these students as receiving little or no parental support, being disrespectful of adults, and experiencing poor academic achievement. In contrast, characteristics such as being truant, involved in gangs, abusing drugs or alcohol, or hailing from a low SES household were linked only minimally to repeated suspension (e.g., less than 7% of respondents attributed gang involvement to students who have been suspended repeatedly).

Table BB: How Do You Believe The Number of Out-of-School Suspensions At Your School Could Be Reduced?

Method	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Method	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Method	% of High Schools Reporting This Method
Increase Staff/Create New Programs (e.g., ISS, Alternatives to Suspension)	25.8%	30.0%	60.0%
Satisfied with OSS Rates/No Need to Change	20.6%	0.0%	6.7%
OSS is Needed (Primarily for SED Population)	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Increase Parent/Family Involvement/Training	0.0%	30.0%	20.0%
Change District Policies/Practices	7.2%	3.3%	0.0%
Students Must Change (e.g., Take Responsibility)	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Address Academic Issues/Teacher Training	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%

Note: Column totals are less than 100% because not all schools provided a response to this question.

Table III-BB shows that most administrators believe that the best way to reduce out-of-school suspensions would be to increase staff and/or create new programs. Many administrators noted that there are not enough alternatives to out-of-school suspension available for serious rule infractions. A number of middle and high school administrators also noted that they believe increasing parent involvement and parent training would help to reduce out-of-school suspensions.

#### School-Community Resources to Promote Prosocial Behavior

In this final section of the survey, administrators were queried regarding the types of resources available at their schools for promoting prosocial behavior as well as about their schools' connections with the community. Issues addressed included the following:

- resources for preventing behavior problems
- financing of special programs to prevent behavior problems
- keys to programs which successfully reduce behavior problems
- current teacher in-service training needs

- community agencies that play an important role in the life of the community in the school's attendance area
- who at the school is most involved in working with community agencies
- which community agencies schools would like to be working with
- the type of school-community collaboration that administrators believe would help to reduce school-related behavior problems

Table III-CC: What Resources Are Available At Your School To Prevent Student Behavior Problems?

Resource	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Resource	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Resource	% of High Schools Reporting This Resource
Counseling/ Guidance/Mental Health	48.5%	56.7%	60.0%
School Resource Officer/Human Relations Specialist/School Community Specialist	7.2%	50.0%	66.7%
Social Worker	5.2%	0.0%	6.7%
School Psychologist	8.2%	6.7%	0.0%
Administrators	11.3%	23.3%	13.3%
School Nurse/Occupational Therapist/Speech Therapist	1.0%	6.7%	0.0%
ESE Staff/Resources	2.1%	3.3%	6.7%
Truancy Officer/Detention Aide	1.0%	3.3%	0.0%
Teacher Expertise/ Curricular Adjustment/ Teacher Training	34.0%	16.7%	20.0%
Mediation/Conflict Resolution	22.7%	33.3%	40.0%
Community-Based Resources	6.2%	6.7%	13.3%
School-Wide Teams/Plans	34.0%	30.0%	20.0%
Occupational Specialist	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%
Specific Classes/Programs/ Interventions	37.1%	26.7%	20.0%
Peer Counseling/Peer Interventions	1.0%	0.0%	13.3%
Rewards/Recognition	26.8%	10.0%	0.0%
School Clubs/Athletics/Activities	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%
Parents/Parent Support Programs	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

Data contained in Table III-CC point to resources such as counselors, school resource officers/human relations specialists/school-community specialists, and mediation/conflict resolution as valued avenues for preventing problematic behaviors that commonly result in out-of-school suspension. Among students in elementary school settings, rewards and special recognition were cited as important means by which to prevent misbehavior. However, the acceptance of this mode of increasing appropriate behavior drops as grade levels increase with

no high schools reporting this as an important element in reducing and preventing misbehavior. Teacher experience/training and curricular factors were cited as notable resources as well.

Note: This list of resources was generated through an open-ended question on the School Discipline Survey. Percentages in this table are likely to underestimate the actual availability of these resources at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. This is because administrators most likely only listed the first few alternatives that came to mind when completing the survey rather than providing an exhaustive list of resources at their schools. The table is better viewed as an indication of the resources that administrators deem most important (or tend to think of first) rather than which resources are actually available.

Table III-DD: If You Have Special Programs To Prevent Behavior Problems At Your School, How Are They Financed?

Financing	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Financing	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Financing	% of High Schools Reporting This Financing
Grants, Drug-Free Schools	19.6%	26.7%	20.0%
Community Partnerships/ Donations	19.6%	10.0%	13.3%
SIT	9.3%	6.7%	0.0%
District Budget/ Accountability Funds	27.8%	30.0%	73.3%
Fundraisers/PTA	17.5%	23.3%	0.0%
SWP	2.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Title I/Part I	8.2%	0.0%	0.0%
No Funds Needed	10.3%	10.0%	6.7%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

As Table III-DD shows, special programs to prevent behavior problems are financed in a variety of ways. Most commonly, they are financed through the district budget or accountability funds. Fundraisers, PTA, and money from grants or drug-free schools also were noted relatively frequently. Community partnerships/donations were mentioned by some schools as well.

Table III-EE: What Is The Key To Programs Which Have Been Successful In Reducing Behavior Problems?

Characteristic	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Characteristic	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Characteristic	% of High Schools Reporting This Characteristic
Consistency/ Fairness	21.6%	13.3%	6.7%
Training/Skills of Providers and Staff	25.8%	13.3%	26.7%
Clear Communication of Expectations	10.3%	20.0%	0.0%
Rewards are Meaningful to Students	8.2%	6.7%	6.7%
Internal Factors Related to Students (e.g., Student Wants to Change)	0.0%	6.7%	13.3%
Mentoring or Strong Staff/Student Relationships	3.1%	20.0%	33.3%
Positive/Proactive/ Teaches Skills	12.4%	13.3%	13.3%
Planning and Time	2.1%	10.0%	6.7%
Community/ Teachers/Parents Buy-In	14.4%	10.0%	6.7%
Parental Involvement	13.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Money/Funds	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

As shown in Table III-EE, schools noted many different characteristics of programs which have been successful in reducing problem behaviors. Overall, however, two things stand out: The skills and training of the staff administering the programs (and the meaningfulness of these programs to students, teachers, and parents) and the programs themselves. Successful programs are those which are based on fairness and consistency; teach skills; and clearly communicate expectations. Interestingly, as students get older, the ability of program staff to develop strong mentoring relationships with students seems to become more important. Additionally, though, administrators at the middle and high school levels are more likely than those at the elementary level to believe that programs can be successful only when students want to change.

Table III-FF: What Teacher In-Service Training Needs Do You Perceive At Your School?

Teacher Training Need	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Need	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Need	% of High Schools Reporting This Need
Behavior Management/Time Out	10.3%	13.3%	53.3%
Cooperative Discipline	10.3%	26.7%	20.0%
Conflict Resolution/Peer Mediation	13.4%	16.7%	26.7%
Classroom Management/Assertive Discipline	8.2%	26.7%	0.0%
Curriculum-Related Training/ Benchmarks/ Cooperative Learning	17.5%	20.0%	26.7%
Multicultural Sensitivity Training	5.2%	30.0%	20.0%
Ethics/School Law	0.0%	0.0%	6.7%
Specific Programs (e.g., Harry Wong, Becky Bailey, NCI)	7.2%	3.3%	13.3%
Stress Management	1.0%	0.0%	6.7%
Discipline with Dignity	1.0%	0.0%	6.7%
Block Scheduling	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Children's Special Needs	13.4%	10.0%	0.0%
Computers	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%
County/State/ Federal Policies	2.1%	3.3%	0.0%
Crisis Intervention/ De-Escalation Strategies	12.4%	6.7%	20.0%
Effective Communication/ Public Relations	0.0%	3.3%	0.0%
Effective Teaming	3.1%	6.7%	0.0%
Understanding/ Collaborating with Parents	3.1%	3.3%	6.7%
Social Skills/ Skillstreaming	10.3%	0.0%	
No Needs at This Time	4.1%	3.3%	0.0%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

As Table III-FF shows, at the elementary level, there is no real pattern of teacher in-service training needs. Some schools noted a number of needs while others did not note any.

At the middle school level, the needs were somewhat more similar, with 30% of administrators noting that they believed their teachers would benefit from multicultural sensitivity training. Additionally, 26.7% of administrators responded that cooperative discipline and classroom management/assertive discipline were among their school's training needs. Twenty percent also noted that they believed that their teachers needed curriculum-related training.

There was considerable consistency at the high school level as well, with 53% of administrators noting that their teachers would benefit from training in behavior management and time out. Additionally, 26.7% of high school administrators reported that their teachers could use in-service training in conflict resolution/peer mediation as well curriculum-related issues (e.g., benchmarks, cooperative learning).

Table III-GG: What Community Agencies Play An Important Role In The Life Of The Community Of Your School's Attendance Area?

Agency	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Agency	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Agency	% of High Schools Reporting This Agency
No Agency Given	6.2%	10.0%	0.0%
YMCA	11.3%	13.3%	13.3%
Boys and Girls Clubs	9.3%	13.3%	6.7%
Multicultural Resources	3.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Boy and Girl Scouts	4.1%	6.7%	0.0%
Business/Sports Organizations	19.6%	36.7%	26.7%
Community Service Organizations	22.7%	33.3%	13.3%
Law Enforcement	21.6%	20.0%	40.0%
Child and Family Services	13.4%	0.0%	26.7%
FASST Team	17.5%	0.0%	0.0%
Other (Local) Agencies	42.3%	33.3%	26.7%
Health Department/Health Clinic/Mental Health Clinic	11.3%	3.3%	13.3%
Local/State/Federal Agencies	18.6%	26.7%	26.7%
Churches	7.2%	23.3%	13.3%
USF	3.1%	0.0%	6.7%
United Way/Big Brothers/Big Sisters	1.0%	0.0%	6.7%
Hospice	11.3%	0.0%	0.0%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

Table III-GG shows that there are a variety of organizations that play an important role in the life of the community in Hillsborough County. Many schools named specific local agencies as being important to the families in their catchment area. Also popular were business and sports organizations, community service organizations, and law enforcement (the latter particularly at the high school level).

Table III-HH: Who At Your School Is Most Involved In Working With The Community?

Individual	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Individual	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Individual	% of High Schools Reporting This Individual
Administration/ Assistant Principal	51.5%	50.0%	53.3%
PTA	4.1%	3.3%	6.7%
Proper Name Given	2.1%	6.7%	0.0%
Guidance Counselor	37.1%	6.7%	13.3%
School-Community Specialist/Human Relations Specialist/ Occupational Specialist	0.0%	60.0%	53.3%
Social Worker	19.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Specific Area Teachers/Staff (e.g., School Nurse, Media Specialist)	10.3%	3.3%	13.3%
Teacher/Lead Teacher/All Staff	11.3%	6.7%	0.0%
Assistant Principal for Elementary Instruction, Administrative Resource Teacher	8.2%	0.0%	0.0%
SIT	2.1%	3.3%	6.7%
ESOL	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Note: Column totals are greater than 100% because some responding schools provided multiple responses to this question.

Table III-HH shows that at all three levels it is administrators who have the most contact with the community. Guidance counselors and social workers also assume this role at the elementary level, while school-community specialists, human relations specialists, and occupational specialists are more likely to do so at the middle and high school levels.

Table III-II: Which Community Agencies Would You Like To Be Working With Collaboratively?

Agency	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Agency	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Agency	% of High Schools Reporting This Agency
Community Service Organizations	15.5%	23.3%	13.3%
Churches	2.1%	6.7%	0.0%
Businesses	4.1%	10.0%	6.7%
Law Enforcement	8.2%	6.7%	6.7%
Social Service/Government Agencies	9.3%	13.3%	13.3%
Other Agencies	13.4%	0.0%	0.0%
Sports Teams	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Health/Mental Health Providers	9.3%	10.0%	13.3%
Acronym Unknown	3.1%	3.3%	13.3%
Universities	1.0%	3.3%	0.0%
Do Not Need Collaboration	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%

Note: Column totals are less than 100% because not all schools provided a response to this question.

Table III-II shows that almost all schools would like to have more collaboration with organizations in the community. While types of organizations were quite varied, community service organizations, social service/government agencies, and health/mental health providers emerged as the most popular choices overall.

Table III-JJ: What Type Of Collaboration Work Do You Believe Would Be Most Successful In Helping To Reduce Student Misbehavior At Your School?

Type of Collaborative Need	% of Elementary Schools Reporting This Type of Collaborative Need	% of Middle Schools Reporting This Type of Collaborative Need	% of High Schools Reporting This Type of Collaborative Need
Social Work/Child and Family Services	4.1%	0.0%	0.0%
Financial (e.g., Providing Materials, Transportation)	4.1%	20.0%	20.0%
Law Enforcement	5.2%	3.3%	6.7%
Mentors/Tutors/Volunteers/Building Relationships	20.6%	20.0%	20.0%
Improved Communication/Expectations	1.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Medical/Mental Health Services	7.2%	6.7%	0.0%
Planned Activities/Opportunities for Student Volunteering	4.1%	6.7%	20.0%
Family Support	10.0%	10.0%	0.0%
Help with Truancy/OSS	3.3%	3.3%	6.7%
Provide School In-Service	3.3%	3.3%	0.0%

Table III-JJ shows that the types of collaboration that administrators believe would be most beneficial in reducing student misbehavior are varied. Across the three levels, however, 20% of administrators mentioned some type of relationship-building (e.g., mentoring, tutoring) to be a service which they believed would benefit their students. Providing financial support to the school and family support to families also emerged as types of collaboration from which administrators believe their schools would benefit.

## Part IV: Community Resources for Promoting Prosocial Behavior in Schools

### Overview of Ways in Which Community Organizations Support Prosocial School Behavior: The Community Organization Survey

As noted above, this analysis examined out-of-school suspensions from a school-family-community perspective. As a result, part of the analysis was focused on examining how local community organizations interface with families and schools to promote prosocial school behavior. Toward this end, a survey was developed to gather information on this type of collaboration and the roles that various organizations play in supporting the healthy development of children in the community (see Community Organization Survey and Early Childhood Survey, Appendices C and D, respectively).

The Community Organization Survey or the Early Childhood Survey was sent to 83 organizations/programs in Hillsborough County. Forty-nine surveys were returned, making the overall response rate 59%. However, 8 of the surveys were returned incomplete because the program did not provide direct services to children and youth, bringing the number of surveys actually included in the analysis to 41 (49%). These 41 programs are listed in the table below along with their missions, who completed the survey, whether they provide on-site services in schools, and how many staff members are on-site in schools. Following the table, a summary of the aggregated responses of these organizations to the survey is provided.

### Organizations Responding to the Community Organization Survey

Organization	Person Completing Survey	Mission	On-Site in Public Schools?	# of Staff in Schools
1. Hillsborough County Health Department—Healthy Start*	Faye S. Coe, R.N., Assistant Community Health Nursing Director	Reduction of infant mortality, infant morbidity, and teen pregnancy	Yes— MacFarlane, Tampa Bay Tech, Hillsborough	3
2. Suncoast Girl Scout Council, Inc.	Rosemary Holliday, Asst. Executive Director Cynthia Williams, Director of Outreach	To inspire girls with the highest ideals of character, conduct, patriotism, and service that they may become happy and resourceful citizens	Yes— Juvenile Detention Center, Burnett, Roland Park	7 (part-time)
3. Boy Scouts	Les Baron, Scout Executive	To serve others by helping to instill values in young people and in other ways to prepare them to make ethical choices in their lifetime in achieving their full potential	Yes— Specific schools not noted	3

Organization	Person Completing Survey	Mission	On-Site in Public Schools?	# of Staff in Schools
4. Tampa JCC Federation	Gwen Kessler, Program Director	To provide a safe environment for children to learn, grow, recreate, and socialize in a well-supervised, organized program	No—But would like to be	
5. Tampa Jewish Family Services	Rabbi Ben Shull, Executive Director	To strengthen harmonious family living	No	
6. Positive Parenting	Joyce Strickland, Owner/Director	To provide training and technical support to parents, caregivers, and teachers to prevent inappropriate behaviors and teach appropriate behaviors	Yes— Various schools with Head Start or special education programs	6
7. Care Options	Marian Jones, Project Coordinator	To provide training to the child care community to facilitate inclusion of children with special needs into child care	Yes—Child care programs throughout the community	
8. CDC of Tampa—Men to Boys Program	Theo Bell, Activity Coordinator	To enhance the quality of life of youths and their families so that they may become self-sufficient, law-abiding citizens	Yes— Middleton, Lomax, Franklin, Williams, Stewart	1
9. Northside Mental Health Center— Families in Transition Program	Estrellita Berry, M.A., Supervisor, Family Enrichment Services	To assist family members in coping with the challenges associated with changes in the family due to divorce, remarriage, birth of a child, and single parent households	Yes— Schools are assigned on a quarterly basis by Guidance Services	2
10. Northside Mental Health Center—Home-Based Family Services Program	Estrellita Berry, M.A., Supervisor, Family Enrichment Services	To improve family functioning and to minimize the negative impact of risk factors so that the problems which often result (child abuse/neglect, family disruptions, school drop-out, and delinquency) are reduced	Yes— Maniscalco, Palm River	4

Organization	Person Completing Survey	Mission	On-Site in Public Schools?	# of Staff in Schools
11. Joint Venture/FASST (MHC and Northside)	Bob Sleczkowski, Program Manager	To provide excellent clinical services within a preventative and early intervention model and to perform early childhood screenings throughout the county	Yes—Foster, Lake Magdalene, Egypt Lake, Twin Lakes, Seminole/Forest Hills	2
12. Mendez Foundation	Regina Birrenkott, Director	To teach prevention education to children and adults	Yes—All schools	25
13. Family Network on Disabilities of Florida, Inc.	Jan LaBelle, Executive Director	To provide family-driven support, education, information, and advocacy	Yes—To attend meetings with parents at schools	4
14. Panos Center (Mental Health Care, Inc.)	Glenn C. Parkinson, LCSW, Program Manager	To decrease mental illness in Hillsborough County	No	
15. The Children's Home—Community Counseling Services	Jim Hart, Director of Community Counseling Services	School success	No	
16. Department of Juvenile Justice	Charles Spellman, Program Specialist	To provide a full range of programs and services to prevent/reduce delinquency in partnership with schools, law enforcement, community, etc.	Yes—26 middle schools for Intensive Learning Alternative Program	26
17. Hillsborough County Department of Children's Services	Richard J. Tribunella, Director	To provide residential and non-residential programs designed to provide care, treatment, training, and early childhood educational services to at-risk and special needs children and families throughout Hillsborough County	No	
18. Life Path Hospice	L. Mosby, Manager, Children's Program	To provide individual, family, and group counseling to children and their families impacted by death or illness	Yes—All schools	4

Organization	Person Completing Survey	Mission	On-Site in Public Schools?	# of Staff in Schools
19. The Children's Home, Inc.	Brian Shaughnessy, Supervisor of Student Services	To provide quality residential, preventative, and follow-up services to help troubled children and families in the Tampa Bay area achieve stable and productive lives	No	
20. Tampa YMCA	Bobbi Davis, Director of Grant Development	To provide significant solutions to community needs and nurture family and individual development of spirit, mind, and body	Yes—40 schools	200
21. National Conference for Community and Justice	Roy Kaplan, Executive Director	To fight bias, bigotry, and racism	Yes—It could be any school	3
22. Arts Council of Hillsborough County	Patti Pace, Director of Program Services	To bring the arts to youth in local juvenile justice youth development, prevention, and intervention programs	Yes—Artists work in facilities with youth	1-2 artists per site
23. Agency for Community Treatment Services, Inc.	Richard Brown, Director, Planning and Education	Group foster care, substance abuse treatment (emergency, outpatient, residential), delinquency services (assessment, residential commitment, and aftercare)	No	
24. USF Youth Support Project	Richard Dembo, Professor	Family empowerment (delinquent youth)	No	
25. Hillsborough County Extension Service	Mary Chernowsky, Director	Youth development through education	No	
26. The Spring of Tampa Bay, Inc.	Lorinda Toole Gamson, Children's Case Manager	To increase awareness of domestic violence, provide crisis intervention and shelter for victims of domestic violence, case management, and outreach services	Yes—Orange Grove, Potter, Meacham, Carver	1

Organization	Person Completing Survey	Mission	On-Site in Public Schools?	# of Staff in Schools
27. Apple Services, A Division of the Crisis Center of Hillsborough County	Nikki Daniels, Clinical Director	A sexual abuse treatment program designed to reduce trauma, protect the victim, prevent self-destructive and delinquent behavior, and develop a healthy family system	Yes—Seminole, Burney Simmons, Oak Park	3 (but not every-day)
28. Metropolitan Ministries	Christine Long, Director of Programs	To provide shelter and services to homeless families to alleviate suffering, promote dignity, and instill self-sufficiency	Yes—School social worker employed by school system—Graham, Madison, Hillsborough	1
29. Focus Women's Care and South Florida Baptist Hospital OB Department	Kathy White, RN, OB Director	To provide OB/GYN care to the community by certified nurse midwives	Yes—Burney Simmons	5
30. Family Service Association/ Brandon Branch	Eva D. Cristiani, Clinician II, LCSW/Supervisor, Brandon office	Counseling/psychotherapy for children, individuals, and families in eastern Hillsborough County	Yes—Brandon	1
31. DACCO	Kay Doughty, Director, Community Intervention	To provide the highest quality services to help families lead drug-free lives	Yes—Various	24
32. Children's Home Society/Joshua House/New Beginnings	L.P. Landry, Program Supervisor	To respond to the unique needs of children through a commitment to the fulfillment to every child's right to a stable living environment and the opportunity for healthy family development	Yes—On an as-needed basis—Maniscalco, Buchanan, Citrus Park	3 (not at the same time)
33. Bay Area Legal Services—Child Victim Rapid Response Program	Mary Haberland, Program Director	To reduce juvenile crime and family violence by providing prevention and intervention services to students who have been or could be impacted by violence	Yes—Oak Park, Franklin, Blake, DeSoto	8

Organization	Person Completing Survey	Mission	On-Site in Public Schools?	# of Staff in Schools
35. The Urban League—TRUST Program for African-American Youth	Darrell Daniels, Associate Director of Youth Development Programs	To assist African-American youth in the development self-respect and responsibility	Yes-- multiple sites	varies
36. Big Brothers/ Big Sisters—Mentor Training Institute	Sarah Wright	To screen individuals to become mentors and provide mentor training thereby making more qualified mentors available to children in the community	No	
37. Big Brothers/ Big Sisters—Project CARE	Flo Bayot, Coordinator	To match carefully trained volunteers with children who are either HIV or AIDS infected so that they may serve as mentors, friends, role models, and confidants	No	
38. Redlands Christian Migrant Association	Daniel Stowe, Project Director	Committed to the provision of quality child care services for young children and to the advocacy of issues relevant to the lives of migrant and seasonal farm workers and the rural poor in general	Yes--Ruskin, Eisenhower	9
39. Child Abuse Council, Inc.—Project Thrive**	Gale Allison, LCSW, Director	In-home intervention for children at-risk (Healthy Start prenatal and postpartum clients in South County)	No—early childhood	
40. Bright Horizons of Tampa Bay**	Veronica Chesbrough, Operations Director	To provide affordable, quality childcare with a developmentally appropriate preschool program, nutritious meals, and family support as we prepare children for school success	No—early childhood	
41. Child Abuse Council, Inc.**	Fern Chapin, MSW, Program Administrator	To stop the cycle of child abuse and neglect	No—early childhood	

\* This program was not included in the data analysis below because it was received later than the others.

\*\*These programs were not include in the data analysis below because they completed the Early Childhood Survey, which was slightly different than the Community Organization Survey.

Summary of Services Provided By Community-Based Organizations

Each organization was asked to describe the types of services it offers and the number of clients served annually. Seventy-six percent (76%) described their services as prevention-based, 46% reported that they provide mentoring, 43% offer treatment-based services, and 28% have an early intervention component. The number of children served annually ranged from a low of 11 to a high of more than 200 children. It was noted that 65% of the organizations who participated in this survey reported serving more than 200 children per year.

Children who have exhibited serious behavior problems at school comprise a notable portion of the client base of these agencies. For example, among 18 of these organizations, a quarter of the client base is comprised of children who have experienced out-of-school suspensions. To address this need, these 41 agencies provide a wide variety of services. More specifically, group counseling/therapy is offered as a service at half of the agencies surveyed. Similarly, individual counseling/therapy is a feature provided by 46% of these agencies. Family therapy is provided at 43% of these agencies as well. Social skills training is a noted element in the majority of these organizations with 65% of the agencies incorporating it into their menu of services. Since academic frustration and failure often accompany severe behavior problems, many of these agencies (i.e., 41%) have some form of academic tutoring and vocational counseling available. Two additional components offered by the agencies surveyed are mentoring programs and supervised recreational activities. Specifically, 41% of the agencies noted having a mentoring program, while 46% reported providing recreational activities for their youth.

A large portion of the agencies surveyed reported that their problem-solving approach entails parental and family involvement. That is, 54% reported that they always involve parents while only 3% stated that parents were not included into their mode of service delivery. Parent involvement crosses a wide array of domains. For example, parent education is the focus of one dimension of parent involvement, with 68% of agencies surveyed offering on-site training, 46% of agencies offering parent training services at the parent's home, and 27% of agencies providing services that focus on family preservation. In addition, counseling is provided at many of the agencies. More specifically, 41% provided either group or individual counseling. Furthermore, three other services that address the family context are provided: Vocational counseling (provided by 8% of the agencies), job referral (arranged by 8% of the agencies), and financial counseling (offered by 27% of the agencies). Additionally, 22% of the agencies reported providing family outreach services to between 76% and 100% of their families.

Although the agencies surveyed in this study take referrals from a variety of sources (e.g., self, parent, juvenile justice, child welfare), one important avenue of referral is through the school system. In fact, 84% of the programs reported that they take referrals from school personnel. A large majority of the referrals that come to these programs are made by school social workers (54%), teachers (46%), or guidance counselors (38%). Principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and building service teams also make a portion of referrals to these agencies. However, their referral rate is much lower (i.e., between 22% and 27% of the agencies cited these school personnel as frequent initiators of referrals). Post-referral waiting lists vary across agencies with an average wait of one to three months common among 11% of the agencies. Importantly, for a large majority of agencies (i.e., 70%) there is no wait list and services can be provided immediately.

Collaboration with school systems was noted among many of the programs surveyed. Seventy percent (70%) of the agencies reported that at least one of their employees spends a certain portion of his/her time providing services on-site within the public schools. Only 16% of the

agencies reported rarely or never collaborating with a youngster's school to supply needed services. When collaboration does occur, the most frequent school employee to be at the other end of the collaborative process is either the youngster's teacher, guidance counselor, or social worker. As was found earlier, almost all school/program collaborations are supplemented by parent involvement.

Evaluation efforts and program accreditation also were examined. Regarding evaluation efforts, it appears that the majority of agencies who responded to this survey engage in some form of formal evaluation to assess the efficacy of the services they provide. Slightly less than half of the agencies are accredited by some overarching bureau.

### Summary of Community Organization Focus Groups

As a follow-up to this survey, focus groups were conducted with individuals working with youth from several highly visible organizations in the community. They included Big Brothers/Big Sisters, DACCO, Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts, the Centre for Women, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCA, Mental Health Care/Family and School Support Teams, and The Urban League. The purpose of these focus groups was to identify what services these groups offer to students who have experienced frequent out-of-school suspensions (or are at-risk for serious behavioral problems in school), and to solicit their ideas on how to reduce suspensions in Hillsborough County. Summarized below are the services provided by these organizations in the schools for students at-risk, what the organizations have to offer at-risk and suspended students, circumstances leading to the dismissal of students from services, and the range of ideas offered regarding ways that out-of-school suspension (OSS) can be reduced in the schools.

The focus groups also revealed a wide array of non-school-based services offered to students and their families. For example, Big Brothers/Big Sisters currently serves over 600 children aged 6-18 from single-parent homes in Hillsborough County, with over 1000 children waiting for a matched volunteer mentor. Big Brothers/Big Sisters serves youth through its Core Program as well as through Adopt-A-Cop (a preventative program for at-risk children), Project Care (children who's lives are affected by HIV or AIDS), Project Dove (children affected by domestic violence), and Life Choices (pregnant teens). In addition to individual mentoring by trained volunteers, services include 12 sessions of in-home family counseling by social workers, as well as parent support groups held throughout the year covering topics such as communication skills, discipline, and parenting skills.

The Centre For Women provides non-school-based services to at-risk middle and high school girls ages 12-18. Services of the Centre For Women intended to prevent school disciplinary problems include counseling, teaching on anger management, goal setting, and attention to specific problems and issues facing girls. Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts also provide non-school-based services to girls aged 5-18 and boys aged 6-18, through Brownies, Jr. Girl Scouts, Girl Scouts, Cub Scouts, Boy Scouts, and Exploring (coed, 14-18). In order to prevent disciplinary problems in school, the Girl Scouts program encourages leadership and empowerment, and Boy Scouts teaches leadership, self-esteem, and crime prevention.

DACCO also provides non-school-based programs for students. The New Directions program serves students returning from alternative schools to regular high school and students at-risk for expulsion or substance abuse. DACCO's alternative school program serves three alternative high schools, typically serving socially maladjusted students who have a pattern of disruptive

behavior. Their most recent Satisfy program serves students with moderate to severe substance abuse problems who are not involved in the juvenile justice system. Services for children who have experienced repeated disciplinary problems at school include drug education, individual counseling, psychoeducational group counseling, family counseling and education, behavior modification, outside referrals, and presentations. In one of DACCO's New Directions achievements which was targeted for completion in June, 1998, 91% of its students who had successfully completed the second nine weeks in the program showed decreased referrals as compared to referrals before expulsion. In addition, after the second nine weeks, 67% had increased attendance as compared to attendance during the nine weeks preceding expulsion.

Boys and Girls Clubs provide a variety of youth activities. Their after school programs are located all over the county and provide youth activities, homework assistance, and computer tutorial. Their representatives reported that students attend Boys and Girls Clubs whenever school is not in session. The focus group expressed concern that students who are suspended from school frequently show up at a club because of no parental supervision at home.

The YMCA provides student memberships to their clubs in addition to operating a number of special programs. They provide after school activities and have recently expanded those services to "Success Centers," located in strategic areas of the county. Their focus group reported that these centers were developed with the at-risk student in mind. Over the years, staff at the YMCA centers recognized that their after school programs and youth activities were not reaching all the students they could. They realized that many students needed more outreach and more intensive services. They also recognized the strength in a network of services versus one flat activity like after school care.

Success Centers offer a range of services at various locations (churches, other community-based sites) after the school day is over. Traditional after school care and homework assistance are core services. Success Centers are "hubs" for services and activities and provide, either through co-location of staff or referral, individualized interventions to students and, in some cases, their families. Representatives of the YMCA want to work more closely with local schools to specifically address out-of-school suspension issues on a case-by-case (as well as a neighborhood) basis. They recognize the relationship suspension has to other risky behaviors in students and to public safety and the quality of life in a neighborhood. Success Centers are places where local schools, churches, and other institutions can come together to offer help to students and their families.

The YMCA's focus group had collected information from YMCAs across the country on programs for youth at risk of suspension, truancy, etc. They cited a program in Atlanta where the YMCA worked closely with the school district in providing an alternative to suspension setting. They suggested that, as a community, we should look collectively at what other places have done and replicate parts that make sense for our needs.

Mental Health Care, Inc. (MHC, Inc.) provides a variety of therapeutic programs to students, both in schools and in their neighborhoods. One essential component of their case management programs is involvement with the student's family. MHC, Inc. is in partnership with Northside Mental Health Center and the Children's Home to use school and community teams known as FASST (Family and School Support Teams). These teams develop comprehensive family support plans for students which are then implemented by a case manager working with the

student and family. The services generally target areas like increased attendance, improved behavior, and reduction of suspension. The services are somewhat intensive in nature and are themselves often an alternative to suspension.

Case managers from several of MHC, Inc.'s programs participated in a focus group. The focus group reported that teachers have usually tried many interventions before suspension became an option. In some cases, suspension was the last resort to establish communication with parents after frequent attempts to involve them in interventions had failed. They echoed the concerns of teachers that this alternative was inadequate in getting the attention of parents but often felt that they had no recourse with parents when all other options had been exhausted. They strongly emphasized that a good case plan involving the teacher, the student, and the parent(s) could successfully address the behaviors that lead to student suspension. Family involvement and support as part of any kind of student intervention was essential to the intervention's success.

One observation they made was that students who were suspended from school frequently arrived at school angry from an incident on the bus. This all too frequently led to an incident in the classroom, often simply a continuation of the earlier problem. They noted that more comprehensive staff development and training of bus attendants and drivers in behavior management techniques would be of great assistance in preventing disruptive behavior on the bus, which frequently erupts in the classroom. Related to this is the incidence of bus suspensions. Students can be suspended from the bus but still be allowed to attend school. Unfortunately, because of transportation issues, bus suspensions often result in non-attendance at school, too.

The MHC focus group also emphasized the impact that all school staff have on a student's behavior. In addition to the instructional staff, custodians, lunchroom aides, and school secretaries all help to either reduce negative behavior or increase it in students. Training for all staff would assist in having a consistent school-wide behavior management plan.

Some of the community organizations also provide services in the schools during school hours. For example, staff from the Girl Scouts spend one to two hours each week delivering general programs to girls about "every day life" topics chosen by the girls, such as how to balance a checkbook. Similarly, Boy Scouts staff spend two to three hours each week in the schools teaching conflict resolution, team building, personal hygiene, and money management skills. DACCO staff provides resources for crisis counseling and individual and group psychoeducational counseling in the schools, ranging from ten hours per week for staff from the New Directions and Satisfy programs to full-time on-site staff in three alternative schools. DACCO also offers pager availability of staff to students as well as presentations for school faculty. In addition, Big Brothers/Big Sisters recently received a grant that will enable them to provide mentoring services to students while the students are at school. Mentors are often discouraged from going to the schools, however, to prevent the mentor from taking on a parental role with the child. Finally, The Urban League has a Youth Development Program available to schools which serves students at risk and has as its objective to improve the school experience of those students. The program is delivered via an integrated class and focuses on anger management, decision making skills, and resisting negative peer pressure. The Urban League also acts as an advocate for students facing disciplinary action by the School Board.

The community focus groups revealed that under some circumstances students are asked to leave the programs, a situation that would potentially leave a suspended student with no services. For example, Big Brothers/Big Sisters terminates a match between a child and a mentor if the parent fails to follow the policies of the agency, such as maintaining monthly contact by making the child available for drop-off and pick-up by the mentor. DACCO asks a child to leave its program when another program is deemed more appropriate or when the school makes a request to terminate the child from the program. In addition, since DACCO's services are voluntary on the part of the child, some students deny the opportunity to receive counseling. The Centre For Women maintains an attendance policy for its girls involved with the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), and the student is asked to leave the program if she does not meet the attendance requirement. Similarly, the student may be asked to leave for the day for behavioral reasons.

Staff from Boys and Girls Clubs noted that students who experience problems in school frequently experience them at the club as well. They also acknowledged that there are situations in which they must ask a student to leave the program. To avoid these situations, their staff work with the parent or another close adult to help the student stay in the program. They reported that this is frequently difficult because of parents who work two or three jobs or who, for other reasons, fail to get involved. They shared that they had experienced success with some students through their relationships with local schools. For example, communication between a local club and the school might result in a contingency contract with a student who has had difficulties both at school and at the club.

Boys and Girls Clubs cited a major need to establish alternatives to suspension off the school campus. Because in-school suspension programs are often unsuccessful, alternatives should be examined where the student is placed off the school campus in a very structured program. They felt that, given adequate funding, Boys and Girls Clubs, the YMCA, city and county recreation departments, and local churches would be able to establish programs to fit these needs. Boys and Girls Clubs is currently working with Villa Madonna and Nativity Catholic churches in the Tampa Heights and Brandon areas, respectively, to address the needs youth in those areas more comprehensively.

The community agencies put forth many ideas during the focus groups on how best to reduce or eliminate out of school suspension. In one example, the organization felt that OSS should not be used at all due to the students' perception of suspension as a "vacation day," and that suspension was thus a positive reinforcer of poor behavior. This organization expressed concern that the students were not being held accountable for their behavior. Other ideas included the following:

- Work with community organizations, including churches, to develop alternatives to suspension that are off the school campus but provide a structured set of daily activities.
- Identify new and successful ways for parents to share responsibility with the school for the student's success or failure.
- Identify new and successful ways to involve parents more fully in the student's behavioral and academic program.
- Promote and adequately fund existing programs that provide successful interventions for students.
- Identify programs that have worked successfully in other places and consider the appropriateness of their replication in Hillsborough County.

- Require mandatory behavior management training for all school staff. A special curriculum should be developed to assist bus drivers and attendants to use while transporting students.
- Use the CHOICE program as an alternative to OSS.
- Schools and community agencies should make a collaborative effort to provide alternatives to OSS.
- Decrease school and class sizes and hire more teachers.
- Teachers make home visits to children and families.
- Get input from teachers on alternatives to OSS.
- Increase the use of in-school suspension (ISS) as an alternative to OSS. ISS should be an educational program with a component that teaches life skills, conflict resolution, and communication skills. Learning should continue while the child is suspended.
- ISS should involve the parents during school hours.
- Determine what risk factors are predictive of chronic truancy and address those issues.
- Responses to behaviors leading to OSS should be age-appropriate.
- Put prayer back in the schools and increase spirituality in the schools.
- Adults making an OSS decision should take care to understand the “whole situation” revolving around the event leading to suspension.
- Schools should make more effort not to leave parents out so as to promote “buy-in” by the parents about education, leading to fewer problems in the children.
- School principals should have sensitivity training and should also be allowed flexibility in making suspension decisions.
- Teach conflict resolution in the schools; responsibility and expectations should be taught at home, since “discipline starts at home.”
- Schools should use creative consequences for inappropriate behavior, rather than frequently relying on OSS.
- School policies should be less rigid, with greater incentives for schools and teachers to handle discipline problems within the school.
- More support should be provided for teaching and support staff.
- MANDATORY behavior management training should be required for all school staff.
- A consistent structured approach should be used throughout the school system.
- Incompetent school staff should be discharged.
- More private sector involvement with the schools should be sought and encouraged. Encourage family-friendly workplace policies which allow parents time to spend at school with their child.
- The school system should begin prevention of discipline problems early by working with young children, providing more pre-K programs, and providing more on-going services for families (e.g., Healthy Start).
- Use student assistance programs such as EAP.
- Provide more parenting classes in the schools.
- Make use of Adopt-A-Grandparent programs for mentoring of children.
- Promote and build a sense of community in the neighborhoods and establish co-ops for child care.
- Build the concept in all children that school is important and prepare them to expect a positive experience in school.

The Urban League advanced many additional ideas and suggestions for reducing out-of-school suspensions in Hillsborough County. Children of color are over-represented in suspensions, as The Urban League staff are aware. Staff recommended considerably more cultural diversity training in the district, particularly for new teachers who interned in schools with little cultural diversity. This training should reduce fear in many new teachers and better prepare them to successfully interact with all children. Furthermore, increased cultural sensitivity will help to relieve the sense many minority students have that they are intruders or outsiders in their own school, especially when they have been bused into the school from a distant neighborhood. Other suggestions by the Urban League included the following:

- Schools should convey to all children that the school cares and the community cares in order to promote self-esteem and pride. White communities often are perceived as not accepting of minority children.
- Schools should allow cultural self-expression for minorities, such as allowing an African American to wear a Malcolm X t-shirt.
- The school system should allow African American students to have cultural groups such as those allowed for gay students.
- Expulsion hearings should be fair and open-minded, with no foregone conclusions or racial bias. Alternative placement should be considered carefully due to the possible negative effect of placing students in an environment where many other students have behavior problems.
- In order to promote more positive attitudes towards schools by minority children, school administrators need to be willing to apologize after making a mistake.
- School personnel should make a concerted effort to treat minority children fairly and without bias or contempt.
- School administrators should be cognizant of the extra challenges facing low-income parents, such as inflexible workplace policies and lack of transportation needed to promptly pick up children.
- The Urban League's Youth Development Program should be used much more widely in schools.
- Teachers need more social skills training.
- The School Board and DJJ should improve their working relationship. The School Board should show more support for grassroots organizations.
- School staff and other adults need to make more of an effort to talk to children.

## **Part V: What is the Relationship Between a School's Out-of-School Suspension Rate and Selected Demographic Characteristics?**

This section of the analysis examined the relationship between out-of-school suspensions and selected school demographic characteristics. In particular, the relationship between a school's duplicated out-of-school suspension rate (i.e., number of suspensions per 100 students at the school) and the following demographic characteristics was investigated:

- Percentage of students receiving free or reduced price lunch
- Student racial diversity (Homogeneous vs. heterogeneous school)  
Note: Heterogeneous schools were defined as those in which no one racial group made up more than 50% of the student body. All other schools were considered homogeneous.
- Percentage of White students
- Percentage of Black students
- Percentage of Hispanic students
- Total school enrollment (school size)
- Degree of overcrowding
- Parent involvement (as measured by administrators' perceptions, percentage of parents attending the last parent conference, and percentage of parents volunteering at the school)
- Percentage of students meeting readiness criteria for kindergarten (elementary schools only)
- Average score on Florida Writes!
- Average Reading score on the Stanford Achievement Test
- Average Mathematics score on the Stanford Achievement Test
- Percentage of new staff at the school
- Average number of teacher absences per year
- Drop out rate (high schools only)
- Mobility rate
- Average class size
- Promotion rate
- Average years of teaching experience among teachers at the school
- Operating cost per pupil

Correlational analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among the above variables and schools' out-of-school suspension rates. As a note for readers of this report who are not familiar with correlational analysis, correlations can range from -1 to +1. Positive correlations indicate that as one variable increases, the other increases as well. The closer a positive correlation is to +1, the stronger the positive relationship. Negative correlations indicate the opposite, i.e., as one variable increases, the other decreases. The closer a negative correlation is to -1, the stronger the negative relationship. Correlations of 0 indicate that there is no relationship between the variables. In general, correlations of .1 are considered low, .3 moderate, and .5 high (Cohen, 1992). Results are listed below for elementary, middle, and high schools.

Table V-A: Correlations Between Selected Demographic Characteristics and Out-of-School Suspension Rates

Characteristic	Elementary Schools (N=97)	Middle Schools (N=30)	High Schools (N=15)
% of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch	.37	.56	.47
Student Homogeneity	.05	-.47	-.24
% of White Students	-.34	-.50	-.51
% of Black Students	.55	.46	.26
% of Hispanic Students	-.21	.20	.58
Total Enrollment	-.06	-.10	.07
Degree of Overcrowding	.10	.08	-.10
Administrators' Perceptions of Family Involvement in Students' Lives	-.28	-.33	-.58
Administrators' Perceptions of Family Involvement in Students' Education	-.28	-.28	-.41
% of Families Attending Last Parent Conference	-.08	.04	.12
% of Families Volunteering at the School	-.19	-.10	.04
% of Students Meeting Kindergarten Readiness Standards	-.14	N/A	N/A
Average Florida Writes Score	-.28	-.59	-.60
Average Stanford Reading Score	-.37	-.58	N/A
Average Stanford Math Score	-.39	-.55	N/A
% of New Staff	.01	.38	.22
Average Number of Teacher Absences	-.05	-.03	.22
High School Drop-Out Rate	N/A	N/A	.17
Mobility Rate	0.29	0.42	0.41
Average Class Size	-0.16	0.06	0.39
Promotion Rate	-0.01	-0.26	N/A
Average Years Teaching Experience Among Teachers at the School	-0.19	-0.08	0.68
Operating Cost Per Pupil	0.16	0.06	-0.14

Note: Correlations of .1 are low, .3 moderate, and .5 high. A positive correlation indicates a positive relationship while a negative correlation indicates a negative relationship.

After examining the above correlations, separate stepwise regression analyses were conducted for: 1) elementary schools and 2) middle/high schools combined. These analyses were conducted to determine which of the following 11 variables best predict a school's out-of-school suspension rate at the elementary and secondary levels: 1) percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch, 2) average Stanford Reading score, 3) average Stanford Math score, 4) average Florida Writes! score, 5) average years of teaching experience among teachers, 6) homogeneity of students, 7) percentage of Black students, 8) percentage of White students, 9) percentage of new staff, 10) family involvement in students' lives, and 11) mobility rate. These variables were chosen because they showed the highest correlations with duplicated out-of-school suspension rates.

Table V-B shows the ability of each of these variables alone to predict the duplicated out-of-school suspension rate at a school. The higher the r-square, the better the predictive power of the variable. The r-square can be interpreted as the amount of variance accounted for by the variable. If the r-square for a particular variable is .50, for example, that means that 50% of the variance in out-of-school suspension rates is accounted for by that variable.

Table V-B: R-Squares for Prediction of Out-of-School Suspension Rates at the Elementary Level (From Most to Least Predictive)

Variable	R-Square
% of Black Students	.30
Average Stanford Math Score	.16
Average Stanford Reading Score	.14
% of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch	.13
% of White Students	.11
Mobility Rate	.09
Average Florida Writes! Score	.08
Family Involvement in Students' Lives	.04
Average Years of Teaching Experience Among Teachers	.04
Student Homogeneity	.004
% of New Staff	.00001

Looking at all of these variables together (which takes into account the relationships between the variables), the best (i.e., most predictive) models were as follows:

Table V-C: R-Squares for Various Regression Models Predicting Out-of-School Suspension Rates (Elementary Schools)

Number in Model	R-Square	Variables
1	.30	% of Black Students
2	.31	% of Black Students; % of White Students
3	.34	% of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch; % of Black Students; % of White Students
4	.35	% of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch; % of Black Students; % of White Students; Stanford Math

As Table V-C shows, at the elementary level, the best predictor of a school's out-of-school suspension rate is the percentage of Black students at the school. Schools with higher percentages of Black students tend to have more out-of-school suspensions. The r-square of .30 for this variable indicates that it alone accounts for 30% of the variance between schools in out-of-school suspension rates. As is seen in the table, adding other predictors does little to increase predictive power. Knowing the percentage of White students, the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch, and the average Stanford Math score at the school only brings the r-square from .30 to .35.

The same type of analysis was conducted with middle and high schools combined. The secondary level schools were examined together because there were too few middle and high schools to conduct separate multiple regression analyses. Table V-D shows the individual predictive power of each of the 11 variables noted above.

Table V-D: R-Squares for Predicting Out-of-School Suspension Rates at the Middle and High School Levels (From Most to Least Predictive)

Variable	R-Square
Average Florida Writes! Score	.37
% of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch	.37
% of White Students	.29
% of New Staff	.26
% of Black Students	.21
Mobility Rate	.20
Student Homogeneity	.15
Family Involvement in Students' Lives	.12
Average Years of Teaching Experience Among Teachers	.01
Stanford Reading	.0003
Stanford Math	.0001

As can be seen in Table V-D, the percentage of Black students at the school did not emerge as the best single predictor of out-of-school suspensions at the middle and high school level. Rather, the average Florida Writes! score and the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch showed the single best predictions, each accounting for 37% of the variance between schools.

When all of the variables were considered together, the most predictive models were as follows:

Table V-E: R-Squares for Various Regression Models Predicting Out-of-School Suspension Rates (Middle and High Schools Combined)

Number in Model	R-Square	Variables
1	.37	Average Florida Writes! Score
2	.51	% of White Students; % of New Staff
3	.64	% of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch; % of New Staff; Average Years of Teaching Experience Among Teachers
4	.69	% of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch; Average Florida Writes! Score; % of New Staff; Average Years of Teaching Experience Among Teachers
5	.71	% of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch; Student Homogeneity; Average Florida Writes! Score; % of New Staff; Average Years of Teaching Experience Among Teachers
6	.72	% of Students Receiving Free or Reduced Lunch; Student Homogeneity; Average Florida Writes! Score; % of New Staff; Average Years of Teaching Experience Among Teachers; Family Involvement in Students' Lives

Table V-E shows that a school's average Florida Writes score is the best predictor of a school's out-of-school suspension rate. It alone accounts for 37% of the variance between schools. It drops out of the picture, however, in the models with 2 and 3 variables, when other variables (most notably percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch) become better predictors. (Note: The best predictors change when more variables are entered into the model because multiple regression techniques take into account the correlations of the variables with each other. When two variables are highly correlated, only one is likely to emerge as a salient predictor because the close relationship between the variables means that they are likely to be predicting the same variance. Predictions are better when each variable contributes unique variance to the model.)

As is seen in the table, most of the variance among schools (64%) is accounted for by the first three variables. The previous correlational analysis showed that percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunch, % of new staff, and average years of teaching experience among teachers were all positively correlated with OSS rate. Thus, schools with greater percentages of children receiving free or reduced lunch, greater percentages of new staff, and higher averages in terms of years of teaching experience among teachers are likely to have the highest OSS rates among middle and high schools.

**Part VI: Differences Between Demographically Similar Schools with Significantly Different Rates of Suspension**

As mentioned in the section on Data Collection, demographically similar schools with differing rates of out-of-school suspension were compared to one another in an attempt to ascertain what accounted for the differing suspension rates. Included in this analysis were six elementary schools (i.e., the three with the highest out-of-school suspension rates and their matches), twelve middle schools (i.e., the six highest and their matches), and six high schools (i.e., the three highest and their matches). Demographic characteristics for these schools are listed in Table VI-A (below).

Table VI-A: Demographic Characteristics for Schools with the Highest Duplicated Suspension Rates (Targets) and Their Matches

	OSS Rate	% Free or Reduced Lunch	% White Students	% Black Students	% Hispanic Students	Grade Range	Total # of Students
<b>Elementary</b>							
Target #1	.32	97%	24%	70%	6%	K-6	779
Match #1	.03	83%	22%	67%	10%	K-6	795
Target #2	.27	79%	50%	37%	9%	K-5	435
Match #2	.06	74%	47%	33%	17%	K-5	738
Target #3	.20	86%	37%	51%	9%	K-5	533
Match #3	.02	96%	18%	62%	19%	K-5	537
<b>Middle</b>							
Target #1	1.42	65%	45%	21%	32%	6-8	1,005
Match #1	.50	66%	45%	32%	21%	6-8	878
Target #2	1.26	76%	36%	47%	16%	6-8	927
Match #2	.31	81%	36%	34%	28%	6-8	874
Target #3	1.08	80%	30%	57%	13%	6-8	798
Match #3	.47	59%	42%	24%	32%	6-8	1,132
Target #4	.85	74%	35%	49%	14%	7	998
Match #4	.44	55%	46%	36%	15%	7	1,061
Target #5	.76	67%	34%	16%	44%	6-8	1,093
Match #5	.36	59%	56%	4%	39%	6-8	1,656
Target #6	.68	52%	37%	44%	16%	8-9	1,220
Match #6	.45	72%	25%	54%	18%	8-9	799
<b>High</b>							
Target #1	.70	29%	58%	25%	15%	9-12	2,424
Match #1	.45	29%	55%	28%	13%	9-12	2,487
Target #2	.70	47%	33%	38%	35%	9-12	1,719
Match #2	.46	44%	38%	38%	19%	9-12	2,113
Target #3	.63	39%	42%	18%	35%	9-12	2,204
Match #3	.22	32%	45%	37%	13%	10-12	2,082

The following section provides a summary of the findings gleaned from a qualitative analysis of these schools' responses to the School Discipline Survey and the follow-up interviews.

Elementary, middle, and high schools are discussed separately.

Note: High OSS schools = "Target Schools" = Those with the highest out-of-school suspension rates in the district for their level (i.e., elementary, middle, high).

Low OSS schools = "Matched Schools" = Demographically similar schools with at least a 25% lower out-of-school suspension rate.

### **Elementary Schools**

Family Involvement: Both high and low OSS schools noted either average or poor parental involvement. All six schools noted concerns about involving parents in the disciplinary process (i.e., lack of communication, no phone, lack of follow-up at home). Both high and low OSS schools reported having opportunities for family involvement at their schools. However, low OSS school appear to have more opportunities for family based activities that are not related to student performance.

Use of Social Skills Training: Two of the three low OSS schools indicated that they used social skills training as a means for communicating acceptable behaviors. (Two of the three low OSS schools are Project ACHIEVE schools.) This was not seen among the high OSS schools, who were more likely to mention using awards ceremonies.

Use of Peer Mediation: Two of the low OSS and two of the high OSS schools noted use of a peer mediation program. The other low OSS school does not use peer mediation because it takes away from instructional time, which is a high priority at the school.

Use of In-School Suspension: Only one of the six schools (a high OSS school) did not have an in-school suspension program.

Ranking of Use of Out-of-School Suspension as a Disciplinary Strategy: OSS was ranked as the last method of discipline used for five of the six schools. One high OSS school marked it second to last. For that school, peer mediation was ranked last.

Presence of a School-Wide Discipline Plan: All six schools have a school-wide discipline plan. One of the high OSS schools was not pleased with how the plan was working. Another of the high OSS schools allowed for individually-developed consequences rather than applying the same consequences to every student in a rote manner (i.e., first offense=X, second offense=Y, etc.). Low OSS schools also report the use of positive reinforcement for positive behaviors as part of the discipline program where high OSS schools tended to emphasize the consequences for negative behavior.

Who Created the School Discipline Plan: The low OSS schools were more likely to involve parents and/or the school psychologist or guidance counselor in creating the discipline plan than the high OSS schools.

Teacher Morale: Most of the six schools noted good teacher morale. Only one school (a low OSS school) noted poor teacher morale.

Percentage of Children Living More Than 5-7 Miles From School: All of the high OSS schools have less than 1% of children who live more than 5-7 miles from the school. The low OSS schools varied. One has no children who live more than 5-7 miles from the school, another had a high number of children in ESE based in from outlying areas, and one had 60% who were based from more than 5-7 miles away.

The Most Important Things Schools Do to Reduce Disciplinary Problems:

"Create a family atmosphere through the positives with kids. We make them want to be here."  
(low OSS school)

Try to get to know the families and be open to family and problems. This principal believes that schools need to support the families just as we ask them to support the school. Parents are the most important link. (low OSS school)

Providing leadership to break the mentality that a child must go if there is a behavior problem. This principal believes that discipline is the responsibility of the teacher, so she supports and trains teachers so they can manage behavior in the classroom. (low OSS school)

"We (lead teacher, ESE specialist, AP, and principal) try to remain visible. We help provide an accepting environment for the kids. We want the kids to be treated fairly because they know when they are not." (high OSS school)

"The social skills program is the most important thing." (high OSS school)

Consistently working with children and parents. Setting up individual contracts with children (lots of incentives like tokens for ice cream or cookies). Principal told a story of a child with whom she made a special contract: If he learned his multiplication tables, she would take him to Outback Steakhouse. (high OSS school)

Low OSS schools reported more counseling and problem-solving activities as alternatives to OSS. The high OSS schools reported alternative "discipline" oriented options. The exception was peer mediation that was available in both high and low OSS schools.

Perceived Relationship Between Behavior and Academics: Several of the six schools made note of the important relationship between behavior and academics. One low OSS school has chosen not to use peer mediation because it takes away from instructional time. This particular school also has a reading block during which all children in the school (grouped by proficiency) are reading at the same time.

Availability of Support Personnel: There did not appear to be differences in the availability of support personnel at the high and low OSS schools. Two high and two low OSS schools have a school psychologist 5 days/week. The low OSS schools have a social worker at the school for slightly more time (on average) per week. Two of the low OSS schools have an ESE specialist as compared to only one of the high OSS schools.

Need to Reduce Out-of-School Suspension: With regard to whether OSS needs to be decreased, most of the six schools agreed that it does. One high OSS school suggested possibly restructuring each grade to create an alternative classroom. All schools reported that they were not sure for which populations or for what behaviors OSS was more effective. One high OSS and one low OSS school reported they believed that OSS worked better for younger children.

Reasons for Continuing to Use Out-of-School Suspension: Reasons mentioned by the six schools for continuing OSS included: To protect the safety of other students, to maintain a positive learning environment, to show children that there are consequences for inappropriate behavior, to eliminate class disruptions and the wasting of class time for negative purposes, and to emphasize the severity of the behavior to the child, to the parent, and to other students. It also was mentioned that OSS is the most severe consequence available for severe misbehavior. Reasons mentioned to decrease OSS included:

- not effective in changing behavior
- short-term consequence
- no adult supervision at home
- missing a day of learning
- the student begins to "disassociate" with the school
- student may enjoy having a day off (not really a consequence) or may purposefully misbehave in order to be suspended

Grade Levels With the Most Out-of-School Suspensions: High OSS schools: 5th and ESE students, 3-5, K-1 and 5. Low OSS schools: 3-5, 1 and 4, varies. There is no real pattern here.

For What Behaviors Are Students Suspended? The most common behaviors resulting in OSS across the six schools were fighting and disrespect toward teachers.

Perceived Teacher Training Needs: The low OSS schools did not perceive as many teacher training needs as high OSS schools. Two of the low OSS schools did not perceive any training needs at the present time, while the third perceived a need for teacher training to diffuse student anger. Two of the high OSS schools perceived a number of teacher training needs, including classroom management, assertive discipline, and social skills training. The third high OSS school noted teacher training needs in the area of effective student behavior management techniques.

## **Middle Schools**

For What Behaviors Are Students Suspended? Among the schools with high OSS rates, students are suspended mainly for disruptive behavior, disobedience, disrespect, general classroom disruptions, defiance to teachers, failure to complete other disciplinary actions, not following through with class work, fighting, profanity, or willful disobedience. Similar behaviors resulted in OSS at the low OSS schools, although some of these schools also mentioned issues such as drugs or possession of a weapon. Most of the twelve schools suspend students for an average of 3-5 days for misbehavior in the form of disobedience, defiance, or profanity. Overall, fighting and disrespect/disobedience in the classroom were mentioned most frequently. There was some variability among schools with regard to how fighting was handled. Several schools automatically suspend students for 10 days for fighting, while others typically suspend students

for 5 days for fighting. Several schools noted that the length of a suspension depends on the severity of the offense (or to whom disrespect was shown).

Family Involvement: Among the schools with low OSS rates, administrators noted that parents' level of involvement with their children (and in their children's education) was average (with a few schools reporting that it was poor). Among the high OSS schools, parent involvement rates were mostly average, with two schools reporting that they were good and one reporting poor-average involvement. While most schools offered parent open houses and PTAs as means to increase involvement, two of the schools with high OSS rates noted that they are using home/school notes to increase communication. One high OSS school is making transportation available for parents. High OSS schools were noted to have as many as 60% of their student population bussed in from areas further than five to seven miles from the school, while low OSS schools have as many as 90% of their students bussed in from surrounding communities.

Grade Levels With the Most Out-of-School Suspensions: There was considerable variability among schools with regard to the grade level at which most OSSs occur. Most of the high OSS schools reported that 8th graders are suspended most frequently. However, among the low OSS schools, there was no particular pattern. Two of the low OSS schools noted that 6th graders are suspended most frequently. The other four schools reported that either 7th graders, 8th graders, or a combination of the two grades made up most OSSs.

What Contributes to Problem Behaviors Among Students? When asked about what contributes to problem behaviors among students, low OSS schools responded by noting low parent involvement, society's acceptance of fighting to solve problems, the immaturity of students in middle school, lack of valuing of education, single parent homes, children being taught to hit, and school overcrowding. High OSS schools provided similar responses, including economics of the area, parent involvement, home environment, lack of parental support at home and at school, lack of coping skills, overcrowding, not being able to attend the same school as siblings, environmental factors (i.e., can cuss, fight, and act up at home), and poor self-discipline resulting in fighting and profanity. All schools except for one cited contributing factors that were external to the control of the school (e.g., environmental situations, home problems, child-related characteristics). One low OSS school noted that teacher effectiveness is a factor that influences students' disciplinary problems.

Actions to Reduce Disciplinary Problems: Half of the low OSS schools noted that visibility reduces discipline problems, while each high OSS school cited visibility as a factor. The low OSS schools noted more varied ways to reduce or prevent inappropriate behavior. Five of these schools indicated that responding to students' needs and treating them with respect is effective in reducing problematic behavior.

Presence of a School-Wide Discipline Plan: Five of the six high OSS schools have a school-wide discipline plan. Most of these plans were created by a team of teachers and administrators. One of these schools noted that all teachers had some involvement in the development of the plan. Important elements of these plans included: Respect for others and yourself, responsibility, positive reinforcement, high expectations, everyone on the same page, and consistency. One high OSS school noted that their plan covers what discipline measures to use (ISS, etc.) and covers ways to increase parent involvement. Another high OSS middle school noted that they believed it was important to encourage the teachers to follow the steps included

(be sure to do 1, 2, and 3 before you go to an administrator). Similar responses were gathered from the low OSS schools. All but one of the low OSS schools have a school-wide discipline plan. One low OSS school noted that the plan must be specific, enforceable, and monitored by all faculty in all areas of the school grounds. Another low OSS school noted that its plan included a process of filtering stages, including: Teacher>team>guidance>assistant principal. A third low OSS school noted that their plan was "not a list of rules but rather positive things that we want to see." Finally, a fourth low OSS school noted that everyone must have the same values, be consistent, and buy into the plan.

Use of Peer Mediation: Among the high OSS schools, two have peer mediation programs which seem loosely organized, one doesn't have a program, two others noted that their programs are working well (one of these schools had all 7th graders involved last year), and the last school stated that the program is successful, although fights are not mediated. Among the low OSS schools, two of the six schools have peer mediation programs which are up and running. One of these schools trains all 6th graders in it for one semester. The other school noted that the program is "working fabulously" and that it especially cuts down on fighting.

School Strengths: When asked about their strengths of their school, three of the six low OSS schools stated discipline was one of their three greatest strengths. This was not noted by any of the high OSS schools.

School Challenges: All but one of the twelve schools listed converting to the middle school concept as one of their greatest challenges during the 1996-97 school year.

Ranking of Use of Out-of-School Suspension as a Disciplinary Strategy: All of the twelve schools listed OSS as the last type of discipline used. The last three disciplinary measures used (across schools) were predominantly detention, ISS, and OSS.

Presence of an In-School Suspension Program: Two of the high OSS and two of the low OSS schools do not have an ISS program.

Alternatives to Out-of-School Suspension: When asked about alternatives to OSS, the most commonly mentioned strategies across the twelve schools were detention, peer mediation, and ISS.

Greatest Problems with Out-of-School Suspension: All twelve schools stated that missing academic time was a major problem with OSS. Other problems with OSS noted included: No supervision, students enjoy missing a day of school, and students still exhibit the same behavior when they return to school.

Need to Reduce Out-of-School Suspensions: The majority of schools see a need for OSS rates to be reduced. Only one school (a low OSS school) noted that its suspension rate did not need to be reduced.

Teacher Morale: Only 3 of the 6 low OSS schools noted high teacher morale, while all 6 of the high OSS schools reported high teacher morale.

Teacher Disciplinary Practices: In low OSS schools, teachers received more varied help when having difficulty with discipline in their classrooms. A greater emphasis was noted in staff development and training as a first step in improving the practices of teachers, rather than as a last resort. Teachers in low OSS schools were noted to be involved with mentoring programs or new educator programs with greater frequency.

## **High Schools**

Who is Responsible for Increasing Parent Involvement? The responses from low OSS schools seemed to indicate that they gave school staff rather than the parents a major role in increasing parent involvement. They seemed to believe that parent involvement is dependent on the behaviors of school staff. This same attitude did not appear to be reflected in responses from the high OSS schools. Low OSS schools reported more parental involvement and more programs designed to reach parents.

School Wide Discipline Plan: Low OSS schools' school-wide discipline plans tended to include parents and the School Improvement Team (SIT) more than the high OSS schools during the development of the plan. The low OSS schools also reported that their plan included ways to get the parents involved before a student's problems were severe. The high OSS schools' plans focused more on consistent consequences for negative behaviors.

The Effective Use of Peer Mediation: Several schools mentioned that when peer mediation was used effectively, it tended to be integrated into the school's discipline plan. The administrators tended to take ownership of this program rather than it being a teacher-led program.

Alternatives to Out-of-School Suspension: High OSS schools tended to believe that they had limited alternatives to OSS. Other disciplinary measures included detention, ISS, and Saturday school.

The Effective Teaching of Conflict Resolution: Conflict resolution was seen as more effective when it is taught in a class such as Social Studies.

Parent Contact in the Disciplinary Process: Two of the three low OSS schools responded that one of the important elements of their discipline plan was that teachers contact parents before students are referred to the office. This philosophy was not noted in the responses of any of the high OSS schools.

What Influences Out-of-School Suspension Rates?: When queried about influences on OSS rates, two of the three low OSS schools addressed the connection between academic skills (or planning) and discipline problems.

Behaviors That Lead to Suspension: There does not seem to be a difference between the high and low OSS schools in the behaviors which lead to suspension. Typical behaviors at all schools include fighting, profanity, willful disobedience, continuous disruptive behavior, smoking, tardies, and needing to be removed from ISS.

Bringing Problems From Home to School: Schools with high OSS rates stated that students often bring problems from home to school. The low OSS schools did not perceive this pattern.

Strategies for Reducing Disciplinary Problems: All of the low OSS schools indicated a "student-centered" approach to reducing disciplinary problems. Their responses highlighted the importance of administrators and staff being good listeners. In contrast, two of the three high OSS schools stated that increasing staff visibility would decrease disciplinary problems. The other high OSS school stated, "We talk to them a lot. We tell them what the rules are." This seems to reflect an authoritative vs. authoritarian style of leadership or "parenting."

Influences on Out-of-School Suspension Rates: The high OSS schools noted that not having enough resources, overcrowding, lack of parental involvement, and limited alternatives to OSS influenced OSS rates.

Problems with Out-of-School Suspension: All low OSS and two of the three high OSS schools reported that OSS should be reduced. Two low OSS schools and one high OSS school reported that the reduction in OSS was necessary because they believed that students have to be in school in order to learn.

Teacher Morale: Two of the three low OSS schools described teacher morale as average or good while all of the high OSS schools described their teacher morale as low.

## **Part VII: Students Experiencing Multiple Suspensions: Life Histories and Parental Perceptions of Suspension**

### Overview

Previous sections of this report have focused on comparing schools with differing rates of out-of-school suspension to each other. In this final section of the report, the level of analysis shifts from the school to the individual student. In other words, rather than asking the question, “How do schools with differing rates of out-of-school suspension compare to each other?”, the question addressed in this section is, “How do students with multiple out-of-school suspensions compare to each other (i.e., what do they have in common)?”.

As described in the Data Collection section of Part I of this report, 25 parents whose children had experienced multiple suspensions were interviewed. These parents were selected at random from records of all students who had experienced three or more out-of-school suspensions last year. All interviews were conducted in the parent’s home or in another location chosen by the parent. Interviews were conducted by individuals familiar with clinical interviewing (either from community agencies or from the University of South Florida). Each parent was paid \$10 as a gesture of appreciation for his/her time and effort.

It must be noted that the 25 parents interviewed for this part of the analysis may not be representative of all parents whose children have experienced multiple suspensions. This is because these 25 parents were the only parents who sent back the letter (and followed through with the interview) of the 297 to whom letters were sent. A response rate of 8.4% is not terribly low given the likelihood that this population of parents in general is not strongly connected to the schools. Nonetheless, the particular subgroup of parents who agreed to be interviewed may differ from the “typical” parent whose child has been suspended multiple times. Thus, these results must be interpreted with some degree of caution with regard to generalizability.

### Participants

As mentioned previously, all students whose parents were interviewed were suspended multiple times last year. Elementary school students were suspended at least twice, and middle and high school students were suspended at least three times. Most of the parents who were interviewed were mothers, although grandmothers, two parent families (mother and father), and foster parents were represented in the sample as well. It was explained to parents with multiple children that the interview would be focused solely on the child who had been identified through district data as having experienced multiple suspensions last year.

The mean age of students whose parents were interviewed was 14 (range=8 to 18). The majority of students ( $n=15$ ) were in high school, although middle school students ( $n=5$ ) and elementary school students ( $n=3$ ) were represented as well. Two of the students were no longer attending school because they had dropped out. Three of the students (two in high school, one in middle school) had been placed in an alternative setting (e.g., Park Hill Exceptional Center). The others attended regular schools.

### Medical and Family History

Parents were asked two questions related to medical and family history: 1) Has your child ever experienced any major accidents, illnesses, injuries, or surgeries?, and 2) Has your child ever been separated from a parent or parental figure for more than a few weeks during his or her lifetime?

With regard to the first question, 11 of the 25 parents (44%) indicated that their child had experienced a serious medical situation. Three of the students had been hurt (mostly bone injuries) playing sports. Two others had been injured in accidents (one drowning, one car accident). Another had attempted suicide by taking an overdose of pills. The other children had experienced ear infections, illnesses, or injuries sustained during a fight (i.e., broken teeth).

The majority of the children in the sample (76%) had been separated from a parent or parental figure for more than a few weeks. Reasons noted by parents for the separation included drug abuse, abandonment (e.g., mother left the family when the child was five years old), incarceration (and severing of parental rights), divorce, and death of a parent. The age of the child at the time of initial separation ranged from 11 weeks to 13 years. In some cases, the child was living with a grandparent or in a foster home. A few of the children had resumed contact with the parent from whom they were separated; the majority, however, had not. Two of the children had never met their father.

### Academics

Parents were asked a number of questions regarding their children's academic history and performance in school. Overall, results showed that many students in the sample had experienced academic difficulties and had received some type of academic-related intervention at school. Eight of the children (32%) were currently being served in an exceptional student education (ESE) program. Three of the eight were in programs for Emotionally Handicapped students. These students also were a relatively mobile group, with elementary students attending an average of 3 different schools, middle school students attending an average of 3.8 different schools, and high school students attending an average of 5.6 different schools during their educational careers to date.

When asked about current academic performance at school, parents in the sample rated their children as follows:

<u>Rating of Academic Performance</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Excellent	2	8%
Good	8	32%
Average	9	36%
Poor	4	16%
Very Poor	2	8%

As can be seen, most of the students were rated as showing Average academic performance (36%). Another 40% were rated as showing Good or Excellent academic performance while 24% were rated as showing Poor or Very Poor academic performance. Sixty percent (60%) of parents indicated that the current rating they had given their child was not representative of the

child's typical educational performance. Interestingly, among these parents, issues with peers (e.g., "discovered girls", conflict with other students) were cited as the antecedent to a downward trend in academic performance in 42% of cases. School factors (e.g., retained, expelled) were cited as the precursor to a change in academic performance (either positive or negative) in 33% of cases. Other events precipitating a negative change in academics included family issues (25% of cases) and entrance into puberty (17% of cases). (Note: Some parents noted multiple antecedents.)

Forty-eight percent (48%) of students in the sample had been evaluated for special education at some point during their educational careers, most frequently in elementary school (75%). The other 25% of students were evaluated in grades 7 or 8. Of those students who were evaluated, 83% qualified for services and 75% received them. One student qualified for a gifted program but chose not to enter the program.

In addition to special education, these students had received a variety of other types of academic-related interventions. Ten of the 25 students (40%) of the sample had been retained, eight (32%) had been placed in a tutorial program, and four (16%) had spent some time at an alternative school. Another two children were assigned to a regular education classroom for children with academic or behavioral problems, and one student was placed in the ILAP Program in 8th grade. About half of the sample had been referred to the guidance counselor at some point, and 16% had received counseling or had been involved in a special group at school. (Note: Many students received multiple interventions.) Only one student had received no special intervention from the school in the area of academics.

### School and Community Behavior

Parents were questioned about their children's behavior both at school and in the community. Results showed that many of the students in the sample had experienced behavior problems in both of these settings.

When asked about current behavioral performance at school, parents in the sample rated their children as follows:

<u>Rating of Behavioral Performance</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Excellent	2	8%
Good	9	36%
Average	10	40%
Poor	4	16%
Very Poor	0	0%

As is seen above, 40% of students in the sample were rated as exhibiting Average behavior in school. Another 42% were rated as exhibiting Excellent or Good behavior at school, while the remaining 16% were rated as exhibiting Poor behavior. Sixty-four percent (64%) shared that their child's current behavior was not typical. Events precipitating a change in behavior (either negative or positive) included school-related factors (e.g., failing classes, retention, bored by classes, did not "click" with teacher) (47% of cases); child characteristics (e.g., temper,

hyperactivity) (29% of cases); peer pressure (12% of cases); and family issues (6% of cases). (It is noted that some parents identified multiple precipitating events.)

All of the parents in this sample had been called by their child's school last year. Many were called on a regular basis. For example, 12 parents (48%) noted that they were called one or more times per week by someone from the school regarding their child last year. Most parents (52%) were contacted by their child's teacher and an administrator. Twenty-eight percent (28%) were contacted only by an administrator, 8% were contacted only by a teacher, and 12% were contacted by the guidance counselor in addition to a teacher or administrator. The majority of parents (56%) reported that the phone call was made to inform them that their child had misbehaved. About 4% of parents reported that the purpose of the call was to inform them that their child was having academic difficulties. Another 28% of parents reported that they had received phone calls to report both misbehavior and academic difficulties. Twelve percent (12%) of parents noted that someone from the school had called during the year to report a positive change in behavior in addition to other reasons (e.g., misbehavior, academic problems).

When asked why they believed their children were experiencing behavioral problems at school, parents gave a variety of responses. The largest percentage of parents (32%) believed that the problem was intrinsic to the child (e.g., child is a rebel, child has ADHD, child is irritable). Another 28% saw the problem as related to family issues (e.g., angry at birth mother, mother set no limits, parents are divorced and child spends no time with father). Some parents (20%) noted peer/community/societal problems underlying their child's inappropriate behavior (e.g., got into the wrong crowd, trying to prove himself in the neighborhood). A slightly smaller percentage (16%) saw the teacher or school as underlying the problem (e.g., teachers are not trained to deal with emotional problems, young teachers have trouble with young Black males). (Again, many parents noted multiple reasons for their child's behavioral problems.)

Parents also responded with a variety of answers when asked what they thought would help to improve their child's behavior at school. Eight parents (32%) indicated that they believed the school should be doing something different. The most consistent theme that emerged in this category was that parents believed their children needed someone to connect with at school, someone who would listen to them. These parents did not perceive teachers as being able to relate to their children in a positive way. Another 12% of parents indicated that they believed they themselves needed to do something different (e.g., pursuing family therapy, taking away privileges at home). Other responses indicated that parents believed their children needed to take responsibility for themselves or that their child needed to associate with a different peer group.

Over half of students in the sample (14 of the 25) also had been in trouble outside of school. Incidents ranged from drug possession/use (two students) to fighting (two students with a deadly weapon, two without, one not clear), to theft (four students). Another student was arrested for breaking and entering as well as property damage. Also noted were citations for smoking, running away from home, loitering, and destruction of school property. Thirteen of the students (52%) had been taken into police custody. Seven (28%) had been held overnight. Several students were involved with the Department of Juvenile Justice on an on-going basis, and one student was on probation for domestic violence.

### Out-of-School Suspensions

As noted earlier, all students in the sample were suspended out of school multiple times last year (at least twice for elementary students and at least three times for secondary students). Seven parents noted that their child had been suspended more than ten times (or more than 10 days total) throughout his or her educational career. One student had been suspended 40-50 days total. The average number of suspensions this year for students in the sample was approximately three. The average age at which students in the sample first experienced suspension was 11.86 years (range=6 to 16.5 years).

Students were suspended for a variety of reasons. The most common was fighting (56%), followed by disobedience/verbal aggression (48%), and skipping class or being tardy (36%). Less common but still noted were smoking (4%), possession of drugs (4%), weapon possession (4%), and property destruction (4%). (Many students were suspended--at different times--for different types of infractions.)

Thirteen parents in the sample (52%) reported that when their child was suspended from school, he or she had spent the day at home with some type of supervision (usually by a parent or grandparent). What children did at home varied considerably, however. Some children spent the time at home completing homework and were not allowed to watch TV or listen to the radio. Others spent the day watching TV or playing video games. Twenty-four percent (24%) of students went to an alternative to suspension program. Twelve percent (12%) were unsupervised at home, where parents believe they played video games or watched TV. In 8% of cases, parents did not know how their child had spent the day. Another 4% gave a response that was unclear.

The students' responses to being suspended from school were mixed. Nineteen (76%) of parents reported that their child had a negative reaction to being suspended (e.g., not fair, missed friends at school, not happy to be at ATOSS). Some of these parents reported that their child acted like he or she did not care. One parent reported that her child appeared remorseful initially but then went right back to engaging in the same behavior that had resulted in suspension. The remaining 24% stated that their child had a positive reaction to being suspended (e.g., liked going to work with Mom better than going to school, glad to have the break).

Parents also were asked about their perceptions of suspension. Most of the parents in this sample (88%) stated that they believe there are too many out-of-school suspensions. Their concerns with out-of-school suspension ranged from children's learning needs not being met (36%) to the idea that kids enjoying missing school (28%) to out-of-school suspension being an "easy out" for teachers (24%). Twenty-four percent (24%) of parents also noted that they believe that out-of-school suspension is used inappropriately for relatively minor infractions (e.g., tardies). Additionally, 4% of parents each noted that students who are suspended develop a bad reputation and that suspended students may be unsupervised. (Note: Many parents noted multiple problems with suspension.)

When asked why they believe most students are suspended, parents gave the following responses:

Disobedience	52%
Fighting	44%
Other	28%
Weapons Possession	24%

Drugs	24%
Absent without Permission, Tardy	16%

The top two categories mentioned by parents are quite accurate in that disobedience and fighting were the top two reasons why students were suspended during the 1996-97 school year. Weapons and drugs infractions, however, actually make up only a small percentage of out-of-school suspensions.

### Life Outside of School

Parents were asked several questions pertaining to their child's life outside of school. One of these was how their child spends his or her time between the end of the school day and dinnertime. Most parents (56%) reported that their child was at home with them completing homework, playing outside, watching TV, talking on the phone, or doing chores. Another 24% reported that their child attended some type of organized after school program. Twelve percent (12%) reported that their child was at home, but it was not clear if the child was supervised or not. Finally, 8% of parents reported that their child was not supervised after school or that they did not know how their child's time was spent after school.

The students in this sample had been involved with many organizations in the community. Results showed that 48% of students in the sample had attended Head Start, 48% belonged to Boys and Girls Clubs, 20% had been involved a YMCA-sponsored program, 12% had received services from Big Brothers/Big Sisters, and 40% were members of Boys and Girls Scouts. Additionally, 76% had been involved in a church-sponsored program and 60% played organized sports. (Note: Most children had been involved with multiple programs.) The great majority of parents reported that these experiences were positive ones for their children.

In addition to involvement in community groups, 76% of parents noted that their children had at least one other adult who played an important role in their lives. Most of these were family members (e.g., older siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins) but some were non-relatives (e.g., a minister, a Big Sister, a therapist). These individuals served as role models, tutors, and providers of encouragement. Many parents noted that these individuals were important because they gave the student someone to talk to or simply because they spent time with the student.

Parents also were asked about their concerns about their child's future. The majority of parents (72%) stated that they were worried about their child being unsuccessful in life because of educational failure (e.g., won't get into college, won't get anywhere without a good education, won't be able to support himself). Some parents (32%) also expressed concern about their child engaging in criminal activities (e.g., dealing drugs, may end up in jail--or dead, worry about child harming people and animals).

With regard to hopes for their child's future, most parents' answers again centered on educational success. Forty-four percent (44%) of parents mentioned specifically hoping that their child would complete high school and/or go to college. Some parents noted that this was important to them so that their child would have control over his or her own life. One foster parent noted that he hopes his foster children will break the cycle of abuse that existed in their families of origin. Several other parents hoped for a sports-related scholarship to finance their child's college

education. A few parents were quite vague in their responses, simply stating that they wanted their child to be successful, happy, or get whatever he or she could out of life.

### Summary

The 25 parents who were interviewed for this part of the study all had a child who was suspended multiple times last year. Their responses to a structured parent interview provided some perspective on the lives of students with multiple suspensions. It is noted, however, that these 25 parents were the only parents of the 297 contacted who agreed to participate in the interview and followed through in meeting with a representative from the study. Therefore, their responses cannot be generalized to the larger population of parents whose children have experienced multiple suspensions. It might be hypothesized that these parents are more involved in their children's lives, more concerned about suspensions, or more interested in working with their children's schools than those parents who did not mail back the interview request form.

Some of the most notable findings from the interviews were as follows:

- 76% of the sample had been separated from a parent or parental figure for more than a few weeks
- 48% of the sample had attended Head Start
- 48% of the sample was currently or had been involved with Boys and Girls Clubs
- 40% of the sample was currently or had been involved with Boy and Girl Scouts
- 48% of the sample had been evaluated for exceptional student education (ESE) at some point during their educational careers
- 40% of the sample had been retained at least once
- 32% of the sample was currently receiving exceptional student education (ESE) services
- 52% of the sample had been taken into police custody outside of school
- 48% of parents in the sample had been called by their child's school one or more times per week last year
- 72% of parents in the sample worried that their child would not be successful in life because of educational failure

Overall, results show that the students in this sample have experienced multiple challenges in their lives. As a group, they have experienced much more parental separation than is typical in the general population. The academic services they have received also signal a much higher than average rate of academic failure. Despite involvement with a myriad of community agencies, many of them continue to struggle. Their parents worry about the impact of educational failure on their futures.

## **Part VIII: Summary**

This part of the report summarizes the major findings of the analysis, including:

- figures on out-of-school suspensions in the Hillsborough County Public Schools during the 1996-97 school year (compiled from district data)
- major findings of the School Discipline Survey (completed by administrators in December, 1997)
- community resources for promoting prosocial behavior
- school variables related to out-of-school suspension rates
- differences between demographically similar schools with differing rates of out-of-school suspension

### **1996-97 Out-of-School Suspensions: Figures and Comparisons**

#### District Out-of-School Suspension Figures

During the 1996-97 school year, there were a total of 145,903 students enrolled in the Hillsborough County Public Schools and 33,620 out-of-school suspensions. Thus, the overall suspension rate for the district was .23 (meaning there were 23 suspensions for every 100 students enrolled). A total of 16,204 students (11% of the student body) experienced at least one suspension. While boys and girls were equally represented in the student population, boys made up 73% of suspensions while girls made up only 27%. Black students also were over-represented, making up 24% of the total student population but 44% of suspensions. White students, on the other hand, were under-represented in suspensions, making up 55% of the student body but only 37% of suspensions. Suspension rates for Hispanic rates were roughly proportional to their representation in the total student population. Hispanic students made up 18% of the school population and 17% of suspensions.

#### Comparison of District Figures with Pinellas County

In 1996-97, according to the St. Petersburg Times (September, 16, 1998), neighboring Pinellas County had a total of 103,625 students and 27,032 suspensions. Thus, their overall suspension rate was .26 (slightly higher than the rate in Hillsborough County). A total of 12,413 students (12% of the student body) experienced at least one suspension. While data on suspensions of boys vs. girls was not reported, data showed that Black students were over-represented in suspensions in Pinellas County as well. While Black students made up 18% of the total student population, they made up 36.4% of suspensions (slightly higher than the over-representation in Hillsborough County).

#### Comparison of District Figures with State Figures

The Florida Department of Education reported that 10% of students statewide experienced at least one suspension in 1996-97. The percentage of suspended students in Hillsborough County was slightly higher (11%).

#### Elementary, Middle and High School Average Rates of Suspension

Data from Hillsborough County for 1996-97 showed that out-of-school suspension rates increased dramatically from elementary to secondary school. While the mean out-of-school suspension rate across elementary schools was 5.6, it was 52.3 across middle schools and 39.2 across high schools. (Again, this means, for example, there were 52.3 suspensions for every 100 students in middle school.) The mean number of students experiencing a suspension increased as well, from 3.3% in elementary schools to 23.68% in middle schools, and 20.7% in high schools. These figures indicate that the greatest cause for concern regarding suspension is at the middle school level. Three middle schools actually had more out-of-school suspensions than students (due to repeat suspensions) during the 1996-97 school year.

### Reasons for Out-of-School Suspension

By far the greatest reason for out-of-school suspension in the district in 1996-97 was disobedience (including disobedience/insubordination, disorderly conduct, disrespectful, disruptive, inappropriate behavior, noncompliance with discipline, and profanity). There were a mean of 25.8 suspensions for disobedience at the elementary level, 371.2 at the middle school level, and 552.26 at the high school level. Again, the rise from elementary to secondary school was dramatic. The next most common reason for out-of-school suspension was violence against persons (including battery, fighting, sexual battery, sexual harassment, sexual offense, and threat/intimidation). In this category, fighting made up by far the greatest number of offenses. At the elementary level, there were a mean of 10.3 suspensions for violence against persons. This number rose to 101.5 at the middle school level and dropped somewhat at the high school level to 75.4. Weapons possession resulted in few out-of-school suspensions, with a mean of 0.9 suspensions at the elementary level, 4.0 at the middle school level, and 7.8 at the high school level.

### **Results of the School Discipline Survey**

The School Discipline Survey is discussed in detail in Part III of the report. Key findings are highlighted in this section.

### Disciplinary Methods Used for Repeat Offenses and Their Effectiveness

With regard to the disciplinary methods that schools in the district are using for repeated behavioral offenses, results showed that almost all schools use warnings, out-of-school suspension, parent phone calls, and parent conferences. Very few schools use corporal punishment. In-school suspension was reported to be used at 79.4% of elementary schools, 76.7% of middle schools, and 73.3% of high schools. Peer mediation, which some schools noted to be highly effective in reducing fighting if used properly, was reported to be used by 54.6% of elementary schools, 83.3% of middle schools, and 73.3% of high schools. Saturday detention, also noted to be useful disciplinary strategy, was reported to be used by 3.1% of elementary schools, 20.0% of middle schools, and 53.3% of high schools.

When asked about the effectiveness of various methods of discipline in terms of behavioral improvement, responses from elementary schools indicated that Saturday detention (used by very few schools) and parent conferences were most successful. At the middle school level, peer mediation and Saturday detention were rated highest. At the high school level, out-of-school

suspension, in-school suspension, and peer mediation were rated as most effective. The following list shows the rankings of effectiveness (from most to least effective) at each level:

Table VIII-A: Ranking of the Effectiveness of Various Disciplinary Strategies in Changing Behavior (Highest to Lowest)--By Level

Elementary Schools	Middle Schools	High Schools
1. Saturday Detention	1. Peer Mediation	1. Out-of-School Suspension
2. Parent Conference	2. Referral to Guidance	2. In-School Suspension (tie)
3. Parent Phone Call	3. Parent Conference	2. Peer Mediation (tie)
4. Parent Letter	4. In-School Suspension	3. Parent Conference
5. In-School Suspension	5. Corporal Punishment	4. Referral to Human Relations (tie)
6. Detention	6. Detention	4. Parent Phone Call (tie)
7. Out-of-School Suspension	7. Student Conference	5. Work Detail
8. Peer Mediation	8. Out-of-School Suspension	6. Saturday Detention
9. Student Conference	9. Referral to Human Relations (tie)	7. Student Conference (tie)
10. Work Detail	9. Work Detail (tie)	7. Detention (tie)
11. Referral to Guidance (tie)	10. Saturday Detention (tie)	8. Warning
11. Referral to Human Relations (tie)	10. Warning (tie)	9. Referral to Guidance
12. Warning	11. Parent Letter	10. Parent Letter
13. Corporal Punishment	12. Parent Phone Call	11. Corporal Punishment

#### Grade Levels With the Most Out-of-School Suspensions

In the absence of data from the district on the grade levels with the most suspensions, administrators were asked to estimate this for their schools. At the elementary level, most suspensions appear to occur in the 4th and 5th grades. At the middle school level, 7th and 8th graders are suspended most frequently. At the high school level, most suspensions occur in 9th and 10th grades.

#### Typical Length of Out-of-School Suspensions

The length of the average out-of-school suspension increases from 1-3 days at the elementary level to 3-5 days at the middle school level and 3-10 days at the high school level. Most schools decide on the length of a suspension based on the severity of the offense and/or the student's past history.

#### What is a Suspendable Offense?

There was considerable variability between schools in terms of offenses that are always, sometimes, or rarely punished using out-of-school suspension. This was particularly true for

unruly, defiant, disruptive behavior/profanity. Some schools always suspend, some sometimes suspend, and some rarely suspend for these types of infractions. There was some variability as well in how different schools respond to verbal/physical assaults or threats. Most high schools suspend for this type of behavior, but many elementary and some middle schools noted that they only sometimes suspend students for such an offense.

### How Are Suspended Students Removed from and Returned to School?

Almost all schools require that parents pick up their children following an administrator's decision that the student is to be suspended out of school. Additionally, most schools require that a parent conference take place before a suspended student can return to school. At the middle and high school levels, this parent conference may sometimes be replaced by a meeting of the student with the counselor. Many schools also noted, however, that their greatest challenge in involving parents in the disciplinary process is contacting or communicating with them. Thus, although most schools require parent conferences, it is likely that this process runs less than smoothly.

### Problems With and Reasons to Continue Using Out-of-School Suspension

According to administrators' responses, the three greatest problems with out-of-school suspension are: 1) the lack of supervision at home or in the community, 2) students are not involved in learning or socialization while suspended, and 3) suspension is ineffective in solving problems.

Administrators believe that the most important reasons for continuing to use out-of-school suspension are: 1) to allow other students to learn and teachers to teach and 2) to ensure the safety of other students. Issues such as maintaining a proper school environment, forcing parents to take responsibility, serving as a deterrent to other students, and serving as a consequence for misbehavior also were mentioned by a number of schools. Twelve percent of elementary and 6.7% of middle schools noted a lack of alternatives to out-of-school suspension as well.

### Common Characteristics of Students Who Have Been Suspended Repeatedly

According to administrators responding to the School Discipline Survey, students who are suspended repeatedly have behavior and/or social problems, get little support from their families (or have dysfunctional families), disrespect authority figures, and have poor achievement in school.

### **Community Resources for Promoting Prosocial Behavior**

There are a wide variety of organizations providing services to children and their families in Hillsborough County. A list of the organizations responding to the Community Organization Survey is found starting on p. 60 of the analysis. Many of these organizations provide services on-site in schools, although the number of staff members devoted to this work is limited.

Almost all (84%) of the organizations participating in this analysis take referrals from school personnel. A large portion of the referrals that come to these programs are made by school social

workers (54%), teachers (46%), or guidance counselors (38%). Principals, assistant principals, school psychologists, and building service teams also make some referrals to these agencies.

It is important to note that many (70%) of the agencies responding to this survey indicated that they did not have a waiting list and that services could be provided immediately.

### **Relationships Between Out-of-School Suspension Rates and Selected Demographic Characteristics**

Schools vary in a number of ways, including the demographic characteristics of the students they serve, the resources they have available, the average academic achievement of their students, their size, and the turnover of their staff. These variables may well be related to behavior of students at the school, and thus, to rates of out-of-school suspension. Correlational analyses, which indicate the degree of relationship between two variables (but do not imply that one variable causes the other), were conducted to determine which of these variables was most strongly related to out-of-school suspension rates.

As a note for readers of this report who are not familiar with correlational analysis, correlations can range from -1 to +1. Positive correlations indicate that as one variable increases, the other increases as well. The closer a positive correlation is to +1, the stronger the positive relationship. Negative correlations indicate the opposite, i.e., as one variable increases, the other decreases. The closer a negative correlation is to -1, the stronger the negative relationship. Correlations of 0 indicate that there is no relationship between the variables.

Results showed that the following variables showed a moderate (.3) to high (.5) correlation--either negative or positive--with out-of-school suspension rates at all three levels (i.e., elementary, middle, and high):

- Percentage of students receiving free or reduced price lunch (positive correlation)
- Percentage of White students (negative correlation)
- Percentage of Black students (positive correlation)
- Administrators' perceptions of family involvement in students' lives (negative correlation)
- Administrators' perceptions of family involvement in students' education (negative correlation)
- Average Florida Writes! score (negative correlation)
- Average Stanford Reading score (negative correlation--elementary and middle schools only)
- Average Stanford Math score (negative correlation--elementary and middle schools only)
- Mobility rate

Variables that showed a low correlation (.1-.2)--either positive or negative with out-of-school suspension rate across the three levels were as follows:

- Total enrollment (school size)
- Degree of overcrowding
- Percentage of families attending the last parent conference
- Percentage of families volunteering at the school

- Percentage of students meeting kindergarten readiness standards (elementary only)
- Average number of teacher absences
- Freshman high school drop-out rate (high schools only)

When all of the variables mentioned above were entered into a regression equation, results showed that the best single predictor of OSS rate at the elementary level was percentage of Black students at the school. At the middle/high school level, the best predictor was the average Florida Writes! score. This means that, at the elementary level, the schools with the highest percentages of Black students are likely to have the highest rates of OSS. Schools with lower percentages of Black students are likely to have lower rates of OSS. This does not mean that the percentage of Black students at a school causes high rates of OSS. It simply means that there is a positive relationship or association between the two. At the secondary level, there is a negative association between the Florida Writes! score and OSS rates. Schools with higher Florida Writes! scores are likely to have lower rates of suspension. This finding highlights the association between higher rates of academic success (in writing in particular) and lower rates of inappropriate behavior.

### **Differences Between Demographically Similar Schools With Significantly Different Rates of Suspension**

Qualitative analysis revealed a number of differences between demographically similar schools with significantly different rates of out-of-school suspension. For a discussion of these differences, see Part VI of the report.

Almost all of the schools included in this part of the analysis serve a majority of children who are economically impoverished. This resulted from the fact that the high OSS schools (those with the highest rates of out-of-school suspension in the district), which were selected first, were schools serving this type of student population. However, the fact that demographic matches with much lower suspension rates were found for every one of the 24 high OSS schools shows that although schools may serve a majority children from lower socioeconomic circumstances, rates of suspension can still be kept down. The low OSS schools in this part of the analysis provide evidence that it is not solely the student population being served--but also the policies and practices of individual schools--that determine rates of suspension.

## **Part IX: Recommendations**

This section of the report summarizes the recommendations of the Constituency based on the preceding analysis. Each recommendation is linked to specific data gathered in the analysis, and steps for implementing the recommendations are suggested.

**RECOMMENDATION #1: The school district and the community should work together to develop alternatives to out-of-school suspension (e.g., high-quality in-school suspension programs, alternative programs in the community). Ideally, these alternatives should:**

- a) involve a rehabilitative component,**
- b) actively involve parents, and**
- c) be linked to other support services for students and families.**

### DATA SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATION #1:

1. Administrators, parents, and those working in community organizations agree that out-of-school suspension has many limitations, including lost academic time. It also is agreed that out-of-school suspension is not particularly effective in changing problematic behavior.
2. Despite the problems associated with out-of-school suspension, administrators continue to use this disciplinary strategy (in 20% and 25% of disciplinary actions, depending on the racial group) because they perceive limited alternatives. When asked what could be done to reduce out-of-school suspensions at their schools, the number one response given by administrators was to create viable alternatives.
3. There are a number of community groups concerned with out-of-school suspension. Many of these groups (e.g., YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, The Urban League) already provide services to students who are at-risk for or who have experienced multiple suspensions. These community groups could serve as partners in creating alternatives to out-of-school suspension which include a rehabilitative component, actively involve parents, and are linked to other support services for children and families.
4. At both the elementary and middle school levels, in-school suspension was rated by administrators as more effective in changing behavior than out-of-school suspension. At the high school level, ISS was rated as only slightly less effective in changing behavior than OSS.
5. At the time this study was conducted, not all secondary schools had an in-school suspension program. Those that did varied considerably in terms of staff assigned to the program (if staff members were actually dedicated to this one function) and how the program was funded. It is likely as well that there are considerable differences between schools in terms of how these programs are run.

### ACTION STEPS FOR RECOMMENDATION #1:

1. Set a meeting for the Constituency, the School Board, and the Children's Board to collaborate with identified providers of alternatives to out-of-school suspension (e.g., YMCA, The Urban

League, HOPE, etc.) to delineate alternatives for different ages/grade levels, establish possible locations, and construct a time line for these alternatives to be developed and implemented.

2. Present information from the analysis on this issue to the Superintendent and ask for the establishment of countywide SIT team whose task would be to identify funding.
3. Present information from the analysis on this issue to the CEO Roundtable and request that funding for alternatives to OSS be set as a priority.
4. With regard to ISS programs, consider that the funding for school staff to implement these programs might come from altering staff schedules (e.g., giving staff an afternoon free to assist with a Saturday program).
5. Schools also might consider use their SIT funds to implement alternative programs.
6. The school district should consider including alternatives to OSS as part of a Safe and Drug Free Schools plan.
7. The school district also should approach the Public Safety Coordinating Council for funding recommendations.

**RECOMMENDATION #2: The school district and the community should work together to develop a better understanding of the over-representation of Black students in out-of-school suspensions (as well as other disciplinary actions) and develop an action plan to address this issue.**

**DATA SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATION #2:**

1. While Black students made up 24% of the school population in 1996-97, they made up 44% of out-of-school suspensions.
2. Table II-C shows that Black students were over-represented in every type of disciplinary action/intervention, including those focused on problem-solving.
3. Thirty percent (30%) of middle school administrators and 20% of high school administrators indicated that one of their teacher in-service training needs was multicultural sensitivity training.

**ACTION STEPS FOR RECOMMENDATION #2:**

1. Present information from the analysis on this issue to the CEO Roundtable and request, at minimum, for the School Board, the Chief of Police, and the City and County Sheriffs to designate key staff to prepare a plan for further research and recommendations for action. . Coordinate with other systems which identify over-representation of minority youth (e.g., Juvenile Justice Council).
2. Establish interactive multicultural training opportunities to include dialogue between school staff and: a) parents of Black students, b) former Black students, c) representatives from

organizations that work specifically with Black youth (e.g., The Urban League), and d) clergy from Black churches.

3. The school district should begin a process of reviewing the types of infractions resulting in OSS for students of different races in order to determine if OSS is being administered equitably across racial groups.

**RECOMMENDATION #3: The school district should develop guidelines for administrators to follow in utilizing out-of-school suspension and other alternatives. Ideally, these guidelines would be designed to reduce the differences in the way that out-of-school suspension is utilized across schools while continuing to allow for human judgement in making disciplinary decisions.**

**DATA SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATION #3:**

1. There are considerable differences between schools in rates of out-of-school suspension which cannot be explained by demographic differences between schools alone. This suggests that administrators across schools have different ideas of what constitutes a suspendable offense.
2. Table III-U shows that administrators differ considerably in their use of out-of-school suspension to punish various types of infractions.

**ACTION STEPS FOR RECOMMENDATION #3:**

1. Present information from the analysis on this issue to the Superintendent's key staff and the Principals' Councils. Ask that a task force be appointed to develop guidelines. The task force should have defined objectives and a time line. Once the guidelines are approved, training should be conducted and implementation monitored.
2. In developing standardized guidelines, input should be sought from the parents of students who have been suspended, former students, and representatives from organizations that work with youth.

**RECOMMENDATION #4: The school district should work with the community to develop a plan to institutionalize across schools a system for linking out-of-school suspension with problem-solving interventions. This system might include:**

- a) school-based intervention strategies to be implemented following the first suspension, the second suspension, the third suspension, etc.
- b) specific guidelines to be followed by school personnel in meeting with parents (and/or students) following a suspension.
- c) a referral network for connecting parents of students with multiple suspensions with services in the community.

**Concomitantly, the school district should develop initiatives to broaden both behavioral and academic primary and secondary prevention strategies (e.g., family involvement, peer**

**mediation, social skills training, mentoring programs, tutoring programs) to reduce out-of-school suspension rates.**

DATA SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATION #4:

1. Administrators, parents, and those working in community organizations agree that out-of-school suspension is ineffective in creating behavioral change. There is a need to link OSS (which is generally viewed as punishment for the student) with problem-solving strategies designed to address underlying issues and problems.
2. Community organizations would like to be more involved in working with the school district to provide services to students with on-going behavior problems at school.
3. Middle schools ranked peer mediation as being most effective in creating behavior change of thirteen different disciplinary/intervention strategies.
4. When asked about the key to successful programs to reduce behavior problems at their schools, administrators at the middle and high school levels were most likely to mention mentoring or strong staff/student relationships.
5. Many parents of students with multiple suspensions mentioned that they believed their children had experienced difficulties in school because they had no one who would listen to them. They indicated that the individuals in these children's lives outside of school were so important because they gave the children an opportunity to have someone listen.
6. Two of the three low OSS elementary schools have a school-wide social skills training program which administrators believe has helped to reduce office referrals.
7. Few secondary schools noted using social skills training to communicate acceptable behavior and conduct to students (see Table III-A).

ACTION STEPS FOR RECOMMENDATION #4:

1. Present information to the Superintendent's key staff and key community organizations that work with this population. Ask for designated individuals from both groups to serve on a task force to develop a problem-solving prevention/intervention plan which could be institutionalized. The task force should have defined objectives and a time line. Once the plan is developed, it should be presented to the Principals' Councils for approval. Following approval, training should be conducted and implementation monitored. Coordinate with the prevention/early intervention initiatives of the Juvenile Justice Council.
2. Assure that every school has a Child Study Team and that it is utilized to provide prevention and intervention strategies for the child and family. In intervening with families, focus first on family strengths. Provide acknowledgement of what families are "doing right" and validate their accomplishments rather than focusing on their deficiencies or dysfunctional aspects. The process should build on that foundation and then begin to address areas where improvements are needed.

3. Expand peer mediation programs to all schools--particularly at the secondary level. Encourage schools with strong peer mediation programs to share with other schools the factors underlying the program's success, including program coordination, selection of student mentors, training and supervision of student mentors, types of issues that might be mediated, etc.
4. Develop initiatives to bring school-wide social skills training to those schools in the district with the highest out-of-school suspension rates.
5. Expand mentoring programs at the middle and high school levels.
6. Beginning in pre-K, assess the difficulties of students who are functioning below grade level and develop individual plans that would include tutorial assistance and family input. With secondary students, this might include relating vocational or life goal plans to school performance.

**RECOMMENDATION #5: Schools with poor parent involvement should work with the community to develop strategies for improving home-school collaboration as a primary prevention strategy to decrease out-of-school suspensions.**

DATA SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATION #5:

1. There is a moderate to strong negative relationship between administrator's perceptions of family involvement in students' lives/education and a school's duplicated OSS rate.
2. At the high school level, schools with low OSS rates were more likely than demographically similar schools with high OSS rates to give school staff rather than parents a major role in increasing parent involvement. Low OSS schools also reported more parent involvement and more programs designed to reach parents.
3. Also at the high school level, two of the three schools with low OSS rates noted that one of the important elements of their discipline plan was that teachers contact parents before students are referred to the office. This philosophy was not noted among any of the high OSS schools.

ACTION STEPS FOR RECOMMENDATION #5:

1. Present information from the analysis on this issue to the Superintendent's key staff, Principals' Councils, and key community organizations, including the County Council PTA. Ask for a task force to be formed of staff from schools with the highest rates of parent participation, staff from community organizations who have experienced success in working with parents, and the County Council PTA to develop strategies and support systems for schools. Coordinate with other systems and services which promote parent advocacy and involvement (e.g., FASST 2, THINK, Hillsborough County Parenting Coalition, Hillsborough County Public Schools' Parent Education Center). Consider involving the families who participated in the parent interviews in this effort. The task force should have objectives and a time line. Once developed, the plan should be presented to the Principals' Councils for adoption and implementation.

2. Conduct sensitivity training for school staff that includes experiential activities related to identifying, understanding, and meeting the needs of families. Emphasize the fact that basic needs must be met before issues such as responsibility, self-esteem, and effective parenting can be introduced.
3. Develop a Family Learning Center (with a "family place") in schools with high out-of-school suspension rates and staff it with a Family Literacy Specialist who would:
  - a) facilitate parent education and an integrated curriculum on strong families (communication skills, coping/conflict-resolution skills, management skills [time, money, decision-making, priority-setting, etc.], and wellness [physical, spiritual, and emotional]),
  - b) assist with referrals for families to community services, emphasizing educational services for the adult family members and other means of empowering them to be better parents, workers, and citizens,
  - c) develop informal networks of support among families, and
  - d) promote support from businesses for family involvement in education.
4. Pilot a "Family Strengths and Resiliency" charter school that would be research-based and use resiliency factors (i.e., caring adults, high but realistic expectations, and student involvement/participation) as the framework for the school's philosophy, curriculum, and interpersonal relationships (with each student, parents, and others). The school should promote resiliency factors in the home and community as well.

**RECOMMENDATION #6: The school district should take steps to ensure that all school staff are highly proficient in the use of proven strategies for managing classroom behavior. This includes the use of positive and negative reinforcement, contingency management, and time out, among others.**

**DATA SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATION #6:**

1. An overwhelming percentage of administrators across levels indicated that teachers who make frivolous referrals to the office lack behavior management skills.
2. When asked about inservice training needs, many high school administrators noted that their teachers need further training in behavior management and time out.

**ACTION STEPS FOR RECOMMENATION #6:**

1. Present information from the analysis on this issue to the Superintendent and key staff and request that the yearly in-service plan include training in research-based classroom management and that all staff be required to attend this training.
2. Request that teachers placed on probation for poor classroom management be required to attend the next scheduled training and be mentored by a teacher with good classroom management skills.

3. Ensure that secondary teachers and administrators are well-versed in adolescent development (similar to the child development training required of early childhood and elementary teachers). This is necessary because many secondary teachers are trained in their subject matter and may have a limited understanding of how adolescents develop and how to best work with them from an interpersonal perspective.

4. Provide training to teachers and other appropriate staff in how to create meaningful connections with families. Beginning with the child's entrance into school, school staff should be skilled in including parents in decisions related to the child, informing them of the school's plans for the coming year, and eliciting their suggestions for school improvement. A parent conference at or shortly after registration might be a good beginning. Interpreters should be provided for non-English speaking parents.

5. Work with the University of South Florida to pilot training programs in successfully connecting with families for pre-service teachers in the College of Education. Track and monitor the success of these teachers in engaging families to evaluate the effectiveness of the training and make suggestions for improvement.

**RECOMMENDATION #7: Community organizations should work together to develop a list of community-based programs targeting students with chronic behavior problems to be distributed to all school administrators in the county.**

**DATA SUPPORTING RECOMMENDATION #7:**

1. Many community organizations serving children with chronic behavior problems and their families currently do not have a waiting list, suggesting that these services may be underutilized.

**ACTION STEP FOR RECOMMENDATION #7:**

1. Present requests to Hillsborough County Information and Referral and the Hillsborough County Crisis Center asking for their collaboration in creating and disseminating this database.

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## Appendix A: School Discipline Survey

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Completing this Survey: \_\_\_\_\_

Position of Person Completing this Survey: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** This survey is part of a project being conducted by the Hillsborough Constituency for Children, the Hillsborough County Public Schools, the University of South Florida's School Psychology Program, the Greater Tampa Urban League, and the Juvenile Justice Council to examine out-of-school suspensions in Hillsborough County from an integrated school-family-community perspective. It is being sent to all public schools in Hillsborough County.

We ask that you provide complete responses to all questions. You may write on the back of the page or attach additional sheets as needed. Your participation is critical to the project's success and is greatly appreciated!

Please return this survey by school mail to Mr. Anthony Satchel, ROSSAC, Route 7 by **Monday, December 15th** (self-addressed return envelope enclosed).

Section I: School Environment

1. In 1996-97, how many of these support personnel were at your school and how many days per week were they in your building? (New schools please provide information for 1997-98 school year.)

	<u>Number of Positions</u>	<u># of Days Per Week (Per Position)</u>
Guidance Counselor	_____	_____
School Nurse	_____	_____
School Psychologist	_____	_____
Social Worker	_____	_____
Speech Therapist	_____	_____
Occupational Therapist	_____	_____
Physical Therapist	_____	_____
Resource Teacher	_____	_____
ESE Specialist	_____	_____
Human Relations Specialist	_____	_____
Occupational Specialist	_____	_____
Assistant Principal for Student Affairs	_____	_____
Administrative Resource Teacher	_____	_____
Other _____	_____	_____

2. What are your school's three greatest strengths?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

3. What challenges did your school face during the 1996-97 school year?

### Section II: Family Involvement

4. For students at your school, please rate the level of family involvement: a) with their children in general, and b) in their children's education.

#### Level of Family Involvement

##### With their children in general

- A. Very Poor
- B. Poor
- C. Average
- D. Good
- E. Excellent

##### In their children's education

- A. Very Poor
- B. Poor
- C. Average
- D. Good
- E. Excellent

5. How are families involved at your school?

6. What percentage of families attended the last scheduled parent conferences at your school? \_\_\_\_\_

7. Approximately what percentage of families volunteer at the school (i.e., classroom or office work, field trips, special events)? \_\_\_\_\_

8. How are families involved in the disciplinary process?

9. What are your school's biggest challenges in involving families in the disciplinary process?

10. When a family cannot or will not come to the school to discuss their child's behavioral difficulties, what other strategies do you use?

### Section III: Discipline

11. How are acceptable behaviors and conduct communicated to students (both formally and informally)?

12. What options are available to teachers at your school when they are having difficulty managing a student's behavior in the classroom?

13. In your educational experience, what are the characteristics of teachers who:  
a) make legitimate referrals to the office, b) make frivolous referrals to the office, and c) fail to make referrals when it would be appropriate to do so?

<u>Make Legitimate Referrals</u> (Teacher Characteristics)	<u>Make Frivolous Referrals</u> (Teacher Characteristics)	<u>Fail to Refer</u> (Teacher Characteristics)
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.

14. How do you believe administrators should intervene with teachers who make either frivolous referrals or fail to make referrals when it would be appropriate to do so?

15. Which of these methods do you use for repeated behavioral offenses and in which order are they typically used?

	<u>Check Those You Use</u>	<u>Please Rank Order Those You Use</u> (1=typically used first, 2=typically used second, etc.)
Corporal Punishment	_____	_____
Detention	_____	_____
In-school Suspension	_____	_____
Out-of-school Suspension	_____	_____
Parent Phone Call	_____	_____
Parent Letter	_____	_____
Parent Conference	_____	_____
Peer Mediation	_____	_____
Referral to Human Relations	_____	_____
Referral to Guidance	_____	_____
Saturday Detention	_____	_____
Student Conference	_____	_____
Warning	_____	_____
Work Detail	_____	_____

16. In terms of behavioral improvement, how effective are the following methods of discipline at your school? Please rate each method using the following scale:

- 1 = Highly effective with most students
- 2 = Somewhat effective with most students
- 3 = Not at all effective with most students

	<u>Rate 1-3</u>		<u>Rate 1-3</u>
Corporal Punishment	_____	Referral to Human Relations	_____
Detention	_____	Referral to Guidance	_____
In-school Suspension	_____	Saturday Detention	_____
Out-of-school Suspension	_____	Student Conference	_____
Parent Phone Call	_____	Warning	_____
Parent Letter	_____	Work Detail	_____
Parent Conference	_____	Other	_____
Peer Mediation	_____		

17. If your school offers in-school suspension, how is it financed and staffed?

18. In your estimation, at what grade level(s) do you have the most out-of-school suspensions?

\_\_\_\_\_

19. How is the decision made to suspend a child out of school (e.g., who can recommend out-of-school suspension, who is involved in making the decision, what factors are considered, when are other available options utilized)?

20. How does the process described in Question #19 change when the child is in an exceptional student education (ESE) program?

21. How is the length of an out-of-school suspension decided? What is typical at your school?

22. Please give 3 examples each of offenses that are 1) always, 2) sometimes, and 3) rarely punished using out-of-school suspension.

<u>Always</u>	<u>Sometimes</u>	<u>Rarely</u>
1.	1.	1.
2.	2.	2.
3.	3.	3.

23. What behaviors do you believe should always be handled using in-school methods?

24. If a student is suspended out of school, how is the student removed from the school building and what must happen before the student can return?

25. For students with chronic behavior problems, what disciplinary measures (other than out-of-school suspension) are available at your school?

26. In your opinion, what are the 3 biggest problems with out-of-school suspensions?

1.

2.

3.

27. In your opinion, what is the most important reason for continuing to suspend children out of school?

28. Please describe the common characteristics of students who have been suspended repeatedly from your school.

29. Do you see a need to reduce the number of out-of-school suspensions at your school? How do you believe this could be accomplished?

Section IV: School Resources for Children and Teachers

30. What resources are available at your school to prevent student behavior problems?

31. If you have special programs to prevent behavior problems at your school, how are they financed? Are they effective?

Name

How Financed?

Effective?

32. For the resources you listed above in Questions #30 and #31, what is the key to those which have been successful?

33. At your school, what is the interface between the person(s) responsible for student discipline and the person(s) responsible for student guidance? Do they ever work together to deal with student misbehavior, and, if so, how?

34. What teacher inservice training needs do you perceive at your school?

#### Section IV: School-Community Linkages

35. What community agencies play an important role in the life of the community in your school's attendance area?

36. Is your school involved in working collaboratively with any of these agencies? If so, how?

37. Who at your school is most involved in working with the community?

38. Which community agencies would you like to be working with collaboratively? What type of collaborative work do you believe would be most successful in helping to reduce student misbehavior at your school?

Thanks for your time and effort in completing this survey. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

## Appendix B:

School Discipline Interview Protocol

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Code #: \_\_\_\_\_

Elementary      Middle      High

Questions for Disciplinarian**Name of Person Interviewed:** \_\_\_\_\_**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_      **In this position last year?**    Yes    No**Interviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_**Date of Interview:** \_\_\_\_\_**Taped?**            Yes    No

1.      You have told us that the challenges your school faced during the 1996-97 school year included:

a.

b.

c.

1A.    Do you believe these any of these challenges affected your OSS rates?

How?

1B.    Did any other challenges potentially affect your OSS rates?

1C.    How so?

2.      What are the top three reasons students are suspended from your school?

a. \_\_\_\_\_ Av. Length:

b. \_\_\_\_\_ Av. Length:

c. \_\_\_\_\_ Av. Length:

2A. In your opinion, what particular factors at your school contribute to these problem behaviors?

2B. How do you think they can best be addressed?

3. You have told us that these disciplinary measures (other than OSS) are available at your school:

a.

b.

c.

3A. Please tell us more about when you might use these in lieu of OSS:

3B. For which students are these methods effective?

3C. For which students are these methods ineffective?

4. You have noted that you do/do not believe that the number of OSS at your school needs to be reduced.  
Please share with us your perspective on this issue:
- 5A. How do you feel about the level of parental involvement at your school?
- 5B. If you would like it to be greater, what have you tried in the past few years to increase parent involvement?
- 5C. How effective were these plans?
- 5D. What gets in the way of increased parental involvement?
- 6A. Do you have a school-wide discipline plan?            Yes    No
- 6B. If yes, who created this plan?
- 6C. If yes, what are the most important elements of the plan? (See if we can get a copy of the plan.)
- 6D. If no, have you considered developing a school-wide discipline plan?
7. (Take a look at the School Improvement Plan for 1996-97 and ask about how they addressed issues related to discipline last year.)

8. How would you describe the morale of teachers at your school last year?

9. How do you intervene with teachers who are not successfully handling disciplinary problems in their classrooms?

10. (For schools who have a peer mediation program): You have told us that you have a peer mediation program. Please tell us how it works, how students are selected to become mediators, how they are trained and supervised, and how well the program is working.

11A. (If question has not already been addressed): Approximately what percentage of children at your school live more than 5-7 miles from the school?

11B. How does this affect your ability to involve parents in the disciplinary process?

12. What is the most important thing you do to reduce disciplinary problems at your school?

13. Is there anything else you want to tell us?

Questions for Student Support Personnel

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Code #: \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of Person Interviewed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position:** \_\_\_\_\_

**In this position last year?** Yes No

**Interviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Interview:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Taped?** Yes No

1A. What are the most important linkages between your school and the surrounding community?

1B. How do you facilitate these linkages?

2. You have told us that you have the following **resources** at your school to prevent student behavior problems:

a.

b.

c.

2A. Please tell us more about these.



- 6D. Does this team conduct any type of evaluation of its efforts? (If so, explain)
- 7A. Do any student support personnel at your school offer support groups or peer groups for at-risk students?  
Yes No
- 7B. If yes, how are students selected for these groups?
- 7C. If yes, how do the groups work?
- 8A. Does your school have a Family and School Support Team (FASST) Team? Yes No
- 8B. If yes, is the FASST team solely yours or do you share it?
- 8C. If yes, who is on the team and how does it work?
9. You have told us that you have collaborative relationships with the following community agencies:  
\_\_\_\_\_,  
\_\_\_\_\_, and  
\_\_\_\_\_.
- 9A. Please tell us how these collaborations work and how successful you perceive them to be in helping children with disciplinary problems at your school.



**Appendix C:**  
**Out-of-School Suspensions in Hillsborough County**  
**Community Organization Survey**

Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Population Served: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Completing this Survey: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Position of Person Completing this Survey: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** This survey is part of a project being to examine out-of-school suspensions in Hillsborough County from an integrated school-family-community perspective. We anticipate that completion of the survey will only take approximately 10-15 minutes of your time. Your participation is critical to the project's success and is greatly appreciated!

Please return this survey to Linda Raffaele, Ph.D., School Psychology Program, USF, 4202 E. Fowler Ave., FAO 270, Tampa, FL, 33620 by **Monday, March 2, 1998** (self-addressed, stamped return envelope enclosed). If you have any questions, please call Kay Doughty at 623-3500 or Linda Raffaele at 974-1255.

1. Does your program serve school-age children and youth?

- A. Yes  
 B. No

X If you answered Yes to Question #1, please continue.

X If you answered No to Question #1, please stop and kindly return this survey to us in the enclosed envelope.

2. What is your program's mission or goal?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

3. What types of services do you offer? (Circle all that apply.)

- A. Prevention  
 B. Early intervention  
 C. Case management  
 D. Treatment  
 E. Mentoring  
 F. Other \_\_\_\_\_

4. Approximately how many children and families do you serve in one year?

- A. 1-10  
 B. 11-50  
 C. 51-100  
 D. 101-200  
 E. 200 plus

5. Please estimate the percentage of children and youth you serve who have been suspended out-of-school.

- A. None  
 B. 1 to 25%  
 C. 26 to 50%  
 D. 51 to 75%  
 E. 76 to 100%  
 F. Don't know

6. What types of services do you provide to children and youth who have experienced serious behavioral problems at school (e.g., school failure, repeated suspensions, expulsion)? (Circle all that apply.)

- A. Individual counseling/ therapy  
 B. Group counseling/ therapy  
 C. Social skills training  
 D. Academic services (tutoring, vocational counseling, etc.)  
 E. Family therapy  
 F. Recreational activities  
 G. Mentoring  
 H. Other \_\_\_\_\_

7. In your experience, which of the options mentioned in Question #6 appears to be the most

successful with this population? Which appears to be the least successful?

Most Successful (list more than one if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

Least Successful (list more than one if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

8. How often do you involve parents?

- A. Never
- B. Rarely
- C. Sometimes
- D. Frequently
- E. Always

9. What types of services do you offer to parents? (Circle all that apply.)

- A. Parent training or education (at your facility)
- B. Parent training or education (in-home)/family outreach
- C. Individual counseling/ therapy
- D. Group counseling/ therapy
- E. Marital counseling
- F. Vocational counseling/job referral
- G. Social services
- H. Family preservation
- I. Financial counseling
- J. Support Group
- K. Other \_\_\_\_\_

10. In what percentage of cases do you use family outreach services (i.e., in-home services)?

- A. 0%
- B. 1-25%
- C. 26-50%
- D. 51-75%
- E. 76-100%

11. From whom do you take referrals to your program? (Circle all that apply.)

- A. Self referral
- B. Parent referral
- C. School system
- D. Juvenile justice system/courts
- E. Child welfare system
- F. Other agencies (please specify which agencies) \_\_\_\_\_
- G. Other \_\_\_\_\_

12. If you take referrals from the school system, who typically makes the referral?

- A. Principal
- B. Assistant Principal
- C. Family and School Support Team (FASST)
- D. Counselor
- E. School Psychologist
- F. Social Worker
- G. Teacher
- H. Child Study Team
- I. Other \_\_\_\_\_

13. Please describe the children and youth who participate in your program.

- A. Age range: \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Gender: Male\_\_ Female\_\_ Both\_\_
- C. Family income range: \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Involved with juvenile justice system:  
All\_\_ Some\_\_ None\_\_
- E. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

14. How many children and families can you serve at any given time? \_\_\_\_\_

15. How many children and families are you currently serving? \_\_\_\_\_

16. What is the average time for a child or family to spend on your waiting list?

- A. We do not currently have a waiting list.
- B. Less than one month.
- C. One to three months.
- D. Four to six months.
- E. More than six months.

17. Which schools do the children and youth you serve most commonly attend? (Please list the top 5 schools in order from most common, second most common, etc.)

- 1st \_\_\_\_\_
- 2nd \_\_\_\_\_
- 3rd \_\_\_\_\_
- 4th \_\_\_\_\_
- 5th \_\_\_\_\_

18. How often do you work collaboratively with the schools attended by the children and youth you serve?

- A. Never
- B. Rarely
- C. Sometimes
- D. Often
- E. Always

19. Does anyone from your program spend a certain portion of his/her time providing services on-site in a particular school ?

- A. Yes
- B. No

20. If you answered Yes to #19, in which school(s) does your program provide services on-site?

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_
- D. \_\_\_\_\_
- E. \_\_\_\_\_

21. If you answered Yes to #19, how many staff members do you have providing services on-site in the schools? \_\_\_\_\_

22. How frequently do you collaborate with a youngster's school on services?

- A. Never
- B. Rarely
- C. Sometimes
- D. Often
- E. Always

23. If you were to collaborate with a youngster's school on services, with whom are you most likely to collaborate?

- A. Principal
- B. Assistant Principal
- C. Family and School Support Team (FASST)
- D. Counselor
- E. School Psychologist
- F. Social Worker
- G. Teacher
- H. Child Study Team
- I. Other \_\_\_\_\_

24. If you collaborate with a youngster's school, how frequently are parents also involved in this collaboration?

- A. Never
- B. Rarely
- C. Sometimes
- D. Often
- E. Always

25. Please tell us the top three characteristics of schools with whom your program(s) has a good working relationship.

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_

26. Please tell us the top three characteristics of children and families who seem to benefit from your services.

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_

27. Please tell us the top three characteristics of children and families who do NOT seem to benefit from your services.

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_

28. Does your program do any formal evaluation of your services you offer?

- A. Yes
- B. No

29. Is your program accredited?

- A. Yes (By what agency?) \_\_\_\_\_
- B. No

\*Please feel free to add additional comments on the back of this page and/or send additional information.

**Thank you for your time and effort in completing this survey!**

**Appendix D:**  
**Out-of-School Suspensions in Hillsborough County**  
**Early Childhood Survey**

Organization Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Population Served: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Person Completing this Survey: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone #: \_\_\_\_\_

Position of Person Completing this Survey: \_\_\_\_\_

**Directions:** This survey is part of a project being to examine out-of-school suspensions in Hillsborough County from an integrated school-family-community perspective. **We anticipate that completion of the survey will only take approximately 10-15 minutes of your time. Your participation is critical to the project's success and is greatly appreciated!**

Please return this survey to Linda Raffaele, Ph.D., School Psychology Program, USF, 4202 E. Fowler Ave., FAO 270, Tampa, FL, 33620 by **Monday, March 2, 1998** (self-addressed, stamped return envelope enclosed). If you have any questions, please call Kay Doughty at 623-3500 or Linda Raffaele at 974-1255

1. What is your program's mission or goal?

\_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

2. What types of services do you offer? (Circle all that apply.)

- A. Prevention
- B. Early intervention
- C. Case management
- D. Treatment
- E. Mentoring
- F. Other \_\_\_\_\_

3. Approximately how many children and families do you serve in one year?

- A. 1-10
- B. 11-50
- C. 51-100
- D. 101-200
- E. 200 plus

4. How often do you involve parents?

- A. Never
- B. Rarely
- C. Sometimes
- D. Frequently
- E. Always

5. What types of services do you offer to parents? (Circle all that apply.)

- A. Parent training or education (at your facility)
- B. Parent training or education (in-home)/family outreach
- C. Individual counseling/ therapy
- D. Group counseling/ therapy
- E. Marital counseling
- F. Vocational counseling/job referral
- G. Social services
- H. Family preservation
- I. Financial counseling
- J. Support Group
- K. Other \_\_\_\_\_

6. In what percentage of cases do you use family outreach services (i.e., in-home services)?

- A. 0%
- B. 1-25%
- C. 26-50%
- D. 51-75%
- E. 76-100%

7. From whom do you take referrals to your program? (Circle all that apply.)

- A. Parent referral
- B. School system
- C. Child welfare system
- D. Other agencies (please specify which agencies) \_\_\_\_\_
- E. Other \_\_\_\_\_

8. Please describe the children and youth who participate in your program.

- A. Age Range: \_\_\_\_\_
- B. Gender: Male\_\_ Female\_\_ Both\_\_
- C. Family income range: \_\_\_\_\_
- D. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

9. How many children and families can you serve at any given time? \_\_\_\_\_

10. How many children and families are you currently serving? \_\_\_\_\_

11. What is the average time for a child or family to spend on your waiting list?

- A. We do not currently have a waiting list.
- B. Less than one month.
- C. One to three months.
- D. Four to six months.
- E. More than six months.

12. Which schools do the children and youth you serve most commonly attend? (Please list in order from most common, second most common, etc.)

- 1st \_\_\_\_\_
- 2nd \_\_\_\_\_
- 3rd \_\_\_\_\_
- 4th \_\_\_\_\_
- 5th \_\_\_\_\_

13. How often do you work collaboratively with the schools attended by the children and youth you serve?

- A. Never
- B. Rarely
- C. Sometimes
- D. Often
- E. Always

14. Please tell us the top three characteristics of children and families who seem to benefit from your services.

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_

15. Please tell us the top three characteristics of children and families who do NOT seem to benefit from your services.

- A. \_\_\_\_\_
- B. \_\_\_\_\_
- C. \_\_\_\_\_

16. Does your program do any formal evaluation of your services you offer?

- A. Yes
- B. No

17. Is your program accredited?

- A. Yes (By what agency?) \_\_\_\_\_
- B. No

\*Please feel free to add additional comments on the back of this page and/or send additional information.

**Thank you for your time and effort in completing this survey!**

Appendix E:

**Community Organization Focus Group Protocol**

**Organization Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Location:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Code #:** \_\_\_\_\_ (L. Raffaele will complete this)

<b>Participant's Name</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Works Directly w/Youth?</b>	
1. _____	_____	Y	N
2. _____	_____	Y	N
3. _____	_____	Y	N
4. _____	_____	Y	N
5. _____	_____	Y	N
6. _____	_____	Y	N
7. _____	_____	Y	N
8. _____	_____	Y	N

**Interviewer:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date of Focus Group:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Taped?** Yes No

**1. Please describe the typical profile of youth served by your organization.**

**2. How are children and youth referred to your organization?**

**3. How many people do you have providing services on staff? What types of training have they had?**

**4. How is your agency funded?**

**5. With which other local organizations does your organization have close connections?**

**6. What types of services do you offer for children who have experienced repeated disciplinary problems at school? (Or--what services does your organization offer to attempt to prevent children's disciplinary problems at school?)**

**7A. What types of contact do you have with the schools of the children you serve?**

**7B. Who initiates this contact?**

**7C. How is it maintained?**

**7D. What follow-up strategies are in place for tracking the students' progress?**

**7E. How long do you track progress?**

**8A. If you have staff members providing services in the schools, what exactly do they do and for how much time?**

**8B. Who initiated this arrangement? When did it begin?**

**8C. How successful has it been?**

**8D. What factors are related to the school program's success (or lack of success)?**

**9. Do you ever ask children to leave your program? For what reasons?**

**10. How do you work with parents and families?**

**11. How do you attempt to involve parents who are difficult to reach?**

**12. Of the services you offer, which do you believe are most critical in terms of decreasing school-based disciplinary problems?**

**13. Please describe the characteristics of: a) schools and b) families with whom your agency has successful relationships.**

**14. How do you evaluate the success of your program? (If formal evaluation is done, we would like a copy of the latest evaluation.)**

**15. In your opinion, what is needed to decrease the number of out-of-school suspensions in our county?**

**16. Is there anything we have not asked that you would like to tell us?**



**Question 4. How many schools (including your child's current school) has \_\_\_\_\_ attended since kindergarten? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Question 5. How well is \_\_\_\_\_ doing in school academically?** (Show parent the following options...read aloud and explain if necessary)

5	4	3	2	1
Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor

**Question 6.** (Refer back to Question 5).

**Has this been typical throughout \_\_\_\_\_'s schooling?** 1. Yes\* 2. No

\*Go to Question 8.

**Question 7.** (Refer back to Question 5.) **How long would you say this is true of \_\_\_\_\_?**

1. Less than 1 yr
2. 1-2 yrs
3. 3-4 yrs
4. More than 4 yrs

### **Precipitating Event?**

**(Ask parent if there were any other changes that occurred in child's life to coincide with how well child was doing academically in school.)**

**Question 8. How well is \_\_\_\_\_ behaving in school?** (Show the parent the following options...read aloud and explain if necessary)

5	4	3	2	1
Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Very Poor

**Question 9.** (Refer back to Item 8.)

**Has this been typical throughout \_\_\_\_\_'s schooling?**

1. Yes\* 2. No

\*Go to Question 11.

**Question 10. How long would you say this is true of \_\_\_\_\_? (Refer back to Item 8).**

1. Less than 1 year
2. 1-2 years
3. 3-4 years
4. More than 4 years

**Precipitating Event?**

**(Ask parent if there were any other changes that occurred in child's life to coincide with how well child was doing behaviorally in school.)**

**Question 11. (Ask this question only if the parent has indicated that the child has experienced academic or behavioral problems in school.)**

**What has the school done to help \_\_\_\_\_? (Circle as many as apply)**

1. Placed in a special education program
2. Placed in a class for children with academic or behavioral difficulties (but NOT special ed)
3. Referred to the guidance counselor
4. Received counseling or some type of special program (but NOT a special class) at school
5. Retained (What grade(s)?\_\_\_\_\_)
6. A class for parents or parent support group
7. Tutorial program
8. Referral to community agency (Which one?\_\_\_\_\_)
9. Other (Explain)\_\_\_\_\_
10. Nothing

Question 12.

12A. **Has \_\_\_\_\_ ever been evaluated for special education?** 1. Yes 2. No\*

\*Go to Question 13.

12B. **In what grade(s) was \_\_\_\_\_ evaluated?** \_\_\_\_\_

12C. **Did \_\_\_\_\_ qualify for special education services?**

1. Yes

2. No\*

\*Go to Question 13.

12D. **Did \_\_\_\_\_ receive special education services?** 1. Yes 2. No

Question 13. **Has \_\_\_\_\_ experienced any major accidents, illnesses, injuries, or surgeries?**

1. Yes 2. No\*

\*Go to Question 14.

If Yes: **Specify:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Age(s) Experienced:** \_\_\_\_\_

Question 14. **Has \_\_\_\_\_ ever been separated from a parent or parental figure for more than a few weeks during his or her lifetime?**

1. Yes 2. No\*

Go to Question 15.

If Yes: **Note Age, Length of Separation, and Reason for Separation:** \_\_\_\_\_

---

Question 15.

15A. **Last year, how often did someone from the school call you about \_\_\_\_\_?** (*Try to get an average*)

1. Everyday
2. Several times a week
3. Once a week
4. Once every few weeks
5. Once a month
6. Once every few months
7. A few times per year
8. Never

15B. **Who called?**

1. Teacher
2. Principal or Assistant Principal
3. Guidance Counselor
4. Social Worker
5. Other (Who?\_\_\_\_\_)

15C. **What was the typical reason someone called?**

1. Because child had misbehaved.
2. Because child was having academic difficulty.
3. Because child had displayed positive behavior or academics.
4. Other (Explain)\_\_\_\_\_

Question 16. (*Ask this question only if the parent has previously stated the child is having difficulty with his or her behavior in school.*)

**Why do you think \_\_\_\_\_ is having difficulty with his or her behavior in school?**

Verbatim Response:

\_\_\_\_\_

(Probe for clarification until you can code the response.)

- |                               |                |
|-------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Child problem              | 5. Don't Know  |
| 2. Family problem             | 6. Other _____ |
| 3. Teacher/school problem     |                |
| 4. Community/societal problem |                |

Question 17. (*Ask this question only if the parent has previously stated the child is having difficulty with his or her behavior in school.*)

**What do you think would help \_\_\_\_\_ to improve his or her behavior at school?**

Verbatim Response:

\_\_\_\_\_

1. Response indicating that the parent should be doing something different
2. Response indicating that the school should be doing something different
3. Parent does not know
4. Other \_\_\_\_\_

## Part II: Suspensions

Question 18. **Has \_\_\_\_\_ ever been suspended out of school?** 1. Yes 2. No\*

\*Go to Question 23.

**Question 19. How many times has \_\_\_\_\_ been suspended out of school...**

19A. in the past year? \_\_\_\_\_

19B. ever? \_\_\_\_\_ (How old was the child at the time of the first suspension?) 19C. \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 20. When \_\_\_\_\_ was suspended from school, what was the suspension for?**  
(Note multiple reasons for multiple suspensions and record age/grade at the time of each suspension.)

Reason	Age/Grade
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	

**Question 21. When \_\_\_\_\_ has been suspended out of school, how has he/she spent the day?**

1. At home without supervision (Doing what?) \_\_\_\_\_

2. At home with supervision (Doing what?) \_\_\_\_\_

3. In a supervised setting outside of the home (Where?) \_\_\_\_\_

4. Parent does not know

**Question 22. How has \_\_\_\_\_ reacted to being suspended out of school?**

1. Positive reaction (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

2. Negative reaction (describe) \_\_\_\_\_

### Part III: Community Life

**Question 23. How does \_\_\_\_\_ usually spend his/her time between the time school lets out and dinnertime?**

- A. Organized after school program
- B. At home with parent
- C. At home either with older sibling(s) (How old is oldest sibling?\_\_\_\_)
- D. At home alone or with younger siblings
- E. Parent does not know
- F. Other (Explain)\_\_\_\_\_

**Question 24. With which of the following groups has \_\_\_\_\_ been involved?**

#### **Dates**

\_\_\_\_\_ 1. Head Start or other preschool \_\_\_\_\_

**In School (1) or  
After School (2)?**      **Positive Experience?  
(1=Yes, 2=No)**

\_\_\_\_\_ 2. Boys and Girls Clubs \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 3. YMCA \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 4. The Urban League \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 5. Big Brothers/Big Sisters \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 6. DACCO \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 7. Redlands Christian Migrant  
Association \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 8. Boy Scouts/Girl Scouts \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 9. Family and School  
Support Team (FASST) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 10. ACOA/Alateen \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. Church Program \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 12. School-Sponsored Program \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 13. Parks and Recreation Program \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ 14. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 25. Has \_\_\_\_\_ ever been in trouble outside of school? 1. Yes 2. No\***

\*Go to Question 29.

**Question 26. What was the trouble?** Verbatim Response: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Fighting/assault (without a deadly weapon)
2. Fighting/assault (with a deadly weapon)
3. Weapons possession
4. Substance use (alcohol, drugs, etc.)
5. Theft (of what?) \_\_\_\_\_
6. Ran away from home
7. Gang-related incident
8. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 27. When was the first time \_\_\_\_\_ was in trouble outside of school?**

Note approximate date: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Within the last month
2. Within the last six months
3. Within the last year
4. More than a year ago
5. Never

**Question 28. Which of the following has happened to \_\_\_\_\_? (Circle more than one if applicable.)**

1. Child has been in trouble outside of school but police have not been involved
2. Child has been in trouble outside of school and police have been involved but child was not taken into police custody.
3. Child has been taken into police custody but not kept overnight
4. Child has been taken into police custody and kept overnight
5. Child has been taken into police custody more than once (either with or without an overnight stay)
6. Child has been involved on an on-going basis with the Department of Juvenile Justice (formerly HRS)

#### Part IV: Parental Perceptions

**Question 29. Some people think that there are too many out-of-school suspensions? Do you agree? Why or why not?**

1. Yes (**Why?**) \_\_\_\_\_
2. No (**Why not?**) \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 30. Why do you think most kids are suspended out of school?**

Verbatim Response: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Disobedience/disrespect (including cursing, arguing with teacher, disrupting class, etc.)
2. Weapons
3. Substance use (smoking, alcohol, drugs, etc.)
4. Fighting (with another child)
5. Other \_\_\_\_\_

**Question 31. Do you think these are good reasons for suspension?**

1. Yes
2. No

**Question 32. What do you worry about with regard to \_\_\_\_\_'s future?**

Verbatim response: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Child's safety and well-being (that child will be harmed by others)
2. Child's treatment of others (that the child will harm others)
3. That child will be involved with criminal activities
4. Gang-related issues
5. Educational failure/drop-out
6. Teen pregnancy
7. Child's emotional stability/mental health/happiness
8. Child's ability to hold a job or survive financially (independently)
9. Drug/alcohol/substance abuse
10. Other \_\_\_\_\_
11. Nothing

**Question 33. What have you done (or are you currently doing) to help \_\_\_\_\_ be successful in life? Verbatim Response: \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Question 34. Are there any other adults who play a big role in \_\_\_\_\_'s life?**

1. Yes (Who? Note relationship to child \_\_\_\_\_)
2. No\*

\*Go to Question 36.

**Question 35. What do the individual(s) mentioned in Question 34 do to help \_\_\_\_\_  
be successful in life?**

Verbatim Response: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Question 36. What do you hope for your child for the future?**

Verbatim response: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Specific response indicating that the parent has goals for the child
2. Vague response that the child will be successful, happy, etc.
3. Vague response that the child will stay out of trouble
4. Other \_\_\_\_\_

Thank the parent(s) for their participation and be sure that they receive \$10.