

SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE: THE FACTORS THAT CAUSE IT, AND HOW WE CAN
PREVENT IT

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ABSTRACT

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The “School-to-Prison Pipeline” is an ongoing challenge and trend in the public school system in America due to inequity in the educational system, discriminatory policies towards students and families of color, and a lack of resources aimed at supporting at-risk youth and the economically disadvantaged within the community. Public schools have made continued progress in shifting their disciplinary policies away from punitive, “zero tolerance” models and towards positive behavioral interventions, but there continues to be a disproportionate number of students ending up in the school-to-prison-pipeline from economically disadvantaged communities and homes. Lawmakers continue to create policies in an effort to make schools safer and more efficient, but do not consider the detriment and alienation this impact has on the students or families within the community, and potential harmful affects these policies could have on children’s futures. A qualitative survey was conducted at a public, continuation high school in the San Francisco Unified School District with staff members over the age of 18, to determine whether or not the school-to-prison-pipeline is still a challenge our educational system is facing, and whether or not there are adequate supports or measures in place to support students and keep them in school. Results from this survey suggest

that there continues to be an increasing number of students pushed into the school-to-prison-pipeline and a system that is unable to support students in the comprehensive high school setting, which leaves them with limited skill sets and restricted options when it comes to their futures. Based on the findings, the recommendation is that districts incorporate work experience programs to incentivize students to stay in school, while also helping to support their socioeconomic need to help support their families, in a meaningful and productive way. In addition, districts should explore community-based programs to help support and educate families in addressing concerns such as trauma, community violence, and unstable home environments that continue to prove a detriment to student's ability to perform in school, and consequentially plague students overall well being.

DEDICATION

To my family, friends, students and school communities that have inspired and supported me along the way.

“I believe that education is the single most important civil rights issue that we face today. Because in the end, if we really want to solve issues like mass incarceration, poverty, racial profiling, voting rights, and the kinds of challenges that shocked so many of us over the past year, then we simply cannot afford to lose out on the potential of even one young person. We cannot allow even one more young person to fall through the cracks”.

- Michelle Obama

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The “School-to-Prison Pipeline” is a term used to describe the ongoing trend of students that end up pushed out of schools and into the criminal justice system. While policymakers have made attempts to address safety concerns in schools with policies such as “zero tolerance” aimed at preventing future Columbine-like school shootings or other acts of violence within the school setting, the policies and practices being implemented have in turn created a culture and expectation of the criminalization of students across the country. These patterns of disciplinary action have echoed law enforcement practices, consequently blurring the lines between keeping students safe, and criminalizing our youth.

The disparity in disciplinary practices among students is inequitable, and tends to impact students of color or at-risk youth most significantly. According to the Department of Education, and research published by the ACLU in 2012, African American students are 3 ½ times more likely to be suspended than white peers (39%), yet only made up 18% of the sample size (ACLU Washington Legislative Office, 2012). Increased suspension rates for students means a decrease in time spent in the classroom, which in turn results in decreased academic achievement and a much higher likelihood of future time spent in correctional facilities. A Brief from the US Department of Education (2016) states, state and local government expenditures on prisons and jails have increased about three times as fast as spending on elementary and secondary education (Department of Education, 2016). In a survey conducted by the Vera Institute and published on CNN Money, data

indicates that in the state of California, the state spends roughly \$8,000 cost per student, compared to a staggering \$46,000 cost per inmate (US Census, 2017). Data also suggests among state prison inmates, two-thirds have not completed high school, and that young black males between the ages of 20 to 24 who do not have a high school diploma or equivalent, have a higher chance of being incarcerated than of being employed (Department of Education, 2016). That being said, simply being a young, male student of color, increases your likelihood of being a victim of the School-to-Prison Pipeline. Skeptics might argue that while overall suspension rates continue to decrease with new policies and procedures like positive behavioral interventions or restorative practices being implemented, our at-risk youth are still experiencing disciplinary measures at a much higher rate than typical peers, and are faced with trauma in the home and community which has a compounded adverse affect on their ability to perform in school. The data presented throughout this research will explore why this trend is occurring, and recommendations to decrease the percentage of students ending up in the school-to-prison-pipeline.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction: *Exploring how culturally induced behavior affects student learning*

School districts and policymakers need to consider the cultural impact that home and community influences have on a student's ability to learn and perform in school. By addressing cultural factors that impact student's overall performance, educators can begin to find effective alternatives to address student needs and behaviors without the use of punitive policies such as the *zero tolerance* approach that is a "one size fits all" policy that has proven to be an outdated and ineffective intervention in schools. However, because of inadequate resources, funding, and community outreach programs, schools are more likely to impose a "zero tolerance" system or other punitive behavioral policies (i.e. School Resource Officers, metal detectors, campus surveillance, suspensions) for students exhibiting inappropriate behaviors instead of addressing the various cultural backgrounds within the community or in the home that contribute to student behavior and academic performance within the school environment. Schools in low-income districts or who are classified as underperforming schools, unfortunately lose a lot of students to suspensions, gang violence, or correctional facilities due to strict behavioral policies and an inadequate concern for the culture of the students, and the impact that home and community factors have on their overall well being and ability to perform in school. By examining alternative behavioral interventions such as the use of restorative practices and collaborative problem solving techniques, schools will be able to address the cultural and

behavioral needs of each student to afford them an equitable opportunity at their education, and provide them with the proper tools for an optimal future.

Research suggests that traditional behavior interventions such as the punitive “zero tolerance policy” are ineffective and outdated, compared to approaches that identify the cognitive skills that some students might be lacking, or considering how culture influences student behavior (American Psychology Association, 2008). The significance of this topic as it relates to the district, schools, and population of students that I work most closely with in the San Francisco Unified School District is the concern for an increasing number of students moving from traditional comprehensive high schools to alternative or continuation schools, high school dropouts, or those who fall victim to the correctional system. The demographics of the SFUSD student population of 56,000 students is very diverse, with students coming from various cultural backgrounds including Latino (27%), Asian (35%), White (14%), African American (7%), and Pacific Islanders (1%), in addition to several other demographic groups (SFUSD 2017). Within these demographic groups are students who are classified English Language Learners (24%), students receiving special education services (12%), and students who qualify for free and reduced lunch (55%), in addition to students who are gang affiliated or from poor socio-economic or homeless backgrounds. While the district has adopted positive behavioral support programs such as Restorative Practice, or positive behavior interventions and supports (PBIS), schools who choose not to implement these evidence based practices or continue to use punitive consequence as a method of dealing with challenging students or behaviors, continue to see an increase in suspensions and lost

instructional minutes for our most at-risk student population. As an educator and compassionate human being, it's frustrating to watch students get lost in the flawed politics of our educational system, and watch students pushed into the School-to-Prison Pipeline due to ineffective educational practices or disciplinary measures. Each time we suspend an at-risk student, we increase the likelihood that these students will give up on themselves, drop out of high school, or become another failed statistic.

All students deserve the opportunity to be in school and learn, and while as educators we have made a collective effort to differentiate instruction to meet the varying needs of all of our students so they can be successful academically, we fail to take the same consideration when dealing with behavior. Behavior should be addressed using a similar pedagogy that would be used when teaching academic skills or tasks: it needs to be something taught, not something we should assume is an inherent quality that students' will automatically know how to do. It's also important to consider, due to the fact that students are coming to school from vastly different cultural backgrounds, cultural sensitivity and consideration in how students learn and behave in school should be respected. If we don't acknowledge that cultural considerations should be made when addressing the learning needs of our students, then we will continue to lose more and more students to dropouts, futile suspensions, or our criminal justice system.

2.1.2 Zero Tolerance Policies

Zero tolerance behavior policies were first introduced to schools in the United States in the 1990's when federal law mandated that any student in possession of a firearm be expelled, regardless of whether or not there was intent on the student's behalf

to inflict harm, if the instance was a first or repeated offense, or any extenuating circumstances existed. The purpose was to reduce drug abuse and violence in schools by creating a clearly defined set of guidelines and interventions to address problem behaviors in schools. While there is never a time when students should be allowed to bring firearms to school, the lines have become blurred with more minor offenses such as classroom disruptions, defiance or truancy, where the use of School Resource Officers, campus surveillance, or punitive consequence has since turned schools into a prison-like environment that has left students feeling unfairly alienated or criminalized in the school setting. Research suggests that zero tolerance policies are both highly ineffective, outdated, and could adversely affect students' opportunities to learn and be positive contributors to their communities following high school (American Psychological Association, 2008, pp. 852).

2.1.3 Title One Schools

Title One is a federally funded program designed to close the disparity gap between under-achieving and high-achieving schools by providing money and resources for students at risk of failing or living at or near the poverty level, who attend an under-achieving school. The program has evolved since 1965 when it was first introduced, with implementations of programs such as "No Child Left Behind" which requires that schools make significant progress in the area of state test scores in order to continue receiving federal funds. The general principles of the program are beneficial in attempting to close the academic achievement gap between under-achieving and high-achieving schools in the United States, but only when resources are used appropriately. If under-achieving

schools are provided with Title One funding, but continue to implement ineffective behavior policies that work against at-risk youth, then the dilemma remains whether or not this opportunity is truly equitable when compared to high-achieving schools.

2.1.4 Collaborative Problem Solving

Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) is an approach that aims to reduce oppositional and challenging behaviors by “identifying and treating lagging cognitive skills that interfere with children’s ability to meet these expectations” (Pollastri et al., 2013, p. 188). The study examined behaviors “including temper outbursts, defiance, deceit, destruction of property, and verbal or physical aggression. The behavior of these children is frequently referred to as oppositional, challenging, explosive, difficult, defiant, or aggressive” (Pollastri et al., 2013, p.188). Traditional behavior theories suggest, “children will do well if they want to”; CPS approach suggests that children will do well if they can” (Pollastri et al., 2013, p. 190). In the same way that educators would not accuse a student with a learning disability of under-achieving by claiming the student is simply “being lazy”, the same considerations should be made when looking at student behavior, and remembering that not all behavior is a “choice”. By collaborating with students on how to improve behavior, students are left feeling empowered and part of the solution, which often times increases students willingness to participate in finding positive alternatives to challenging behaviors.

2.2 History behind behavior interventions

Schools across America understand the need to use differentiated teaching methods to meet the various academic needs of students within the school, but often fail to acknowledge the cultural factors that play an important role in academic learning and impact the behavioral needs within the school climate. “Since the early 1990’s, the national discourse on school discipline has been dominated by the philosophy of zero tolerance. Originally developed as an approach to drug enforcement, the term became widely adopted in schools in the early 1990s as a philosophy or policy that mandates the application of predetermined consequences, most often severe and punitive in nature, that are intended to be applied regardless of the gravity of behavior, mitigating circumstances, or situational context” (American Psychological Association, 2008, p. 852). Although many schools across the United States practice this policy, there is no single definition of what this implementation actually means, and zero tolerance is interpreted by each school on a case by case basis with the understanding that there are strict guidelines in place to address misbehaviors without consideration of outside circumstances or the severity of the behavior in question. In the American Psychological Association journal, researchers discussed how “...an adolescent was expelled for violating school rules by talking to his mother on a cell phone while at school- his mother was on deployment as a soldier in Iraq and he had not spoken with her in 30 days” (American Psychological Association, 2008, p. 852). In a college preparatory academy in New Orleans, a reporter discovers the strict, punitive behavior policy, which states that “the penalty for falling asleep was 10

demerits, which triggered a detention; skipping detention could warrant a suspension” (Carr, 2014, pp. 1). Similarly, one of my students from a previous district with severe social phobias and emotional issues (which he coped with by self-medicating with the use of marijuana), who also had a significant amount of absences from school, was given a suspension on the day he tried to re-enter the school campus due to the school’s policy on truancy. The administration justified the suspension based on the student’s admittance of marijuana use prior to entering school grounds that morning, and a significant amount of prior truancies from school. While it seems reasonable that the use of illegal substances is not permitted on or off school grounds, other interventions might have been considered before suspending a student who was already having difficulty making it to school in the first place, such as an attendance contract or a referral for drug counseling. “Zero tolerance policies assume that removing students who engage in disruptive behavior will deter others from disruption and create an improved climate for those students who remain” (American Psychological Association, 2008, p.852). In a school environment where students see the “problem students” as a reason that they are unable to access the curriculum, this may be true. However, when students are faced with the potential threat of being jumped on the way to school or shot at on their way home at the end of the day, the expectation of cooperative behavior or turning in homework on-time seems to take a subsequent backseat to the need for basic safety and survival. Students have reported: “I had to get my brothers and sisters to school because my mom is a junkie and was passed out; or, We live in an apartment with one bathroom and there are ten of us that have to shower and get ready in the morning; or, I was walking to school and got jumped by

some guys in my neighborhood, and they took my backpack”. For students with these types of daily scenarios, showing up to school ready to learn is likely a low priority in their day. According to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs theory, people must have their most basic needs met (i.e. physiological; safety), in order to focus on meeting secondary needs like belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. For students who are experiencing trauma in the home or community, or are faced with the daily dilemma of where their next meal will come from, greeting them with a slip for lunch detention after arriving late to school is reinforcing the idea that they do not have a place in school.

While zero tolerance policies were created initially to reduce the number of drug related and violent incidents in schools, “there is no evidence, however, that zero tolerance has increased the consistency of school discipline. Rates of suspension and expulsion vary widely across schools and school districts, and this variation appears to be due as much to characteristics of schools and school personnel as to the behavior or attitudes of students” (American Psychological Association, 2008, p. 854). I recently attended a meeting with school staff members where there were concerns about certain staff members’ cultural intolerance toward a specific population of students. Students had expressed to Administrators that they felt unfairly targeted, or that there were staff members who were acting racist against them. As a result of feeling this way, students became increasingly vocal against these staff members and would walk out of class without permission or get into verbal altercations with these staff members. At the same time, staff members perceived some of the students’ misbehaviors as defiant, disrespectful, or even threatening. Instead of simply targeting student behavior as the

only thing that should be changed, it's important to consider the role educators play in influencing student behavior as well. Districts should continue to invest in "cultural awareness training for teachers and enlisting community members to fulfill advocacy roles in schools to represent the growing recognition that prevention efforts are more viable and less costly than remedial efforts to enhance student outcomes" (Hudley et al., 2008, 138). By taking ownership that as educators, we do play a role in how students behave in school and investing in training staff members on cultural awareness, we are sending a message to students that they are worth it.

In addition to the more common factors such as poor socio-economic status or a lack of resources in the home or community that contribute to misbehaviors in school, it's important to also recognize how students with disabilities fit within this zero tolerance policy. Typically, "children exhibiting externalizing behaviors are frequently referred to as oppositional, challenging, explosive, difficult, defiant, or aggressive. They may carry diagnoses of attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), conduct disorder (CD), oppositional defiant disorder (ODD), or intermittent explosive disorder, or these challenging behaviors may be part of a larger set of symptoms identified as a mood, anxiety, or developmental disorder." (Pollastri et al., 2013, p. 188). In the larger class sizes we have become accustomed to in public schools, these students exhibiting externalizing behaviors are often the ones who spend a significant amount of time in the administration office, lunch detentions, or suspensions. There are several factors which can contribute to a teacher's misunderstanding of a student's behavior, some of which include a lack of specific knowledge regarding behavior, lack of experience, lack of

cultural awareness or sensitivity, and in some cases a lack of flexibility in classroom management techniques or teaching styles. Due to a lack of understanding regarding the specific behaviors, or perhaps a mindset that students should act in a certain way regardless of other contributing factors (e.g. ADHD, depression, anxiety, repeated failures leading to an emotional response of defiance), schools have typically viewed behavior as a *poor choice* that the student is making instead of considering that the student might be lacking essential skills in order to behave appropriately within the school setting. In the health industry, medical personnel have “historically used methods of intervention that are based on operant theories of behavior modification. These methods, including point and level systems, quiet rooms, physical restraints, and seclusion, are typically believed to help patients develop greater self-control and coping, to increase positive behavior, and to decrease negative and aggressive behavior. However, the efficacy of some of these behavioral methods has recently been called into question” (Pollastri et al., 2013, p.188). While these behavioral interventions used in the medical field are paralleled within schools, and have proven to be effective in some cases, some might consider these interventions to be archaic or outdated.

2.3 Conventional Behavior Policies

There is no question that schools have the obligation to maintain a safe learning environment for their students and staff, but determining the causes of inappropriate behaviors requires staff to consider the function the behavior may be serving, and if the environment or teaching practices have any impact in the resulting behavior. Traditional

“behavioral theories suggest that students learn to behave disruptively because those behaviors effectively get them something (e.g. attention) or allow them to avoid something (e.g. work). This understanding assumes that children have control over whether they behave in compliance with, or in opposition to, adult expectations. This behavioral theory suggests that children will do well if they want to. Such methods date back to the famous behaviorist studies of B.F. Skinner (1904-90), who demonstrated that target behaviors could be elicited, and unwanted behaviors diminished, through an intensive and consistent menu of rewards and punishments” (Pollastri et al., 2013, p. 189). While this may suggest that students make a choice about their behavior, understanding what motivates people can be used as a tool to incentivize positive behavior as opposed to imposing punitive consequence following a negative one.

In an Associated Press article, a parent made a compelling point, that “in dealing with individuals, how can you possibly apply one law (i.e. zero tolerance policy) to every single person and their circumstances” (Associated Press, 2007, pp. 1). When school officials or staff discusses teaching pedagogy and the need to differentiate instruction to meet student’s learning needs, it makes sense to people that education should not be a “one size fits all” model. When policymakers and school officials write and implement behavior policy however, that same care and creativity needs to be used in establishing effective disciplinary models for each our students to be successful in school. Some critics might suggest that when using positive behavior supports: “these approaches can sometimes do more harm than good: first, by increasing behavioral performance only in response to promise of reward”. In response to such concerns, and like any good teaching

practice, the use of incentives should be used in conjunction with other interventions in a scaffolded approach so that this support can eventually be faded to help foster independence in that skill (Pollastrri et al., 2013, p.189). Pollastrri also indicated that children's self-esteem could negatively be impacted by the use of positive behavioral supports in some cases where students "want to do well, but lack the skills to do so, and are told repeatedly that they are failing to meet expectations because they are not trying hard enough"(Pollastrri et al., 2013, p.189). This dynamic can inadvertently create a power struggle between teacher and student, or can leave the student with dissent towards the staff member if they feel they are unable to meet these expectations. Determining the antecedent of the behavior and the function of what purpose that behavior is serving will allow staff to determine what intervention is most appropriate to use, on a case-by-case basis. Self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation are difficult skills for educators to teach, one reason being that most students have grown accustomed to extrinsic motivation in order to perform. For the most part, students know how to work for tangible rewards, but not for the pleasure of achieving the intrinsic satisfaction one gets from meeting a goal or completing a task. In addition, behavior systems that are extrinsically driven (i.e. point level reward systems), only work when done consistently and if the student buys into the program. If a student is not willing to work that day for a reward or lacks the skills to see the benefit of the reward system in place, then the reward system will be ineffective. If students are taught the skills to be intrinsically motivated though, then these are skills they can carry with them into adulthood.

Some might assume that by suspending students that are disruptive in class, this would result in an improvement in the class or school climate after these students are removed. However, “the data on a number of indicators of school climate have shown the opposite effect, that is, that schools with higher rates of school suspension and school expulsion appear to have less satisfactory ratings of school climate, and spend a disproportionate amount of time on disciplinary matters. Perhaps more important, recent research indicates a negative relationship between the use of school suspension and expulsion and school-wide academic achievement, even when controlling for demographics such as socioeconomic status” (American Psychological Association, 2008, p. 854). This data indicates, schools with higher suspension and expulsion rates have a poor school climate, and spend an unbalanced amount of time on disciplinary measures as opposed to academic achievement. In addition to the academic achievement disparities being amplified due to increased suspension rates, racial disparities are also increased as a result. Washington Post studies indicate: “the disproportionate rate of suspensions follows students into later grades, with black students suspended or expelled at a rate three times greater than their white peers- 5% for whites and 16% for blacks, respectively. Students with disabilities and those whose first language isn’t English were also suspended at higher rates. Students with disabilities are more than twice as likely to be suspended compared to students without disabilities” (Lee, 2014, pp. 2). If a student was performing poorly on tests, even after studying and putting adequate effort into preparing for the test, then teachers would look to see if there are factors that may be impeding the student’s ability to learn. When teachers consider how to address behavioral

issues though, there is still a common belief among staff members that students should just “know how to behave” instead of considering that students may need to be taught *how* to behave appropriately within the classroom or school setting. Due to the convenience and efficiency that traditional behavior policies (i.e. zero tolerance) provide to schools already struggling, the much easier solution to address challenging behavior still continues to be getting rid of the students causing problems. Evidence supports that “rather than reducing the likelihood of disruption, however, school suspension in general appears to predict higher future rates of misbehavior and suspension among those students who are suspended. In the long term, school suspension and expulsion are moderately associated with a higher likelihood of school dropout and failure to graduate on time” (American Psychological Association, 2008, p. 854). If schools are noticing a pattern of increased dropouts or student’s not meeting graduation requirements, then staff should be looking further into the problem then just assuming that students’ behavior is the only reason this trend is occurring. The increased trend, “...has also resulted in a higher number of referrals to the juvenile justice system for infractions that were once handled in school. The term School-to-Prison Pipeline has emerged from the study of this phenomenon”, which describes the pattern of students being channeled from schools into the criminal justice system (American Psychological Association, 2008, p.856). One factor that contributes to the school-prison-pipeline phenomenon is that “most districts don’t require that suspended and expelled students receive homework support or tutoring, so they fall further behind their peers. In addition, expelled students abandon activities that lead to college and take up activities that lead to prison” (Perry, 2014, pp. 2). So the

problem then becomes, not only are students being punished for their actions, but also they are also losing valuable educational minutes and services they are entitled to.

According to Lee, the data also supports that this *trend* is something that typically starts at a very young age for our at-risk youth: "...racial disparities in school discipline policies are not only well documented among older students, but actually begin during preschool", Attorney General Eric Holder said in a statement. 'Every data point represents a life impacted and a future potentially diverted or derailed' (Lee, 2014, p. 2).

When most people think of suspensions or expulsions occurring in school, they typically associate those behaviors with that of older students, most often high school aged. This evidence presented by Lee, counters the idea that zero tolerance policies are not reserved just for older students, but instead suggests that this pattern of detrimental disciplinary action instead follows students from pre-school into young adulthood. Ironically, there seems to be a constant debate between putting money into education, or, putting money into our prison system. Research identifies that "there is a strong body of evidence showing that preventing or treating delinquency and school failure are more cost effective than doing nothing, or paying welfare and prison costs incurred by undereducated and alienated youth"(American Psychological Association, 2008, p. 856). This simple cause and effect theory quickly highlights the fact that by making a choice to continue pouring money into our criminal justice system without putting adequate resources towards educating our youth, policymakers are inevitably pushing students into the School-to-Prison Pipeline instead of equipping them with the skills they need to be productive, healthy adults in our society.

When teachers or staff members are quick to suspend a student for defiance or other non-violent behaviors, they fail to consider the other factors that could be contributing to a child's inappropriate display of behavior in school. Research shows: "...before age 15, adolescents appear to display psychosocial immaturity in at least four areas; poor resistance to peer influence, attitudes toward and perception of risk, future orientation, and impulse control. Findings from the field of developmental neuroscience indicate that if a particular structure of the brain is still immature, then the functions that it governs will also show immaturity. That is, adolescents are more likely to take greater risks and to reason less adequately about the consequences of their behavior. Used inappropriately, zero tolerance policies likely exacerbate both the normative challenges of early adolescence and the potential mismatch between the adolescent's developmental stage and the structure of secondary schools" (American Psychological Association, 2008, p. 855). This lack of maturity can be especially detrimental to students with disabilities who already have deficits that contribute to their academic or socio-emotional challenges in school. In low-income communities, it is not uncommon for older siblings to take some responsibility in helping to care for their younger siblings, or provide financial support towards basic necessities in the household. In instances such as these, it seems unfair to punish a student for the responsibilities they feel towards helping their family, and an emphasis placed on an education, to which they see no future in. Instead of fighting a battle against our students in these cases, districts should be finding creative ways to bridge the gap between cultural influences in students' homes or communities, and balancing the academic demands in the classroom.

2.4 Alternative Behavior Policies

While discipline problems and challenging behaviors continue to be a challenge in schools, “research has shown that punishment-based approaches actually increase disruptive behaviors” (Fay, 2012, pp.1). While many districts seem to agree that zero tolerance policies and out-of-school suspensions are outdated, schools often times have the misconception that making changes to the programs would be a financial burden and unrealistic due to scarce funding that is always an issue with schools (Hefling, 2014, pp. 2). In a previous district, and in an attempt to provide cost effective, alternative behavior interventions that provide simple, yet effective ways of addressing behavior problems, Charles Fay, PhD designed the *Love and Logic* program. Fay’s research is based on these five principles: (1) Preserve and enhance the child’s self-concept; (2) Teach children how to own and solve the problems they create; (3) Share the control and decision making; (4) Combine consequences with high levels of empathy and warmth; (5) Build the adult-child relationship (Fay, 2012, pp. 2). One of the main differences between traditional behavioral interventions such as “zero tolerance” and Fay’s *Love and Logic* program is the emphasis on the child having an active role in how to solve the problems as opposed to having consequences imposed on the student without any input on their own behalf. Fay’s research indicates, “behaviors yielding positive consequences tend to increase in frequency, whereas those producing negative consequences tend to diminish” (Fay, 2012, pp. 4). By actively including students in how to address their own behavior, we are equipping them with the tools to be independent, and supporting their ability to

intrinsically motivate themselves as opposed to waiting for external reinforcements. This research supports that, "... a focus on behavioral principles and consequences alone has the following limitations: (1) Fails to prevent behavior problems; (2) Fails to teach appropriate replacement behaviors; (3) Contributes to student withdrawal, avoidance, or retaliatory aggression" (Fay, 2012, pp.4). Fay's research also supports the ineffectiveness of traditional behavior policies and their impact on at-risk students by showing that at-risk students who already lack a positive relationship with their teachers and other adults they feel are unable to relate to them, often times display more "...disruptive behaviors, are more likely to disengage from academic activities, and are likely to drop-out before they graduate" (Fay, 2012, pp.4). This approach is an effective way to target challenging behaviors in a positive, and constructive way that still allows students to feel part of the school community and not alienated from it. Conversely, "other research has shown significant improvements in behavior, academic achievement, and on-time attendance when students experience caring relationships with their teachers and when the overall school climate feels supportive" (Fay, 2012, pp.4). It makes sense to think that students, much like adults in the workplace, would feel more productive and more likely to perform for their teachers in an environment in which they feel welcome and respected. While there are professional roles educators and students must both fulfill in the school setting, staff should keep in mind that respect from students is not something that is always automatically given. For our most at-risk students who have typically experienced trauma or past experiences in school that have left them feeling angry or ostracized from the school community, it will take staff members willing to take the time to build a

rapport and gain the trust of each of their students before some students can begin to demonstrate respect and comfort in the classroom environment.

According to Harvard's Department of Psychiatry research study, another effective alternative behavior intervention strategy that aims to focus on "identifying and treating lagging cognitive skills that interfere with children's ability to exhibit appropriate behaviors in class", is known as Collaborative Problem Solving (CPS) (Pollastri et al., 2013, pp.188). Doctors Ross Greene and J. Stuart Ablon demonstrate through their research that "the CPS model reconceptualizes the reasons for children's externalizing behaviors, and offers specific techniques for intervention" (Pollastri et al., 2013, p. 189). The CPS model "...is a conceptual and therapeutic model that posits that chronic and severe externalizing behavior is the product of lagging cognitive skills that interfere with a child's ability to comply with adult expectations. Consider this: in order to meet adult expectations, a child must have an adequately developed set of cognitive skills allowing him to accurately comprehend and interpret the expectations, to flexibly respond to different expectations in different situations, to consider a range of responses, to predict consequences of each of those responses, to express his or her needs or difficulties in meeting expectations, and to tolerate frustrations in the face of unexpected results" (Pollastri et al., 2013, p. 190). It makes sense to think that if someone lacks the appropriate cognitive skills to behave according to whatever behavior standards are in place, that misbehavior is more likely to occur due to this lack of cognitive ability. The CPS philosophy validates, "...that children do well if they can. Analogous to the contemporary view of children with learning disabilities who are performing below their

potential in academic areas, CPS asserts that children who are not successful in complying with behavioral demands have one or more skill deficits in critical areas such as flexibility, social perception, executive functioning, language processing, or emotion regulation. An underlying assumption of the CPS model is that all children start out motivated to comply, until experience teaches them that they do not have the skills to meet the demands; motivation wanes as a direct result” (Pollastri et al., 2013, p. 190). By first identifying the skills that are lacking with each of our students exhibiting behavioral difficulties and then identifying antecedents and environments in which the behaviors are occurring, staff is then able to introduce positive interventions which assist the student in developing those skills that are not allowing them to behave appropriately in the educational setting. It makes sense in the world of education, that if students lack the “academic skills” to be successful, you teach them. The same mentality though does not apply with behavior, and most teachers and school staff believe that when a student is misbehaving, they are just *choosing* to do so. It seems obvious that if we are teaching academic skills to be successful, that we should teach behavioral skills in the same manner, so that students have the opportunity to access education equitably across all settings, not just the privileged schools.

2.5 Summary

While maintaining a safe learning environment should remain a top priority for schools across the United States to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn in a safe and welcoming environment, the use of traditional behavior policies such as

zero tolerance, have proven through extensive research to be outdated and ineffective. In the 1990s, zero tolerance policies were adopted to address the growing concerns of serious behavior issues, specifically with drugs and violence. Research indicates that over the years, the policy has evolved into a “school-prison-pipeline” that not only seems ineffective in preventing behavior challenges within schools, but has also taken away the opportunity for many at-risk students to appropriately access the curriculum because of disciplinary actions that remove students from the classroom and often times place them into the juvenile court system or on the streets. Instead of considering cultural factors, which have an impact on student learning and behavior in school, teachers and schools often fail to individualize behavior policies and interventions in the same way that they differentiate learning to meet the academic needs of students. While there are some positive aspects to zero tolerance policies, such as addressing students’ possession or use of weapons on campus, this approach fails to consider other factors that could contribute to a student exhibiting challenging behaviors in school such as trauma in the home or community, or homelessness. Through evidence based research, studies show that alternative behavior interventions such as *Love and Logic* or *Collaborative Problem Solving* techniques, are effective in addressing problem behaviors in school while also maintaining a respectful teacher/student relationship where both parties feel like part of the solution, as opposed to the punitive behavior approach where students often feel inferior to teachers or staff. If schools made a conscious effort to consider the cultural differences of each of their students and accommodate their larger community by creating a behavior system in school that meets the needs of their specific student population as

opposed to a generic “one size fits all” behavior approach, research shows that not only will unnecessary suspensions and expulsions be reduced, but students will have the intrinsic motivation to stay in school and will have the opportunity to learn. If we adopt and implement behavior policies and interventions that can be adaptable to the needs of individual students in the same way that we differentiate learning, students might actually have a chance at living up to the potential we believe each of them to possess. By implementing practices that demonstrate compassion and remain student centered, we will be less likely to lose students to the School-to-Prison Pipeline or to becoming another high school dropout statistic.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Objectives and Hypotheses

The goal of this study is to determine ways to reduce the number of students becoming victim to the School-to-Prison Pipeline trend that continues to plague our public schools and at-risk youth. Based on reviews of literature, possible contributing factors to this increasing trend were cultural influences on students from the home or community and a lack of positive behavioral incentives to keep students in school. This study was designed with the intent to identify why students are ending up in the School-to-Prison Pipeline and how this trend can be diminished. The hypotheses of the current study are as follows:

HO1: Culture within the home or community impacts behavior in school.

HO2: Students who are suspended are more likely to end up in prison.

HO3: Providing work experience opportunities in the community, while students are enrolled in school would reduce inappropriate behavior and incentivize students to stay in school.

3.2 Research Design

This study was conducted using a 28-question, hard copy survey, and took participants approximately 15-20 minutes to complete. The survey was constructed as a multi-item, mixed methods, qualitative survey in order to gain staff perspectives about the School-to-Prison Pipeline and where they feel the issue is rooted (i.e. school, home, community), and what solutions staff members proposed on how to correct the issue.

Questions consisted of: 9 multiple-choice questions establishing teacher perception and beliefs; 18 questions on a 4-point Likert scale (range: 1- strongly disagree; 2- disagree; 3- agree; 4- strongly agree), and 1 free response asking staff members what they feel led students to their continuation school. Likert questions included questions such as: “I feel culture within the community or home impacts students’ motivation to do well in school” and “students who are suspended are more than likely to end up in prison”. Reliability of the 18 questions presented on the Likert scale, as measured with the mean and standard deviation, was represented as $\sigma=0.38$ which demonstrates a tightly clustered set of responses and high reliability between responses.

3.2.1 Research site demographics and setting

A continuation site was chosen specifically for this research, as opposed to a comprehensive high school, due to the demographics and backgrounds of the students that inevitably end up enrolling in continuation schools. Needless to say, students that are finding success or acceptance at a comprehensive site are not the ones looking to transfer to a continuation school. Participants in this survey included 22 staff members, consisting of Teachers, Administrators, Counselors, and support staff members all over the age of 18. No students or minors were surveyed during this research study.

The survey was provided to staff members at the start of a staff meeting during contractual hours, with approval by the site Administrator, and all participants signed consent to participate in the study. Participation in this research was strictly voluntary; therefore, no additional compensation was provided to staff members as a result of participation nor was there any repercussions for choosing not to willfully participate. Results from this study

were placed faced down when returned to the surveyor in order to protect anonymity, and were placed under locked supervision to protect confidentiality of the data and participants. Due to the nature of human subjects being surveyed, an IRB proposal was submitted prior to the start of conducting this research, to the Instructional Review Board for Protection of Human Subjects: IRB # 16-261.

The research survey was conducted at Ida B Wells High School in San Francisco, CA, and is part of the San Francisco Unified School District. Ida B Wells is a continuation high school in SFUSD, in the Hayes Valley neighborhood, and serves students 16 and older who are seeking a high school diploma or certificate of completion. Total enrollment for Ida B Wells fluctuates throughout the year due to the nature of the alternative school model: students who are credit deficient, students in need of additional supports or smaller classroom settings, safety transfers, or voluntary transfers from a comprehensive site. The site is currently serving 150 students in general education, including those receiving special education supports in an SDC or co-taught model. Of this total number, there are currently 45 students receiving special education services on campus, and 3 special education teachers allocated to provide these services. In addition to special education support, there are 2 paraprofessionals to provide learning and behavioral supports, and a full-time School Psychologist and Wellness Coordinator on staff.

Multivariate correlation analysis procedures were used to explore the relationships between different research variables, and to measure the reliability in the data set. Mean scores, standard deviation, and t-tests were calculated using Microsoft

Excel, which are represented in the results section, as well as through visual representations in tables throughout the document.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Background Information on the study

The current research study explored reasons why the School-to-Prison Pipeline continues to be an issue plaguing our educational system, and what some potential solutions are to correct this problem. When surveyed staff members were asked, “how long have you been teaching”, 64% reported “10 years or more”. 59% also reported attending grades K-12 school themselves, in a school setting that could best be described as “middle class”. This background information on who was surveyed, is important to consider in order to determine any potential bias that could influence staff member’s outlooks on the students that are affected by the School-to-Prison Pipeline, and why this trend might be occurring. A multifaceted approach is necessary when analyzing the effect experience has on the outlook of a teacher, one being their years of knowledge serve as the foundation for their proficiency in teaching, whereas some may understand their years of experience to be the reason not for excellence, but for inflexibility and rigidity when it comes to understanding each new generation of students who walks into their classroom.

4.2 Staff Perception

When presented with the question of “which ethnic group of students staff members feel earn the highest number of suspensions or instructional minutes lost due to inappropriate behaviors”, 59% of the staff members surveyed reported that African American students lose the most time, which is consistent with national data that African

American students are 2/3 times more likely to be suspended than Caucasian peers (ACLU Washington Legislative Office, 2012).

To identify staff perceptions of their own teaching practices and beliefs, staff members were asked “if they use positive behavioral interventions in their teaching practices”. 100% of the responses indicated that staff members “agree” or “strongly agree” with this statement, which suggests that they have not only been trained in the use of positive behavioral interventions, but they all feel they implement them well. Similarly, 95% of staff participants feel that students can confide in them, which suggests that this staff has a strong rapport with students and have established adequate trust for students to confide in them.

4.3 Cultural influences

In addition to staff perceptions and teaching practices, staff members were also questioned about cultural influences from the home or community, and how these factors have an impact on student’s performance in school and overall well being. When asked about culture within the community or home, 95% of staff members “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with this statement as demonstrated in Table 1. This same question, was dissected further into staff’s perception on whether or not these cultural influences impact academic performance and student motivation.

Table 1. Culture within the community

Variable	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-test (p= probability)
Impact on behavior	1-4	3.43	0.75	p= 0.82
Impact on academic performance	1-4	3.43	0.60	p= 0.82
Students' motivation to do well in school	1-4	3.48	0.60	p= 0.82

This data shows reliability amongst the responses and a common theme that staff's perception is that cultural influences from the home or community significantly impact behavior, academic performance, and perceived motivation to do well in school. The t-test analysis ($p=0.82$) indicates a failure to reject the null hypothesis (H_0) that culture within the home or community impacts behavior in school. In further examining the scope of behavior in school, participants were asked if "it is our responsibility *as educators* to teach appropriate behavior to students". 52% surveyed responded that they "agree" with this statement. However, when compared to "it is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to teach behavior to their students", 57% of participants surveyed responded that they would "strongly agree" with this statement. While the two different positions are not significantly different, it does suggest that staff members feel there should be a shared responsibility between parents and schools for teaching appropriate behavior.

4.4 Parent and student resources

In order to establish reliability on if there are adequate resources available for students and parents to access, in order to help their children prepare for their future, the following mean and standard deviation represent the consistency between the two responses:

Table 2. Adequate resources available

Variable	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation
To support diverse students	1-4	2.59	0.96
To support parents	1-4	2.8	0.91

This demonstrates consistency between the two sets of response data, that staff members “agree” with there being resources available for both students and parents to access within the school and community. The next consideration to make then based off of these data points would be to consider not if parents and students had access, but whether or not they take advantage of the available resources provided, or if they know how to use these resources to their advantage.

4.5 Staff demographics

Table 3. Staff Demographics & Expertise

	Highest # of responses	% of total responses
Years of experience in the field of education	10 years or more	64%
Primary department worked in	<i>Special Education</i>	18%
	<i>Counseling/Wellness Center</i>	18%
Gender identity	Female	59%
Would you have qualified for free and reduced lunch?	No	55%

In analyzing the staff demographics and expertise, the majority of staff members surveyed identify as women, from middle to upper-class families, experienced in their field of work, 36% of whom serve in a branch of social services and welfare (i.e. Special Education, Counseling, or Wellness) within the school setting surveyed. This framework of questioning was necessary to determine if there was any bias amongst staff responses and how staff's cultural upbringing or background impacts their view on the cultural background of their at-risk student population.

4.6 Staff perceptions on where at-risk students are likely to end up

In comparing staff demographics to the responses provided on whether or not students who are suspended are more likely to end up in prison, the responses were split. 30.4% of staff members “disagreed” with this statement, and 30.4% agreed with this statement.

Table 4. Q 19-20 (Likert scale)

Variable	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-test (p= probability)
Giving students the skills & opportunity to stay in school is a <i>responsibility of the educator</i>	1-4	3.7	0.46	p= 0.02
Students who are suspended are more likely to end up in prison	1-4	2.65	0.93	p= 0.02

In running a t-test analysis of these two particular questions, $p=0.02$, results indicate a rejection in the null hypothesis (H_0): students who are suspended are more likely to end up in prison. Despite evidence from this t-test, which prove to be a contradiction to data examined in the review of literature, “students who have been suspended or expelled are three times more likely to come into contact with the juvenile probation system the following year compared to one who wasn’t” (Nelson, 2015). The survey results from this study may therefore suggest the apparent “self-removal” or “distancing” educators exhibit when it comes to the role they play, and the severity of the effects they have on the fates of their students. Staff members who indicated “agree” on the survey response, are consistent with this statistic that demonstrates a correlation between suspensions and prison, whereas those who “disagree” with this statement, do not see a direct correlation between suspension rates and the likelihood of ending up in the correctional system. The significance in these survey findings compared to other research data is that, when people are willing to acknowledge that there is a correlation between suspension rates and the

likelihood of an at-risk student ending up in prison, only then can we begin to identify potential solutions on how to keep students from becoming a victim of the School-to-Prison Pipeline trend.

4.7 Programs to support student engagement in school

While 90% of staff members surveyed indicated that they feel “it is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to teach behavior to their students”, this doesn’t account for environmental factors that many of our students face, such as homelessness, foster youth, group homes, and single parent households. Similarly, 95% of staff members also felt that “as educators it is our responsibility to teach appropriate behavior to students” and that “programs within schools can be effective in reducing inappropriate behavior”. This data suggests that staff members collectively see the importance of students receiving balanced support from both the parental unit and school staff in order for students to have a chance at being successful in school. The problem that “in school” programs tend to overlook though are the incidents and influences that occur outside of the school setting, or cultural circumstances bleeding into the schools that are having a significant impact on our students ending up in correctional facilities at such a young age. According to San Francisco Unified School District Court and County school data (2014-15): 53.6% of the incarcerated youth from grades 8-12 that were detained during this time period were from socioeconomically disadvantaged households, 21.4% were identified as English Learners, and 32.1 % of the students in attendance had documented disabilities (SFUSD 2015). Of the total percent of enrollment of incarcerated youth during this same time period, a

staggering 84% of the students were of African American (44.6%) or Hispanic/Latino (33.9%) demographics. Considering that African American and Latino students only comprise 34% of the total student population in SFUSD as earlier noted, it is self-evident that this disproportionality demands resolution. Surveyed staff members indicated two ways in which they felt schools could effectively reduce inappropriate behaviors, and keep students in school:

Table 5. Q 15-16 (Likert scale)

Question	Range	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-test (p= probability)
Programs within the community	1-4	3.33	.73	p= 0.74
Providing work experience opportunities, while enrolled in school	1-4	3.4	0.50	p= 0.74

The data from this table dissects two very specific proposed solutions: initiation of community programs, and work experience opportunities for students while they are enrolled in school. The results indicate with a mean response of 3.33, that staff members “agreed” that programs within the community could be effective in reducing inappropriate behaviors in schools. They also indicated with a mean response of 3.4, that they agreed “providing the opportunity for students to gain work experience in the community, while enrolled in school, would be an incentive to reduce inappropriate behavior”. The t-test analysis results for this hypothesis (HO3), yielded a probability of

$p=0.74$, which fails to reject the null hypothesis, that there is a correlation between behavior in schools, providing students with both community supports, and the opportunity to work while enrolled in school as a means of incentive.

4.8 Recommendations for School-Prison pipeline prevention

In attempting to identify staff perceptions on where they felt most students who are suspended will likely end up following high school, staff members indicated the following:

Table 6.

Attend college: <1%	Unemployed: 27%
Find employment: 36%	Correctional Facilities: 18%
Join the military: 0%	Other: 14%

It can be implied from this data that staff members are hopeful that the majority of their students will leave high school with the necessary skills preparing them to find employment, as opposed to the 45% who seem less confident that students attending their school will either end up unemployed or in correctional facilities. It can be argued that due to the nature of the continuation school model where students have the opportunity to earn up to 50 credits per semester, whereas in a comprehensive high school setting students are only eligible to earn up to 30 credits per semester, that students in a continuation school model are provided with additional supports that provide them an opportunity to graduate with life readiness skills including a diploma. This optimism is

also reflected by staff members who indicated a response of “other”, by stating that “positive interactions with adults and feeling cared for impacts their path”, or the understanding that in a continuation school: “our students turn it around” which suggests that this environment provides them a second chance at success that they didn’t have in the comprehensive high school setting. This mentality supports that the relationships staff members have with their students greatly impacts student outcomes in the future. When staff members were questioned on where they feel suspended students are likely to end up, and where resources would have the greatest impact on reducing inappropriate behaviors and suspensions, survey results indicted the following:

Table 7. Recommendations for prevention

Variable	Range	Standard Deviation	t-test (p=probability)
Where <i>students who are suspended often</i> , will end up	1-6	1.6	p= 0.82
Where you feel resources would have the greatest impact on reducing suspensions	1-6	1.93	p= 0.82

Due to this line of questioning being a multiple choice response as opposed to the Likert scale responses analyzed in Table 4, the data presented in Table 6 suggests a difference in reliability when compared to the Table 4 data. This can be interpreted that when presented with a range of both interval and ordinal options on a scale of “strongly disagree --> strongly agree”, responses will vary differently than when given specific examples (i.e. find employment, unemployed, correctional facilities) in a multiple choice

question, where staff members feel students who are suspended will likely end up. This inconsistency between responses can also suggest a bias among staff members surveyed that when they are prompted with options to a particular question, they will respond differently than when presented with interval or ordinal scaled responses that measure their belief or attitudes on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and how this trend impacts their own students.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Survey free response (Question 21)

On question twenty-one of the survey, participants were asked to write a response on the following: “Briefly describe your thoughts on why you feel students were unsuccessful in a comprehensive high school setting, and what path led them to a continuation school”. This question yielded a variety of responses, which included themes of: students experiencing trauma in their lives, violence in the community, lack of resources or support, and being socioeconomically disadvantaged. Other responses included poor attendance, comprehensive school sites not being a good fit for them, and students needing to support their families financially which inhibited them from participating in a traditional school setting.

5.1.2 Trauma and violence in the community

In a study conducted by Kaiser and the CDC in the mid 1990s, researchers began to identify a correlation between exposure to childhood trauma and poor health outcomes. This study was referred to as, ACES (Adverse Childhood Experiences Study). When a patient experiences childhood trauma, they would earn 1 ACE, which indicates that a patient has experienced “physical/sexual/emotional abuse, physical/emotional neglect, parental mental illness, substance abuse, incarceration, parental separation, or domestic violence (Burke Harris, 2014). The higher a patient’s ACE count, the worse their long-term health outcome would be. Researchers from this Kaiser/CDE study found that ACES cause detrimental health issues such as depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation,

ADHD, heart disease, hepatitis, and lung cancer, to name a few. The significant takeaway from this ACES research, is to understand that trauma and cultural influences from the home or community should not be viewed in isolation, but instead seen as a direct catalyst impacting students that are at-risk of ending up in the School-to-Prison Pipeline. When staff members at Ida B Wells were surveyed and asked to describe their thoughts on why students were unsuccessful in a comprehensive school setting, which ultimately led them to a continuation school, 50% of the free responses indicated a reference to the trauma that student's experience being a detrimental impact on their education and overall well being. One staff member said, "all of my students have had situations that would make me have difficulty in continuing in school". Another staff member shared a comment that she heard directly from one of her students: "I know you care about me, but you're not the person I want to care about me". For students who have experienced trauma, and the basic needs related to the trauma go unmet, then it is safe to assume this child will have difficulty anywhere, under any circumstance.

5.1.3 Lack of resources and socio-economic disadvantage

Staff responses indicated that one difference between students attending a comprehensive high school versus a smaller continuation or alternative high school is the ability of the smaller school to provide individualized attention and support for students who have experienced trauma or other adverse affects in their lives. Comprehensive sites naturally have a much larger student population, and other factors to consider on a daily basis such as attendance, student performance, disciplinary actions, curriculum, clubs, sports, special education services, and the varying number of supports required to support

a large student population. Staff members indicated that due to these factors, “comprehensive high schools do not have the focus or resources to reach at risk students, or students who may be at risk of failing, therefore, students fall through the cracks”. Survey responses also suggested that students coming from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds also have “family obligations other than education, and can be easily influenced by peers or poor role models in the community” which also serve as contributing factors to the odds already stacked against them.

5.2 Limitations of the Case Study

While the parameters of the research study were designed to collect data on a wide range of variables that influence the School-to-Prison Pipeline, a number of factors in the research design have proved to be limiting. Personal bias, and bias amongst the chosen survey population, must be acknowledged. While passion on this particular topic proved to be a driving force behind the completion of the research study, potential bias could have impacted the creation of the survey questions, how respondents participated in their response, and how responses were interpreted by the evaluator. The research conducted was designed in a way to minimize bias, but nevertheless, it is an important consideration to keep in mind.

Although one of the hypotheses was designed to examine cultural influences from the home or community on overall performance in school, the framework of the questions limited how far the research could be dissected to examine facets such as trauma and the impact trauma specifically has on student’s behavior and likelihood of ending up in the

School-to-Prison Pipeline. Another limitation on potential findings was the sample size surveyed. If the research study was expanded to include student's perception on the School-to-Prison Pipeline, or if comprehensive high schools and court and community schools were also surveyed in conjunction with continuation schools, then the expanded scope of research would be able to determine greater reliability in the findings.

5.3 Future research and implications

Future researchers should consider presenting the survey in an electronic form, to eliminate the ability for participants to "skip questions", and to reduce the user error in responses collected. It may also be helpful for future research to expand from a qualitative survey to also include one on one interviews with participants to further expand on their beliefs or attitudes on why this problem continues to be an increasing trend in our public school system, or to expand the scope of subjects to include student feedback on the School-to-Prison Pipeline and the impact it has on their education.

CHAPTER 6: RECOMMENDATIONS

The School-to-Prison Pipeline continues to be an alarming trend that pushes students out of public schools and into the correctional system. Reviews of literature have demonstrated a correlation between inequitable disciplinary practices, which most significantly impact at-risk, students of color.

The objective of the study was to examine cultural impact on behavior in school, and if students who are suspended are more likely to end up in prison. Results from this study indicated that there are significant cultural influences such as trauma, community violence, and socioeconomic disadvantage that impact behavior in school, but that this does not necessarily prove a direct correlation that students are therefore more likely to end up in prison, according to survey data.

While schools have shown improvement on the disciplinary practices being used in schools to shift away from a “zero tolerance” approach, to the use of positive behavior interventions, there is still a disparity not being addressed through these interventions, and an increasing number of at-risk youth ending up in the correctional system at a very young age. This increasing trend is not something that can simply be solved within schools. The recommendation based on the findings from this research study is that students should be incentivized through the use of positive behavioral supports by being provided work experience opportunities in the community, while they are enrolled in school, in order to reduce inappropriate behavior and the number of students falling victim to the School-to-Prison Pipeline.

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APPENDICES

“School-To-Prison-Pipeline: the factors that cause it, and how we can prevent it”
(Survey)

Dear participants: In an effort to address ongoing behavior concerns in schools, this survey was created to collect data from a staff perspective to see whether or not the current measures in place are effective and preventative. Please take a moment to complete this survey with the understanding that all responses will be kept confidential. Thank you for your time and participation! Sincerely, Ali Wittig (Masters of Education Candidate; *Humboldt State University*)

1. Which ethnic group of our students do you feel currently earns the highest number of suspensions or instructional minutes lost due to inappropriate behaviors, in the district?
 - a. Latino
 - b. Caucasian
 - c. Asian
 - d. African American
 - e. Polynesian/Samoan
 - f. Other: _____

2. Choose the option that best reflects the number of students you feel are suspended from *our* school annually:
 - a. Less than other public high schools
 - b. More than other public high schools
 - c. Same as other public high schools

For the following statements, identify the degree to which you *agree* or *disagree* with each statement

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
3) I use positive behavioral interventions in my teaching practices.	1	2	3	4
4) Students can confide in me to help them with personal problems.	1	2	3	4
5) I believe my students will be successful.	1	2	3	4

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
6) Behaviors such as defiance or classroom disruptions can be attributed to classroom management.	1	2	3	4
7) Behaviors such as defiance or classroom disruptions can be attributed to cultural factors or a student's upbringing.	1	2	3	4
8) I feel there are adequate resources available to support diverse students in school.	1	2	3	4
9) I feel culture within the community or home, impacts <i>behavior</i> in school.	1	2	3	4
10) I feel culture within the community or home impacts students' <i>academic performance</i> in school.	1	2	3	4
11) I feel culture within the community or home impacts students' <i>motivation</i> to do well in school.	1	2	3	4
12) As educators, it is our responsibility to teach appropriate behavior to students.	1	2	3	4
13) It is the responsibility of parents or guardians to teach behavior to their students.	1	2	3	4
14) Programs within schools can be effective in reducing inappropriate behaviors.	1	2	3	4
15) Programs within the community can be effective in reducing inappropriate behaviors in schools.	1	2	3	4
16) Providing the opportunity for students to gain work experience in the community, while enrolled in school, would	1	2	3	4

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
be an incentive to reduce inappropriate behaviors.				
17) Parents have access to the resources they need at the school to help their children prepare for college and beyond.	1	2	3	4
18) Most students are motivated to do well in school.	1	2	3	4
19) Giving students the skills and opportunity to stay in school is one of my responsibilities as an educator.	1	2	3	4
20) Students who are suspended are more likely to end up in prison.	1	2	3	4

21) Briefly describe your thoughts on why you feel students were unsuccessful in a comprehensive high school setting, and what path led them to a continuation school (i.e. behavior, attendance, safety):

22. How long have you been teaching?

- a. 1 year or less
- b. 5 years or less
- c. Between 5-10 years
- d. 10 years or more

23. Which is the primary department do you teach in?

- a. Science
- b. English
- c. Math
- d. PE/Art/Elective
- e. Special Education
- f. Administration
- g. Other: _____

24. Do you identify as female or male?

- a. Female
- b. Male

25. When you were in grades K-12, would you have been a student that qualified to receive *free and reduced lunch*?

- a. Yes
- b. No

26. Did you attend grades K-12 in a school that could best be described as:

- a. Upper class
- b. Lower class
- c. Middle class
- d. Other: _____

27. Choose the path that you feel best reflects where our *students who are suspended often* will end up following high school:

- a. Attend college
- b. Find employment
- c. Join the military
- d. Unemployed
- e. Correctional facilities
- f. Other: _____

28. With limited resources available, choose ONE option where you feel resources would have the greatest success at reducing behavior issues and suspensions:

- a. Community programs (i.e. parent education)
- b. Work experience opportunities
- c. On-campus organizations (i.e. Phoenix Fliers)
- d. After school programs (i.e. tutoring)
- e. Sports
- f. Other: _____