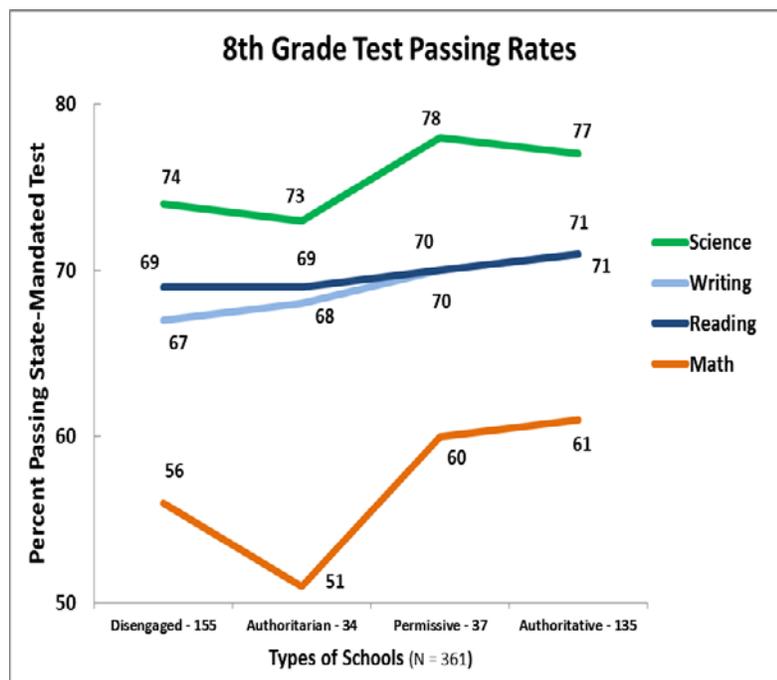


Authoritative Schools have High Achievement Test Passing Rates

Our research found that authoritative schools tend to have high passing rates on state-mandated achievement tests in comparison to other schools. As described in Issue 1, an authoritative school is one in which students report that their teachers are strict but fair in their discipline (high structure) *and* concerned and respectful toward them (high support). In contrast, there are schools with high structure but low support (authoritarian), high support but low structure (permissive), or low structure and low support (disengaged). School climate was measured with surveys of 7th and 8th grade students and test performance was based on schoolwide passing rates on Virginia’s Standards of Learning (SOL) tests. Results for 8th grade in 361 schools are shown here (there are similar results for 7th grade). These analyses controlled for differences in size, poverty level, and minority composition of the student enrollment. In other words, students in schools with authoritative climates tended to perform better than students in other schools regardless of school size, student body poverty level, and minority composition.



Practical Suggestions. Academic instruction and curriculum are critical to achievement test performance, but the quality of school climate is also important and should not be neglected. Students seem to be most responsive to teachers when they feel their teachers are strict but fair in their expectations for student behavior and they believe that their teachers are concerned about them and want them to do well. Although most teachers would endorse those attitudes, students may not always perceive them. Teachers should look for ways to convey their high expectations and demonstrate their concern and respect for their students.

Study Overview. The Virginia Secondary School Climate Survey (including scales from the Authoritative School Climate Survey) was administered as a component of the Virginia School Safety Audit program carried out by the Virginia Center for School Safety of the Department of Criminal Justice Services, in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Education. The survey was designed to yield practical information on school climate and safety conditions that can be used to improve conditions for learning. The survey was developed by researchers (P.I. Dewey Cornell) with the Youth-Nex Center to Promote Effective Youth Development and the Virginia Youth Violence Project of the Curry School of Education, University of Virginia. This project was supported by Grant #2012-JF-FX-0062 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice. This is a correlational study that can support, but not prove, causal relationships. More detailed analyses are available from the Virginia Youth Violence Project: <<http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu>>.