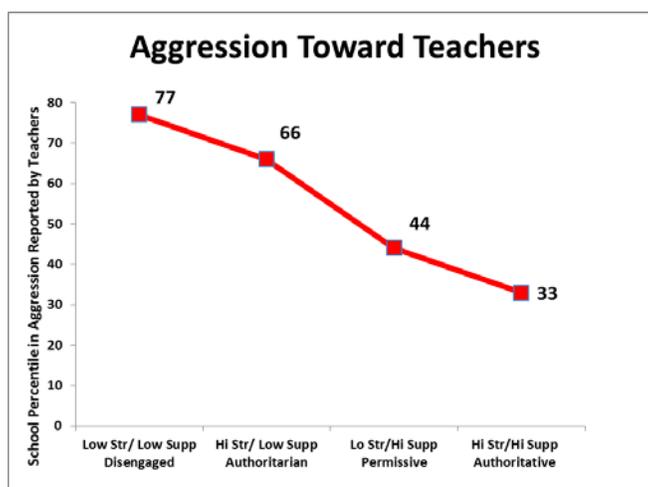


Authoritative High Schools Have Less Student Aggression toward Teachers

Our research found that teachers in high schools with an authoritative climate report less student aggression toward them in comparison to teachers in other high 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 48,027 students in grades 9-12 in 323 Virginia public schools. Student aggression toward teachers was measured by surveys of 13,455 teachers who were asked to report about five types of aggression in the current school year, including verbal aggression, property theft, threats, physical attack, and threats with a weapon. The five types of aggression were summed into a total score for each teacher, and the average for all teachers in a school was used to determine each school's percentile relative to the state. As shown in the chart, aggression toward teachers was at the 33rd percentile in authoritative schools versus 77th percentile in disengaged schools. The comparisons of school types controlled for differences in size, poverty level, and minority composition of the student enrollment.



Practical Suggestions. Teachers do not have to choose between being strict versus being supportive with their students; the best strategy is to do both. Teachers should demonstrate to students that they have high standards and are strict in their enforcement of school rules, but that they treat all students fairly. They should convey concern and respect for their students and a desire for each of them to do well. They should encourage students to seek help for problems or concerns such as bullying and they should be proactive in speaking to students who seem frustrated or unhappy in class. Many schools are shifting to a restorative justice approach to school discipline

< <http://www.weareteachers.com/blogs/post/2015/04/03/restorative-justice-a-different-approach-to-discipline>>. Two evidence-based resources for guiding and improving student behavior are My Teaching Partner-Secondary <<http://www.mtpsecondary.net/>> and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) <<http://ttac.odu.edu/pbisva/>>.

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) at 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>>.