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TEACHING INTERRUPTED

Do Discipline Policies in Today's Public Schools Foster the Common Good?

PREPARED BY
PUBLIC AGENDA WITH SUPPORT FROM

COMMON GOOD
REFORMING AMERICA'S LAWSUIT CULTURE

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Teaching Interrupted: Do Discipline Policies in Today's Public Schools Foster the Common Good?

Executive Summary

Too many students are losing critical opportunities for learning—and too many teachers are leaving the profession—because of the behavior of a few persistent troublemakers. What's more, say teachers, today's misbehaving students are quick to remind them that students have rights and their parents can sue.

These are some key findings in *Teaching Interrupted: Do Discipline Policies in Today's Public Schools Foster the Common Good?* based on national random sample surveys of 725 middle and high school teachers and 600 parents of middle and high school students. The surveys offer a detailed look at the discipline issue, exploring its causes, the effectiveness of current policies, the impact on school climate and receptivity to various solutions. *Teaching Interrupted* was underwritten by Common Good, a non-partisan policy group focusing on legal issues in the United States today.

A Culture of Second-Guessing

According to the study, teachers operate in a culture of challenge and second-guessing—one that has an impact on their ability to teach and maintain order. Nearly half of teachers (49%) complain that they have been accused of unfairly disciplining a student. More than half (55%) say that districts backing down from assertive parents causes discipline problems. Nearly 8 in 10 teachers (78%) say that there are persistent troublemakers in their school who should have been removed from regular classrooms.

Both teachers and parents support a variety of remedies, ranging from more special schools for misbehaving students to removing monetary awards for parents who sue.

Discipline: An Old Story

Discipline has been a recurring theme in public opinion research on public schools for years, and *Teaching Interrupted* suggests that educators have made only limited progress addressing it. The issue continues to bedevil teachers, concern parents and derail learning in schools across the country.

It's almost unanimously accepted among teachers (97%) that a school needs good discipline and behavior in order to flourish, and 78% of parents agree. It's also widely accepted among both groups that part of a school's mission—in addition to teaching the three R's—is to teach kids to follow the rules so they can become productive citizens (93% and 88%).

Yet, the observations of both teachers and parents collected in this study suggest that today's school discipline policies may not be working in the interest of the common good. For example:

- *The vast majority of both teachers (85%) and parents (73%) say the school experience of most students suffers at the expense of a few chronic offenders.* Most teachers (78%) report that students who are persistent behavior problems and should be removed from school grounds are not removed.

- *Students pay a heavy price academically when schools tolerate the chronic bad behavior of the few.* Most teachers (77%) admit their teaching would be a lot more effective if they didn't have to spend so much time dealing with disruptive students. Similarly, many parents (43%) believe their child would accomplish more in school if teachers weren't distracted by discipline issues.

- *Lack of parental support and fear of lawsuits are ever-present concerns for many teachers*. Nearly 8 in 10 teachers (78%) say students are quick to remind them that

they have rights or that their parents can sue. Nearly half (49%) say they have been accused of unfairly disciplining a child. More than half (52%) say behavior problems often stem from teachers who are soft on discipline "because they can't count on parents or schools to support them." Nevertheless, approximately 7 in 10 teachers (69%) and parents (72%) say it's just a handful of parents in their own school who challenge or threaten to sue when their child is disciplined.

- *Many teachers say documentation requirements go beyond common sense.* Although relatively few teachers (14%) reject the need to document incidents of misbehavior as too cumbersome, more than 4 in 10 (44%) say the requirements in their own school "go beyond common sense" and are used primarily to protect the schools from potential lawsuits. The overwhelming majority of teachers (79%) would reserve the use of special hearings—where witnesses are called and lawyers are present—for only the most egregious discipline cases.

- *Student discipline and behavior problems are pervasive.* More than half of the teachers surveyed (52%)—and 43% of the parents—report having an armed police officer stationed on their school grounds, and large numbers indicate that discipline is a concern in their own school. On the whole, the findings suggest that the schools are doing a good job responding to the most serious behavior problems, like drugs and guns, but that they should be doing a lot better when it comes to minor violations of the rules, such as talking out, horseplay, disrespect and the like.

- *Student discipline takes a toll on teachers.* More than 1 in 3 teachers say they have seriously considered quitting the profession—or know a colleague who has left—because student discipline and behavior became so intolerable. And 85% believe new teachers are particularly unprepared for dealing with behavior problems.

- *Problems with student behavior appear to be more acute in urban schools and in schools with high concentrations of student poverty.* Compared with their counterparts, teachers in these schools are more likely to cite student discipline as a top problem, more likely to say it is driving teachers out of the profession and more likely to indicate it has a serious negative impact on student learning.

The Main Culprits

Topping the list of causes of behavior problems in the nation's schools is parents' failure to teach their children discipline (82% of teachers and 74% of parents). Second on the list is: "There's disrespect everywhere in our culture—students absorb it and bring it to school" (73% and 68%). Other Public Agenda research shows that only about a third

of parents say they have succeeded in teaching their child to have self-control and discipline, while half say they have succeeded in teaching their child to do their best in school.

Along with inattentive parents and an overall culture of disrespect, teachers and parents also attribute behavior problems to: overcrowded schools and classrooms (62% of teachers and 54% of parents); parents who are too hasty in challenging school decisions on discipline (58% of teachers and 42% of parents); districts that back down from assertive parents (55% of teachers and 48% of parents); and teachers who ease up on discipline because they worry they may not get support (52% of teachers).

Open to Many Solutions—from Alternative Schools to Limits on Litigation

Despite multiple and complicated causes, the discipline problem is not insurmountable, according to the teachers and parents who participated in this study. In fact, majorities of both teachers and parents voice support for all of the ideas tested in the surveys, although some garner much more intense backing than others. The number of respondents who show "very" strong support (as opposed to "somewhat" strong) indicates the intensity of support. The proposals fell into the following categories:

Dealing with "persistent troublemakers"

- Seventy percent of teachers and 68% of parents strongly support the establishment of "zero-tolerance" policies so students know they will be kicked out of school for serious violations, with another 23% of teachers and 20% of parents indicating they support this idea somewhat (Total support: 93% teachers; 89% parents).
- In addition, 46% of teachers and 33% of parents strongly support giving principals a lot more authority to handle discipline issues as they see fit, with

another 38% of teachers and 37% of parents supporting this idea somewhat (Total support: 84% teachers; 70% parents).

- More than half of teachers (57%) and 43% of parents also especially liked proposals for establishing alternative schools for chronic offenders, with another 30% of teachers and 32% of parents liking this idea somewhat (Total support: 87% teachers; 74% parents).

Putting more responsibility on parents

- A strong majority of teachers (69%) say finding ways to hold parents more accountable for kids' behavior would be a very effective solution to the schools' discipline problems, with another 25% saying they think it would be somewhat effective (Total support: 94% teachers).

Limiting lawsuits on discipline

- Forty-two percent of teachers and 46% of parents strongly support limiting lawsuits to serious situations like expulsion, with another 40% of teachers and 32% of parents liking this idea somewhat (Total support: 82% teachers; 78% parents).
- Fifty percent of teachers and 43% of parents also strongly approve of removing the possibility of monetary awards for parents who sue over discipline issues, with another 32% of teachers and 27% of parents approving somewhat (Total support: 82% teachers; 69% parents).

Consistently enforcing the little rules

- Both groups show high levels of support for the "broken windows" approach—strictly enforcing the little rules so the right tone is created and bigger problems are avoided: 61% of teachers and 63% of parents strongly support this, with another 30% of teachers and 25% of parents supporting this idea somewhat (Total support: 91% teachers; 88% parents).
- Parents, in particular, think dress codes are a very (59%) or somewhat (25%) good idea (Total support: 75% teachers; 84% parents).
- Most teachers believe putting more of an emphasis on classroom management skills in teacher education programs would go a long way toward improving student discipline and behavior: 54% say this would be a very effective solution and another 37% somewhat effective (Total support: 91% teachers).
- Teachers also believe that treating special education students just like other students, unless their misbehavior is related to their disability, is a good approach: 65% of teachers say this would be a very effective solution, while another 29% consider it somewhat effective (Total support: 94% teachers).

About Common Good and Public Agenda

Teaching Interrupted was conducted by Public Agenda for Common Good, a bipartisan organization whose mission is to call attention to America's "lawsuit culture." Public Agenda is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization that examines public thinking about a wide range of social and political issues. As an organization, Public Agenda takes no position on the role litigation plays in public school discipline policies or in any other area of American life. Common Good gave Public Agenda complete freedom to use its own judgment and expertise in conducting and reporting this research. The purpose of this document is to report the views of parents and teachers on this subject, not to endorse them.

Finding 1: An Old Problem with Real Costs

For teachers and parents, student discipline and behavior is a major concern, one that affects both teacher morale and student learning.

Probably few people will be surprised that this study shows student discipline and behavior to be an important concern for teachers and parents. Past surveys, including some conducted by Public Agenda, have shown this to be a persistent issue. But it is eye-opening to consider the very real costs the problem exacts of education in terms of teacher morale, teacher attrition and student learning.

In *Teaching Interrupted*, we tally the damaging impact student misbehavior is having on today's schools. But before reporting the details, it may be useful to add a word about what teachers and parents mean when they talk about discipline in schools. For well over a decade, Public Agenda has addressed this topic in surveys and focus groups with parents, teachers and others. Although there is overwhelming consensus for more disciplined schools, few want them to become intimidating places where children tremble before teachers and silence is the rule. Educators and parents alike readily accept that kids will be kids, and that energy, spontaneity and a little impishness here and there are natural parts of childhood. Yet both parents and teachers seem to yearn for schools that offer a more civil and respectful atmosphere, where teachers can teach and students can learn, and where the adults, not the kids, set the rules.

Start with the Teachers

Early in the research it became clear that teachers—who spend countless hours in school buildings and bear witness to the behavior of hundreds of students—were in a far

better position to judge and report the specific discipline issues facing their own school. Parents often are not as knowledgeable about the behavior of students overall and are quite naturally focused mainly on their own child's experiences. As a result, while we consistently report the views of both teachers and parents throughout *Teaching Interrupted,* it is the views of teachers that drive the analysis. Moreover, although discipline problems affect the wide spectrum of schools across the country, many of the problems appear to be especially severe in urban schools and schools with a high concentration of students from low-income families.

An Extremely Important Area

Teachers and parents agree in overwhelming numbers that good student behavior is a must-have for schools and kids to thrive—an essential condition before teaching and learning can take place. Virtually all teachers (97%) and an overwhelming majority of parents (78%) say good discipline and behavior is a prerequisite for a successful school[*]. Vast majorities go further, saying the job of the public schools is not simply to ensure that kids achieve academically but also to "teach kids to follow the rules so they are ready to join society" (93% of teachers and 88% of parents).

According to these data, however, there is much room for improvement in terms of student discipline and behavior. Speaking of their own school, pluralities of teachers (49%) and parents (45%) say student discipline ranks "somewhere in the middle" in the range of problems. And some teachers (30%) and parents (15%) say it is one of the top problems.

[*] Full question wording and responses are available in the Complete Survey Results beginning on page 43.

Cops with Guns

Perhaps the harshest testimonial to the seriousness of the problem is this simple data point: 52% of America's teachers report their school has an armed police officer stationed on school grounds—and more than 4 in 10 parents (43%) know this as well. The number is higher among high school teachers (60%), but a substantial 45% of middle school teachers also report having an armed officer on the premises. Teachers working in urban (62%) and suburban (60%) schools, in the South (70%) or in schools where all or most of the students are African American or Hispanic (67%) are more likely to report that their school has an armed police officer on-site.

Instruction Is the Minimal Piece

In the context of the national push to raise standards and academic expectations, the discipline problem gains even greater relevance. In one of the most profound findings in this study, most teachers—and many parents—say discipline is such a distraction that student learning is suffering. More than 3 in 4 teachers (77%) acknowledge that "if it weren't for discipline problems, I could be teaching a lot more effectively," with 40% saying that they *strongly* agree. More than 4 in 10 parents (43%) believe their child "could be learning a lot more if the teachers weren't so busy trying to control the classroom"—although 52% disagree.

In the words of a New Jersey teacher: "Instruction becomes—I don't want to say the minimal piece, but often it does become that. Often the first month or two you're just getting through all their emotional and thinking management.… They're not focused on getting an education."

"I'm Not Doing It Anymore"

Lack of discipline in the schools engenders other serious costs as well. The findings in *Teaching Interrupted* reveal that problems with student discipline and behavior are driving substantial numbers of teachers out of the profession. More than 1 in 3 teachers (34%) have seriously considered quitting because of student discipline and behavior. "I haven't [quit] yet. I have wanted to many times. I have cried and been very upset. I have actually had students lie to the point where I could have been written up," said a Florida middle school teacher.

And it appears that teachers are actually leaving their jobs—not just thinking about it. More than 1 in 3 teachers (34%) responding to this survey say colleagues in their school have quit or were asked to leave because student discipline and behavior were too challenging (another 29% are not sure). As another Florida teacher told us: "We actually had a teacher in our department that quit. She ended up going home one day and saying, 'That is it. I'm not doing it anymore.' She was gone."

Teachers are not the only ones who leave: 1 in 5 parents (20%) have considered moving their child to another school or have already done so because discipline and behavior were such problems.

Even More Troubles for the Urban and the Poor

Although schools across the spectrum have problems with student behavior, the issue appears to be more acute in urban schools and in schools with high poverty. Student discipline is cited as a top problem by 42% of teachers in urban schools—in contrast with only 1 in 4 of their rural (25%) and suburban (26%) counterparts. A 51% majority of

urban teachers *strongly* agree that "if it weren't for discipline problems," they "could be teaching a lot more effectively." The numbers are lower among rural (35%) and suburban (38%) teachers. Urban teachers (43%) are more likely to report teacher attrition caused by student discipline problems than are rural teachers (27%).

Problems with student discipline are also more acute in schools with the highest concentration of economically disadvantaged kids (those where 75% or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch). The pattern of detrimental effects repeats: teachers in the most impoverished schools are more likely to say discipline is a top problem (45% compared with 15% of teachers in schools where less than 25% of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch); twice as likely to report teachers have left in recent years because student discipline was such a problem (49% to 24%) and more likely to *strongly* agree that "if it weren't for discipline problems," they "could be teaching a lot more effectively" (54% to 31%).

Sink or Swim

Teachers in the focus groups said that newer teachers are particularly vulnerable to the negative consequences of discipline problems. They pointed out that newcomers typically lack the experience or training to deal with behavior issues, that students are more likely to test them and that they are often assigned the harder-to-manage classes.

The survey indicates this is more than anecdotal. For example, 85% of teachers who took part in *Teaching Interrupted* believe that "new teachers are particularly unprepared for dealing with behavior problems in their classroom," a sentiment Public Agenda has uncovered in previous surveys.[i,ii] One second-year teacher was feeling the

pressure: “It has been tough…it is kind of a sink-or-swim program right now. You are just thrown in there [to] see if you can handle it.”

Is Anybody Listening?

The education field bemoans the rate at which teachers drop out of their profession, yet few focus on student discipline as a serious cause of the problem. These findings provide fresh evidence that the losses and costs in terms of attrition of personnel are very real and deserve attention. Who knows just how much motivated talent the public schools lose every year when teachers are overwhelmed by problems with discipline? And these findings suggest an even more important rationale for taking a serious look at the urgency of the problem: the large number of teachers reporting significant consequences for the academic achievement of students—especially when they are in the nation’s cities and highest poverty schools. Even as the pressure to raise standards and improve student performance mounts, it is apparent that much time and opportunity to learn is being lost. Finally, the fact that so many of the nation’s middle and high schools feel they need an armed police officer on their grounds is a sobering reality whose cost may be more than can be measured in dollars.

Finding 2: The Tyranny of the Few

Teachers and parents are convinced that the school experience of most students suffers because of the unruly, disruptive behavior of just a handful of students.

America's public schools were founded on the belief that all members of society benefit from an educated citizenry, that a basic education for all citizens is essential for a democracy. But today, teachers and parents believe that the good of the many is in jeopardy because of the misbehavior of the few. Most teachers surveyed for *Teaching Interrupted* said outright that there are some students in their school who are so badly behaved they should have already been removed from the building, and overwhelming numbers admit most students suffer because of a few persistent troublemakers. Although the schools seem to have made headway when it comes to handling the most serious discipline problems, they appear to routinely fall short when dealing with less serious violations.

The Same Names Over and Over Again

Both teachers and parents clearly believe that most discipline problems in schools are caused by just a few kids but that all students end up paying the price. Large majorities of teachers (78%) and parents (74%) say it's just a handful of students who cause most of the problems in their school; only 21% and 15%, respectively, say it's more widespread. One teacher conducts her own reconnaissance at the start of each semester: "There is a handful. You can check the in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension list. You recognize the names over and over again. If you see them on your list, you know what to expect."

The source of the problem may be limited, but the consequences and costs are widely felt. An overwhelming 85% of teachers agree that "in the end, most students suffer because of a few persistent troublemakers" (43% *strongly* agree). Most parents (73%) are of the same mind on this point. "It's a low number [of students], but the effect is disproportionate. You can have one kid blow up a whole class," said a Florida teacher. "There are kids that are trying to learn. They definitely feel like they are losing out," added a colleague.

Just Terrorizing Other Students

Nor do teachers claim their own school has found the Rosetta stone for handling chronic discipline problems. In conversations with teachers, it was startling to realize how rare it was for the schools to take effective action until a student truly crossed the line—by doing something violent or outrageous. "We have students that just terrorize other students, and yet we can't get rid of them, and they know this," a New Jersey teacher said. Nearly 8 in 10 teachers (78%) admit their building has persistent troublemakers who should already have been removed and sent to alternative schools. A much smaller proportion of parents agree (37%), with almost 1 in 4 saying they don't know.

The frustration with problem students being constantly recycled through the system often coexists with genuine concern that the system has failed to come up with an effective alternative for the toughest cases, those children who seem to refuse to learn. In the focus groups, it was clear that teachers and parents were looking for a way to retrieve, not abandon, these students. "A lot of these kids who are troublemakers," a Florida

teacher told us, “are dying to have some consistency because they don’t have it in their life anyway.”

The contrast between how public schools and private schools handle student discipline was instructive to many in the focus groups. In the survey, by a 41% to 25% margin, teachers believe the private schools in their community outdo the public when it comes to dealing with student discipline (34% are not sure). Those who give the nod to private schools believe the reason they do a better job is mainly because private schools “have stricter rules and kick out troublemakers” (69%), not because students there come from more affluent families (4%) or because they have stronger parental involvement (27%). The views of parents virtually mirror those of teachers: by a 39% to 29% margin, parents say their local private schools do a better job on student discipline (32% are not sure), and, among those who feel this way, 55% say it is mostly because private schools “have stricter rules and kick out troublemakers.”

Treading Lightly on Special Education

Public schools also appear to be failing when it comes to disciplining special needs students. Focus group participants didn’t say that special needs kids were especially prone to misbehave. But there was a definite sense—especially among teachers—that the authority of the public schools to effectively discipline special needs students who do break the rules is constrained both by the law and by anticipatory fears of parental challenge. More than 3 in 4 (76%) teachers believe that “students with

I.E.P.'s* who misbehave are often treated too lightly, even when their misbehavior has nothing to do with their disability." Most parents (75%), for their part, are unaware that this is even an issue, although parents of special needs students are much more likely to be familiar with it than other parents (41% vs. 16%).

Better on the Most Serious Offenses

Disturbingly high numbers of the teachers and parents surveyed in *Teaching Interrupted* report serious problems in their school with issues like illegal drugs (41% and 46%) and physical fighting (36% and 30%). But it is at least somewhat reassuring that most teachers and parents believe their school responds swiftly and forcefully to these serious offenses. Overwhelming majorities (83% and 88%) say their school has a quick, no-nonsense response to weapons or drugs, with 63% of teachers and 76% of parents saying they *strongly* agree. In New Jersey, a teacher said, "There are some no-brainers, like no guns, no weapons, no drugs, none of that kind of stuff going on. There are certain things that are certainly zero tolerance."

As to how assertive their colleagues are when fighting breaks out among students, teachers are divided. Although just over half (51%) predict that most teachers in their school would physically intervene and pull kids apart, almost half (45%) think their colleagues would be either "very reluctant" or would "never" do so—either because they are afraid of getting hurt themselves (49%) or because they are worried about getting mixed up in legal trouble (45%). Interestingly, only 17% of teachers say their school has an official policy that discourages them from physically intervening when students fight.

* I.E.P.: Individualized Education Plan

Yawning Aloud, Putting Their Feet up on the Desk

If the schools respond quickly to transgressions that compromise the safety of their students and teachers, they appear to be far less effective in dealing with the low-intensity violations of school order. Nearly 6 in 10 teachers (and 43% of parents) believe that their school should be doing a lot better in dealing with routine misbehavior.

When asked about nine specific student misbehaviors, majorities of teachers say their school has serious problems with six of them. [See Table 2.] Topping the list is students who disrupt class by talking out of turn and horsing around (69%). Almost 6 in 10 teachers also point to cheating, lateness, disrespect and bullying as serious problems; more than half say rowdiness is a serious concern. A New Jersey teacher commented, "What I find amazing, and I teach middle school, seventh and eighth graders, is this lack of morals. There's just a disrespect for classroom materials; they'll write all over things, desks, rulers…I don't even think they think [it's] wrong, and it just amazes me. The gum chewing…the yawning aloud or putting their feet up on the desk…like they didn't know that was inappropriate."

Kids Will Be Kids?

Taken individually, these more typical problems might draw a "what else is new, kids will be kids" response. But teachers having to deal with a series of such low-level interruptions, day in and day out, complain that they are in the business of crowd control, not education—and many in our focus groups talked about exactly that. What's more, when it comes to student learning and teacher morale, the cumulative impact of such

disruptions may be as costly as the most dramatic incidents—although they garner less press coverage and op-ed outrage.

Fighting in the City, Cheating in Suburbia

Not surprisingly, perhaps, urban school teachers are substantially more likely than their rural and suburban counterparts to report problems in their school when it comes to student rowdiness, class disruptions, lateness, truancy, physical fighting and lack of respect toward teachers. [See Table 3.] There are two notable exceptions: First, the data show virtually no differences across the groups when illegal drugs are at issue. Second, suburban teachers are more likely than the others to report cheating as a serious problem.

Teachers in schools with a high concentration of students eligible for free or reduced-cost lunch are also substantially more likely to report specific discipline problems such as class disruptions, disrespect toward teachers and rowdiness, among others.

The Swing Vote

A teacher interviewed in the Florida focus group offered her own demographic analysis of the students in the typical classroom. According to her, there are three types: those who show up eager and loving to learn; those who are always ready to make trouble or act the class clown; and the larger "swing vote," those students who follow the prevailing atmosphere in the class and school. In essence, when a teacher or a school enforces the rules, deals effectively with the tougher cases and insists on accountability, students quickly learn what is and what is not permissible and behave accordingly. As we

will see in Finding 5, teachers and parents are especially disposed to a solution to student misbehavior that directly addresses the “swing” students: strictly enforcing the little rules so that the right tone is created and bigger problems are avoided.

Finding 3: Getting the Support They Need

Most teachers say their principals support them on discipline, but many say formal documentation requirements sometimes go beyond common sense.

Teachers overwhelmingly accept responsibility for handling behavior problems in their own classroom. To them, it's part of the job. At the same time, they believe the principal sets the tone for the building—and in one of the good news stories to come out of this study, a large number say they can count on their own principal for help when it comes to backing them on discipline decisions.

Teachers are less sanguine about school policy and procedures for documenting incidents of misbehavior. While few teachers say their school's requirements are over-extensive or cumbersome, many feel they sometimes go beyond common sense.

It's Part of the Job

Teachers still see managing student discipline and behavior as primarily a teacher's job and are hardly anxious to hand off responsibility for classroom discipline to administrators. In the focus groups, teachers sometimes criticized colleagues who they thought were shirking their responsibility by being too quick to send students to the principal's office. Almost 9 in 10 (89%) believe that an integral part of being a teacher is knowing how to handle the inevitable misconduct that will crop up in the classroom. Just 9% of teachers believe instead that "the profession would be better off if discipline were the responsibility of the supervisors in the building."

Lean on Me

Nevertheless, teachers believe that the overall atmosphere of a school and enforcement of policies concerning student behavior are determined by a school's leadership. Almost 9 in 10 (89%) agree it's the principal who sets the tone when it comes to discipline and order, with more than half (53%) saying they *strongly* agree. What's more, experience tells teachers that sooner or later someone will challenge their decisions on discipline, and that's when they need their principal's support. In fact, nearly 1 in 2 teachers (49%) say they have been accused of unfairly disciplining or reprimanding a child. When it happened, 2 out of 3 say an administrator had to get involved to resolve the dispute.

Interestingly, when identifying the broad underlying causes of behavior problems in the nation's public schools, 44% of teachers point to lack of support by administrators. But their own personal experience tells them something different: more than 7 in 10 teachers (72%) say they can virtually always or mostly rely on their own principal to support them on matters of student discipline and behavior. "My administration's very supportive. If I say it happened, it was that way," said one teacher from New Jersey.

Previous research conducted by Public Agenda confirms just how crucial administration support is in the minds of teachers. In our survey of new public school teachers, 82% said they would prefer to work in a school with supportive administrators than one that offered a significantly higher salary.[iii]

Documentation: Too Much of a Good Thing

The teachers we spoke with were matter-of-fact about the need to document incidents of student misbehavior. They knew that having a written record would protect them if they were ever questioned. They also knew that if they needed their principal's support, they would be asked if they had followed proper procedures. More than 7 in 10 teachers (73%) say the official documentation required for incidents of student misbehavior in their school is about right; only 14% say it's over-extensive and cumbersome; 11% say it's not extensive enough.

In focus groups, teachers also readily acknowledged the fallibility of their colleagues—misunderstandings can occur, errors in judgment can be made, oversights are always possible. A focus group participant from Missouri said, "I think students deserve due process. As a parent and a teacher, if my child, or a child in my classroom, had done something wrong, I think they have a right to discuss it, to talk about it. I don't think there should ever be, 'You did this, see you, good-bye.'" A sizable 33% of teachers say documentation requirements "are on target—students need these protections because administrators and teachers make mistakes." Still, the opposite viewpoint—shared by 44% of teachers—is that the schools have resorted to these procedures mostly to protect them from parental or legal challenges (with another 23% unsure). As one Missouri teacher put it: "…now we document all this stuff. The irony here is as we're documenting it more, we have less control."

Similarly, teachers are also split over whether the process for expelling students who really shouldn't be there is "too elaborate and requires too much documentation"

(38%) or “strikes the right balance in protecting accused students and the school” (40%). (Another 23% are unsure.)

Too Many Rights?

There are more telling indications that many teachers feel the schools have gone too far in expanding the power of students and parents to challenge educators over discipline decisions. For one thing, teachers feel their authority is undermined when students are overly empowered. Nearly 8 in 10 teachers (78%) agree that “today’s students are all too quick to remind you that they have rights or that their parents can sue.”

Although teachers accept the need for due process, they do want some limits and boundaries: the overwhelming majority (79%) would reserve formal procedures—such as a hearing with witnesses and lawyers—for the most egregious cases; about 1 in 10 teachers (12%) say that hearings and the like should be available “any time a parent feels the school has disciplined their child unfairly.”

Finding 4: Who's to Blame?

Topping the list of causes of behavior problems in the schools is parents' failure to teach children discipline, followed by a general disrespect in society and a growing willingness on the part of parents and students to challenge schools' authority.

The conviction that parents play the central role in the way children learn and behave in school is one of the most unambiguous and recurring trends in Public Agenda's extensive body of opinion data on the public schools.[iv,v,vi] A recent Public Agenda survey showed the degree to which parents themselves accept responsibility for their own shortcomings on this front: almost 6 in 10 agreed that when a child doesn't know how to behave, it usually means parents are not doing their job.[vii] As one parent from a northern Virginia suburb explained, "Sometimes parents aren't disciplining their children at home. Maybe it's because a lot of parents both are working so there's not a lot of time to be a bad guy.… You don't want [to] come home and tell your child no…[but] somebody has to tell them no, and they have to know that there are boundaries."

"I'm Lucky if I Get a Response"

Parents' failure to teach their children discipline tops the list of the underlying causes of behavior problems in today's public schools. [See Table 4.] On a scale of 1 to 5, 82% of teachers and 74% of parents rate this as either a "4" or a "5." Moreover, more than half of teachers (52%) believe that the schools' problems with student behavior result from teachers being soft on discipline "because they can't count on parents or schools to support them." Other Public Agenda research shows that only 34% of parents say they have succeeded in teaching their child to have self-control and discipline and

only half say they have succeeded in teaching their child to do their best in school.[viii] "The thing I see missing when we're looking at accountability and dealing with discipline is the parent," a Missouri teacher said. "Somehow we've got to get the parents.… They will not come to school." Another said, "The student will mouth off or not do homework, and I'll contact the parent in writing or on the phone, and I'm lucky if I get a response."

"The More Money They Make…"

Not surprisingly, the discussion quickly turns to parents when teachers talk about student discipline and behavior problems. Their concerns often seem to be about parents who are not paying enough attention to their kids and failing to teach self-control or appropriate behavior. But teachers also talk about another kind of parent, those who are unreasonable, who instinctively refuse to consider that their child may be at fault. According to a New Jersey teacher, "The more educated the parent is and the more money that they make…their respect for the teacher is not the same. They feel they are on a higher level, they question, they're so defensive of their children and it's a big problem.… They will try to intimidate you."

The majority of teachers (69%) say, at most, there's just a handful of parents like this, who challenge or threaten to sue the school when their child is disciplined, and only 18% say it's more widespread. (As for parents, only 7% think it is widespread.) For their part, parents seem to trust teachers when it comes to discipline. Seventy-five percent believe that virtually all or most of their child's teachers are fair and appropriate when they discipline or reprimand students. A relatively small 30% have ever felt that a teacher has acted unfairly toward their child.

A Lot of Times We Are Afraid of Parents

Unfortunately, the few parents who are always primed to challenge educators appear to have an inordinately negative effect. Nearly 6 in 10 teachers, and 42% of parents, cite parents who are "too quick to challenge and appeal school decisions on discipline" as a main source of discipline problems in the nation's schools. About half of both groups—55% of teachers and 48% of parents—point the finger at school districts "backing down" when they are challenged by parents, because they "are scared of lawsuits." "I am finding a lot of times that we are afraid of parents," said a Florida teacher. "…A lot of times parents will say that they are going to sue. Therefore, [administration] bend[s] down for them quite a bit."

The findings show signs that this growing willingness to question teacher authority has seeped into students' mind-set as well, with an overwhelming number (78%) of teachers believing that "today's students are all too quick to remind you that they have rights or that their parents can sue."

When teachers were asked to choose among three basic factors that may undermine student discipline in the nation's public schools, 40% of teachers point to parents who are far less likely to trust educators, 26% say too many lawsuits and student rights tie the hands of administrators and 24% point to schools' failure to enforce discipline policies already on the books.

Disrespect Everywhere You Turn

Still, teachers and parents recognize that parents are functioning in a society replete with social trends that undermine their efforts to raise well-behaved, respectful

children. About 7 in 10 of both groups say that among the biggest causes of discipline and behavior problems in the schools is the "disrespect everywhere in our culture—students absorb it and bring it to school." A Missouri teacher had a list: "The lack of respect the kids show. The loss of innocence, really. The kind of stuff that I think the kids see, the exposure [from] watching too much TV. Maybe the fact that they're probably not monitored enough. That they read stuff on the Internet."

Another theme that emerged in the focus groups with parents was their belief that society's views about appropriate ways to discipline children have hindered parents' capacity to handle their own kids' behavior as they see fit. The survey results confirm this feeling, with well over half of parents (56%) saying one of the biggest causes of the schools' discipline problems is that "society has put too many limits on parents' right to discipline their own children."

Teachers Get a Pass?

Although conventional wisdom puts much of the onus on teachers, most teachers and parents surveyed for *Teaching Interrupted* reject the notion that teachers are a main cause of student discipline problems. Only about 1 in 4 teachers (26%) and 1 in 3 parents (32%) agree with the statement, "When students misbehave, it usually means the teacher has failed to make lessons engaging," with barely handfuls saying they *strongly* agree (2% and 12%). Similarly small proportions say that the discipline problem resides mainly in teachers who "try to be friends to students rather than authority figures" (34% and 19%). And despite concerns reported earlier about inadequate classroom management

skills among new teachers, the charge that too many don't know how to run a classroom is toward the bottom of the list of possible causes (30% and 25%).

Power to the Teachers

A close look at the data also shows that many teachers and parents are in fact confident in the power of teachers to positively influence student behavior, even in those children who come to school lacking family support or basic values. Majorities of teachers (58%) and parents (60%) believe most students, regardless of the neighborhood, will behave properly as long as expectations are clear and rules are enforced. In contrast, smaller numbers say discipline problems are inevitable in the toughest schools (35% and 33%).

This hopeful sentiment was corroborated in a recent Public Agenda survey of K–12 public school teachers, where approximately 2 out of 3 said they had faith that truly good teachers can overcome societal barriers such as poverty or uninvolved parents and still get their students to learn what they are supposed to.[ix]

The Politics of Race

The focus groups indicated that the politics of race can intrude in discipline decisions. One teacher—an African American—explained, "Here in St. Louis [they] pull the race card very, very fast, instead of looking at the issue. [They are] quick to grab a hold to, 'What's going to help me out of this hole?' If it's a non-African American [who] disciplined me, that's the first thing I'm going to say." But in the survey, a slim majority of teachers believed evenhanded accountability can transcend race-based suspicion. The

survey asked teachers to imagine a white principal taking charge of a school with serious discipline problems and a predominantly African American student body. While 40% of teachers said that "it would probably be tougher" for this principal to enforce discipline for fear of accusations of prejudice, 52% said that "if the principal is effective and fair, it probably wouldn't be a problem." Parents were more closely divided, with 45% saying that "it would probably be tougher" and 48% that it wouldn't be a problem.

Perennial Problem: Overcrowding

These findings suggest that broad social issues are at the heart of most discipline problems, but practical considerations may also be at play. Overcrowded schools and classrooms are among the top causes of student behavior problems as well, according to majorities of both teachers (62%) and parents (54%). One Florida parent expressed, "Honestly, I think…[teachers] are overwhelmed with classroom size. Because in every situation, especially [when it comes to] listening, having the smaller classroom size, they're allowed to focus more on the needs of the children. Whereas when you're dealing with 250 children a day, I don't care who you are, you can be Mighty Max or Superwoman or whatever, you're going to be overwhelmed."

Finding 5: Solving the Problem

Teachers and parents gravitate toward solutions that address the problem of persistent troublemakers, that hold parents more accountable and limit their capacity for legal challenges, and that contribute to an orderly school environment.

Seasoned observers of public opinion know there are countless social policy issues where Americans overwhelmingly agree there's a problem but where there is no consensus about action. But on the issue of discipline in the schools, there are high levels of agreement on both the sources of the problem and solutions. The most popular approaches for solving the discipline problem fall into the following general categories: The first looks at diminishing the impact of those "few persistent troublemakers." The second focuses on ways to hold parents more responsible for their own child's behavior. Another aims to limit parents' capacity for frivolous challenges or lawsuits. The last category revolves around ideas for creating an orderly school environment.[*] [See Table 5.]

Perhaps because respondents are so hopeful about the public schools' capacity to solve discipline and behavior problems, each proposed solution garnered an overwhelming degree of support. To get a sense of priority, our analysis focuses on those who feel strongly about the proposed solution—that is, teachers who say it would be a "*very* effective solution" and parents who say it would be a "*very* good idea." Once again, teachers' experiences with discipline issues proved to be much more detailed and vivid than those of parents, which is why it is teachers who mainly drive the analysis.

[*] While the concepts we wanted to cover were the same for both teachers and parents, some tweaking was necessary to ensure that survey questions were phrased appropriately—that is, that they were not too complicated for parents, not too simple for teachers. Thus, in the solutions battery, answer categories intentionally vary. Teachers were asked how effective they thought each solution would be; parents were asked if they thought each solution was a good or bad idea.

Strong Medicine, A Dose of Common Sense

Given that so many teachers and parents trace most discipline problems to a few chronic offenders—many of whom should already have been removed from the building, according to most teachers—it is not surprising that solutions addressing this issue resonate strongly.

Approximately 7 in 10 teachers (70%) and parents (68%) strongly support establishing and enforcing "zero-tolerance" policies so students know they will be kicked out of school for serious violations. But focus group participants were quick to caution that they did not want to see a blind application of the rules. Instead, they expected the strong medicine to include a dose of common sense. A New Jersey teacher said, "The point is zero tolerance, it's good. It kind of scared some of the kids, but it's with common sense. Every case is different." The appeal of zero-tolerance proposals no doubt stems from people's desire to recapture the sense of accountability they feel has been lost.

Fifty-seven percent of teachers and 43% of parents strongly approve of a proposal to "create more schools that specialize in dealing with students who are chronic discipline problems." Nearly half of teachers (46%) and 33% of parents strongly support giving principals "a lot more authority to handle discipline issues and reduce interference from parents or central administration."

Moving the Onus from the Schools to the Parents

As we saw in Finding 4, large majorities of teachers and parents believe that inadequate parenting is a primary cause of student behavior problems. Thus, it makes sense that so many also point to solutions that deal directly with parents' behavior. Both

groups seem to rally around approaches that have the potential to either pull in parents who've checked out in terms of taking responsibility for their kids' behavior or rein in those who are relentless about defending their children, right or wrong.

Almost 7 in 10 teachers (69%), for instance, feel strongly about a solution that would "find ways to hold parents more accountable for their kids when they misbehave in school." "We have to find some way of engaging the parents," a Missouri teacher said. "We're putting the onus on the schools. We're nagging at the child. That's a *child*. Something has to happen with these parents that are neglecting their children."

Repercussions of Lawsuits

More specifically, teachers and parents respond favorably to proposals that place some limits on parents' ability to legally challenge schools on disciplinary disputes. In the focus groups, both groups acknowledged that schools sometimes make mistakes and that there should be a venue for parents to appeal discipline decisions. But they also talked about the effects of the squeaky wheels—the parents, though small in number, who go to extremes and cause the schools to wrongly back off for fear of litigation.

These sentiments are reflected in the survey findings. More than 4 in 10 teachers (42%) and parents (46%) strongly support a proposal that would limit lawsuits over discipline to only the most serious of situations, like expulsion. Half of teachers (50%) and 43% of parents also strongly support a measure that would eliminate the option of monetary awards when parents sue over discipline issues. One St. Louis parent speculated: "The schools are reluctant because they're facing repercussions of lawsuits

from the parents for kicking their kids out…they may not punish the serious offenders enough because of the fear."

Fixing Broken Windows

Most teachers and parents react positively to solutions that cultivate an orderly school environment and provide a "nip it in the bud" approach to student misconduct. More than 6 in 10 teachers (61%) and parents (63%) strongly back a proposal "to strictly enforce the little rules on behavior so that the right tone is created at school and bigger problems are avoided."

For parents, establishing a dress code is one concrete manifestation of setting the right tone—about 6 in 10 (59%) think it would be a very good idea**.** A much smaller number of teachers feel strongly about this (39%). One explanation could be that having a dress code makes the "what to wear" decision much easier for parents—but for teachers it is just one more rule to enforce, one more incident to document. A Missouri parent told us, "That's why I like the Catholic school system, because they had the dress code. They all wore the same [uniform], so there was no big difference in what the family had or where you came from. Everybody was the same. No competition." A teacher from New Jersey who liked the idea of a dress code said, "It sets a definite tone that when you walk in this door you are going to check some of your 'I'm going to do what I want to do and screw everybody else' [attitude]. You are part of a community, you are part of a school."

Most teachers (54%), in their own version of nipping a problem in the bud, think it would be very effective to "put a lot more emphasis on effective classroom management in teacher education programs." And almost 2 in 3 teachers (65%) think that

“treat[ing] special education students who misbehave just like other students—unless the misbehavior is related to their disability” would be very effective.

Openness to a Wide Variety of Other Solutions

Again, overwhelming numbers of teachers and parents were receptive to virtually all the solutions they were asked about. There are clearly some, however, that enjoy less intense support than others. Only 3 in 10 teachers think assigning armed police officers to patrol the most troubled schools would be very effective—although 51% of parents see it as a very good idea. Process-oriented methods of dealing with discipline problems garnered the least support among teachers, with just 28% pointing to reducing the paperwork for documenting incidents of misbehavior as a very effective solution (31% of parents), and only 21% to creating a school-based committee to deal with discipline appeals (45% of parents).

Easy Does It

It is crucial to remember that the seemingly straightforward support for so many solutions masks a lot of conditional thinking that emerged in the focus groups. By experience and instinct, people know the devil is in the details. For example, teachers are anxious to remove the persistent troublemakers, but they are just as insistent that these children be retrieved, not forgotten. In their search for reestablishing accountability over student behavior, teachers also insisted that common sense not be lost—that gum chewing, for example, not be treated as the equivalent of a capital offense.

Table 1: Teachers' and Parents' Views on Student Discipline and Behavior

% who "strongly" or "somewhat" agree that:	Teachers	Parents
A crucial part of the school's mission is to teach kids to follow the rules so they are ready to join society	93	88
In the end, most students suffer because of a few persistent troublemakers	85	73
My school has a quick, no-nonsense* response to the presence of weapons or drugs	83	88
If it weren't for discipline problems, I could be teaching a lot more effectively	77	NA
Students with IEPs who misbehave are often treated too lightly, even when their misbehavior has nothing to do with their disability	76	NA
When it comes to dealing with routine misbehavior, my school should be doing a lot better	59	43
My child could be learning a lot more if the teachers weren't so busy trying to control the classroom	NA	43

*Parents were asked if their child's school has a "quick, clear-cut" response

Table 2: Typical Student Behavior Problems

% who say item is a "very" or "somewhat" serious problem:	Teachers	Parents
Disrupting class by talking out & horseplay	69	45
Students treating teachers with a lack of respect	60	49
Cheating	58	26
Students showing up late to class	57	30
Bullying & harassment	55	46
Rowdiness in common areas, such as hallways & lunchroom	51	39
Truancy & cutting class	45	33
Illegal drugs	41	46
Physical fighting	36	30

Table 3: Typical Student Behavior Problems by Urbanicity and Poverty Level*

% teachers who say item is a "very" or "somewhat" serious problem	Urban	Suburban	Rural	High Poverty	Low Poverty
Disrupting class by talking out & horseplay	78	66	66	77	54
Students treating teachers with a lack of respect	71	56	55	77	40
Students showing up late to class	69	56	48	70	49
Rowdiness in common areas, such as hallways & lunchroom	67	47	42	68	29
Truancy & cutting class	62	41	36	63	33
Bullying & harassment	60	56	50	65	44
Cheating	56	66	51	59	62
Physical fighting	55	30	28	55	17
Illegal drugs	40	43	40	41	42

*Schools where $\geq$ 75% of students are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program were categorized as "High Poverty"; schools where < 25% of students are eligible were categorized as "Low Poverty."

Table 4: Causes of Student Discipline and Behavior Problems

% who rate the following as "among the biggest causes" of student discipline & behavior problems in the nation's public schools:*	Teachers	Parents
Too many parents fail to teach their kids discipline	82	74
There's disrespect everywhere in our culture– students absorb it & bring it to school	73	68
Society has put too many limits on parents' right to discipline their own children	NA	56
Schools & classes are too crowded	62	54
Parents are too quick to challenge & appeal school decisions on discipline	58	42
School districts are scared of lawsuits & back down when they are challenged by parents	55	48
Today's teachers are softer on discipline because they can't count on parents or schools to support them	52	NA
The schools are too slow to kick out the students who are always making trouble	NA	39
Too many administrators/principals fail to support their teachers on discipline	44	26
Administrators are reluctant to suspend students because they're afraid it will affect the school's reputation & funding	40	NA
Too many teachers try to be friends to students rather than authority figures	34	19
Too many teachers are ineffective at classroom management/don't know how to run a classroom	30	25

*Rating scale of 1 to 5 where 1 means respondent thinks it is not at all a cause of student discipline & behavior problems and 5 means it is among the biggest causes. % shown is net "4" and "5" responses.

Table 5: Solutions to Student Discipline and Behavior Problems

Please indicate how effective/good you think each of the following would be as a solution to the discipline & behavior problems found in the nation's public schools*:	Teachers		Parents	
% responding:	Very effective solution	Somewhat effective solution	Very good idea	Somewhat good idea
Establish & enforce zero-tolerance policies so that students know they will automatically be kicked out of a school for serious violations	70	23	68	20
Find ways to hold parents more accountable for their kids when they misbehave in school	69	25	NA	NA
Treat special education students who misbehave just like other students–unless the misbehavior is related to their disability	65	29	NA	NA
Strictly enforce the little rules on behavior so that the right tone is created at school & bigger problems are avoided	61	30	63	25
Create more schools that specialize in dealing with students who are chronic discipline problems	57	30	43	32
Put a lot more emphasis on effective classroom management in teacher education programs	54	37	NA	NA
Remove the possibility of winning financial awards when parents sue the public schools over discipline issues	50	32	43	27
Give principals a lot more authority to handle discipline issues & reduce interference from parents or central administration	46	38	33	37
Limit lawsuits against the public schools over discipline–allow them only for serious situations like expulsion	42	40	46	32
Implement a dress code for students that sets rules on what students can or can't wear	39	36	59	25
Assign armed police officers to patrol schools that have the most serious discipline problems	30	47	51	26
Reduce the paperwork & formal documentation required to take disciplinary action	28	42	31	31
Create a school-based committee of parents & teachers to resolve appeals by parents who challenge a principal's disciplinary action	21	42	45	35

*Teachers were asked: "Please indicate how effective you think each of the following would be as a solution to the discipline and behavior problems found in the nation's public schools." Parents were asked: "Now I'm going to read a list of things that the nation's public schools could do to improve student discipline and behavior. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a good idea or a bad idea."

Endnotes

i. *Stand by Me: What Teachers Really Think about Unions, Merit Pay, and Other Professional Matters*, Public Agenda 2003, pp. 29, 30, 43. Based on a mail survey conducted in spring 2003 with a national random sample of 1,345 K-12 public school teachers.

ii. *A Sense of Calling: Who Teaches and Why*, Public Agenda 2000, pp. 30, 41. Based on three national telephone surveys: one of 664 public school and 250 private school K-12 teachers who have taught for five years or less; one of 511 public school superintendents and principals; and one of 802 college graduates under the age of 30.

iii. *Ibid*, p. 19.

iv. *Playing Their Parts: Parents and Teachers Talk about Parental Involvement in Public Schools*, Public Agenda 1999, pp. 24, 25, 26. Based on a telephone survey of 1,220 parents with children in public school grades K-12 and a mail survey of 1,000 K-12 public school teachers, both conducted in Fall 1998.

v. *Reality Check*, Public Agenda 2001, pp. 5, 6, 7. Based on telephone surveys conducted in November and December 2000 with national random samples of 601 K-12 public school teachers; 602 parents with children currently attending public school in grades K-12; 600 public school students in middle or high school; 251 employers who make hiring decisions for employees recently out of high school or college; and 254 college professors at two- and four-year colleges who taught freshmen or sophomores in the last two years.

vi. *Stand by Me*, pp. 12, 41.

vii. *A Lot Easier Said Than Done: Parents Talk about Raising Children in Today's America*, Public Agenda 2002, p. 43. Based on telephone interviews with a national random sample of 1,607 parents or guardians of children aged 5 to 17.

viii. *Ibid*, p. 18.

ix. *Stand by Me*, p. 16.

Methodology

The findings in *Teaching Interrupted* are based on two national random sample surveys: a mail survey of 725 public middle and high school teachers and a telephone survey with 600 parents of public school students in grades 5 through 12. The surveys were preceded by six focus groups.

The Mail Survey of Teachers

The first mailing, which included a questionnaire, a cover letter explaining the survey and a postage-paid envelope, was mailed on March 12, 2004, to a random sample of 3,000 public middle and high school teachers in the United States. A reminder postcard was sent on March 18, and a follow-up mailing identical to the first was sent on March 25. All responses received through April 9, 2004, were included in the final tabulated results.

The process netted responses from 725 teachers for a response rate of 24%. The margin of error for the sample of teachers is four percentage points; it is higher when comparing percentages across subgroups.

The sample of teachers was randomly drawn from a comprehensive national database of public middle and high school teachers. Sample was supplied by Market Data Retrieval of Shelton, Connecticut. The survey was fielded and tabulated by Robinson and Muenster Associates, Inc., of Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

The Telephone Survey of Parents

Telephone interviews with 600 parents or guardians of public school students in grades 5 through 12 were conducted between March 11 and March 18, 2004. Interviews averaged 17 minutes in length.

The 600 parents in the nationwide sample were selected through a standard, random-digit-dialing technology whereby every household in the 48 contiguous states had an equal chance of being contacted, including those with unlisted numbers. The margin of error for the sample of parents is plus or minus four percentage points; it is higher when comparing percentages across subgroups.

The survey was fielded by Robinson and Muenster Associates, Inc., and sample was provided by Survey Sampling, Inc.

Focus on Middle and High School

Some readers may wonder why elementary school teachers and parents are not included in this research.* Early on in the focus groups, it became clear that what constitutes student misbehavior in the elementary years is qualitatively different—and less consequential—from what takes place in middle and high school. Because our main interest was in exploring the seriousness of the discipline problem and its impact on student learning, we decided that focusing on middle and high school parents would provide a more interesting, pertinent and richer analysis.

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*Fifth grade can be considered either elementary school or middle school, depending on the district. Thus, the sample may include a small number of teachers or parents from fifth grade elementary schools.

The Questionnaires

Both questionnaires were designed by Public Agenda, and all interpretation of the data reflected in this report was done by Public Agenda. As in all surveys, question order effects and other non-sampling sources of error can sometimes affect results. Steps were taken to minimize these, including extensively pre-testing the survey instruments and, for the telephone survey, randomizing the order in which some questions and answer categories were read.

The Focus Groups

Focus groups allow for an in-depth, qualitative exploration of the dynamics underlying attitudes toward complex issues. Insights from these groups were important to the survey design, and quotes were drawn from them to give voice to attitudes captured statistically through the surveys. Six focus groups were conducted with parents and teachers of public school students in January 2004 in the following four cities: Old Bridge, New Jersey; Alexandria, Virginia; Earth City, Missouri; Safety Harbor, Florida.

Complete Survey Results: Teachers

Teaching Interrupted is based on interviews with national random samples of 725 public middle and high school teachers and 600 parents of public school students in grades 5 through 12. The teacher surveys were conducted by mail March 12-April 9, 2004; the margin of error for the sample of teachers is plus or minus 4 percentage points. Parent surveys were conducted by phone March 11-March 18, 2004; the margin of error for the sample of parents is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Results of less than .5% are signified by an asterisk. Results of zero are signified by a dash. Responses may not always total 100% due to rounding. Combining answer categories may produce slight discrepancies between the numbers in these survey results and the numbers in the report.

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1. In general, when it comes to having a successful school, how important do you think good student discipline and behavior is? Is it:

	%
One of the most important prerequisites……..	97
Somewhere in the middle……	3
Near the bottom……...	*
Not sure…….....	-

2. As far as your own school is concerned, is student discipline and behavior:

	%
One of the top problems……...……...	30
Somewhere in the middle……	49
Near the bottom…….....	20
Not sure…….....	1

3. Thinking about student behavior at your school, how serious a problem would you say each of the following is?

	Very serious	Somewhat serious	Not too serious	Not at all serious	Not sure
a. Bullying and harassment	11	44	38	7	*
b. Cheating	19	40	34	6	2
c. Disrupting class by talking out & horseplay	29	40	25	5	1
d. Illegal drugs	10	31	36	18	5
e. Physical fighting	11	25	40	23	1
f. Rowdiness in the common areas, such as hallways & lunchroom	22	29	37	12	*
g. Students showing up late to class	23	34	31	11	1
h. Students treating teachers with a lack of respect	27	33	27	14	*
i. Truancy & cutting class	15	29	38	17	1

4. In the past several years at your school, have there been cases of teachers quitting or being asked to leave because student discipline and behavior was such a problem or not?

	%
Yes…….....	34
No…….	37
Not sure……	29

5. Have you yourself ever seriously considered quitting the teaching profession because student discipline and behavior was such a problem or not?

	%
Yes……	34
No…….	64
Not sure……	2

6. In your experience, is it a handful of students who cause most of the discipline problems at your school, or is it more widespread than that?

	%
A handful……..	78
More widespread than that……...	21
Not sure……	1

7. At your school, are there persistent troublemakers who should already have been removed from the building and sent to alternative schools or not?

	%
Yes…….....	78
No……	15
Not sure……	7

8. Have you ever been accused by a parent of unfairly disciplining or reprimanding their child or not?

	%
Yes…….....	49
No……	50
Not sure……	1

9. Was the matter always resolved between you and the parent or did an administrator ever have to get involved?
Base: Has been accused by parent of unfairly disciplining or reprimanding a child [n=345]

	%
Always resolved……...	31
Administrator had to get involved……..……	67
Not sure……	2

10. How often do you feel you can count on your principal to firmly support teachers on matters of student discipline and behavior?

	%
Virtually always…….....	35
Most of the time…….....	37
Sometimes……	18
Hardly ever or never…….	9
Not sure……	1

11. How much do you agree or disagree with

each of the following?

	Strongly agree	Somewhat agree	Somewhat disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
a. When students misbehave, it usually means the teacher has failed to make lessons engaging	2	25	33	40	*
b. If it weren't for discipline problems, I could be teaching a lot more effectively	40	36	13	10	1
c. A crucial part of the school's mission is to teach kids to follow rules so they are ready to join society	59	34	4	3	1
d. When it comes to dealing with routine misbehavior, my school should be doing a lot better	25	35	22	17	2
e. When it comes to discipline and order, the principal sets the tone for the school	53	36	6	4	1
f. In the end, most students suffer because of a few persistent troublemakers	43	42	11	4	-
g. New teachers are particularly unprepared for dealing with behavior problems in their classroom	45	40	11	2	2
h. My school has a quick, no-nonsense response to the presence of weapons or drugs	63	20	8	6	3
i. Students with IEPs who misbehave are often treated too lightly, even when their misbehavior has nothing to do with their disability	40	37	11	8	4
j. Teachers or principals who are very firm on discipline will eventually be told to back off by the central office	17	26	20	26	12
k. Today's students are all to quick to remind you that they have rights or that their parents can sue	39	39	14	6	2

12. When it comes to having teachers formally document and officially report incidents of student

	%
Over-extensive and cumbersome…….	14

misbehavior, would you say that your school's requirements are:

About right…….....	73
Not extensive enough……..	11
Not sure……	2

13. Do you think that these documentation requirements:

	%
Are on target – students need these protections because administrators and teachers make mistakes….....	33
Go beyond common sense – they mostly exist to protect the schools from parental or legal challenges……	44
Not sure……	23

14. In your school district, would you say that the process for expelling students who really shouldn't be there:

	%
Is too elaborate and requires too much documentation……..	38
Strikes the right balance in protecting accused students and the school…….	40
Not sure……	23

15. How do you think most teachers at your school would probably react if a fight between students were to break out in front of them?
Do you think most teachers:

	%
Would probably pull the kids apart……..	51
Would probably be very reluctant to physically intervene …….	28
Would call security but never physically intervene……..	17
Not sure……..	4

16. Do you think this is mostly because:
Base: Would probably be very reluctant to physically intervene or would call security but never physically intervene [n=286]

	%
Teachers worry about getting mixed up in legal troubles……	45
Teachers are afraid of getting hurt themselves	49
Not sure……	6

17. Thinking about the parents at your school, about how many would you say challenge or threaten to sue the school when their children are disciplined?

	%
It's just a handful of parents……...	65
It's more widespread than that…….....	18
There are no parents at your school who fit that description…….	4
Not sure……	14

18. When parents want to challenge disciplinary action against their child, school districts can provide a hearing where witnesses can be called, a

	%
Only when major disciplinary action is at stake – hearings for small infractions undermine the authority of educators……...	79

lawyer can be present, etc. In your opinion, should these hearings be provided:

Any time a parent feels the school has disciplined their child unfairly – the schools can be wrong and students deserve to have their side heard…….	12
Not sure……	9

19. In your community, which schools do you think do a better job when it comes to student discipline and behavior?

	%
Local private schools…….....	41
Local public schools……	25
Not sure……	34

20. *If private:* Why do you think the private schools do a better job on student discipline? Is it mostly because they:
Base: Local private schools do a better job [n=244]

	%
Have stronger parental involvement……	27
Have stricter rules and kick out troublemakers…..……..…….……	69
Have students from more affluent families…..	4
Not sure……	*

21. Which comes closer to your view?

	%
No matter what educators do, schools in very needy, tough neighborhoods will have problems with student discipline and behavior……	35
Regardless of the neighborhood, most kids will behave themselves if educators have clear expectations and consistently enforce the rules……..	58
Not sure……	7

22. Imagine that a white principal takes charge of a school that has serious student discipline problems and that happens to have a predominantly African American student body. Do you think:

	%
It would probably be tougher for this principal to enforce discipline for fear of being accused of prejudice…….	40
If the principal is effective and fair it probably wouldn't be a problem…….	52
Not sure……..	8

23. Does your school have an armed police officer stationed on school grounds or not?

	%
Yes……	52
No…….	47
Not sure……	1

24. Does your school have a zero-tolerance policy regarding student discipline and behavior or not?

	%
Yes…….....	36
No…….	52

Not sure……	12

25. Does your school have an official policy that discourages teachers from physically intervening when students fight or not?

	%
Yes…….....	17
No…….	60
Not sure……	23

26. How important is each of the following as a cause of student discipline and behavior problems in the nation's public schools? Please use a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 means you don't think it is a cause at all and 5 means it is among the biggest causes.

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Not sure**
a. Administrators are reluctant to suspend students because they're afraid it will affect the school's reputation and funding	19	15	19	20	20	7
b. There's disrespect everywhere in our culture – students absorb it and bring it to school	3	6	15	26	47	4
c. Too many teachers are ineffective at classroom management	7	29	32	22	8	2
d. Parents are too quick to challenge and appeal school decisions on discipline	4	13	22	28	31	4
e. Too many parents fail to teach their kids discipline	1	3	8	22	60	6
f. Too many school administrators fail to support their teachers on discipline	9	19	25	25	19	3
g. Schools and classes are too crowded	5	11	19	27	35	4
h. School districts are scared of lawsuits and back down when they are challenged by parents	5	14	18	24	31	8
i. Too many teachers try to be friends to students rather than authority figures	10	24	30	23	11	2
j. Today's teachers are softer on discipline because they can't count on parents or schools to support them	6	14	24	26	26	4

27. Below are three of the many things which may or may not be undermining student discipline and behavior in the nation's public schools. Which of these three do you think has the greatest impact?

	%
Too many lawsuits and too many rights for students tie the hands of administrators…..…	26
Parents are far less likely to trust and support	40

the authority of educators……...	
The schools are failing to enforce discipline policies that are already on the books……..	24
Not sure……	10

28. Which is closer to your view of the mission of teaching:

	%
Knowing how to deal with student discipline is an integral part of what it means to be a good teacher……...……..	89
The profession would be better off if discipline were the responsibility of the supervisors in the building.....	9
Not sure……	2

29. Please indicate how effective you think each of the following would be as a solution to the discipline and behavior problems found in the nation's public schools.

	Very effective	**Somewhat effective**	**Not too effective**	**Not at all effective**	**Not sure**
a. Assign armed police officers to patrol schools that have the most serious discipline problems	30	47	16	4	3
b. Create a school-based committee of parents and teachers to deal with parents who challenge a principal's disciplinary action	21	42	21	11	5
c. Establish and enforce zero-tolerance policies so that students know they will automatically be kicked out of a school for serious violations	70	23	5	1	1
d. Find ways to hold parents more account-able for their kids when they misbehave in school	69	25	5	1	*
e. Give principals a lot more authority to handle discipline issues and reduce interference from parents or central administration	46	38	12	1	3
f. Implement a dress code for students that sets rules on what students can and can't wear	39	36	19	6	1

[Continued]
29. Please indicate how effective you think each of the following would be as a solution to the discipline and behavior problems found in the nation's public schools.

	Very effective	Somewhat effective	Not too effective	Not at all effective	Not sure
g. Limit lawsuits against the public schools over discipline – allow them only for serious situations like expulsion	42	40	11	3	5
h. Put a lot more emphasis on effective classroom management in teacher education programs	54	37	7	1	1
i. Reduce the paperwork and formal documentation required to take disciplinary action	28	42	22	6	3
j. Remove the possibility of winning financial awards when parents sue the public schools over discipline issues	50	32	11	2	6
k. Create more schools that specialize in dealing with students who are chronic discipline problems	57	30	9	3	2
l. Strictly enforce the little rules on behavior so that the right tone is created at school and bigger problems are avoided	61	30	6	2	1
m. Treat special education students who misbehave just like other students–unless the misbehavior is related to their disability	65	29	4	1	2

		%
30. Are you:	Male……..	39
	Female…… …….……	61

		%
31. How many years have you been a teacher in the public schools?	Less than 5 years……..	12
	5-10 years…….	21
	11-20 years……...	24
	More than 20 years…….…….	43

		%
32. Do you teach at a:	Middle or junior high school…….……..	41
	High school……..	56
	Something else ……	4

		%
33. About how many students attend your school?	Less than 500…….…….....	19
	500-999……	34
	1,000-1,499……..	24
	1,500 or more…….....	23

		%
34. Which best describes the location of your school?	Urban……	27
	Suburban……..	36
	Small town/Rural…….	37

		%
35. What state do you teach in?	Northeast……...	16
	Midwest…….	27
	South…….	39
	West……...	17

		%
36. About how many of your school's students are African American or Hispanic?	Virtually all……..	9
	Most…….	17
	Some……	45
	A few or none……..	29

		%
37. Approximately what percentage of students at your school are eligible for the free or reduced-price lunch program?	Under 25%.....	27
	25%-49%.....	35
	50%-74%.....	23
	75% or more……...…….	16

Complete Survey Results: Parents

Teaching Interrupted is based on interviews with national random samples of 725 public middle and high school teachers and 600 parents of public school students in grades 5 through 12. The teacher surveys were conducted by mail March 12-April 9, 2004; the margin of error for the sample of teachers is plus or minus 4 percentage points. Parent surveys were conducted by phone March 11-March 18, 2004; the margin of error for the sample of parents is plus or minus 4 percentage points.

Results of less than .5% are signified by an asterisk. Results of zero are signified by a dash. Responses may not always total 100% due to rounding. Combining answer categories may produce slight discrepancies between the numbers in these survey results and the numbers in the report.

2. Think about your OLDEST child who currently goes to public school. What grade is this child in?

	%
Fifth…….....	5
Sixth……..	7
Seventh ……	13
Eighth…….....	11
Ninth [Freshman]…….	14
Tenth [Sophomore]……...	17
Eleventh [Junior]……..	16
Twelfth [Senior]…….....	18

4. In general, when it comes to having a successful school, how important do you think good student discipline and behavior is? Is it one of the most important things, somewhere in the middle, or near the bottom?

	%
One of the most important things…….	78
Somewhere in the middle…….	20
Near the bottom…….....	1
Don't Know …….	1

5. At your child's school, would you say that student discipline and behavior is one of the top problems, somewhere in the middle, or near the bottom?

	%
One of the top problems…….....	15
Somewhere in the middle……	45
Near the bottom…….....	38
Don't Know…….	2

Most of the questions I'm going to ask are about student discipline and behavior. Some of these questions may describe your experiences, some may not. Please answer the questions to the best of your knowledge, and remember, if you don't have an opinion, just say so.

To the best of your knowledge, how serious a problem would you say each of the following is at your child's school? Your choices are a very serious problem, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not a serious problem at all. How about [INSERT ITEM]?

	Very serious	**Somewhat serious**	**Not too serious**	**Not at all serious**	**Don't know**
6. Bullying and harassment	15	31	32	15	8
7. Cheating	8	18	28	18	28
8. Disrupting class by talking out & horseplay	13	32	32	13	10
9. Illegal drugs	19	27	25	18	12
10. Physical fighting	10	20	39	27	4
11. Rowdiness in the common areas, such as hallways & lunchroom	11	28	31	19	11
12. Students showing up late to class	8	22	34	19	17
13. Students treating teachers with a lack of respect	22	27	27	16	8
14. Truancy & cutting class	12	21	31	22	14

15. Have you ever seriously considered moving your child to another school because discipline and behavior was such a problem or not?

	%
Yes …….....	19
No……...……...	80
Have already moved child to another school because of this [Vol.]……	1
Don't Know……...	-

16. In your community, which schools do you think do a better job when it comes to discipline and behavior, the local private schools or the local public schools?

	%
Local private schools…….....	39
Local public schools…….....	29
Don't Know……..	32

17. Do you think the private schools do a better job on discipline mostly because they:
Base: Local private schools do a better job [n=221]

	%
Have stronger parental involvement……	27
Have stricter rules and kick out troublemakers…….....	55
Have students from more affluent families….	12
Don't Know……..	6

18. As far as you know, is it a handful of students who cause most of the discipline problems at your school or is it more widespread than that?

	%
A handful of students…….....	74
More widespread than that….....	15
There are no discipline problems [Vol.]…….	1
Don't Know ……...	10

19. And as far as you know, are there persistent troublemakers at your school who should already have been removed from the building and sent to alternative schools or not?

	%
Yes ……..	37
No, there are not……..	38
Don't Know ……	24

20. Thinking about your child's teachers, about how many would you say are fair and appropriate when they discipline or reprimand their students – would you say virtually all teachers, most, some, only a few or none?

	%
Virtually all……..	29
Most…….	46
Some……	10
Only a few……	8
None…….	1
Don't Know.....……...	6

21. Have you ever felt that a teacher unfairly disciplined or reprimanded your child or not?

	%
Yes, have felt that teacher unfairly disciplined or reprimanded child……	30
No, have not…….	69
Don't Know …….	1

22. And what – if anything – did you do? Did you let it go, did you go directly to the teacher about it, or did you go directly to the principal?
Base: Have felt that teacher unfairly disciplined or reprimanded child [n=175]

	%
Let it go……	19
Went directly to the teacher……..……..	42
Went directly to the principal……...……...	33
It depended on the situation…….	6
Don't Know……...……..	-

23. Was the matter resolved satisfactorily between you and the teacher or did the principal have to get involved?
Base: Went directly to the teacher[n=68]

	%
Resolved satisfactorily between you and the teacher……..	62
Principal had to get involved.....	31
Don't Know……..	7

24. Do you feel that the principal at your school has a good handle on discipline and behavior or not?		%
	Yes …….….....	74
	No…….……	15
	It's mixed [Vol.]……..…….	5
	Don't Know……..	6

Please tell me how much you agree or disagree with each of these statements about student discipline and behavior. How about: [INSERT ITEM]?

	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Disagree strongly	Disagree somewhat	Don't know
25. When students misbehave, it's usually because their teacher is not interesting	12	20	30	34	4
26. My child could be learning a lot more if the teachers weren't so busy trying to control the classroom	23	20	22	30	5
27. A crucial part of the school's mission is to teach kids to follow the rules so they are ready to join society	62	26	8	5	*
28. When it comes to dealing with routine misbehavior, my child's school should be doing a lot better	21	22	28	23	6
29. In the end, most students suffer because of a few persistent troublemakers	43	30	14	11	3
30. My child's school has a quick, clear-cut response to the presence of weapons or drugs	76	12	3	3	6

Now I'm going to read a list of things that

may or may not be a cause of student discipline and behavior problems in the nation's public schools. Please rate each on a 1-to-5 scale, where 1 means you don't think it is a cause at all and 5 means it is among the biggest causes. Remember if you don't know, just say so. How about [INSERT ITEM]?

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**Don't know**
32. There's disrespect everywhere in our culture – students absorb it and bring it to school	5	7	19	25	43	1
33. Too many teachers don't know how to run a classroom	15	23	32	16	9	5
34. Parents are too quick to challenge and appeal school decisions on discipline	8	15	31	23	19	5
35. Too many parents fail to teach their kids discipline	5	4	17	29	46	1
36. Too many principals fail to support their teachers on discipline	19	19	26	14	12	10
37. Schools and classes are too crowded	12	11	22	21	33	2
38. School districts are scared of lawsuits and back down when they are challenged by parents	9	15	23	21	27	6
39. Too many teachers try to be friends to students rather than authority figures	18	26	32	12	7	5
40. The schools are too slow to kick out the students who are always making trouble	10	18	27	18	21	6
41. Society has put too many limits on parents' right to discipline their own children	13	12	17	19	37	2

42. As far as you know, does your school have an armed police officer stationed on school grounds or not?

	%
Yes …….…….	43
No…….	43
Has police officer but not sure if armed [Vol.]	6
Don't Know……...……..	9

44. Thinking about the parents at your school, about how many would you say challenge or threaten to sue the school when their children are disciplined? Is it just a handful of parents, is it more widespread than that, or are there no parents who fit that description?

	%
It's just a handful of parents……..…	50
It's more widespread than that…….….	7
There are no parents who fit that description…	22
Don't Know ……..	21

		%
46. Which of these two statements comes closer to your view?	No matter what educators do, schools in very needy, tough neighborhoods will have problems with student discipline and behavior……	33
	Regardless of the neighborhood, most kids will behave themselves if educators have clear expectations and consistently enforce the rules.....	60
	Don't Know……..	7

		%
47. Imagine that a white principal takes charge of a school that has serious student discipline problems and that happens to have a predominantly African American student body. Do you think:	It would probably be tougher for this principal to enforce discipline for fear of being accused of prejudice……..…...	45
	If the principal is effective and fair it probably wouldn't be a problem…….……	48
	Don't Know…… ……...……	7

Now I am going to read a list of things that the nation's public schools could do to improve student discipline and behavior. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a good idea or a bad idea. Remember, I am not asking if your own school does this, just how good an idea you think it is in general. How about [INSERT ITEM]?

	Very good	Somewhat good	Somewhat bad	Very bad	Don't know
48. Assign armed police officers to patrol schools that have the most serious discipline problems	51	26	12	9	2
49. Create a school-based committee of parents and teachers to deal with parents who challenge a principal's disciplinary action	45	35	12	6	3
50. Establish and enforce zero-tolerance policies so that students know they will automatically be kicked out of a school for serious violations	68	20	6	3	2
52. Give principals a lot more authority to handle discipline issues and reduce interference from parents or central administration	33	37	16	11	4
53. Have a dress code for students that sets rules on what students can and can't wear	59	25	7	8	1
54. Limit lawsuits against the public schools over discipline – allow them only for serious situations like expulsion	46	32	10	7	6

[Continued]

Now I am going to read a list of things that the

nation's public schools could do to improve student discipline and behavior. For each one, please tell me if you think it is a good idea or a bad idea. Remember, I am not asking if your own school does this, just how good an idea you think it is in general. How about [INSERT ITEM]?

	Very good	Somewhat good	Somewhat bad	Very bad	Don't know
55. Reduce the paperwork and formal documentation required to take disciplinary action	31	31	22	12	6
56. Remove the possibility of winning money when parents sue the public schools over discipline issues	43	27	15	10	6
57. Create more schools that specialize in dealing with students who are chronic discipline problems	43	32	13	10	3
58. Strictly enforce the little rules on behavior so that the right tone is created at school and bigger problems are avoided	63	25	7	3	3

60. This next question is about students who are "special-needs" or who have been diagnosed with a physical, emotional or learning disability. Some people say that these students are more likely to get away with misbehavior, even when it has nothing to do with their disability. Have you ever heard of something like this happening at your school or not?

	%
Yes…….....	22
No…….	75
There are no special-needs students at the school [Vol.]……..	1
Don't Know……...	2

61. Has the child you were thinking about when answering these questions been identified as a "special-needs student" at school, or diagnosed with a specific physical, emotional or learning disability?

	%
Yes ……...	23
No…….…….	76
Don't Know……. ……	1

63. Which of these statements comes closest to describing you?

	%
I'm a parent who is very active at my child's school - I often volunteer for events and many	34

	people in the building know me……	
	I'm not very active at the school but I get very involved with my child's education at home….	60
	I don't really have a chance to get as involved as I'd like to be with my child's education at school or at home……..	6
	My child is home schooled [Vol.]…….	*
	Don't Know……..	*

64. Which of these best describes your family's current employment situation?		%
	Both parents work full time……	44
	One works full time and the other works part time…….....	19
	One works full time and the other is mainly at home……..	20
	I am a single parent……...	14
	Something else [Vol.]…..…….…….	3
	Don't Know…….……..	*

65. How old are you?		%
	27-29…….....	1
	30-39…….....	23
	40-49 …….....	56
	50-59 …….....	18
	60-76 …….....	2
	Don't Know …….……	1

66. What is the highest level of school you completed?		%
	Less than High School …….	6
	High School graduate ……...	26
	Some College or Trade School, no degree……	23
	Associates or 2-year degree …….	11
	Bachelor's or 4-year degree …….……	21
	Graduate degree ……...……	14
	Don't Know ……..	*

67. Are you white, black or African American, Hispanic, Asian, or something else?		%
	White …….....	78
	Black/African American ……..……	10
	Hispanic …….……..	8
	Asian …….....	*
	Something else (Specify) …….	3
	Don't Know ……...……..	*

68. About how many of the students in your child's school would you say are African American or		%
	Virtually all……...	6

Hispanic – virtually all, most, some or a few?

Most…….....	15
Some…….	36
A few……	41
None…….	1
Don't Know …….	2

69. About how many students attend your child's school?

	%
Less than 500…….....	24
500 to 999……	31
1,000 to less than 1,499…….....	20
1,500 or more ……..…….……..	21
Don't Know ……..…….	3

70. I'm going to read some ranges of annual household income. Please stop me when I read the one that best describes your total household income in 2003.

	%
Under $15,000……..……..	4
$15,000 to less than $25,000.....	10
$25,000 to less than $35,000.....	8
$35,000 to less than $50,000.....	17
$50,000 to less than $75,000.....	27
$75,000 or more……..……	33
Don't Know ……...…….	1

71. May we call you back another day if we have a quick follow-up question?

	%
Yes…….....	95
No……	5
Don't Know……..….....	*

		%
Gender	Male…….....	41
	Female……..…	60

		%
Region	Northeast……...……..	19
	Midwest……...…….	24
	South …….…….....	36
	West ……..…….……..	21

		%
Urbanicity	Rural…….....	28
	Suburban……..……	47
	Urban…….....	26

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