FINAL REPORT:

Measuring Up: The Impact of Suspensions, Parental Involvement and Textbooks in Four Minneapolis Public Schools

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# Table Of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. SAMPLE SET AND METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Suspensions</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Parental Involvement</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Textbook Access</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. RESULTS</td>
<td>III</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Suspension</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b) Parental Involvement</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) Textbook Access</td>
<td>vii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>IX</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Clarify and carefully define the relationship between textbooks</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and performance on the Minnesota Basic Standards Test</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Use existing Minneapolis Public School surveys to determine if</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>there is any racial difference in the area of textbooks as</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>redefined above</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Convene a workshop featuring national experts and local teachers</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and principals to discuss the importance of textbooks for</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>learning.</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Continue ongoing efforts to improve parental involvement in</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>students' school experiences and establish a system for</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>monitoring parental involvement with individual students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Use results of monitoring to identify best practices for various</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>types of students and families.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Identify the causal relationship between parental involvement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and student performance, the type(s) of parental involvement that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>are most important and the relative size of their effect on</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>student test scores.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Consistently apply the existing Minneapolis Public School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>suspension policies across all racial/ethnic groups.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Identify the relationships between suspension and other</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>determinants of student test scores such as attendance, poverty,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>percent of minority staff and language spoken at home and the</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>further indirect impact that suspension may have on test scores.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATEMENT AND NATURE OF THE PROBLEM</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NATIONAL DATA ON THE EFFECTS OF SUSPENSIONS AND PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT ON TEST SCORES</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FRANKLIN MIDDLE SCHOOL</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SANFORD MIDDLE SCHOOL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMERSON SPANISH IMMERSION SCHOOL</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OLSON MIDDLE SCHOOL</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUSPENSIONS</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODOLOGY</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACIAL DISPROPORTION RATIONANS</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A DEEPER LOOK AT MINNEAPOLIS PUBLIC SCHOOLS</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EXAMINING THE PROBLEM</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LITERATURE REVIEW</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Referrals Based on Race</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Researchers have examined many different factors in an attempt to discern what is causing the racial gap in academic achievement. The Minneapolis Foundation, in partnership with the Minneapolis Public Schools, has initiated a series of reports detailing performance measures for improving student achievement. In their latest report, *Measuring Up 2002*, large gaps between students of color and White students were found on scores from the Minnesota Basic Standards Test (MBST). This finding emphasizes the need for continued efforts to determine what factors affect test score performance and overall academic achievement. This study is one of those efforts.

Previous research by the Roy Wilkins Center for Human Relations and Social Justice identified attendance and mobility as being highly significant in explaining the racial disparity in test scores, but these factors did not entirely explain the gap. At the start of this study, we analyzed three national surveys on education: the National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS:88), the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY97), and the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which is conducted annually—and identified three other possible indicators of student academic achievement: suspension, parental involvement and access to textbooks. The NELS and NLSY surveys include questions about student suspensions. All three surveys include questions about parental involvement. We analyzed each survey for information about the effects of these two variables on math test scores. Nationally, substantial racial differences in suspension rates and parental involvement exist; the NAEP results indicate that access to textbooks and other materials needed for success in schools may vary by race. The goal of this study was to determine the incidence and effect of these three factors within the Minneapolis Public Schools.
I. SAMPLE SET AND METHODOLOGY

For this study, we looked at Minneapolis Public School district data and also compared four middle schools (grades six through eight) with distinct demographic characteristics: Franklin, Sanford, Emerson Spanish Immersion, and Olson. Quantitative and qualitative data (observations, interviews, policy research, focus groups and surveys) on a) suspensions, b) parental involvement and c) textbook access were collected and the relationship of these factors to students’ scores on the Minnesota Basic Standards Test (MBST) were analyzed.

a) Suspensions

We examined this issue by reviewing the following sources: literature pertaining to suspensions, state and district suspension policies, court cases stemming from suspensions, and empirical data we received from the state. A disproportionality ratio (percent of minority students by race suspended compared to percent of that race in the student population) was constructed to determine if a racial imbalance existed among suspension rates. Mean scores on the MBST of the races were compared, and a regression analysis was conducted to see if being suspended had an effect on a student’s test score. In addition, data regarding suspensions derived from student and parent surveys were analyzed.

b) Parental Involvement

We reviewed Minneapolis Public School policy regarding parental involvement. Three documents in particular were examined, one of which included staff, student and parent survey results on family/parent involvement. Since the student survey was anonymous and could not be connected with an MBST score, results are presented by school and race and associated with the 2001 mean MBST score for that group. The teacher survey pertains only to school-based
involvement. It was also anonymous, and is thus presented by school. We also conducted teacher focus groups and interviews with principals, school counselors, school social workers, and family liaisons at the four selected schools.

c) Textbook Access

Could the racial disparity in MBST scores be due to inconsistent access to textbook materials along racial lines? Unfortunately, there was no way for us to measure textbook access along racial lines without more in depth student level data or a larger sample of schools for comparison. So we decided to include all learning materials into the study, such as workbooks, worksheets, and other teacher-created material. To understand the role of these teaching tools in a student’s learning, we conducted observations, interviews, and focus groups in the four schools.

II. RESULTS

a) Suspension

- There are significant racial disparities in suspensions and these do have an impact on student achievement. In this case, disparities result from inconsistently enforced district and individual school policies.

- Suspensions appear to have an effect on parental involvement, with an effect that seems to be more negative than positive.

Suspension rates and test score ranges differ among the five racial groups. Blacks account for 74.5 percent of the sixth grade suspensions for the 2000-2001 school year, and males make up 70 percent of the suspensions. These startling statistics are even more disconcerting when compared to the racial makeup of the school district, in which Blacks make up 45 percent
of the district. Therefore, Black students are approximately 1.67 times more likely to be suspended than the population of the district. While a high ratio, this is lower than the national and state ratios: (2:1) at the national level and (5.6:1) at the state level. However, the state numbers are misleading because the state data reports the number of suspensions, rather than the number of students suspended, meaning that an individual student within state level data could have been suspended more than once. The results for the 4 individual schools showed varying levels and demographic make-up of suspensions. All showed racial disparities of some kind: Franklin had higher suspension rates for Blacks, Asians and White students; Olson in the rates of Blacks and Asians; Sanford in the rates of Blacks, Asians, and White students; and Emerson, the lowest suspending school, in rates of American Indian, Black students (because none were suspended) and Hispanic students.

A regression analysis was conducted to examine the effects of being suspended in the sixth grade on seventh grade test scores. The results concluded that being suspended does have a negative effect, but that the relative size is not very large (0.015). One large finding was that the largest impact on test scores comes from attendance. Suspensions were found to be correlated with attendance (0.597) as well. These results indicate that this is only one of the reasons for the disparity in academic achievement among racial groups.

We also measured the impact of suspensions using data collected from surveys of parents and students. Although it is not possible to connect these survey data with individual test scores, we were able to analyze their impact on the average scores for students in different schools.

Our analyses included 26 schools for which survey data and test scores were available. We looked at the impact of gender, race, the percent of students in the school who were

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1 The schools in our sample all have majority students of color, and to compare racial access to textbooks we would...
suspended, and a variety of school level characteristics. Our analysis showed that the percent of students in the school who were suspended during the year had major impacts on both the average math and reading scores in the school. Further analysis attempted to determine if the impact of suspension on test scores differed by race. The data did not show any significant interaction.

The next question we asked was there a racial disparity in discipline practices? The literature review showed that nationally, subjective measures of what constitutes an offense result in overrepresentation of minorities in the suspended population. Three leading causes of this racial disparity are cultural misperception, student resistance and defiance, and lack of academic and social support.

Our review of the Minneapolis Public Schools district’s policy on suspensions found wide latitude given in how offenses are interpreted and the suspension handled. For instance, the policy states that suspensions are to avoided unless the student is an immediate danger to themselves, others or school property. Attempts to provide other disciplinary action or alternative programs must be made before resorting to suspension. But the policy does not specify how many attempts must be made. Also, an informal administrative conference must be held with the student, which the principal must attend. However, no representative for the student is provided. It is not clear that the consequences of suspension are adequately communicated to the student.

Interviews with administrators at two of the target schools reinforced the conclusion reached after examining the district policies: suspension policies are not specific enough, leaving too much room for interpretation. This lack of specificity also hampered our information need student level data.

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Executive Summary
gathering: the ambiguous district guidelines allow different schools to define suspension in their own ways, and thus, in some cases, not to have to report this disciplinary action to the district. Without this information, it is impossible to assess whether there is a racial difference in the severity of the discipline.

b) Parental Involvement

- This analysis found disparities in several parental involvement variables among the four schools studied, and among the races in the district as a whole.

- Parental involvement can be linked to differences in student achievement, but this analysis did not determine the exact relationship to the MBST scores used in the study.

Staff responses in interviews identified several common themes for improving overall student academic performance through parental involvement, including a more positive relationship with parents through positive phone calls and inclusive events tied to services such as incentives, food, child care and transportation. While this analysis did not find a conclusive causal relationship, it did find support for the connection between parental involvement and student performance.

In terms of home-based involvement, the most important factor is how parents and students discuss school, and how much help the parents are able to give the students in those discussions. Focus group participants asserted that if parents are not able to help their children as much (whether because of language difficulties, or their own limitations or negative experiences within an academic setting), the students may not perform as well in school.

Given the conclusions of literature in this area and qualitative information from the Minneapolis Public Schools, these disparities could provide one explanation for the differences in test scores between schools and between races. Our review of the literature revealed that family or parental “involvement” is discussed in the terms of either home or school, so we have
chosen to analyze Minneapolis Public Schools’ policies and practices through this lens. This separation of school-based and home-based involvement also helped us to consider where involvement efforts need to be targeted.

**c) Textbook Access**

- *Frequent use of math textbooks in the classroom significantly increases student test scores. And there is a racial disproportionality to this effect: it is not equivalent or as robust for all racial groups.*

- *However, the issue of textbook use and its effects on test scores is complex and would require a study of its own.*

- *The scope of this study did not enable us to attain definitive results.*

- *A scarcity of textbooks and their expense limits access in the classroom.*

Through our research at the national and local level we were able to begin unraveling the complex nature of how student performance is affected by textbooks. In particular, we were able to establish some of the reasons why textbooks, alone, cannot be analyzed as *the* sole critical ingredient, but rather that textbooks must be considered as among a whole set of resources necessary for effective learning.

On the one hand, our review of the literature and national studies reveals that the frequent use of *math* textbooks in the classroom significantly increases student test scores. The racial disproportionality shows that frequent use of math textbooks is not equivalent or as robust for all racial groups. This may indicate that the usage of textbooks has a different magnitude in effect for different racial groups. However, more in-depth inquiry into the specific effect of textbook use and availability must be conducted (nationally and locally) in order for the effect to be fully deconstructed.
On the other hand, national and local findings indicate that many teachers do not use textbooks. There are various reasons for this: they are out of date, irrelevant, or poorly written. Our focus groups and interviews revealed another reason teachers claimed textbooks were of little educational use: students’ reading levels are often times lower than the textbooks. In cases where textbooks seemed to be a small help, teachers often emphasized other learning materials. Then there is the shortage of useful textbooks in the nation and here locally. Teachers often times compensate by making photocopies and/or limiting the amount of content taken from textbooks. In order to make any conclusions of how this shortage in learning materials affects student performance, further research must be undertaken.

The factor we found most critical in limiting access to textbooks is their price. If a resource is very expensive, then it is less likely to be used because teachers worry that these materials may be lost. This fear of lost materials is highly important when considered in the context of limited resources, already constrained site and district budgets, and low-income students who cannot afford to replace lost materials or purchase their own copies. Such a constraint would invariably affect poorer school districts.

It is clear that adequate and equal access to an array of resources—from textbooks to other learning materials—is of paramount concern not only for individual student performance, but for attaining fairness and equity in the public school system. At this point in time, we recommend further research into the effects of the Minneapolis schools moving away from using textbooks and other high priced resources, of which every student should have fair and equal access.
III. Recommendations

1. **Clarify and carefully define the relationship between textbooks and performance on the Minnesota Basic Standards Test.**

   The question posed to the Roy Wilkins Center asked if student access to textbooks was a factor in explaining the gap in test scores between students of color and White students in Minneapolis Public Schools. Our literature review identified studies suggesting that having access to textbooks is valuable compared to having no textbooks at all. Data from a national survey (NAEP 2000) shows that students whose math teachers did problems in class from a textbook every day had higher average math scores than those who did not do problems every day. These are two different ways of looking at the importance of textbooks. Adding to the confusion, teachers and principals interviewed for this project said that they did not like textbooks as teaching tools and preferred to use alternative types of materials in the classrooms.

   With all these differences, it appears that we need a better definition of the problem in order to make progress. Here are several alternatives:

   * Access to printed materials that can be regularly taken home for study.
   * Access to traditional textbooks for use in class and at home
   * Access to printed materials for use in class.
   * Access to an individual copy of printed material which remains in the students’ possession.

2. **Use existing Minneapolis Public School surveys to determine if there is any racial difference in the area of textbooks as redefined above.**

   There is no evidence available at this time to show that student access to textbooks differs by race. No quantitative data exist and no teachers interviewed mentioned it as a concern. A
first step after refining our problem as recommended above would be to include a question about textbooks in the annual survey of students conducted by Minneapolis Public Schools. The results could be analyzed by race to determine if there are any differences. If these results show a difference, further investigation can be designed and carried out.

3. **Convene a workshop featuring national experts and local teachers and principals to discuss the importance of textbooks for learning.**

   National studies (some subsidized by textbook publishers) have found textbooks to be an important part of student academic achievement. Our interviews with teachers and principals in Minneapolis Public Schools found a strong feeling that textbooks are often inappropriate and a desire to replace traditional texts with other materials such as workbooks, photocopies or original materials. We propose that a one-day workshop be held to explore the issue. Scholars, publishers, teachers and others from across the country can be invited to discuss the educational importance of textbooks as part of the middle school curriculum. These discussions should shed some light on the importance and relevance of textbooks for student achievement.

4. **Continue ongoing efforts to improve parental involvement in students’ school experiences and establish a system for monitoring parental involvement with individual students.**

   Minneapolis Public Schools are currently encouraged to develop and implement strategies to increase the involvement of parents and families in students’ academic, athletic and cultural experiences. These efforts should be continued. A system of monitoring the extent of parents’ involvement in the school activities of their children should be implemented which allows identification of the nature and degree of involvement with individual students.
5. Use results of monitoring to identify best practices for various types of students and families.

With data collected for individual students, schools can better identify the types of involvement efforts that are most successful for different types of families and students. Best practices can be identified and rewarded, encouraging their use by other schools as appropriate.

6. Identify the causal relationship between parental involvement and student performance, the type(s) of parental involvement that are most important and the relative size of their effect on student test scores.

Data describing parental involvement for individual students can be linked to test scores and other information to allow a quantitative answer to the outstanding questions about parental involvement and test scores:

* Does parental involvement increase test scores or vice versa?
* Which measures of parental involvement correlate best with test scores?
* What is the absolute and relative size of the impact (if any) of parental involvement on text scores?

7. Consistently apply the existing Minneapolis Public School suspension policies across all racial/ethnic groups.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that African American students are more likely to be suspended than White students. Consistent application of existing policies is necessary to reduce the likelihood that suspensions are awarded unevenly or in a biased manner. There is a perception in the community (as documented in the recent Pioneer Press reports) that suspensions are applied in a racially discriminatory manner. It is important that the District be able to show that policies are applied in a race-neutral manner.
8. Identify the relationships between suspension and other determinants of student test scores such as attendance, poverty, percent of minority staff and language spoken at home and the further indirect impact that suspension may have on test scores.

Our research suggests that suspension has a small direct role in the racial gap in test scores. As in previous analyses, attendance turns out to be a major factor in predicting test scores. A number of other factors (language, poverty, percent of teachers of color in the school) clearly have larger direct impacts on test scores than suspensions. There may, however, be many indirect impacts. Further research and analysis may quantify the indirect and longer-term impacts of suspension on test scores. Our current data only looks at the immediate impact of suspension in one year (6th grade) on test scores in the next (7th) grade. A longitudinal study could identify the long-term impact of suspension, effects from labeling of students as “troublemakers” and other factors.

Overall, we find that the Minneapolis Public Schools has developed policies that closely follow predominant theories and research in these three areas. However, closer scrutiny should be focused on implementation of the policies to ensure that all students in the schools are treated equally in practice as well as on paper.
STATEMENT AND NATURE OF THE PROBLEM

Researchers have examined many different factors in an attempt to discern what is causing the racial gap in academic achievement. The Minneapolis Foundation in partnership with the Minneapolis Public Schools has initiated a series of reports detailing performance measures for improving student achievement. In their latest report, *Measuring Up 2002*, large gaps between students of color and White students were found on scores from the Minnesota Basic Standards Test (MBST). Three other areas, suspensions, textbooks, and parental involvement seem to stand out as possible indicators of student academic achievement. The latest results described in *Measuring Up 2002* illustrate the need for continued efforts to examine what factors impact test score performance and overall academic achievement.

The extent of the problem of racial disparities in test scores can be found across numerous studies. This information becomes increasingly important due to high stakes graduation standards testing and college admissions exams. Low scores on these tests can severely limit opportunities for minority students.

Another line of research suggests that high stakes standardized tests are harmful and discriminatory. Bankston & Caldas (1997) found that in light of all other factors, race is the strongest predictor of test performance. One study found a significant racial gap among eighth grade students on the California Achievement Test (Hall, Davis, & Bolen, 1999). When these tests are used for purposes of tracking by ability, minority students are often left out of higher level classes (Catsambis, 1994). The lower level classes, consisting mainly of minority students, often focus on test-preparation to the exclusion of
higher order curriculum (Lomax, 1995). College admission tests strongly influence a student’s chances of attaining higher education. This is the case even though it has been shown that test scores were unrelated to subsequent grades in college math for American Indian and Alaskan Native students (House, 1998). These test scores are truly high stakes as the results of the tests usually outweigh assessments made by teachers. Currently, high stakes tests are very popular in the education system, therefore, they remain the most common assessment tool for assigning minority students to classes and admitting them into college.

Kim & Hacovar (1998) further hypothesize that differences in math scores among Black and White students may reflect lack of exposure to math for Black students. When race is considered as a variable, it is imperative to also examine socioeconomic status. It has been found that low socioeconomic status is intertwined with ethnic group membership (Blair, Blair, & Madamba, 1995). One study showed that in Louisiana public schools, low test scores were related to race even when socioeconomic status was taken into consideration (Caldas & Bankston, 1998). However, there has been some work that has contradicted this hypothesis. In a different analysis, Bankston & Caldas (1996) found low levels of academic achievement were not due wholly to socioeconomic status. Furthermore, Catsamabis (1994) found that parents with higher incomes often intervene on their children’s behalf to be tracked into higher ability classes. This data suggests that other variables besides socioeconomic status should be considered.

Due to the importance of these test scores, variables contributing to low test scores among racial minorities must be carefully considered. Parental involvement is sometimes examined when attempting to explain lags in achievement by minority students. One
study examined many variables and concluded that engagement in school activities and expectations of high achievement were critical to student’s success (Arroyo, Rhoad, & Drew, 1999). Another study suggested that parental support was a significant determinant of attitudes toward math.

The nature of parental and family involvement in students’ education has long been a concern for many researchers. Survey results from “Values and Student Achievement,” a Capstone paper written by Humphrey Institute students in 2000, identified parental involvement as being “extremely important” to student academic performance. Furthermore, the report indicated that parental involvement was one of two factors having a positive effect on student achievement. Further evidence from the National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS:88) suggests that Black students are disproportionately more likely to be suspended from school, less likely to have parents who volunteer for classroom involvement, and are less likely to have home access to reading materials and quiet work spaces. All of these factors contribute in a statistically significant manner to lower reading and mathematics test scores. These independent impacts are found once controls are made for family structure, poverty, sex, and a host of other factors.

An analysis of the 1996 Minnesota Basic Standards Test Data (Myers, 1997) found that all minorities did worse than White students on both the math and reading portions of the test. The overall math scores were below passing (70% correct) for many students except Whites and Asian Americans. Almost all non-White students scored below passing on the reading portion of the exam. Most White students passed the exam, while most minorities failed. The poorest performance came from Black students. High achieving
American Indian and Black students attended schools that were ranked lower than those of high achieving Whites. Those minority students who did well did not necessarily attend the same schools or have similar backgrounds as top White students, indicating the importance of socioeconomic status in test score disparities. The 1996 results showed that the low achieving minority students attended schools with greater percentages of minority students. These high concentration minority schools ranked among the bottom of all schools.

Current studies suggest that minority students who attend White schools outperform those attending predominantly minority inner-city schools. Factors such as socioeconomic status, parent involvement, and tracking into low-level classes may contribute to low test scores. Controversy still exists as to whether the tests are accurate measures of ability or not. Data consistently shows a racial disparity in test scores on high stakes tests. Reasons for these differences seem to be unclear at this point in time. There are substantial racial differences in suspension rates; there are wide racial gaps in parental involvement; and there are possible differences in access to textbooks and other materials needed for success in schools. Our goal is to determine the prevalence and effect of these factors within the Minneapolis Public Schools.

Previous research by the Roy Wilkins Center for Human Relations and Social Justice also identified attendance and mobility as being highly significant in explaining the racial disparity amongst test scores. The results from this research did not entirely explain the gaps amongst test scores for students of color. This leads us to believe that we should examine other factors that might have an effect on student test scores and overall academic achievement.
National data on the effects of suspensions and parental involvement on test scores

* Suspension has a significant negative effect on math test scores of Black and Hispanic (-7.5%) students and a slightly larger impact on White students (-9.5%) in a 1997 study of 6th – 8th graders. A 1988 study of 8th graders only found a significant effect for White students.

* Parental Involvement, measured by questions about discussing school matters with parents or parental attendance at various events at school, has a significant positive effect (between +4% and +7%) on math scores across three studies done in 1988, 1997 and 2001.

Several national surveys on education offer chances to test the relationship between suspension, parental involvement and test scores. The National Education Longitudinal Survey was conducted in 1988 (NELS:88). The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth in 1997 (NLSY97) included questions about education. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is conducted annually. The NELS and NLSY surveys include questions about student suspensions. All three surveys include questions about parental involvement. We analyzed each survey for information about the effects of these two variables on math test scores (see Table 1).

The results from NELS and NLSY both show that Caucasian students who were ever suspended from school had test scores significantly lower than students who were never suspended. The size of the difference for Caucasian students who had ever been suspended was 11 percent in NELS and 9.5 percent in NLSY. The NLSY analysis also found significant differences in test scores between African American and Hispanic students who were suspended and those who were not. The difference in test scores associated with ever being suspended was about 7.5 percent for both the African American and Hispanic students in NLSY. The different results for NELS and NLSY
suggests that the effects of suspension on test scores for students of color are not robust across the time period (1988-1997).

Table 1: Differences in Math Test Scores between Students Ever Suspended and Others

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<th>African American</th>
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<td>48.3</td>
<td>48.2</td>
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<td>Not Suspended</td>
<td>47.4</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>49.5</td>
<td>53.2</td>
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<td>.105</td>
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<td>.267</td>
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<td>.0001</td>
<td>.365</td>
<td>.0001</td>
<td>.0001</td>
<td>.0001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Parental involvement variables had different types of effects on math test scores. All three surveys had similar questions asking if students discuss school work with parents at home. Asian/Pacific, Caucasian and Hispanic students in the NELS who said they discussed school work with parents at home had math test scores about 7% higher than those who did not. The NLSY results showed a difference of about +5% for African American, Caucasian and Hispanic students whose parents were knowledgeable about school. The NAEP survey showed that Caucasian and Hispanic students who discuss studies at home had test scores about 3-4% higher than those who did not.

Students taking the NELS survey whose parents attended an event at school had higher math test scores than those whose parents did not attend. This was true for African American students (+5.5%), Caucasians (7%) and Hispanics (4%). On the NAEP, teachers were asked to estimate the percent of parents in their school who attended parent-teacher conferences. For those Caucasian students in schools where teachers said parent
attendance was over 25%, math test scores averaged 2.5% higher than the average for students whose teachers said parental attendance was under 25%.

Table 2. Differences in Math Test Scores Between Students with High Parental Involvement and Others*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Asian/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NELS:88 “Discuss Studies at Home?” (Study of over 25,000 8th grade students)</td>
<td>Yes: 46.5, 56.3, 53.7, 48.9</td>
<td>No: 45.5, 52.7, 49.7, 46.7</td>
<td>P&gt;0: .15, .01, 0, .002</td>
<td>.0000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLSY97 “Parents Knowledgeable About School?” (Study of 9,000 youth including 6th-8th graders)</td>
<td>Yes: 90.8, 103.6, 105, 94</td>
<td>No: 85.6, 95.2, 99, 88.6</td>
<td>P&gt;0: .0036, .4062, .0001, .0001</td>
<td>.0001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAEP 2001 “Discuss Studies at Home?” (Study of 16,846 8th graders)</td>
<td>Yes: 249.5, 288.8, 288.4, 256.7</td>
<td>No: 244.8, 292.5, 277.9, 248.9</td>
<td>P&gt;0: .072, .5546, 0, .0087</td>
<td>.0001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NELS:88 Parents Attended Event (Study of over 25,000 8th grade students)</td>
<td>Yes: 47.7, 56.9, 54.5, 49.4</td>
<td>No: 45.0, 55.3, 50.9, 47.8</td>
<td>P&gt;0: 0, .107, 0, .005</td>
<td>.0000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All responses from students except where indicated.
** Based on Teacher responses

Based on the evidence above, we hypothesize that all three areas of textbooks, suspensions, and parental involvement have an effect on academic achievement of students. What we are trying to ascertain is the extent of the problem in the Minneapolis Public Schools. In order to understand the problem’s effects, we have to examine the nature of the problem, causes and consequences of suspensions, textbooks, and parental involvement.
The first issue that we are concerned with deals with the issue of suspensions and the total number of students of color that are suspended compared to Whites. By raising this issue, we hope to understand how students who get suspended have negative effects on their test scores and overall academic achievement. The questions we hope to answer about suspensions are: Are students of color suspended at higher rates than Whites? How do suspension policies operate and influence the impacts of suspension on attendance and student achievement? Do suspension policies operate largely as school level decisions or are their effects independent of variations across schools? We believe that through interviewing principals and assistant/vice principals, we will be able to better understand each individual school’s decision in suspending students.

The issue of parental involvement stems from the belief that parents are key to a child’s academic achievement. However, in order for us to understand this, we need to ask what exactly is parental involvement? How is it manifested in specific schools? Why are there such wide racial differences in participation in PTA meetings and other formal interactions with the schools? Are there similar wide racial gaps in informal interactions with the school or teachers? Are there ways to improve parental involvement and/or compensate for differential involvement that may affect student’s academic achievement? What policy changes could increase parents’ participation? By examining the problem of parental involvement more clearly, we can try to determine what barriers exist due to the different types of parental involvement, what methods have worked to motivate parents and how to attract parents who are less involved.

The issues of textbooks are linked to how schools work with policies on textbooks. We argue that access to textbooks may affect the ability of students to study and prepare
for classes. Some suggest that there is a shortage of textbooks in some schools, which negatively affects the academic achievement of students. The exact extent of the problem and the factors leading to shortages are not well understood. Policy makers need better information about the nature and causes of textbook shortages. We also hypothesize that by asking teachers, we will have a better understanding of the use, effectiveness, and purpose of textbooks.

Through asking the questions listed above, we hope to explore the nature, causes, and consequences of these problems. We understand that the problems of suspensions, parental involvement, and textbooks are very complex. In the end, our recommendations for policy changes will be based on an examination of these three issues.

METHODOLOGY

The researchers selected and compared four middle schools (grades six through eight) in Minneapolis in terms of suspension rates, parental involvement, textbook availability, and test score performance. The team developed and implemented a research design that included a literature and document review, interviews, observations at schools, site visits to public meetings, focus groups, and a short informational survey. The results of these analyses have been prepared as a policy report for The Minneapolis Foundation and Minneapolis Public Schools.

The document analysis consisted of examining current policies by the Minneapolis Public Schools related to suspensions, textbooks, and parental involvement. Other documents examined included state statues on suspensions and parent responsibility, as well as federal laws on suspensions.
Observations were conducted at each of the four schools. The purpose of the observations was to examine the use and distribution of textbooks among students. Members of the research team visited all four schools during the last two weeks of April 2002. The researchers examined the use of textbooks in classrooms. Researchers were able to examine two of each of these types of classes: math, English, social studies, and physical science with an average of 20 minutes per classroom. Hallways and lunchrooms were observed for a period of one hour each.

Observations were also conducted at each of the school’s Parent Teacher Association or Site Council leadership team meetings to determine what type of parents become involved and stay involved in school activities and how much of a decision-making role parents have in this process. The observations lasted for the duration of the meetings. Members of the research team were able to attend all four schools’ PTA or Site Council leadership team meetings.

Two members of our research team conducted focus groups at Emerson, Franklin, Olson and Sanford, between April 15 and April 26, 2002. Each site hosted one session, except Olson, which held two because enough staff members signed up. The focus groups were open to all staff, advertised by flyers in mailboxes and/or advance appearances by focus group facilitators at school staff meetings, depending on the principal’s decision. Participants were given food and gift certificates for their time.

The focus groups provided important context and school-specific information about textbooks and parental involvement in these four selected schools. The focus group instrument is attached in Appendix C. Responses were analyzed by subject and by school, with the most common topics highlighted in this report.
One-on-one interviews were also conducted with principals, social workers, family liaisons, school counselors, and monitors in charge of in-house suspensions during the month of April 2002. These staff members were identified by the school staff list given to the researchers by the respective school principals. The selection of these employees was due to the different types of contact these school staff have with parents and families.

Information gained from these interviews will help us determine what their experiences have been with parents and learn what practices are best to involve parents. In addition to this, interviews with delegates from Parent Teacher Associations and site council leadership teams gauge how much the community feels it has the right to become involved with the schools. Individual interviews were conducted for no longer than one and half hours. Interview participants were given a gift certificate as an incentive for participation in the project.

A four-page survey consisting of 19 questions was sent to principals at 30 schools with 7th grade students in the Minneapolis School District (see Appendix A). The purpose of the survey was to obtain public data and information concerning textbook selection criteria, distribution, budget information, and information about parental involvement initiatives. Observation results are located in Appendix B.

The Minneapolis Public Schools administered a practice version of the MBST at 27 of the 31 Minneapolis schools that have 7th grade students in February of 2002. The test was a practice test taken off of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning’s website and administered by teachers in the same way that the actual test is conducted. Two other school districts, St. Paul and Richfield public schools also
participated in the practice test, but for the purposes of our study these school districts’ results were not analyzed.

The practice test consisted of 67 math questions in eight different categories. The eight categories are: whole numbers and fractions; percent, rate, ratio, and proportion; number sense; estimation; measurement; tables and graphs; chance and data; and shape and space. The estimation questions are the first eight questions of each test. During this section, students are not allowed to use calculators and once they have finished with this section, the section is sealed. For the rest of the math test, calculators are allowed and the remaining seven test categories are randomly placed.

The reading test consists of only 40 questions. Students are asked to answer questions after reading a long passage, often in the form of a newspaper article. Students are graded on only two types of questions in the reading section. One type of question measures the student’s literal comprehension of the reading material, in which students select an answer based on information that has been stated explicitly in the text. The other category measures inferential comprehension, which requires the student to draw some understanding about the material that is not explicitly stated in the text (MBST Practice Test Administrator’s Handbook, 2001-2002).

The MBST practice test was given at Andersen Open, Anthony, Anwatin, Banneker, Barton Open, Cityview, Emerson, Field, Four Winds, Green Central, Jefferson, Jordan Park, Lake Harriet, Lincoln, Lucy Craft Laney, Marcy Open, Nellie Stone Johnson, Northeast, Olson Middle, Ramsey Fine Arts, Sanford, Seward, Sheridan, Sullivan, Webster, West Central and Windom Open. Test scores were analyzed for three of our focus schools, Emerson, Sanford, and Olson. For reporting of scores, for each individual
student, we used the percent correct as the test score. When scores were reported for schools and other aggregate groups, the mean percent correct was used.

**DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILES**

Each one of our sample schools had distinct demographic characteristics which partially explain their test score results. All of this information was taken from the Minnesota Department of Children, Families, and Learning’s webpage (2001). Because the data do not have as extensive socioeconomic data, we use the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch as a proxy for low-income.

**Franklin Middle School**

Franklin is a north Minneapolis school where students participate in the looping system, in which students in grades six through eight stay with a team of about 110 other students and with the same teachers. The school also uses a collaborative model of special education with pull-out support as needed. In 2001-02 Franklin enrolled 642 students in grades six through eight. Over 8 in 10 students (83%) were eligible for free or reduced price lunch, indicating that most students came from low-income families. Twenty-nine percent of the students received English Language Learner (ELL) services. The largest racial/ethnic group was African American (77%), followed by Asian (16%), and White (6%). There were no Hispanic/Latino or American Indian students at Franklin during the 2001-02 school year.

Franklin has 53 licensed teachers and 43% of those teachers have advanced degrees. The teachers at Franklin have an average of 8.4 years of experience. Franklin did not participate in the 7th grade practice Minnesota Basic Standards Test (MBST) so those scores are not available for comparison to the other three schools.
Sanford Middle School

Sanford is a south Minneapolis school that uses a team model for student achievement, where the teaching teams keep the same students throughout their middle school years to build relationships and a commitment to learning. Of the 46 teachers at Sanford, 26 percent had an advanced degree. The total 2001-02 enrollment at Sanford middle school was 569 students. Almost eight in 10 students were eligible for free or reduced price lunch and 33 percent of students received ELL instruction. The largest racial/ethnic group was African American (58%), followed by White (24%), American Indian (9%), Asian (5%), and Hispanic/Latino (4%).

Sanford’s Minnesota Basic Standards practice test math scores had higher averages for minority students than the district’s average but had lower scores for White students (average score of 41 for Sanford’s White students compared to the 48.8 district average). Sanford has the lowest racial gaps in math and reading scores for the three schools of interest.

Emerson Spanish Immersion School

The Spanish Immersion Learning Center at Emerson is a dual language immersion program for native English and Spanish speaking students. Emerson is the only Minneapolis Public School that offers this type of dual language immersion and is also one of the few Minneapolis schools that draws students from the suburbs.

In 2001-02, Emerson enrolled 488 students in grades kindergarten through eight. One in three students were eligible for free or reduced price lunch, which is much lower than the rest of Minneapolis Public Schools and also of the other three schools in our study. The percentage of students who received ELL services was 29 percent. The largest
racial/ethnic group was Hispanic/Latino (51%), followed by White (26%), African American (19%), and American Indian (3%).

Emerson had 33 classroom teachers with 45 percent of the teaching staff having advanced degrees. In addition, of the four schools studied, Emerson has the most racially diverse group of teachers, with 31 percent teachers of color. Emerson’s Minnesota Basic Standards practice test math and reading scores were well above the district’s average for all races represented at the school and they had the highest practice scores out of the three schools with available scores. Among the three schools measured, Emerson had the largest racial gaps in math test scores.

Olson Middle School

Olson is a middle school located in north Minneapolis. The school’s 6th, 7th, and 8th graders are divided into six teams, two teams at each grade level. Olson’s program has been designed to focus on student learning. This allows flexible grouping of students combined with flexible use of time and resources.

Total enrollment at Olson Middle School in 2001-02 was 709 students for all three grades. Over three-fourths of Olson students were eligible for free or reduced price lunch, indicating that most students came from low-income families. Thirty percent of students were using ELL services. With regard to race/ethnicity, the largest group of students was African American (45%), followed by Asian (33%), White (18%), American Indian (3%), and Hispanic (2%).

Olson had 53 licensed teachers and 40 percent had advanced degrees. The average years of experience for a teacher at Olson was 5.7 years, which is far below the district’s average of 11.3 years. Olson’s Minnesota Basic Standards practice test math and reading
scores are slightly lower than the district’s average and they have the highest reading racial gap, with the average score for White students being 24.5 and the average score for students of color, 18.9.

### Table 3a. Four School Profiles, 2001-02

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enrollment</th>
<th>Franklin</th>
<th>Sanford</th>
<th>Emerson</th>
<th>Olson</th>
<th>District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>569</td>
<td>488</td>
<td>709</td>
<td>48,155</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student race/ethnicity</th>
<th>Franklin</th>
<th>Sanford</th>
<th>Emerson</th>
<th>Olson</th>
<th>District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>More student information</th>
<th>Franklin</th>
<th>Sanford</th>
<th>Emerson</th>
<th>Olson</th>
<th>District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percent of students living in poverty</td>
<td>83%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent of students receiving English language services</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student mobility</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Licensed Teachers</th>
<th>Franklin</th>
<th>Sanford</th>
<th>Emerson</th>
<th>Olson</th>
<th>District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent with advanced degrees</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average years of experience</td>
<td>8.4</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>8.3</td>
<td>5.7</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of first year teachers</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>161</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff race</th>
<th>Franklin</th>
<th>Sanford</th>
<th>Emerson</th>
<th>Olson</th>
<th>District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic/Latino</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* All data is from the 2001-02 school year except for teacher information, which is from 2000-01.
### Table 3b. Four School Profiles: MBST Mean Scores and Number of Students Taking Test, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Franklin</th>
<th>Sanford</th>
<th>Emerson</th>
<th>Olson</th>
<th>District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Math</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian Students</td>
<td>65.93 (6)</td>
<td>63.77 (11)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>71.32 (4)</td>
<td>65.58 (164)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Students</td>
<td>84.99 (24)</td>
<td>65.98 (23)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>70.37 (80)</td>
<td>71.76 (512)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Students</td>
<td>60.72 (205)</td>
<td>50.61 (109)</td>
<td>73.53 (6)</td>
<td>58.57 (88)</td>
<td>57.84 (1292)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Students</td>
<td>75.98 (3)</td>
<td>69.85 (4)</td>
<td>59.48 (18)</td>
<td>55.88 (2)</td>
<td>61.98 (208)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Students</td>
<td>77.30 (46)</td>
<td>76.29 (50)</td>
<td>94.68 (13)</td>
<td>75.03 (46)</td>
<td>80.57 (1004)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>65.73 (283)</td>
<td>60.05 (197)</td>
<td>74.13 (37)</td>
<td>66.51 (220)</td>
<td>67.93 (3180)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian Students</td>
<td>68.75 (6)</td>
<td>66.14 (11)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>83.13 (4)</td>
<td>70.33 (172)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Students</td>
<td>79.58 (24)</td>
<td>72.61 (23)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>68.36 (81)</td>
<td>71.73 (517)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Students</td>
<td>66.40 (204)</td>
<td>58.30 (110)</td>
<td>79.17 (6)</td>
<td>71.88 (88)</td>
<td>65.34 (1305)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Students</td>
<td>85.00 (3)</td>
<td>76.25 (4)</td>
<td>58.06 (18)</td>
<td>66.25 (2)</td>
<td>65.73 (206)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Students</td>
<td>80.54 (46)</td>
<td>82.30 (50)</td>
<td>94.42 (13)</td>
<td>81.11 (45)</td>
<td>85.21 (1002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>70.06 (283)</td>
<td>66.82 (198)</td>
<td>74.26 (37)</td>
<td>72.63 (220)</td>
<td>72.88 (3202)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Table 3c. Change in Raw Scores of MBST Mean Scores 1997-2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Franklin</th>
<th>Sanford</th>
<th>Emerson</th>
<th>Olson</th>
<th>District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Math</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian Students</td>
<td>-6.6 (-8%)</td>
<td>+1.4 (2%)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>+8.1 (13%)</td>
<td>+3.0 (5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Students</td>
<td>-7.8 (-10%)</td>
<td>-0.7 (-1%)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>+8.3 (13%)</td>
<td>+5.0 (8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Students</td>
<td>+2.0 (3%)</td>
<td>+2.5 (5%)</td>
<td>+1.8 (3%)</td>
<td>-2.8 (-5%)</td>
<td>+1.1 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Students</td>
<td>+12.0 (19%)</td>
<td>+11.9 (21%)</td>
<td>-6.3 (-10%)</td>
<td>-24.4 (-35%)</td>
<td>+3.4 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Students</td>
<td>+1.1 (1%)</td>
<td>+9.9 (15%)</td>
<td>+18.7 (25%)</td>
<td>+13.6 (18%)</td>
<td>+1.8 (2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>+2.1 (3%)</td>
<td>+1.7 (+3%)</td>
<td>+3.5 (5%)</td>
<td>+0.3 (1%)</td>
<td>+0.8 (1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian Students</td>
<td>-0.5 (-1%)</td>
<td>+7.2 (12%)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>+19.9 (31%)</td>
<td>+11.7 (20%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Students</td>
<td>+11.5 (17%)</td>
<td>+10.9 (21%)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>+18.2 (36%)</td>
<td>+15.2 (27%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Students</td>
<td>+12.0 (22%)</td>
<td>+14.1 (32%)</td>
<td>+7.2 (10%)</td>
<td>+12.1 (20%)</td>
<td>+11.4 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic Students</td>
<td>+23.0 (37%)</td>
<td>+28.1 (+8%)</td>
<td>+4.6 (9%)</td>
<td>-11.4 (-15%)</td>
<td>+11.2 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Students</td>
<td>+10.8 (16%)</td>
<td>+20.1 (32%)</td>
<td>+14.1 (18%)</td>
<td>+10.2 (14%)</td>
<td>+9.8 (13%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In 2000, the average math and reading scores for the four schools show the same pattern. The average overall scores at one school (Emerson) are above the district average, the average overall scores at another (Olson) are about equal to the district average, Franklin is slightly below the district average and Sanford is well below the district average.

There is a similar pattern for average scores of Black students at the four schools. The average math scores for Black students at Emerson are well above the district average, while Black students at Franklin have average scores slightly above the average for the district. Black students at Olson have scores close to the district average for Black students while Sanford Black students score well below the district average.

Sanford, despite having average scores below those for the district as a whole, actually showed higher than average improvement from 1997 to 2000 on both Math and Reading tests, as did Olson and Franklin. Only Emerson where students already had scores above the district’s average, showed lower than average improvement between 1997 and 2000. The improvements for Black students at both Franklin and Sanford also exceeded the district average improvements for Black students.

Results from the practice test administered by the Roy Wilkins Center this past February as shown in table 3d show that Black students in the district still score on both the math and reading tests that were at least ten points less than White students. Emerson’s scores are still above the district average for both math and reading, however the gap in math scores between Blacks and Whites are pretty large, with an 11 point
difference. Sanford was the school with the smallest gap between both math and reading scores for Black and White students.

**Table 3d. MBST Practice Test Mean Scores, 2002**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Franklin***</th>
<th>Sanford</th>
<th>Emerson</th>
<th>Olson</th>
<th>District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Math</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Students</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>37.1</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>32.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Students</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>41.0</td>
<td>57.6</td>
<td>42.3</td>
<td>48.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td>39.1</td>
<td>39.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Students</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>20.9</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>19.5</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Students</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>32.2</td>
<td>24.5</td>
<td>28.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>27.3</td>
<td>19.9</td>
<td>21.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Minnesota Basic Standards Practice Tests were conducted at 26 Minneapolis Public Schools that have middle school students. The District average scores come from those 26 schools listed in the methodology section. No mean scores are reported for American Indian, Asian or Hispanic students due to the low numbers of those students who took the exam.***

*** Franklin did not administer the practice exam.

**SUSPENSIONS**

Are students of different races suspended at different rates in the Minneapolis Public School District? Do suspensions have an adverse effect on students’ test scores? Do the differences in suspensions by race contribute to the racial gap in test scores? For the purposes of this project, our group examined various sources relating to suspensions to determine if there is documented evidence of disparity in discipline procedures across school districts, especially as applied to Black students. In particular, we wanted to examine what type of relationship exists between the discipline practices the national literature identifies and the policies of the Minneapolis Public School District. Does this district follow the national trends? Are Black students in Minneapolis suspended at a disproportionate rate to their population? If so, what are the possible reasons for this disparity?
Methodology

Several methods were used to investigate the issue of suspensions in Minneapolis. The first step was to decide if there is a problem in Minneapolis. This was done by comparing the Minneapolis Public School racial disproportionality ratios to the racial disproportionality ratios in the state of Minnesota and in the nation (Table 3). Racial disproportionality ratios are a measure of the number of students of a certain race who are suspended compared to the number of students of that race within the sample. For example, saying that Black students account for 70 percent of the suspensions in the Minneapolis School District does tell us much unless we know how many Black students there are in the district. When the 70 percent statistics compared to Blacks’ representation in the sample, 45 percent, we know that Black students are being suspended more than they should be. This racial disproportionality ratio indicates that there is a problem in the Minneapolis public schools.

The next step was to examine the literature regarding suspensions, including academic articles, newspaper articles, national, state, district and school policies, and court cases. The newspaper articles helped to further identify the problems in the Minneapolis School District. The academic articles provided a theoretical basis for analysis and the policies gave insight into how the Minneapolis School District handles suspensions and why there might be disproportionality ratios.

Next, several school administrators in the Minneapolis School District were interviewed to find out how the written policies are operationalized in the schools. Due to time constraints only three interviews were held, but they provided much insight into the schools’ practices. Finally, we looked at the actual suspension records and test scores for
seventh graders in the Minneapolis Public Schools. In February 2002, 27 of the 31 Minneapolis Public School District middle schools administered the Minneapolis Basic Standards Practice Test. The test was given to all of the seventh graders in these schools. The school district made these results available for analysis, as well as suspension data for sixth graders for the 2000-01 school year. The data was put into two separate files. The first contained suspension data alone. Some students had more than one suspension and some analysis was done on the number of suspensions rather than on the number of suspended students. The second file contained data on all the students for whom we had available information. The final file used had students who took the test and had suspension data, students who took the test and did not have suspension data, and students who did not take the test but had suspension data. This file was created through several steps. First, the suspension file was aggregated by student ID into a new file. This aggregate file contained each student’s ID, sex, race, number of times suspended, number of days suspended and average number of days suspended per offense. This aggregate file was then merged with a file of all the students who took the test and their scores. After merging, it became apparent that some students were suspended who did not take the test. This caused a problem in that there was missing demographic information on these students. The Minneapolis Public Schools provided a file with the missing demographic information. This was then merged with the test scores to create a final file with all of the students, all of the test scores and all of the suspension data.

These two files were examined on three levels. The first level was that of summary and descriptive statistics. The second level compared the means of the samples, while the third level of analysis considered what effect being suspended had on a student’s test
score. Regression analysis techniques were used in this part of the analysis. The models used in the regression analysis were developed using information from the academic literature regarding the reasons for suspensions. The results of this study are presented in the following sections: Statement of the Problem, Literature Review, and Data Analysis.

Statement of the Problem

In the last few years, many authors have attempted to determine all the factors related to suspension rates, and whether those factors differ by race. Most of the literature states that the suspension rates of minority students are disproportionate to their representation in the school population. We wanted to determine whether this is true for the Minneapolis Public School district.

Racial Disproportionality Ratios

Basing our racial disproportionality ratios on data from national studies, the state, and the Minneapolis Public School District, we calculated the ratio for each race using the formula

\[
\text{disproportionality} = \frac{\% \text{ of race suspended}}{\% \text{ race in sample}}
\]

where disproportionality is equal to the percent of students of a particular race who were suspended based on percent to which their race is represented in the school population. The results are listed below (Table 3).

Table 4: Disproportionality Ratios for Suspensions by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>2.1 : 1</td>
<td>2.0 : 1</td>
<td>0.6 : 1</td>
<td>1.2 : 1</td>
<td>0.8 : 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NELS:88</td>
<td>2.1 : 1</td>
<td>2.0 : 1</td>
<td>0.6 : 1</td>
<td>1.2 : 1</td>
<td>0.8 : 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 “The National Longitudinal Education Survey of 1988 (NELS:88) is a large-scale longitudinal study of high school students conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Begun in 1988, it
The ratios show the proportion of students in each racial group suspended based on their representation in the student population. At the national level, Black students are suspended at a disproportionate rate to their population in schools (2:1) compared to White students (0.8:1). At the state level, Black students are suspended at a highly disproportionate rate to their population (5.6:1) compared to White students (0.7:1). Minneapolis Public Schools appear to have a lower rate than both national and state ratios (1.6:1 for Black students and 0.4:1 for White students). However, these numbers are not directly comparable because the Minnesota state data reports the number of suspensions, rather than the number of suspended students. This means that the state ratios could appear larger than the other ratios, since an individual student at the state level could have been suspended more than once and counted separately for each suspension.

While racial differences in suspensions are clearly present in Minneapolis Public Schools, the racial disproportionality ratios are also lower than the national ratios for all
students of color except American Indians. The ratio for White students in Minneapolis is also much lower than the national results. As compared to both the NLSY and NELS data, the Minneapolis suspension disproportionality ratios are: lower for Hispanics, lower for Blacks, and lower for Whites.

A Deeper Look at Minneapolis Public Schools

In May 2002, the Saint Paul Pioneer Press published a series of articles by reporter Paul Tosto regarding suspensions in Minnesota Public School districts. These articles included data on the suspension rates in the Minneapolis Public School district. The following excerpts from his articles provide another perspective on the extent of suspensions in Minneapolis Public Schools compared to statewide data.

… Minneapolis dominates suspensions in Minnesota. The state's largest district represented about 6 percent of the statewide K-12 student body but accounted for some 40 percent of the penalties reported the last two years.

… Minneapolis suspended nearly half the children in its middle schools during the 2000-01 school year, including two out of every three students at Sanford Middle School, where—perhaps not surprisingly—half the children responding to a school survey didn't think students respected teachers and 40 percent of the staff didn't think students respected them.

… Minnesota law gives districts wide latitude on discipline and suspension, requiring only that a student be expelled for bringing a gun to school. The law also gives principals the authority to send a problem child home for the rest of the day without reporting it to the state.

… Minneapolis, which dominates discipline activity in Minnesota schools, reported suspending nearly 8,000 students of color last school year—a number larger than the total enrollments of most state school districts. Seventy-five percent of students suspended from Minneapolis schools last year were African-American.
These results again illustrate the over-representation of African American students among those suspended in Minneapolis.

**Examining the Problem**

As these excerpts indicate, there is indeed a problem with suspension in Minneapolis Public Schools. Another area of concern was the wide latitude given to policy interpretation. We examined this issue by reviewing the following sources: literature pertaining to suspensions, state and district suspension policies, court cases stemming from suspensions, and empirical data we received from the state.

The literature provided documented reasons for suspensions, including: office referrals, racial disparity in discipline practices, and the consequences of suspension. For further comparison, we reviewed the suspension policies for the state of Minnesota and the Minneapolis Public School District to find possible discrepancies in the implementation of discipline policies. Several court cases at the national, state and local level illustrated the actual discrepancies in suspension policies. The literature also led us to develop a statistical model that is examined later in the paper.

**Literature Review**

*Office Referrals Based on Race*

Skiba et al. (2000) found that suspensions are often associated with factors outside of obvious student behavior. These include: teacher attitudes, administrative centralization, the quality of school governance, teacher perception of student achievement and the racial makeup of the school. A different report by Skiba, released in August of 2000, illustrates that a group of teachers who comprised 25 percent of the teaching staff...
were responsible for two-thirds of all disciplinary referrals in one district. Teacher attitude has the greatest impact on suspension, since teachers are the ones who refer the student to the office in the first place.

Why are students referred to the office to begin with? Are some students referred more so than others? Skiba et al. (2000), Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (2001), Johnson, Boyden and Pittz (2001), and Landis (2001) all contend that Black students are referred more often and for lesser offenses. White students, in general, are referred to the office for smoking, leaving without permission, vandalism, and obscene language. Black students, in general, are referred to the office for disrespect, excessive noise, threats, and loitering. Skiba (2000) concludes that referrals for Black students are more subjective and lead to more severe punishments.

Gordon, Piana, and Keleher (2000) assert that subjective measures lead to greater suspensions for minority students because these measures leave too much room for subjective interpretation. This may allow for a teacher’s conscious or unconscious beliefs about minority students to influence how they should be disciplined. They also contend that how the offenses are defined may create disparities in referral rates: when certain offenses are “ill-defined,” cultural misinterpretation and bias affect how children are disciplined. Table 5 comes from a study of a Midwestern school district comparing the rate of office referrals to suspensions, which were broken down by race and gender. This table indicates that Black students are referred to the office more frequently than White students, and that Black males were referred most often and had the highest number of suspensions.

Table 5. Office Referrals and Mean Suspension Rates in a Midwestern School District
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Total Sample</th>
<th></th>
<th>Black</th>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office Referrals Per Student</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>5585</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>3187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.98</td>
<td>5195</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>2978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>10780</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>6165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspensions Per Student</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>5585</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>3187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>5195</td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>2978</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>10780</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>6165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proportion of Referrals Suspended</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td>2802</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>1811</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>1659</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>1173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>4461 b</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td>2984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No. of Days Per Suspension</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1698</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>1106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>840</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>609</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2538 c</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1715</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Includes total number of Black or White students, including those with no office referrals.
b. Includes only those students who were referred to the office one or more times during the school year.
c. Includes only those students who were suspended one or more times during the school year.


**Causes of Disparity**

A research brief from the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (2001) looks at disparity in discipline practices and how it affects academic achievement. They concluded that there are three leading causes of disparity: cultural misperception and misinterpretation, student resistance and defiance, and lack of academic and social support. Townsend (2001) discusses a fourth cause of disparity, socioeconomic factors.

Cultural misperception and misinterpretation leads to White teachers (primarily) referring non-White students to the office on a regular basis. Landis (2001) cites numerous studies of teachers who often feel intimidated or threatened by non-White students when interacting with them in the classroom or hallways. Studies have shown that teacher interpretation of non-White behavior often leads to the student being referred to the office. For example, numerous studies demonstrate that teachers often misinterpret verbal and non-verbal communication between Black students, especially males, as aggressive behavior.
Townsend (2000) discusses the fact that many teachers find Black students engaged in behaviors that seem to conflict with the mainstream culture. This includes verbal expression, with slang and cultural expressions that are misinterpreted by the teacher as offensive or threatening. For example, the words *phat* and *dawg* have a positive meaning in Black culture, but can be viewed in a negative light by teachers who do not understand their meaning. In non-verbal communications, teachers often misinterpret the use of gesturing, which is common in Black culture. This is similar to research done by Skiba et al. (2000) and the Bay Area School Reform Collaborative (2001) who found that teachers often found Black students’ “loud wordplay” confrontational. All three authors conclude that it is the burden of students of color to be aware of the mainstream culture and try to conform to it, but teachers in the mainstream culture are not expected to be aware of theirs.

The second cause of disparity in discipline is student resistance and defiance. This is the reason for the bulk of student suspensions. The common definition of defiance used in the literature comes from Kohl (1994): “resisting the authority of the teacher” (p.2). This includes talking back, not following directions, and insubordination. According to Kohl resistance stems from students reacting to the institutionalized racism that they and their families have experienced. This is becoming the largest factor in suspensions. Students react either by trying to excel and prove the teacher wrong, or by resisting learning, and so are often suspended for their “unwillingness to learn.” Defiance and resistance often fall under the previously mentioned subjective criteria; as Gordon, Piana, and Keleher (2000) state, “defiance of authority” can extend to almost any behavior that a teacher does not agree with.
The third cause of disparity is a lack of academic and social support. This disparity is most closely linked to poor academic performance. Teachers substitute a controlled classroom in place of sound academic support and learning tools as important to academic performance. Students in turn do not feel challenged in their school environment and tend to act out and be disruptive. Students who do not receive support when they are struggling with material also act out and are disciplined. Skiba (2000) discusses how inexperienced teachers, because they lack the skills to effectively manage classroom disruption and feel that an authoritarian approach is necessary, tend to overuse suspension.

The cultural divide is widened somewhat by socioeconomic factors, as some teachers, even those from the same ethnic background as students, tend not to understand the family lives of students who come from low-income homes and will misinterpret their behavior. Many principals and school administrators interviewed in studies and newspaper articles argue that they do not suspend students based on race, but admit that low-income students tend to be suspended at greater rates. Landis (2001) argues that despite Black students making up a large percentage of the poor student population, their numbers are not great enough in the student population as a whole to explain their rate of suspension. For example, Black students in Rhode Island constitute eight percent of the student population but account for thirteen percent of the suspensions compared to poor White students. Skiba et al.’s (2000) empirical analyses controlled for socioeconomic factors and still found race and gender bias in school suspension rates. He concludes that while poverty does have some impact on suspension, it is not as great as the race factor; Black students of all socioeconomic backgrounds are suspended in higher numbers.
Consequences of Suspension

The literature supports the claim that suspension affects academic achievement. Townsend (2000) contends that students who are suspended frequently fall behind academically and are often placed in low track programs. Rodney, Rodney, and Mupier (1999) state that Black male students are three times as likely as White students to be placed in special education programs or in classes for slow learners. Students who are not achieving academically also tend to be suspended more. This begins a vicious cycle: the students who should not be missing school end up having less access to educational resources (Gordon 2000).

Suspension also affects dropout rates. Skiba (2000) states that nationally, 31 percent of high school sophomores with a history of suspension dropped out of school. In the Minneapolis Public School District, 1998-99 figures show that 47.5 percent of dropouts were Black males (Hennepin County, 2002). Studies also suggest that there is a link between suspension and anti-social behavior. Students prone to anti-social behavior tend to seek out others who are, too. If these students are the ones who are suspended, they will only socialize with each other rather than forming healthy social bonds at school with other peers and adults (Skiba 2000, Townsend 2000). Rodney, Rodney, and Mupier (1999) contend that students with antisocial behaviors are at risk for low academic achievement. Students who are given out-of-school suspensions are more likely to be involved in criminal activity since they are not at school, they are more likely to spend time on the streets (Skiba 2000, Townsend 2000).
Discipline Policies

In order to examine the wide latitude given in interpreting discipline policies, it is necessary to examine the written policies from the national, state, and district perspectives. The only federal law addressing suspension is the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1997 (IDEA). This federal law is particularly important to our analysis because of the disproportionate representation of African American students receiving special education services who are suspended. There are special mandates within IDEA about the length of time, type and severity of an incident for students receiving special education services.

Special education students can be suspended from their “regular placement for not more than ten consecutive or cumulative school days, for any violation of school rules if non-disabled children would be subjected to removal for the same offense” (OSEP, 1999). A student receiving special education services cannot be “long-term suspended or expelled from school for behavior that is a manifestation of his or her disability” (OSEP, 1999). After a student has been suspended for more than ten days, the Individual Education Plan (IEP) team, made up of teachers, parents, student and school personnel, must meet to discuss behavior modifications and possible re-assessment of the student. Whenever a special education student is suspended for more than ten days or if disciplinary violations result in a change of placement, the student has a right to due process.

If a student becomes a threat to other students, or commits a drug or weapons offense, the student can be removed from his or her regular education placement to an interim alternative setting for up to 45 days. When a student moves to the interim setting...
the student’s prior general curriculum along with educational modifications and services included in the IEP must follow.

The Pupil Fair Dismissal Act is the overriding State legislation that governs school suspension. It outlines district standards for suspension, expulsion, and exclusion, but leaves room for interpretation. The guidelines include grounds for dismissal, requirements for students with disabilities, parental notification and hearings, pupil rights, and readmission plans. Grounds for dismissal are defined as being in violation of a school board policy when aware of the regulation; conduct that prevents others (students, teachers, or faculty) from performing their designated tasks; or endangerment of people and property. In accordance with IDEA, students with disabilities must continue to receive their special education services regardless of dismissal. Also, parents must be notified in writing if their child is to be removed from school for exclusion or expulsion. The document must include information about the offense and the involved parties; alternative educational services; and student and parent rights. Finally, a school administrator must compose a readmission plan for the excluded or expelled student.

Although the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act includes information regarding suspension, it is very limited and focuses more on regulating expulsion and exclusion. However, the noted suspension policies detail administrative conferences, notifying the pupil of the offense, and a written notification to parents or guardians. In cases when suspension may

6 “Suspension means an action by the school administration, under rules promulgated by the school board, prohibiting a pupil from attending school for a period of no more than ten school days… Expulsion means a school board action to prohibit an enrolled pupil from further attendance for up to 12 months from the date the pupil is expelled… Exclusion means an action taken by the school board to prevent enrollment or reenrollment of a pupil for a period that shall not extend beyond the school year…” (Chapter 121A, Minnesota Statutes 2001)
lead to exclusion or expulsion, alternative educational services must be implemented when the school board’s decision exceeds five days.

The Minneapolis Public School District Policy number 5200 outlines the city’s discipline rules. This policy conforms to the state law at the most basic level. According to the Policy 5200a entitled City Wide Discipline Policy, suspension is defined as:

…an action taken by the school administration, under rules promulgated by the school board, prohibiting a pupil from attending school for a period of no more than ten school days. If a suspension is longer than five days, the suspending administrator must provide the superintendent with a reason for the longer suspension… Each suspension action shall include a readmission plan. The readmission plan shall include, where appropriate, a provision for alternative programs to be implemented upon readmission. Suspension may not be consecutively imposed against the same pupil for the same course of conduct…except where the pupil will create an immediate and substantial danger to surrounding persons or property. (Minneapolis Public School District, Policy 5200a, 1994)

The Philosophy

Minneapolis Public School District Policy 5200 begins with a statement of their philosophy. This philosophy emphasizes that discipline is not punishment and should be used as a tool to educate students on “law, authority, property, rights of others and toward responsibility for self” (Minneapolis Public School District, Policy 5200, 1994).

The Offenses

A student in the Minneapolis district will be suspended for the following infractions: carrying weapons, assault, sexual harassment/sexual violence/indecent exposure, alcohol/other drugs, use of tobacco, verbal abuse and disrespect of school
staff/students, personal theft, school property damage, improper activation of fire alarms, trespassing, bus discipline infractions, truancy, and tardiness.

The first offense, “possession of a weapon or device that can be used in a threatening manner” (Minneapolis Public School District, Policy 5200a, 1994) carries penalties of a five-day suspension and/or the possibility of expulsion. The possession of a weapon and the attack on another person with a weapon are both included under this infraction. Therefore, both possession of a weapon and the attack upon another person with a weapon are penalized within the same guidelines. For students in grades K-3 the weapon guidelines state that the suspension will not exceed three days. Students in grades 4-6 face a suspension of up to 5 days. Students in grades 7-12 are recommended for expulsion. All incidences of weapons violations are referred to the police, and the offending student may be subject to felony charges as laid out in Minn. Stat. § 609.02, Subd. 1(a).

Assault has many different levels, depending upon the circumstances of the incident. The first type of assault is defined as the “threat of bodily harm to another person without material contact,” (MPSD, Policy 5200a, 1994). This offense will result in a five-day suspension. The second level is an assault without material contact, but the student possessed a weapon. These transgressions are regulated by the weapons policy. The third level of assault is fighting with contact. Students in grades K-3 may be suspended from one to five days and transferred to another education setting. Students in grades 4-12 will be initially suspended for five days. The student could also be transferred to another educational setting. A second assault with contact could result in recommendation for
expulsion. The Citywide Policy 5200C regulates discipline of students with disabilities, including assault.

Sexual harassment, sexual violence, and indecent exposure will “result in immediate suspension with disposition dependent upon offense. This may involve a parent conference, participation of the support staff, psychological evaluation and/or police referral and recommendation for expulsion” (MPSD, Policy 5200a, 1994). The Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence policy further details the expected behavior of students.

The possession and/or use of alcohol or other drugs, including illegal drugs and the misuse of prescription drugs, will result in a one-day suspension for students in elementary school. The policy recommends a parent conference and referral to an elementary chemical awareness team. A student in secondary school will be suspended for three days, with a parent conference and will be referred to a chemical awareness team for assessment. In the case of a second offense the student will be suspended for five days, with a parent conference and the recommendation of the use of a community based evaluation, with the “involvement of a building multidisciplinary chemical awareness team” (MPSD, Policy 5200a, 1994). The sale of alcohol, illegal substances, or prescription drugs will result in five days of suspension and a police referral. The principal may recommend expulsion. If a student uses tobacco on school grounds or in any school vehicle, the student will be suspended for one day with parental notification. If the student repeats the same tobacco offense, the suspension time can increase to five days.

Verbal abuse and disrespect of school staff and students “includes but is not limited to, refusing to comply with reasonable requests from school authorities; directing profanity and verbal abuse toward adults and/or students; displaying behavior which is
intended to be demeaning, derogatory or confrontational. Some examples include refusing to follow instructions, name-calling, vulgar gestures, racial epithets, etc.” (MPSD, Policy 5200a, 1994). Students in grades K-3 will be suspended for one to three days. Students in grades 4-12 will be suspended for three days, and can be a suspension from the classroom or the building.

Students who participate in personal theft will be suspended for three days, referred to the police and parents will be notified. Students who damage school property will be suspended for three to five days, referred to the police, and held responsible for payment of monetary damages determined by the court. The improper activation of a fire alarm will result in a suspension of two days and the student will be referred to the fire marshal and police liaison. Trespassing is categorized as an incident when a student has an “unauthorized absence from his/her home school, [and is] found present without permission at another Minneapolis Public School or on Minneapolis school property” (MPSD, Policy 5200a, 1994). If a student is found in violation of the trespassing policy the student may be suspended for up to five days. Bus disciplinary policy follows the same guidelines as other offenses except that the student faces the penalty of denial of transportation privileges. The denial cannot go into effect until the parent has been notified.

The offense of truancy results in the application of the Minnesota compulsory attendance law. Tardiness will result in a punishment that is determined by each building, but habitual tardiness will be treated as truancy. Dealing with tardiness may involve: (a) classroom teachers resolving the problem in the classroom; (b) parent-teacher cooperation via telephone; (c) referral to counselor or building administrators; (d) conference between
social worker, parent, teacher, administrator, counselor, or any part of this group; (e) in-house suspension; (f) police involvement; (g) court referral; (h) administrative transfer to another school; (i) referral to in-school support agency; (j) referral to outside agency; (k) exclusion from school (MPSD, Policy 5200a, 1994).

The Procedure

The district also has a policy that outlines the procedure for suspending a pupil. This policy is MPSD Policy 5200B Suspension. According to this policy, suspensions are documented using a district-provided suspension form. This record is kept by the district. The policy states that unless the student is an immediate danger to themselves, others or the school property, attempts must be made to provide the students with alternative programs or methods of discipline. The principal is held accountable for these attempts, and must be able to show that such attempts were made. The district policy never defines how many attempts have to be made.

When a student is suspended, the policy outlines several steps that have to be followed. First, an informal administrative conference has to be held with the student unless that student is a threat to school persons or property, or if the student has already left the building. If the student is denied this conference for the aforementioned reasons, the student must be allowed a conference at the earliest possible time.

The policy only mentions that the principal must be in attendance for the informal administrative meeting. No representative for the student is provided. Parents are to be notified of the suspension, but the citywide policy only states that, “A written notice containing the grounds for suspensions, facts, testimony, a readmission plan, and a copy of the ‘Pupil Fair Dismissal Act’ must personally be served upon the student at or before the
time of suspension is to take effect and upon the parent or guardian by certified mail within 48 hours of the informal administrative conference” (MPSD, Policy 5200B, 1994). An informal administrative conference must also be held before the student returns to school. The principal also needs to prepare a written readmission plan at the time of the suspension. This plan should include procedures for the student’s return to classes or provisions for an alternative program.

This Suspension Policy states that “suspension may not be imposed consecutively against the same student for the same course of conduct, or incident of misconduct, except where the student will create an immediate and substantial danger to the student or the persons or property around the student…No suspension shall exceed fifteen school days. An alternative program shall be implemented when suspension exceeds five days” (MPSD, Policy 5200B, 1994). Again, discipline of students with disabilities is regulated by 5200C.

**Students with Disabilities**

As stated earlier, students with disabilities have a separate policy detailing discipline procedures. The main difference is that Policy 5200c acknowledges that some behaviors exhibited by a special education student may be a manifestation of their disability. The district’s Policy 5200a and 5200b, which outline the rules and procedures for suspension, can be applied to a special education student under the following stipulations. First, the student’s Individual Education Planning (IEP) team has to conclude that applying the citywide discipline policy is appropriate for that student, taking into consideration the student’s disability. Second, when the IEP team concludes that the policies can be applied to a student, a copy of the policy and the conclusion need to be
given to the parent. Policy 5200c goes on to discuss a parent’s right to challenge a suspension.

In accordance with federal law, the MPSD cannot discipline students in a way that constitutes a significant change in a student’s placement. This includes suspensions longer than 10 days, including 10 aggregate days of suspension. Policy 5200c is interesting because it goes to great lengths to discuss parents’ rights to appeal a suspension decision yet Policies 5200a and 5200b do not. This may be unfair to students who are not disabled.

**Student’s Acknowledgement of the Discipline Policies**

Upon entering the Minneapolis School District a student must sign a form entitled *Acknowledgement of Minneapolis Public Schools’ Citywide Discipline Policy*. By signing this statement a student agrees that he or she is aware that such offenses as assault, possession of a weapon, sexual misconduct, religious, racial, and sexual harassment, and the sale or attempted sale of alcohol will result in immediate suspension or expulsion. There is no indication that the parent must acknowledge the policies.

The consequences for possessing a firearm are different on this form than in the written policies. The MPSD policy 5200a states that expulsion is a “period not to exceed one year” (1994) while the *Acknowledgement of Minneapolis Public Schools’ Citywide Discipline Policy* has the student sign a statement that says “I understand that if I possess a firearm or a replica of a firearm at school, I will be expelled for at least a year.” This contradiction has yet to be clarified by school administrators.
Suspension Notification

When a student is suspended a “Notice of Suspension” must be drawn up and sent home to the parent or guardian within 48 hours prior to, or the first 48 hours of the suspension, as outlined in Policy 5200B. The notice of suspension includes the name and address of the student; the type of suspension, in-house or away from school; and the signature of an administrator. The signature of the administrator signifies that this suspension is in compliance with all state and federal laws for regular and special education students. Below the signature of the administrator is a section to be filled out if this new suspension is an extension of previous extension. In this case, the date of the original suspension must be provided. After that, one completes the section called “Ground of Suspension,” where a complete explanation of the circumstances leading to the suspension is required. There are eight lines in which to give the explanation. There are also reason codes that the person filling out the form can use.

Directly following the grounds for suspension is a section called “Statement of Suspended Student.” It is not stated whether the student is permitted to write on the form or if someone else asks the student for his or her statement. There are three boxes that are to be checked and three lines for explanation. The three boxes indicate whether a student agrees or disagrees with the “statement of fact” located in the “Grounds for Suspension” statement. The third box indicated if the student was sent home because of immediate or substantial danger. If the student does not agree with the statement in the “Grounds for Suspension” section the three lines are to be used to indicate the student’s interpretation of the facts.
The next section regards the re-admission plan. The options for re-admission include being admitted back in the student’s regular classes, parental meeting with administrators to discuss the problem, parental meeting at school to develop a plan of action, or other. This option is followed by two lines for description. The last section is for special education students. There is nothing to fill out in this section, but it gives instructions for how to handle a suspension situation for a student receiving special education services. The IEP team must meet within five days to complete Minnesota’s Manifestation Determination form. If the suspension is to last more than ten school days the IEP team must complete the Manifest Destination form, “review or implement a Behavior Intervention plan and conduct a Functional Behavioral Assessment.” (MPSD, Notice of Suspension Form, 1999)

A reasonable effort must be made to contact the parents of the suspended student. An informal administrative conference is to take place, then the notice and “Pupil Fair Dismissal Act,” which is on the back of the Notice of Suspension must be mailed certified mail to a parent within 48 hours of suspension. Subsequently, at or before the time of suspension a student must receive a written notice of suspension along with the “Pupil Fair Dismissal Act.” An informal administrative conference must be held with the suspended student. This conference will not be held if a student poses an immediate or substantial danger to other persons or property.

The maximum lengths of time of suspensions are as follows: “No suspension shall exceed 15 school days. An alternative program shall be implemented when suspension exceeds five days” (MPSD, Suspension policy 5200b, 1994). If the student has a disability then the suspension may not exceed 10 days. Student suspensions may not be
imposed consecutively against the same student if there is not a threat of immediate or substantial danger. The principal determines this danger. If this danger is present then an informal administrative conference is held over the phone or off of the school site.

**Building Expulsion Referral Checklist**

The last document that the district has regarding discipline is the *Building Expulsion Referral Checklist*. This is the checklist to be used by administrators when they are referring a student for expulsion. The fourth level of policy analysis was to contact the four schools in our study and look at the school-level policies and practices they have relating to discipline. Two of the schools were contacted. To maintain the confidentiality of our participants, these schools will be identified as A and B. Speaking with these schools reinforced the conclusion reached after examining the district policies: the district policies are not specific enough and leave a lot of room for interpretation. The best example of this is what schools do with students they want to remove from the classroom for a half a day or a day, and what policies the schools have to help teachers handle the classroom.

School A has a written building management plan that spells out for the teachers what behaviors they are supposed to handle in the classroom. Beyond these standards, each team of teachers decides at the beginning of the year what different interventions they will use to change a student’s behavior, yet keep them in the classroom. After a teacher has gone through his or her team-specified interventions, that teacher can send the student to a behavioral room. Any time a student is sent to this room for a “time out,” an administrator goes to see the child in the room. Teachers have to fill out an incident report in which they list the interventions taken prior to removing the student from the
classroom, as well as to describe the incident. Then the administrator decides what action should be taken, such as a lunchtime detention, time spent in the behavior room, an in-school suspension, or an out of school suspension.

School B has no formal requirement that teams of teachers have to put together behavior modification plans. In this school, the teacher can send students to the office with a behavioral referral. The only intervention mentioned on this referral is a call to the parents. After the student is sent to the office, it is the responsibility of the administrator to investigate the incident and decide what action should be taken. Instead of a behavioral room, this school has an in-school suspension.

These two differently named rooms are vital to our discussion of suspensions. This is because the district has very ambiguous guidelines about what to do with a student that a school wants to remove from the classroom for a day. Some schools, like School A, have the student sit in a behavioral room for that half or whole day, yet do not report this “detention” as a suspension. On the other hand, School B sends their student to the in-school suspension room for a half or whole day and must report it as a suspension, causing their suspension rates to appear higher than the other school. The school district does not require written records be kept of office referrals or detentions. By not having this information, it is impossible to assess whether there is a racial difference in the severity of discipline. The activities in the two rooms appear to be the same; students do schoolwork or other tasks assigned by the administration.

The literature also suggests that cultural misinterpretation is a cause of racial disparities in suspension rates. To investigate how this is handled in schools, each school was asked, “What cultural diversity training do you provide your staff members?” School
A responded with “not as much as we should.” School A offers most cultural training through programming. Teaching teams also choose topics for staff development days and they occasionally address the issue of cultural diversity. In previous years, School B had Ruby Payne conduct workshops for the faculty and staff about racism.

The schools were also asked what they do to give their teachers guidelines regarding discipline. At the beginning of the year School A spends the two weeks, before the students arrive, discussing behavior policies with their teachers. During the year, classroom management is often discussed at staff meetings and staff development days. Also, School A required the staff read a short book on how to manage a classroom. The teachers then discussed it during staff development. The School A administrator lamented the fact that universities are no longer offering their education students classes in classroom management. To make up for this, the first year teachers at School A are paired with a mentor. The mentor attends the first year teacher’s classroom for approximately one to two hours everyday. The two also meet daily to discuss classroom management issues and techniques. In addition, all teachers work in a team. The teams meet daily and support each other, discussing how to manage different pupils.

School B has recently gone through a revision of administration and practices. During the first year of the revision, the administrators ran regular staff meetings that addressed behavior management. In recent years, these workshops have not been offered due to the limitations of the administration’s time. Instead, most of the classroom management discussions have been among the teaching teams and administrators. The teams meet daily with an administrator, and discuss curriculum and classroom issues. The efficacy of these policies is unknown. In the data analysis, School B had a higher count of
suspensions than School A, but when you compare number of suspended students, the two schools were similar. It is possible that School B has a few students who act up and are causing their suspension rates to be high.

Court Cases

The review of suspension policies at the national, state, district, and school levels has led to much confusion on the rights of the student, parent(s), and school. Similarly, the “wide latitude” given illustrates the dissent between written policies and implementation. The following court cases examine the results of unclear policy statements and execution within individual schools. One case, from the national perspective, addressed the issue of suspension in relation to IDEA; the next three cases illustrate the context of state (specifically the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act) and district policies; and finally, the last case analyzes the situation at the district level.

In Honig v. Doe, US Supreme Court (484 US 305, 311) from the US Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit, two San Francisco Unified School District students were suspended indefinitely in separate incidences of assault. Both of the students exhibited behavior that was outlined in each of their Individual Educational Plans. The ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court held the Circuit Court’s decision that students could be suspended for up to 30 days for incidences that arise out of their known behavioral disorders. The ruling stated that students with disabilities could not be suspended indefinitely or expelled, because it violated the long-term suspension definition in the EHA/IDEA. The court also recognized the state’s responsibility to provide educational services even when a student’s school is unwilling or unable to provide those services.
There are three cases in the last ten years concerning suspension policies in Minnesota. The first, *Eason vs. Independent School District No. 11 of 1999*, discusses a student suspended for verbally abusing another student. The father, on behalf of his son, obtained a temporary restraining order preventing the school from suspending his son based on the argument that the school did not give written notification prior to leaving the informal meeting. He stated that this was a direct violation of the district policies and did not comply with the guidelines of the Pupil Fair Dismissal Act. The District Court granted the temporary injunction, in favor of the father. However, the Court of Appeals repealed the decision, stating that the District Court could not issue a temporary injunction because, while the state law allows for appeals of expulsion to be taken to the court level, no such state law exists for suspension. Therefore, judicial review is limited to expulsion and exclusion decisions in Minnesota.

The next case, *E.R.D. and Court of Appeals of Minnesota*, states that E.R.D. was suspended for having a pocketknife and making threats with it. After the student was suspended, a police officer was informed of the incident. E.R.D. motioned to dismiss the criminal charges because of potential double jeopardy. He argued that because the school is a state agency, the suspension was already a form of punishment, so any other criminal penalty would constitute double jeopardy. The Court of Appeals ruled that the case did not involve double jeopardy because suspension falls within the groups that serve remedial goals of safety, institutional order, and protection of the rights of other students to an education.

The final case, *Polonia vs. Independent School District No. 709*, involves the possession of a toy gun. Polonia used the toy gun to threaten another student at the bus
stop, was suspended and recommended for expulsion. There is no distinction made between real and toy weapons in Minnesota state suspension policies. During the school board hearing regarding the potential expulsion, the school district attorney mentioned, “typically (the school board has) had a policy of zero tolerance” to which a chairwoman responded, “I take a zero tolerance, period.” Polonia appealed the expulsion saying that the zero tolerance policy was not explicitly declared in the school handbook. The Court of Appeals ruled that the consequences for real and toy weapons are adequately delineated in the handbook and therefore rejected the appeal.

At the local level, there is one case involving the Minneapolis School District and their subsequent suspension and special education policies. The case was brought against the school district by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Civil Rights, and reached agreement in 1998. The Voluntary Compliance Agreement speaks to the disproportionate number of students of color in special education and gifted and talented curriculums and implements a variety of activities to improve students’ academic achievement in reading, math, and behavior (OCR Voluntary Compliance Agreement). The agreement is a five-year goal, which extends to June of 2002. This particular case is pertinent to our study because this it speaks to the literature and empirical study (to follow) of how students of color are over represented in special education and suspensions.

Data Analysis

Many questions persist around the issue of suspension that cannot be fully answered without looking at the statistical data of the Minneapolis Public Schools (MPS). MPS provided the information for the analysis and two files were used. The first file
contained the results of the Minnesota Basic Standards Practice Test given to seventh graders in February of 2002 at twenty-six schools. The second file contained suspension data for the 6th grade from the 2000-2001 school year. As a result, not everyone for whom we have suspension data took the test. Six hundred seventy five of the 1217 students in the suspension file did not take the test. Possible reasons for this could be anything from that child moved away, being absent the day the test was given, or failing the 6th grade. Fortunately, much analysis could still be run on the sample of test takers and the sample of suspended students.

Summary Statistics – The district as a whole

The first level of analysis was to summarize and describe the data provided. Table 5 provides the first summary of the statistics. This shows the number of students in the sample, the number who took the test, etc.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 6. Summary statistics of the sample</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students in the sample</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students who took the test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of suspensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students suspended</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average length of a suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most common length of a suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum length of a suspension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximum number of suspensions for one student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of suspended students who did not take the test</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The problem found in the Minneapolis Public Schools is that suspension rates and test score ranges differ among the five racial groups. Tables 7 and 8 show the rates of suspension for the district as a whole, for all males in the district and for all females. In
comparison the same numbers were calculated for each race. Table 6 shows the statistics per suspension and Table 7 shows the statistics per suspended students.

**Table 7. Racial and Gender Breakdown of the Number of Suspensions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total Suspensions</th>
<th>Percent of all suspensions</th>
<th>No. of Male Suspensions</th>
<th>Percent Males</th>
<th>No. of Female Suspensions</th>
<th>Percent Females</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>3084</td>
<td>8.8 %</td>
<td>2158</td>
<td>70.0 %</td>
<td>926</td>
<td>30.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>74.5 %</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>65.2 %</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>34.8 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>2299</td>
<td>5.1 %</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>83.3 %</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>30.9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>3.3 %</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>82.5 %</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>16.7 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>8.3 %</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>69.5 %</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>17.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>8.3 %</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>69.5 %</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>29.7 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(See Appendix D for more information.)

As seen in the tables above, African Americans account for 74.5 percent of the sixth grade suspensions for the 2000-2001 school year, and males make up 70 percent of the suspensions. These startling statistics are even more disconcerting when compared to the racial make up of the school district.

According to the report, *Measuring Up* 2002, the Minneapolis School District’s racial makeup for the 2000-2001 school district is:

**Table 9. Racial Make-Up of MPSD**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percent of the District</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>4 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>45 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>15 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>9 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>27 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Therefore, Black students are approximately 1.67 times more likely to be suspended than the population of the district. These were the numbers used to calculate the district racial disproportionality ratios earlier. This overrepresentation may be the result of serious defects in the district’s implementation of suspension policies, or other inadequacies facing students of color in general. These speculations are examined in depth later Table 9 further shows the racial and gender breakdown of the entire sample from those who took the test and those who had ever been suspended.

Table 10 further shows the racial and gender breakdown of the entire sample from those who took the test and those who had ever been suspended.

**Table 10. Racial and Gender Characteristics of Minneapolis 7th Graders,* Practice Test Takers and Suspended Pupils**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent of All 7th Graders*</th>
<th>Percent of Test Takers</th>
<th>Percent of Suspended Pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>4.4% (157)</td>
<td>3.6% (107)</td>
<td>8.6% (104)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>47.1% (1663)</td>
<td>38.9% (1160)</td>
<td>70.0% (851)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>15.2% (537)</td>
<td>17.0% (507)</td>
<td>5.8% (70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>8.5% (299)</td>
<td>10.8% (321)</td>
<td>4.1% (50)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>24.8% (874)</td>
<td>29.7% (886)</td>
<td>11.5% (140)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td>51.2% (1806)</td>
<td>49.5% (1476)</td>
<td>65.2% (793)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>48.8% (1724)</td>
<td>50.5% (1505)</td>
<td>34.7% (422)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Data on 7th grade students in Minneapolis from 2002 Fall reports to MN Dept. of Children, Families & Learning and taken from their web site (File GED2002).

The racial distribution of test-takers is significantly different from that of all students, with African American and American Indian students less likely to have taken the test than students of other races.

For the 2001-02 seventh grade students who took the Minnesota Basic Standards Practice Test, Table 11 summarizes the percent in special education, the percentages, and how many are in the gifted and talented program. These numbers are important for two reasons. Because the literature mentions that Black students are over-represented in
special education programs, and since the Minneapolis Public School District has separate policies for suspending special education students, we were interested in how many students were in special education. We also wanted to see how many of the students were in the gifted/talented program and to examine the percentages among test takers and among suspended students.

Table 11. Percent of the Sample in Special Education and the Gifted and Talented Program

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percent of 7th Graders</th>
<th>Percent of test takers</th>
<th>Percent of Suspended Pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Students</td>
<td>17.0%</td>
<td>11.6%</td>
<td>29.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifted and Talented students</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean test scores, special education rates and gifted and talented rates for each race are listed in Table 12. These were calculated for only those students who took the test. Table 12 shows the special education and gifted and talented rates for students who did not take the test.

Table 12. Test Means, Special Education Rates and Gifted and Talented Rates by Race for Those Who Took the Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Test Takers</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Math Score Average</td>
<td>39.03</td>
<td>37.04</td>
<td>32.92</td>
<td>40.76</td>
<td>32.08</td>
<td>48.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading Score Average</td>
<td>21.87</td>
<td>19.07</td>
<td>18.81</td>
<td>20.26</td>
<td>17.94</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(out of 40)</td>
<td>S = 9.68</td>
<td>S = 9.15</td>
<td>S = 8.40</td>
<td>S = 7.90</td>
<td>S = 8.19</td>
<td>S = 9.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td>16.0 % (346)</td>
<td>20.6 % (22)</td>
<td>16.8 % (195)</td>
<td>6.1 % (31)</td>
<td>7.2 % (23)</td>
<td>8.5 % (75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Gifted and</td>
<td>17.8 % (589)</td>
<td>14 % (15)</td>
<td>13.4 % (155)</td>
<td>18.1 % (92)</td>
<td>9.7 % (31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talented students</td>
<td>18.0 % (22)</td>
<td>14 % (15)</td>
<td>13.4 % (155)</td>
<td>18.1 % (92)</td>
<td>9.7 % (31)</td>
<td>34.5% (306)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13. Special Education and Gifted and Talented Rates for Suspended Students Who Did Not Take the Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>All Suspended Non-Test Takers</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>Asian (%)</th>
<th>Hispanic (%)</th>
<th>White (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Special Education Students</td>
<td>35.4% (239)</td>
<td>38.2% (26)</td>
<td>34.6% (169)</td>
<td>21.4% (6)</td>
<td>37.0% (10)</td>
<td>45.9% (61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifted and Talented students</td>
<td>7.4% (50)</td>
<td>1.5% (1)</td>
<td>7.8% (38)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>3.7% (1)</td>
<td>16.4% (10)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The tables show that of the students who took the test, African American students and American Indian students were more likely to be in special education than the other three races. This difference in special education rates was not the same for students who did not take the test.

The literature indicated that African American students are usually suspended longer and for less serious offenses. In Minneapolis, African American 6th graders were suspended in essentially equal numbers for fighting and lack of cooperation. In contrast, students of other races were much more likely to be suspended for fighting than lack of cooperation. Table 14 shows that the top five reasons for suspensions differed in order among the races, though in general the same five reasons were in the list for each race. The percentages and orders also differ slightly.

Table 14. Top 5 Reasons for Suspension for the Whole Sample and Each Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>All (%)</th>
<th>Suspended</th>
<th>American Indian (%)</th>
<th>African American (%)</th>
<th>Asian (%)</th>
<th>Hispanic (%)</th>
<th>White (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fighting (17.3%)</td>
<td>Fighting (23.7%)</td>
<td>Persistent lack of cooperation (16.3%)</td>
<td>Fighting (21.8%)</td>
<td>Persistent lack of cooperation (15.5%)</td>
<td>Fighting (20.7%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Persistent lack of cooperation (16%)</td>
<td>Persistent lack of cooperation (14.8%)</td>
<td>Fighting (16.1%)</td>
<td>Persistent lack of cooperation (14.7%)</td>
<td>Fighting (10.7%)</td>
<td>Persistent lack of cooperation (15.6%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Disrespect/verbal abuse adult (9.3%)</td>
<td>Disrespect/verbal abuse adult (9.3%)</td>
<td>Disrespect/verbal abuse adult (9.4%)</td>
<td>Disrespect/verbal abuse adult (11.5%)</td>
<td>Disrespect/verbal abuse adult (7.8%)</td>
<td>Defiance (9.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Defiance (8.0%)</td>
<td>Defiance (7.0%)</td>
<td>Defiance (8.2%)</td>
<td>Endangering* (5.8%)</td>
<td>Defiance (7.8%)</td>
<td>Disrespect/verbal abuse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 15 shows that for Minneapolis 6th graders, the average length of suspension was not very different from one race to the next. Each racial group had an average suspension length of two days.

**Table 15. Average Length of Suspension Per Offense by Race/Ethnicity**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Average Suspension Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the average suspension time is similar for each race, African American students had marginally longer average suspensions (2.04 days) and White students had the shortest (1.87 days). No White, Asian, or Hispanic student received a suspension longer than 5 days. There were only 16 suspensions longer than 5 days for the whole district (14 African American, 2 Native American).

**Table 16. Top 5 Reasons for Suspension for the Whole Sample and Each Race**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top 5</th>
<th>Sample (%)</th>
<th>American Indian (%)</th>
<th>African American (%)</th>
<th>Asian (%)</th>
<th>Hispanic (%)</th>
<th>White (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>(17.3%)</td>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>Persistent lack of cooperation</td>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>Persistent lack of cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Persistent lack of cooperation (16%)</td>
<td>Persistent lack of cooperation (14.8%)</td>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>Persistent lack of cooperation</td>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>Persistent lack of cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Disrespect/verbal abuse adult (9.3%)</td>
<td>Disrespect/verbal abuse adult (9.3%)</td>
<td>Disrespect/verbal abuse adult (9.4%)</td>
<td>Disrespect/verbal abuse adult (11.5%)</td>
<td>Disrespect/verbal abuse adult (7.8%)</td>
<td>Disrespect/verbal abuse adult (7.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Defiance (8.0%)</td>
<td>Defiance (7.0%)</td>
<td>Defiance (8.2%)</td>
<td>Willful* (5.8%)</td>
<td>Defiance (7.8%)</td>
<td>Disrespect/verbal abuse adult (7.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Pushing, Shoving,</td>
<td>Pushing, shoving,</td>
<td>Pushing, shoving,</td>
<td>Defiance (5.8%)</td>
<td>Willful* (5.8%)</td>
<td>Pushing, Shoving,</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 17 shows that in this sample, the average length of suspension was not very different from one race to the next. Each racial group had an average suspension length of two days.

Table 17. Average Length of Suspension Per Offense

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnic Group</th>
<th>Average Suspension Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>2.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>1.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>2.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>1.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the average suspension time is similar for each race, no White, Asian, or Hispanic student received a suspension longer than 5 days. There were only 16 (14 African American, 2 Native American) suspensions longer than 5 days for the whole district.

Summary Statistics – The four target schools

After looking at the suspension data for the district as a whole, the four target schools were examined. Below (Table 15) are the summary statistics for Franklin Middle School, Olson Middle School, Sanford Middle School and Emerson Spanish Immersion School (K-8). Although the schools had different frequencies of suspensions, they also differed in their demographic make-up of suspensions.

Table 18. The Number of Offenses for Each of the Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent of Total Suspensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olson</td>
<td>168</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanford</td>
<td>249</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerson</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 19. The Number of Students Suspended for Each of the Schools
As is shown in Tables 18 and 19, Emerson had the best record of suspensions in the 6th grade in the year of 2000-01. Emerson is a different type of school than the other three because it is a Spanish Immersion School. Students have to apply to be in this school. This may make the population of Emerson different from the other three schools. The other three had similar rates of students suspended for each school. Table 18 shows that Sanford has a much higher rate of offenses, but considering that they have similar rates of suspended students, it is hard to conclude whether the high rate in table 18 is because of a select number of children or not.

Next we looked at the schools’ racial and gender breakdowns of suspensions. Table 20 and Table 21 show the racial breakdowns per school. These numbers were calculated for both the offenses (Table 20) and for suspended students (Table 21).

### Table 20. Gender and Racial Suspension Breakdown by School per Offense

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent of Total Suspensions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>5.0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olson</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>6.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanford</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>6.6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerson</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.3 %</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is shown in Tables 18 and 19, Emerson had the best record of suspensions in the 6th grade in the year of 2000-01. Emerson is a different type of school than the other three because it is a Spanish Immersion School. Students have to apply to be in this school. This may make the population of Emerson different from the other three schools. The other three had similar rates of students suspended for each school. Table 18 shows that Sanford has a much higher rate of offenses, but considering that they have similar rates of suspended students, it is hard to conclude whether the high rate in table 18 is because of a select number of children or not.

Next we looked at the schools’ racial and gender breakdowns of suspensions. Table 20 and Table 21 show the racial breakdowns per school. These numbers were calculated for both the offenses (Table 20) and for suspended students (Table 21).
Table 21. Gender and Racial Suspension Breakdown by School per Suspended Student

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Amer. Indian</th>
<th>African Amer.</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Franklin</td>
<td>73.8 %</td>
<td>25.2 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>77 %</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4.9 %</td>
<td>85.2 %</td>
<td>9.8 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspensions#</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>77 %</td>
<td>16 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>6 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olson</td>
<td>53.2 %</td>
<td>46.8 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
<td>45 %</td>
<td>33 %</td>
<td>2 %</td>
<td>18 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3.9 %</td>
<td>63.6 %</td>
<td>11.7 %</td>
<td>1.3 %</td>
<td>19.5 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspensions#</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>58 %</td>
<td>5 %</td>
<td>4 %</td>
<td>24 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanford</td>
<td>71.3 %</td>
<td>28.8 %</td>
<td>9 %</td>
<td>58 %</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.5 %</td>
<td>72.5 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>3.8 %</td>
<td>16.3 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspensions#</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>75 %</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerson</td>
<td>50 %</td>
<td>50 %</td>
<td>3 %</td>
<td>19 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>51 %</td>
<td>26 %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>75 %</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspensions#</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>0 %</td>
<td>75 %</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* These numbers are from the 2001-02 school demographic information
# These numbers are from the 2000-01 suspension data file

Table 21 shows that among of the four schools, Franklin has disproportionalities in the suspension rates of African Americans, Asians and White students. Olson has disproportionalities in the suspension rates of African Americans, and Asians. Sanford had disproportionalities in suspensions for African Americans, Asians, and White students. Emerson, the lowest suspending school, had disproportionalities in suspensions for American Indian, and African American students (because none were suspended) and in its suspensions of Hispanic students.

**Summary Statistics – The Practice MBST**

The Minnesota Basic Standards Practice Test results are being used in this study as a measure of academic achievement. The question asked is whether being suspended
affects a student’s academic achievements. Five hundred forty-two of the students in the suspension file took the test. The remaining test takers had never been suspended in the 6th grade (or were not in the district).

The scores for the Math test ranged from 0 to 67 (67 being perfect), with a mean of 39.03. The scores for the Reading test ranged from 0 to 40 (40 being perfect), with a mean of 21.87. Below, Table 22 shows how the students from Franklin, Olson, Sanford and Emerson compared. Franklin school did not participate in the practice test, so no scores are available for that school.

Table 22. Raw Test Scores – Math and Reading

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Raw Math Score</th>
<th>Raw Reading Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Min</td>
<td>Max</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Franklin (n = 0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Olson (n = 231)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanford (n = 44)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emerson (n = 45)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Emerson had the best scores. Their minimum score was only nine points below the other school’s means. Emerson also had the best suspension rates and is a different school from the other three.

Compared Mean Test Scores

The second level of analysis begins to answer the question behind this paper: Does being suspended affect academic achievement? Using the same files from the summary statistic part, we compared the test score means for suspended students and non-suspended students. We did this for each individual race to see what the effect was for each race. This
was important because the prompt for this project was the poor performance of African American students on previous tests.

Table 23 shows the results of compared means t-tests between students who were suspended and students who were not suspended for each ethnic group. Again, the test score data was gathered during February 2001 and the test takers were seventh graders. The suspension data is from the 2000-2001 school year, when the students were in sixth grade.

Table 23: Compared Means for Independent Sample’s Test Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>African-American</th>
<th>Asian</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>White</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>MATH</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-suspended</td>
<td>72%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspended</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p-value for equal variances assumed</td>
<td>0.029</td>
<td>P&lt; 0.001</td>
<td>0.231</td>
<td>P&lt; 0.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>READING</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-suspended</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspended</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p-value for equal variances assumed</td>
<td>0.201</td>
<td>P&lt; 0.001</td>
<td>0.552</td>
<td>P&lt; 0.001</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 23 illustrates whether or not being suspended affects the percentage of correct responses on the math and reading portion of the Practice MBST. The p-values for the African-American and White students show that being suspended has a significant effect on the percentage correct for both the math and reading tests. African-American and White students who had been suspended have an average percent correct score that was significantly different from students of the same respective race who had not been suspended. For American Indian students, being suspended was significantly different from not being suspended in the mean math scores, not reading. There was no significant
difference between mean math and reading percent correct for students who had either been suspended or those who had not been suspended, for Hispanic and Asian students.

**Regression Analysis**

The third level of analysis was to find the effect of suspension on academic achievement. To do this, regression analysis was used. The models were based on variables identified in the literature as factors in suspension. Some of the variables outlined in the literature were not included in the regression analysis because of missing information. Cultural misinterpretation, a key factor identified in many of the articles, could not be included. There is no information about such a concept for each individual student. The only information available was concrete, quantitative information. Qualitative information such as student’s perceptions of their teachers and similar concepts could not be captured in this analysis.

We used three different models in the analysis. The dependent variable in the first model was simply the percent correct on the test. The dependent variable in the second model was the log of the percent correct. The dependent variable in the third model was the log of the odds of getting a certain score on the test. In addition, each of these dependent variables was run for the math and the reading test scores.

Every regression had some independent variables in common. The common independent variables were gender (MALE), whether the pupil received a free or reduced lunch (LUNCH), the number of enrollments (MOBILITY), the percent of days of attendance (ATTEND), whether the child is in the gifted and talented program (GTDUMMY), whether the child is in special education (SPDUMMY), and whether the child speaks English at home or not (LANGDUMM). Besides these independent variables,
each model was run three different times with a different policy variable each time. There are three different measures of suspension that could affect test scores. The first is whether the child had ever been suspended or not (SUSPEN). The second is a measure of the total number of days that child had been suspended in the sixth grade (SUMDAYS). The last is a measure of the number of times the child had been suspended (TIMES). Our results showed that the dummy variable SUSPEN (was the student suspended?) was the most significant. The formulas for these nine different regressions for the math test are located in Appendix D. These nine regressions were also run for the reading test (for which the dependent variables were READPER, LNREAD, AND ODDSREAD, respectively). The 18 regressions were run for the entire sample of test takers and included dummy variables for each non-white race. This matrix of regressions was then run a second time for all the students who are not receiving special education services.

The initial regressions showed that the log-odds model (which measures the effect of each variable on the odds of getting one percent of the answers correct on the test) explained the most variance in the results. Further analyses focused on this regression for all students, regardless of their special education status.

Discussion

This analysis shows that being suspended in the sixth grade does have a negative effect on seventh grade test scores. The relative size of this effect, however, is not very large (.015). Figure x shows the relative importance of the significant independent variables on math and reading test scores. The largest impact comes from attendance. While suspension has both a direct effect and an indirect effect through its impact on
attendance, there are still significant effects on being Black, American Indian, English speaking, receiving subsidized lunches and other variables.

The figures above show the elasticities associated with each independent variable that had a significant effect on mean test scores. The elasticity associated with a variable such as suspensions measures the percentage change in the dependent variable due to suspension. In the case of mean math scores, the direct effect of suspension on math scores is about 0.011, meaning that suspensions account directly for about one percent of one percent of the mean math score for all students. The largest elasticity (0.48) is associated with attendance, measured by the percent of possible days the student actually attended.

We also found that suspensions are correlated with attendance (0.597). For that reason, we calculated the association of suspension with attendance and used that result to add this indirect effect to the direct effects of suspension. The graphs show this total effect of suspensions as 0.015 on math and reading scores. Clearly, there are other variables affecting attendance and contributing to that variable’s impact on test scores, and there are other paths through which suspensions have indirect effects on those scores. Further research will be required to quantify these effects.

While this data is not a complete census of the seventh grade, it does show that being suspended adversely affects test scores. The results show, however, that this is only one of the reasons for the disparity in academic achievement among the races. A replication of this study that had a measure of academic achievement for all students suspended would probably show even greater effects, since the sub-sample of students who were suspended but did not take the test could include students who failed the sixth
grade. These children presumably are lower achieving than the other students, and being suspended could have even greater effects with them in the sample.

It is clear that suspension can have an impact on several of the other independent variables. Further research is needed to identify suspension’s impacts on test scores through other channels.
Table 24. All Students, Reading, Including Special Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Elasticity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SUSPENSION (TOTAL)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HISPANIC</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BLACK</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMERICAN INDIAN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASIAN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUSPENSION (DIRECT)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPECIAL EDUCATION</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GIFTED/TALENTED</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATTENDANCE</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SUBSIDIZED LUNCH</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MALE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 25. All Students, Math, Including Special Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Variable</th>
<th>Elasticity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suspension (Total Effect)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suspension (Direct)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-English Speaking</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gifted/Talented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attendance</td>
<td>0.500000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subsidized Lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
School Level Analyses

One way to determine the relative impact of suspensions and parental involvement is to use data collected from surveys of parents and students. Although it is not possible to connect these survey data with individual test scores, we can analyze their impact on the average scores for students in different schools.

Our analyses included 26 schools for which survey data and test scores were available. We calculated mean test scores for each test for all white, male students in each school and for all other race/gender groups. Similarly, we were able to calculate the average response to questions about parents attending school events for that race/gender group as well as the average percent of students of that group who were suspended at each school. We were able to look at the impact of a variety of school level characteristics on reading and math scores for that race/gender group across all 26 schools. Our analysis (see table x below) showed that the percent of students of that racial/ethnic group in the school who were suspended during the year had major impacts on both the average math and reading scores in the school, while the average score for the parental involvement variable had little or no significant impact. Other relevant factors were the percent of students in the school living with two parents, Hispanic or Black race and the percent minority teachers in the school. The data did not show any significant interaction between student race and suspensions.

Further analysis attempted to determine if the impact of suspension on test scores differed by race. Separate analyses for each racial/ethnic group showed significant effects of suspension. This confirms that there are major independent effects of race on mean test scores not directly
caused by the rate of suspension of students of that race. The importance of the percent of minority teachers in the school was an unexpected and very interesting finding. More research is needed to determine how this impacts the mean scores for all students (Whites included).

Table 26. All Students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Math Scores</th>
<th>Reading Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>coeff. pr&gt;</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercept</td>
<td>73.3819 &lt;.0001</td>
<td>86.8823 &lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>3.0842 0.0054</td>
<td>-1.0988 0.3808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>-17.5424 &lt;.0001</td>
<td>-16.6646 &lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>-10.1527 0.0001</td>
<td>-8.9263 0.0028</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>-9.4117 &lt;.0001</td>
<td>-17.6366 &lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>-17.8281 &lt;.0001</td>
<td>-21.6317 &lt;.0001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollment</td>
<td>-0.0085 0.0453</td>
<td>-0.0087 0.0704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority Staff Pct.</td>
<td>13.8666 0.0226</td>
<td>22.0391 0.0017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pct. Students With 2 Parents</td>
<td>20.1742 0.0521</td>
<td>19.8743 0.0954</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents Attended Event</td>
<td>2.3990 0.0384</td>
<td>0.3161 0.8104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent Students Suspended</td>
<td>-13.8418 0.0025</td>
<td>-16.4106 0.0018</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recommendations from suspensions group

The following recommendations were developed through research and investigation of the Minneapolis Public Schools suspension policies, as well as a variety of alternative programming that suggests improvement in student behavior.

1. **Consistently apply the existing Minneapolis Public School suspension policies across all racial/ethnic groups.**

   Anecdotal evidence suggests that African American students are more likely to be suspended than White students. Consistent application of existing policies is necessary to reduce

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7 Total enrollment, percent Limited English Proficiency students, percent minority teaching staff, percent of students living with two parents, percent of Special Education students, percent of students receiving subsidized lunches, percent of Black students, percent of Hispanic students

*Measuring Up: The Impact of Suspensions, Parental Involvement and Textbooks in Four Minneapolis Public Schools*
the likelihood that suspensions are awarded unevenly or in a biased manner. There is a perception in the community (as documented in the recent Pioneer Press reports) that suspensions are applied in a racially discriminatory manner. It is important that the District be able to show that policies are applied in a race-neutral manner.

2. **Identify the relationships between suspension and other determinants of student test scores such as attendance, poverty, percent of minority staff and language spoken at home and the further indirect impact that suspension may have on test scores.**

Our research suggests that suspension has a small direct role in the racial gap in test scores. As in previous analyses, attendance turns out to be a major factor in predicting test scores. A number of other factors (language, poverty, percent of teachers of color in the school) clearly have larger direct impacts on test scores than suspensions. There may, however, be many indirect impacts. Further research and analysis may quantify the indirect and longer-term impacts of suspension on test scores. Our current data only looks at the immediate impact of suspension in one year (6th grade) on tests cores in the next (7th) grade. A longitudinal study could identify the long-term impact of suspension, labeling of students as “troublemakers” and other factors.

**PARENTAL AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT**

Parental and family involvement provides one possible explanation for the differences in test scores and performance for students. There is a clear difference in reported family involvement across races for Minneapolis students. For example, when asked if family members attended school events in which they participated, 80% of White students answered yes, compared to only 70% for African American students and 68% for American Indian students. We begin by reviewing the literature, then looking at qualitative and quantitative information to
determine the situation in the four selected schools and the Minneapolis Public Schools as a whole.

Parental and family involvement literature varies in evaluating its impacts on student academic achievement. Many authors concluded that the overall role of parents is critical to overall child well being. The literature we surveyed contained several components of parental involvement: definition of parental involvement, reasons parents became involved, and ways in which involvement impacts student achievement. Though most of the literature focused on parental involvement in general, we focused on the middle school grades in some of the literature. We will also address deterrents to parental involvement.

**Parental Involvement Defined**

Perhaps the first item of importance in terms of defining parental and family involvement is whether to use “parental” or “family.” Much of the literature points toward using “family” because family is a more inclusive term and represents an institution that must be engaged for its children to succeed. While we recognize this trend to be important, some of the research we found uses “parental” and some uses “family” and we feel that leaving the language as we found it is an important caveat.

The literature reflects disagreement with regard to the definition of “parental involvement.” Wadsworth (1999) surveyed parents and teachers as to what constitutes “parental involvement.” While most parents surveyed indicated that checking homework and encouraging kids to learn were the most important things they could do to be involved, they also indicated that they would like to be more involved with their child’s education. Teachers surveyed indicated they were most concerned with the quality of parenting implied by students’ behavior.
In their definition of parental involvement, Stevenson and Baker (1987) only take into account formal activities, such as parents attending Parent Teacher Association (P.T.A.) meetings. Others such as Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) expand formal activities to include attending school events such as a special theme night or activities that their children participate in. Epstein (1991), Belenardo (2001), Deslandes (1999) believe that parental involvement means more than attending a school-related event. Their definition makes their arguments vastly different from the contingent that recognizes only formal parent participation.

**Why Parents Become Involved**

In addition to the variability of definitions, the nature of involvement differs according to several variables, most of which can be categorized as family and school characteristics. Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler (1995) assert that there are three areas at home where parents become involved in their child’s education: personally defining their role as parent, feeling a personal sense of efficacy in helping their children succeed at school, and having opportunities to participate in their children’s school life.

School choice is a way parents become involved in their children’s education. Brown (2001) and Yanofsky and Young (1992) agree that the introduction of school choice within a public school district contributes to higher parental involvement. The introduction of school voucher programs lead to increased competition in school choice and this becomes a good beginning point for parents to become involved.

Belenardo (2001) examined sense of community and whether or not it increases upon expanded parental involvement. Belenardo uses six elements to define “sense of community”: shared values, commitment, a feeling of belonging, caring, interdependence, and regular contact. Belenardo found that a sense of community is needed to develop positive relationships between
school staff members and families. For parents, strengthening their sense of community comes through having activities that involve them and continued communication about their child’s progress.

The role of school and family characteristics is key with regard to parental involvement policy. Kessler-Sklar and Baker (2000) examined different school districts’ parental involvement policies, programs, and practices. Their study found that the most common parental involvement policies revolved around communicating with parents about a child’s academic progress and informing parents about school activities. The second most commonly adopted policy supports parent participation in making decisions about school policies and practices. Chrispeels (1996) examined what criteria for evaluation needs to be determined in order to evaluate how teachers interact with parents. Looking at public policy literature, she identifies four types of policy instruments which could be used to induce change, including: mandates, inducements, capacity building, and system-changing policies. Additionally, Chrispeels emphasizes the importance of the schools’ community liaison’s role and asserts that it is the community liaison who is most likely to keep contact with parents and families.

**Middle School Years**

Many authors agree that as children get older, the level of parental involvement decreases. Epstein (1992) notes the declining trend of family involvement over time and in particular, during middle school and high school when parents need to be informed the most about students’ academic achievement. Eccles and Harold (1993) stress the importance of parent-school involvement during early adolescent years and describe involvement during this time as critical to future student performance. They illustrate ways of increasing parental involvement through creating more leadership roles for parents, keeping parents informed about
students’ academic progress, and creating more opportunities for parents to support learning at home and at school. In particular, they cite Comer’s work on parental involvement on a site-based management team as important because it is a forum where parents are involved in the school’s decision making process.

Brough and Irvin (2001) also cite the importance of parental involvement during the middle school years. However, they conclude that there is no one universal formula that is successful across the board for increasing parental involvement, rather the specifics of each school should dictate how best to expand involvement.

**Barriers and Factors Impacting Parental Involvement**

Gettinger and Guetschow (1998) surveyed teachers and parents on what they themselves would recommend to increase parental involvement at schools. They concluded that parents would like to participate in a particular school event, whereas teachers were interested in how effective parents were in helping children in a designated group of activities. Both groups were also showed interest in their roles were perceived and potential opportunities for involvement. Their findings support Hoover-Dempsey and Sandler’s (1995) hypothesis that self-efficacy and the role that parents have in their child’s education are significant factors impacting parental involvement. Additionally, Gettinger and Guetschow found that making available sufficient opportunities for parental involvement and overcoming barriers were the largest deterrents to creating positive home-school partnerships.

Leitch and Tangri’s work (1988) found deterrents to parental involvement included health problems, economic differences between parents and teachers, work responsibilities, and parental feelings that teachers looked down on them for not being as successful as the teachers (Qtd in Brough, 57). In addition, Wadsworth (1999) discovered that a major reason for the lack
of involvement stemmed from parents who did not know how to become involved or what might be expected of them despite survey results suggesting that teacher-parent communication is fairly strong.

Though Stevenson and Baker (1987) discuss how the educational level of mothers would positively impact student academic performance, and other indicators such as the role of single parents and at-home mothers who worked full time were mentioned in the literature, there was still was a gap in the literature discussing nature of racial disparities of parental involvement.

**The Role of Parental Involvement and Its Impacts on Student Achievement**

The most commonly cited work of examining the effects of parental involvement on student achievement is the work of Joyce Epstein. Epstein’s seminal work “Effects on Student Achievement of Teachers’ Practices of Parent Involvement”(1991) discusses how the teacher involves the parent in homework and how that engagement results in student achievement gains. Epstein (1992) emphasizes the semantic difference between “school and family partnerships” or “home-school relations” and “parental involvement” as an important distinction. Epstein concludes that “school and family partnerships” is the preferred terminology because it implies that “both institutions share major responsibilities for children’s education”(1140). In addition, Epstein acknowledges that the primary goals in these partnerships are to “increase student motivation, achievement, and success in school (1141).” Her recommendations focus on improvement of three general domains for enriching school and family partnerships: increased training for teachers and administrators, improved policy and development, and an understanding that there are different types of families and students and school readiness must be accessible for them.

Epstein’s article contains six practices for building school and family partnerships:
1. Basic obligation of families: provide positive home conditions, health, safety, and support learning.
2. Basic obligation of schools: communicate with families about child’s progress, help students and families select curricula and courses.
3. Involvement at school: involvement at events.
4. Involvement in learning activities at home: monitoring and assisting children with needs.
5. Involvement in decision making, governance, and advocacy: activism, participatory roles.
6. Collaboration with community organizations: schools work with agencies who have an interest in seeing students succeed.

Muller’s (1998) hypothesis examines the relationship between parental involvement in education and student performance on math tests amongst boys and girls. Muller used National Education Longitudinal Survey (NELS) data for students at three different points in the student’s lives: 8th, 10th, and 12th grades.

Muller distinguishes between two types of parental involvement: formal and informal. Formal involvement refers to school activities where managerial authority is to be exerted (340). Informal refers to involvement in school events that are considered more casual in nature (ibid). Her results indicated that parental involvement affected test performance in both positive and negative ways. Talking with parents about school was positively associated with test performance while the negative association was displayed when parents intervened due to a behavioral problem (344).

In Canada, Deslandes (1999) studied the impact of several family characteristics (lower income, less educated, single parent, larger size family) on prediction of school achievement and the moderating role and relationship between parenting dimensions and school achievement. The final goal was to test a model in which parenting variables are mediators between family characteristics and school achievement. The study found that parents with more education are
more likely to be involved in their adolescent’s education and that their children attain higher levels of academic achievement (148). In addition, parenting variables (including involvement) were stronger predictors of school achievement than family characteristics.

Shaver and Walls (1998) researched children enrolled in federal Title I special reading or math classes and examined the relationship between the amount of parental involvement and children’s academic achievement. Concurrently, a parent group structured to emphasize current topics of parenting and schoolwork took place. Parents and children were highly encouraged to attend these meetings. The results showed that parents involved in Title I programs who “regularly attended school-based parent training and information workshops were more likely to [have children who] make significant achievement gains in reading and math than noninvolved parents (94).” Socio-economic status did not influence parents’ levels of involvement. Their final recommendation was to increase parental involvement in “remedial reading and mathematics programs” (95).

The analysis conducted by Sui-Chu and Willms (1996) compared how two types of home-based involvement and school-based involvement impacted student academic achievement. They defined home-based involvement as parents discussing school activities and monitoring the student’s out-of-school activities. They defined school-based involvement as volunteering in school or attending parent-teacher conferences and/or open house meetings (127). By selecting the variables below, the authors also wanted to determine if low income families would not be as involved as middle class families. Using NELS data from 1988, researchers created four independent composite variables to test which type of involvement would have the greatest impact on academic achievement. The composite variables were:
• Home discussion (talk with mother, talk with father, discuss school programs and discuss activities)
• School communication (parents contact school and school contacts parent)
• Home supervision (limit tv time, limit going out, monitor homework, home after school)
• School participation (volunteer at school and attend PTO meetings)

The home involvement variable, particularly discussion at home, consistently showed up as the most significant variable predicting student academic success. One unexpected result was that there was little proof for the idea that richer or two-parent families were more involved with their children’s education at the home level. What they found instead was that more affluent and two-parent families exhibited higher involvement at school activities. Another conclusion from this research found that student academic achievement increased when the student attended a school with an overall high socio-economic status despite the individual students’ backgrounds (138), which contradict earlier studies indicating the importance of socioeconomic status.

Document Analysis

The literature review above outlines the dominant discourse and research about parental involvement. We now turn our attention to an analysis of the documents of the Minneapolis Public School district. These documents are critical as they are the key tools to how the district formulated and implemented policies on parental involvement, some of them originating in the theories mentioned above.

In order to determine what official family involvement policies and standards schools are expected to maintain, we have reviewed three types of documents. The three documents: the district’s Family Involvement Policy (FIP) and School Information Reports (SIR), and the individual schools’ Reports to the Community, represent the most prominent publicly accessible information on family involvement in the Minneapolis Public School system.
The Family Involvement Policy (FIP) describes eight standards for family involvement and specifically addresses the schools’ roles. The roles range from development of family involvement policies to developing knowledgeable staff to offering opportunities for family participation. Some of the standards address issues such as specific language needs of family members and overcoming barriers such as transportation, but most standards are more broad and are applicable to all families.

In general, the district’s standards for schools provide few specifics of how schools should meet their goals. Similarly, neither consequences for schools’ failure to meet nor rewards for satisfying family involvement standards are defined. Furthermore, while district FIP standards require schools to provide opportunities for family involvement, they do not include expectations for parents. Schools apparently retain the responsibility of enacting and enforcing measures to achieve the district standards. The district also offers schools the latitude to develop school-specific policies.

At the school level, each school produces a Report to the Community that includes a brief statement about family and community involvement (“Partnering with Families and the Community”). These statements vary from school to school, and thus provide the best public documentation of an individual school’s family involvement priorities:

- Olson Middle School describes its family involvement team and parent liaison, and indicates that its English Language Learners (ELL) teaching team holds three special meetings with ELL families each year.
- Sanford Middle School cites a Family Fun Night, an Open House, and a New Student Open House as ways it interacts with families.
- Emerson reports a 90 percent participation rate in parent/teacher/student conferences, and defines the role of its Parent Teacher Student Association.
- Franklin Middle School’s information was not available through the district’s web site.
In their *Reports to the Community*, the schools promote family involvement through more formal offerings, particularly official staff positions and organized events. None of the four selected middle schools mention any informal or day-to-day interactions with families, nor did any of the schools indicate expectations of parents in terms of actually using the resources available, for example, contacting staff members or attending events.

Similarly, the district FIP standards require schools to provide opportunities for family involvement but do not include expectations for parents. The standards do not define any specific participation targets, which means that district standards do not easily lend themselves to measurement and monitoring.

Another district publication offers a measurable alternative formulation of standards, which include goals for parent participation. *School Information Reports* (SIRs), produced annually and made available to the public, use annual survey data from students to gauge family involvement. Three questions from the annual surveys are asked by the district to measure the general sense of parental involvement at the Minneapolis Public Schools. The three questions centered on:

- If a family member came to school for meetings often or frequently (see Figure 1)
- If a family member phoned or spoke with a teacher often or frequently (see Figure 2)
• If a family member attended events in which the student participated (see Figure 3)

*Note: Some schools and the district had data only available for specific years.

Figure 1 indicates that during the past school year, 2000-2001, Sanford reported higher than the district average for students whose families came to school “often” or “frequently” for meetings. It is important to note that Franklin and Olson were slightly behind the district’s middle school (6th-8th grades) average. Emerson did not report this data for this year. During the 1998-1999 school year, Franklin was the only school that was closest to the district average reporting, however, when you compare the numbers of all the schools to the average report for just middle school grades, most of the schools were close to the middle school average.
The results from Figure 2 indicate that teacher communication with families varied during the 2000-2001 school year. While Franklin and Sanford were above the 6th-8th grade district average, Olson’s reporting percentage was somewhat lower.

In Figure 3, during the 1998-99 school year, both Emerson and Franklin reported higher than district averages for middle schools in which family members often or frequently attended events in which the student participated. Two years later however, the numbers were higher for Olson and Sanford. This might be due to increased school events at these schools in particular and during this particular school year as well. The frequency of school events were not asked in the SIRs.

These three questions are useful for understanding the district’s expectations for schools, but not entirely reliable as measures since they are based on student perceptions (not actual family involvement) and involve subjective measures of participation (“often or frequently”). These measures also lack target percentages and while the SIRs compare each school to the
district average, this is an inadequate goal since the average changes with the schools’ performance. It is also important to recognize that each year’s cohort is a different set of students and might not be a good group for comparison.

Additionally, the SIRs track two involvement factors (obtained from teacher surveys) in a more exact quantifiable way:

- 60% or more of families attend teacher conferences (see Figure 4)
- Contacted 40% or more of families for good or excellent academic performance (see Figure 5)
Results from the staff survey reveal a similar pattern to that of the student survey. In this case, there is a stark difference between Emerson and the other schools. As the figure above shows, Emerson’s conference participation rate is much higher than that of even the K-8 district average.

The two factors above indicate exact percentage targets, and thus they are the most clear and measurable indicators of parental involvement at the school level within this data set. Although the official district policies do not include these targets, we interpret these SIR goals to be *de facto* goals for the purposes of measurement. These are the standards we will use in our analysis, primarily because they are tangible correlates to the broader district goals, and because the district already collects data from all schools for these purposes.
Current MPS Policies – District Level and School Level

In March 1996, the Minneapolis Public Schools’ Office of Family Involvement began developing standards for family involvement. To develop these standards, the Family Involvement Stakeholders Group—made up of parents, teachers, principals, students, district-level staff, Board of Education members, family liaisons, educational assistants, health assistants, and community members—was convened. The group met through April, May, and June 1996 to provide feedback and guidance to the policy development work. In October 1996, upon completion of the standards, the Board of Education unanimously adopted these standards (Minneapolis Public Schools, 2002). The document that was created to inform the individual schools of these new policies is called the District Family Involvement Standards.

The standards are based on both a body of research that confirms the positive impact of family involvement on student achievement as well as the best practices already in use by principals, teachers, families, and others in the Minneapolis Public School district and nationwide (Minneapolis Public Schools, 2002).

Family involvement standards were laid out for the district, schools, classrooms, and home. The district level standards are as follows:

- There is a district policy adopted by the Minneapolis Board of Education that identifies clear and measurable goals for family involvement.
- The district leadership actively supports staff and promotes efforts that increase the level and quality of family involvement.
- The district helps schools understand and implement school and classroom level family involvement standards.
- The district leadership actively raises the community’s awareness of how important family involvement is to students’ success and academic achievement.
• Schools’ efforts to increase the level and quality of family involvement are documented, monitored, and evaluated, and best examples of what works are shared.

• Everyone who works for the district is expected to be friendly and respectful and treat families as partners in their children’s education.

• The district has a regular process for involving a wide range of families in district-level efforts such as setting policy and planning.

• The district has two-way communication with families that is regular, timely, and meaningful.

The school level standards are:

• Family involvement is incorporated as a strategy to achieve any goal in the School Improvement Plan.

• Everyone who works at the school strongly believes that family involvement is important to students' success and academic achievement.

• School staff use creative ways of reaching out to families who have not been involved in their children's education.

• There is a strong partnership among school staff, students, families, and community members that increases students' success and academic achievement.

• The principal and site council provide active leadership in increasing the level and quality of family involvement in children's education.

• The school is responsive to the needs of its families.

• School staff, families, and community members work together to plan, put into action, and evaluate family involvement efforts.

• Everyone who works at the school draws upon the knowledge and expertise of all families to support the school as a whole.

These standards are targeted towards all parents, with a special emphasis on reaching parents in their native language. There is also an effort to reach the full range of families, not just a targeted population.
The district leadership, consisting of the Board of Education, Superintendent, Executive Directors, and central administration staff, is responsible for satisfying these standards. The departments of Research Evaluation and Assessment, School and Site Services, and the Office of Family Involvement measure the success or failure of meeting the standards. Technical assistance is provided to the schools by the Office of Family Involvement to monitor and evaluate family involvement strategies that produce specific results for students (Minneapolis Public Schools, 2001).

Parents have access to the standards on the Minneapolis Public Schools website. Parents can also request a copy of their child’s school’s School Improvement Plan, (SIP). The SIP should include these standards as an integral part of the larger plan for the school. The SIP should be available in the parent’s home language and, according to the district’s guidelines, should be easily accessible. Parents also have access to the Office of Family Involvement, which provides family involvement information to parents.

The research points to the fact that parental involvement in a child’s education must be seen as a “family and school partnership” that includes parental responsibilities, school responsibilities, and community-wide collaboration. We have included MPS district-level and school-level family involvement policies as a way of showing how the district has worked to develop and implement policies based on current research.

We have analyzed two district-level documents and one school-level document from the Minneapolis Public Schools’ that are a result of this research: the district’s Family Involvement Policy (FIP) and School Information Reports (SIR), and the individual schools’ Reports to the Community. Together, these reports clarify MPS district-level and school-level family involvement policies and report them to their respective communities annually. The
shortcoming in these documents is that they contain no clear definition of accountability and no named consequences for not meeting the standards.

**Data Analysis**

The School Information Reports also provide other useful information to our analysis of parental/family involvement. This section of our analysis primarily uses 2001 Minneapolis Public Schools student, staff and parent survey results to gauge family involvement in the district. The student survey contains responses relating to both the home-based and school-based sections. Since the student survey was anonymous and could not be connected with an MBST score, results are presented by school and race and associated with the 2001 mean MBST score for that group. The teacher survey pertains only to school-based involvement. It was also anonymous, and is thus presented by school. Finally, we considered parent surveys, but they were based on a district-wide sample (not specified by school) and did not distinguish between parents of elementary and middle school students. For this reason, we determined them to be inadequate and they did not become part of our analysis.

In order to frame the issues surrounding family involvement, we conducted teacher focus groups and interviews with Principals, school counselors, school social workers, and family liaisons at the four selected schools, Emerson, Franklin, Olson, and Sanford. The issues raised in these interactions can be associated with two main types of family involvement, school-based and home-based, consistent with the research in this field.

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8 MPS surveys select grades; eighth graders are the only middle school grade surveyed, so this analysis covers only eighth graders’ responses.
9 We used responses only from staff members that indicated they worked with grades six through eight. Since schools have staff members (in addition to teachers) responsible for interacting with parents, we also used responses from all staff, whereas the SIRs report results for classroom teachers.
School-Based

In focus groups and one on one interviews conducted at our four schools (Emerson, Franklin, Olson and Sanford), staff members named a long list of ways that they would like to see families involved at school. Responses ranged from more formal contact such as parent-teacher conferences (mentioned frequently) and parent associations (mentioned infrequently), to less formal contact including phone calls and occasional visits to school. A common theme in focus groups involved the desire for parents to work together with teachers as “part of a team.” Staff interviewed also listed the different capacities in which they contacted parents. The most frequent answer given was that these staff members spend about 20 percent of their time in contact with families. Some of the contacts include sending notices to parents when their child is failing at school, behavioral issues that children are having, setting up Individual Education Plans (IEP), and sometimes coordinating parent volunteers.

Staff members believed the main barriers to school-based family involvement arose from the negative relationship some parents had with their child’s school, as well as constraints imposed by jobs and family situations (e.g., single parents, young parents). Several teachers were concerned about their ability to reach parents; one teacher commented, “If we can’t get a hold of the parents, can the kids get a hold of the parents?” Nearly all teachers wanted more contact with parents, particularly if their children were not performing well and/or need special attention.

When asked if their respective schools were doing enough to provide opportunities for families to attend school events, most of the staff interviewed indicated that their school attempted a great deal to involve families. Some cited the involvement of parents at school
plays, festivals, and open houses. One school held curriculum based nights so that parents could come in and get a better understanding of what their children were learning at that school.

According to school staff, they see more parents at conferences than at any other school-based activity. At the same time, a couple of the schools were concerned about low turnout at these events. One school even incorporated family-oriented events into the conference. Staff members indicated that schools were especially sensitive to conferences, providing various interpreters so parents feel comfortable talking to teachers. One school even provided native-English-speaking staff from different cultures for parents to use as a resource during the conference. The interview subjects indicated that fall events, such as the fall conference and open house, had the most frequent parental participation.

When asked about barriers to parents attending these events, one staff member indicated that transportation was a huge issue, “we know in the past we did more [parental involvement] because we had more money, we provided a mini-van.” Childcare was also provided at conferences. One staff member indicated that “involvement is dependent on two things, time and interest…the trick is to match parent interests to involvement.”

When individual interviews were conducted with other school personnel, all of the staff members had heard of the SIPs and had participated at one point in the creation of them. Most of the staff stated that the process was usually done at a school in-service and/or staff development day. In other words, the district complies with its goal to create these plans with input from their staff.

The staff discussed that their involvement with actual recruitment of parents to school events and conferences was minimal. Most of the staff referred to the family liaison, whose main role was to increase visibility and attendance at such school events. In focus groups, a few
teachers remarked that they would appreciate more training in the area of parental involvement, and others expressed a need for more staff support to help them interact with parents.

All interviewed staff members indicated that parents were allowed to participate in meaningful leadership roles as members of the site-based management team and the PTA. However, one staff member indicated that overall parent involvement activities are still “not taken advantage of.”

**Student Survey Analysis**

The results of the 2001 student surveys indicate that, district-wide, 82 percent of eighth graders’ parents attended a school meeting or conference. Among the four selected schools, Emerson was much higher and Olson was slightly higher than the district in student-reported meeting/conference attendance and attend[ing] a school event in which the student participated, while Franklin and Sanford were slightly lower than the district in these two measures. Emerson showed much higher rates of parents coming to school for meetings or conferences, including 100 percent of students reporting that their parents had come in to school at least once for a meeting or conference.

As we know from the earlier section on suspensions, parents sometimes become involved in school because of their children’s negative behavior. Therefore, school-based family involvement rates might measure negative reasons for a family member attending a meeting or conference in addition to neutral or positive ones. However, this can be corrected in a rudimentary way, by subtracting the number of students who reported that a family member had come in to school because of their bad behavior. After subtracting the students with these negative parent visits, the difference—46 percent district-wide—represents the minimum number
of students whose parents came in for all reasons other than bad behavior. Of course, this marks the low-end estimate; the number could be higher but it is unlikely to be lower.

Even after subtracting bad behavior involvement, the correlation between school-based involvement and mean MBST scores remained high for all schools in the district. The bad behavior visits had similar effects on the four schools (and the district) such that the Emerson non-behavior visits still topped the list at 62 percent, Olson—at 48 percent—remained slightly above the district, and Franklin and Sanford were again below the district average, with 44 and 43 percent respectively.

To verify that the findings from the four selected schools could be applied to the entire district, we calculated correlation coefficients for parental involvement measures and mean test scores, with the school as our unit of analysis. These results show a clear correlation between parent visits and mean MBST scores (for both reading and mathematics, though only reading is shown here), even after accounting for poor behavior visits. However, it is important to note that this analysis was not able to determine causation in the correlation between scores and parental involvement at school. The information presented here does not prove that higher parental involvement causes higher test scores, nor vice versa.

In another student-reported measure, parent conversations with teachers or counselors, Emerson (at 90 percent) reported much higher than the other schools, which were all near the district average of 79 percent.

District-level analysis by race revealed significant gaps between racial groups. This was true for both school-based and home-based involvement. Two charts illustrate these findings and put them into context. The first shows compares racial groups in terms of one specific parental involvement measure, attended a meeting or conference. This variable is similar to another
which asks if a parent came to school as a result of the student’s poor behavior. As the chart shows, there are small differences between races which become bigger when “poor behavior” cases are taken out. Unfortunately, we were not able to determine from the data the exact number of times a parent came in for good, neutral or poor behavior, but this chart provides a rudimentary way of accounting for those differences.

![Figure 6. MPS School-based Parental Involvement, by Race, 2001](chart)

Amongst different racial groups, most positive involvement variables reveal lower rates for American Indian and African American students; negative variables, such as poor behavior visits, were higher among these groups. Interestingly, the racial breakdown for the parent-teacher/counselor conversation variable at the district level showed lower conversation rates for parents of Asian American and Hispanic American students. Presumably, this is the result of language barriers, although the surveys and focus groups did not provide enough information to determine such a relationship. Focus group participants reported that there are staff members
and sometimes teachers available who speak the most common non-English languages in the schools, and they often make or receive calls to and from parents with limited English proficiency. However, we did not have sufficient information to determine the effectiveness of these efforts.

The next graph attempts to put the magnitude of the racial gaps in parental involvement into context by comparing their magnitude with the racial gaps in test scores. While this provides restricted room for interpretation of causation and interrelationships, it is clear that the racial gaps in parental involvement are smaller in size than the gaps in test scores.
Staff Survey Analysis

From the staff survey, we looked at four school-based factors. For conferences, the district average was 51 percent of classrooms with more than 40 percent of parents attending. Emerson placed well above this, with 96 percent of classrooms above 40 percent conference attendance. Olson was near the district average, with 49 percent. Franklin and Sanford were well below; they had only 25 and 23 percent of classrooms with 40 percent conference attendance, respectively.

Another variable measured teacher contact with parents for good or excellent academic performance. This variable followed a similar pattern to the conference attendance variable, with Emerson well above the district average of 51 percent of teachers contacting at least 40 percent of their students for positive academic reasons. The exception was that Franklin and Sanford, in addition to Olson, were near the district average.

The nearly opposite result came from the measures of contact for poor academic performance or behavior. The district average was 43 percent of classrooms contacting parents for poor academic performance. Emerson was well below this, with 15 percent. Franklin was slightly above, with 55 percent. The other two schools were near the district average. For poor behavior contacts, the district average was 38 percent. Emerson was again lowest, with 11 percent. The other schools were all above the district average, though not by a large margin.

The staff-reported results again show a clear correlation between school-based family involvement and student achievement as measured through mean MBST scores, though these results tell us nothing about the causality or direction of the relationship.
**Home-Based**

Focus group responses echoed the parental involvement literature, stating that parents who discuss homework and in-class experiences with their children see an increase in their children’s achievement. Focus group participants also emphasized the importance of parents getting involved with their child, from basic support such as setting bedtimes and providing breakfast, to more involved activities such as checking up on homework.

**Student-Reported Participation**

The student survey employs a series of seven questions asking how often a student discusses a particular issue with family members, and two additional questions about whether a family member helps the student get to school on time and whether a family member knows where the student is after school.

**What do students discuss with their families?**

At the district level, more students reported discussing their grades (with their family members) than any other topic. The least discussed factor was behavior, though 79 percent of eighth graders still reported that they had discussed this with their family at least once.

**Table 27. Percent of Students Discussing Subjects with Their Parents at Least Once**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Discussion variable</th>
<th>At Least Once (District Average)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Things studied in class</td>
<td>88%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Course program</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>86%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When examined one by one, the eleven individual home-based involvement questions displayed differing results:

- All four schools registered nearly equal results for discussion of post-secondary plans and grades
- Emerson was greater than or equal to five percent above the district average on five of the questions (the only school to register that far above average on any home-based measure): discussion of school program, what student studied in class, and behavior; and family member support before and after school
- Emerson was ten percent below average on discussion of friends
- Olson was five percent below average on homework discussion and six percent below average on family helping students get to school on time
- Sanford was eight percent below average on discussion of school program
- Franklin was within five percent of the average on every measure

In our analysis of these parental involvement measures for all MPS schools with eighth grade survey results, we found that the factors most highly correlated with mean MBST scores were academics-oriented: selecting school program, homework, and things studied in school. Other home-based discussion variables, including post-secondary plans, grades, behavior and friends, had very weak or no correlation with MBST scores.

**Further Explanation of School Differences**

Emerson’s family involvement success shows up in all measures reported by students and teachers. The school’s status as the sole K-8 school in our sample provokes thoughts that perhaps this structure lends itself to higher family involvement, as Emerson’s teachers reported themselves in a focus group. Even at the 6-8 schools, teachers emphasized the importance of
building a relationship with students and parents, and of the students getting to know each other over time, as being factors in improved outcomes.

Teachers offered several explanations of why the K-8 structure could lead to higher family involvement, including:

- Parents with more than one child in grades K-8 only have to be involved at one school for all their children
- Parents feel more comfortable at a school where they spend more time
- Teachers can communicate with each other about students more easily

At Olson, where “looping” is used to keep students with the same set of teachers throughout their three grades at the school, teachers reported that staying with students longer made a positive difference in parents’ attitudes and relationships with teachers. When asked, most agreed that having a single feeder school might have added benefits, similar to those identified for the K-8 school, Emerson. However, it is important to remember that, due to student mobility, a student may move in and out of schools even if the programs are designed to keep the student with the same cohort and teachers.

The apparent connection between the K-8 structure and family involvement may be only one piece of a complicated relationship. For example, since Emerson is a Spanish-immersion magnet school, it may draw more motivated students and involved parents, so that the population self-selects based on already-high involvement. It would be useful to study further the K-8 school effect before drawing any conclusions. The important point here is to consider the structure of the school itself as one possible factor in family involvement.

Another explanation for high parental involvement rates at Emerson involved thematic school events, such as talent shows and music festivals that welcomed and encouraged family
attendance. Even at schools with lower overall parental involvement, staff members (through focus groups) reported success increasing conference attendance by linking these formal meetings to more informal school and community gatherings. Staff members generally expressed more confidence in these events than in other efforts to increase parental involvement in school, including transportation. Further, several staff members underscored the importance of building school community through these events and the importance of that community to increased family participation.

**Analyses of School Test Scores and Parental Involvement**

Without the ability to connect individual students’ test scores to their report of parental involvement (see above), we explored the relationship between parental involvement and test scores at the school level. Two separate data sets allowed us to find the average test scores for all students of each gender and racial/ethnic group along with the average responses to the parental involvement questions. For example, we calculated the average math and reading scores for all white male students at Emerson and compared those with the average parental involvement answers of white males at the same school. The results of the analyses showed that the parental involvement variable with the most impact on average test scores was the reported attendance of family members at a school event in which the student participated. The average response to this variable was significantly related to average math scores but did not have a large effect. There was no statistically significant impact of the average parental involvement on average reading scores.
Conclusion

This analysis found disparities in several parental involvement variables between the four schools studied, and between races in the district as a whole. Our review of the literature emphasized several important facts that guided our analysis and ultimately led us to the conclusions and recommendations we lay out at the end of our report.

The language that is used to define involvement is important. Most of the research we reviewed used the term “family” instead of “parent” when describing involvement. Joyce Epstein goes one step further than that by using “partnership” instead of “involvement” to define the relationship between school and home. It is this partnership that is so important in a child’s education. As we make clear in our recommendations, when both the family and the school are working together toward education, the process is much more efficient.

As Chrispeels explains in her 1996 research, four policy instruments may be used to induce change: mandates, inducements, capacity building, and system-changing policies. These tools helped us define our recommendations and rank them according to their efficiency and equity effects.

Finally, our review of the literature framed our analysis by highlighting the fact that “involvement” is discussed in the context of either “home-based” or “school-based.” Much of the research focuses on either one of these involvement contexts and so we have chosen to analyze Minneapolis Public Schools’ policies and practices through this lens. This separation of school-based and home-based involvement also helped us to consider where involvement efforts need to be targeted. As our recommendations make clear, involvement efforts must be aimed at home, school, and the link between the two institutions to be effective.
Staff responses identified several common themes for improving overall student academic performance through parental involvement, including a more positive relationship with parents through positive phone calls and inclusive events tied to services such as incentives, food, child care and transportation. While this analysis did not find a conclusive causal relationship, it did find support for the connection between parental involvement and student performance.

In terms of home-based involvement, the most important factor is how parents and students discuss school, and how much help the parents are able to give the students in those discussions. This would support the assertions of focus group participants that if parents are not able to help their children as much (whether because of language difficulties, or their own limitations or negative experiences within an academic setting), the students may not perform as well in school.

Given the conclusions of literature in this area and qualitative information from the Minneapolis Public Schools, these disparities could provide one explanation for the differences in test scores between schools and between races. It is not possible to use existing data to definitively answer this question because there is no individual level data that can be linked to test scores. In addition, there is an unresolved question about the direction of the relationship – do parents become more involved because their children perform well in school, or does parental involvement precede academic performance?

Recommendations

1. **Continue ongoing efforts to improve parental involvement in students’ school experiences and establish a system for monitoring parental involvement with individual students.**
Minneapolis Public Schools are currently encouraged to develop and implement strategies to increase the involvement of parents and families in students’ academic, athletic and cultural experiences. These efforts should be continued. A system of monitoring the extent of parents’ involvement in the school activities of their children should be implemented which allows identification of the nature and degree of involvement with individual students.

2. **Use results of monitoring to identify best practices for various types of students and families.**

With data collected for individual students, schools can better identify the types of involvement efforts that are most successful for different types of families and students. Best practices can be identified and rewarded, encouraging their use by other schools as appropriate.

3. **Identify the causal relationship between parental involvement and student performance, the type(s) of parental involvement that are most important and the relative size of their effect on student test scores.**

Data describing parental involvement for individual students can be linked to test scores and other information to allow a quantitative answer to the outstanding questions about parental involvement and test scores:

* Does parental involvement increase test scores or vice versa?
* Which measures of parental involvement correlate best with test scores?
* What is the absolute and relative size of the impact (if any) of parental involvement on test scores?
TEXTBOOKS

The problem presented to the class was structured in the following way: could the racial disparity in MBST scores be due to differences in access to textbook materials along racial lines? (i.e. minority students are not being given equal opportunity and access to textbooks with their White counterparts). The expected observed relationship under this set of assumptions is that increased access to textbooks (and, implicitly, higher textbook usage) leads to higher test score results. Unfortunately, there was no way for us to measure textbook access along racial lines without more in-depth student-level data or a larger sample of schools for comparison. Without the ability to identify any differences in textbook access by race, we were unable to answer any of the follow-up questions about the impact of textbook access on test scores. We first concluded that answering the original question required more data.

For the purposes of this project, we defined textbooks as traditional, hardcover books that are used for an entire course or semester, and not meant to be written in. Other learning materials were defined as consisting of such things as workbooks (like the district-adopted CMP math curriculum,) worksheets, and teacher-created materials. We learned that within Minneapolis Public Schools, textbooks are made available (by district adoption and individual school purchase) for instructors to develop curriculum. However, since teachers have discretion as to what materials they will use, supplementary materials are often utilized in addition to, or in place of, textbooks. What we learned about the role of textbooks in student learning from observations, interviews, and focus groups in these schools is that the curriculum in all four of our schools has been moving further and further away from using textbooks as a primary core

10 The schools in our sample all have majority students of color, and to compare racial access to textbooks we would need student level data and perhaps bring in more schools with majority White students.
source of instruction. One focus group participant said, “We’re on a push to get away from textbooks.” Our second conclusion was that there is no consensus that textbooks as traditionally defined are valuable in middle school teaching.

There are three questions that we asked as a part of our investigation of the textbook situation in Minneapolis Public Schools. First, we wanted to know what the relationship is between student performance and access to textbooks and other learning materials, and if there are any racial differences along these lines. To answer this question, we did an extensive search of national studies and reports, and looked at the relationship between access to materials and student performance in our four schools of interest through focus groups and interviews.

The next question we wanted to answer relates to the level and severity of shortages in learning materials. To answer this question, we used national data as well as information from focus groups and observations in the four schools. Finally, we wanted to know (aside from the availability of resources), how the quality and appropriateness of textbooks and other learning materials affect student performance. Again, we conducted a literature review and asked teachers and administrators in Minneapolis schools to answer this question.

What is the relationship between student performance and availability or access to textbooks and other learning materials?

Before we can say it is a problem that each student does not have a textbook to take home, we need to establish if having an individual copy to take home has an effect on student performance. After doing an extensive search of the literature, we found three studies that directly speak to this issue.

According to a survey by the Association of American Publishers (AAP) administered in Florida, three out of four teachers (74.5%) believe that every student should have a textbook to
take home, nine out of ten (86.2%) believe students should have access to textbooks in class, and four out of five (78.9%) believe textbooks should be replaced at least every five years, but these things are not happening. Furthermore, teachers reported classroom disruptions and a loss of class time because students do not have individual textbooks. These Florida teachers report that the use of instructional materials is an integral part of classroom instruction (76.7 percent report using textbooks on a weekly basis (p. 2)). They also report that instructional materials are effective tools to promote student learning (71.7 percent report textbooks as being effective tools (p. 2)).

A study of a program in Mexico also shows that textbooks are key to student achievement. Acevedo examined the impact of Programa para Abatir el Rezago Educativo (PARE) on student learning. This program increased school resources, including textbooks and supplies, in order to improve the quality and efficiency of primary education. School achievement was measured by 4th and 6th grade test scores. The performance of students in PARE schools improved significantly. The findings indicate that by doubling resources allocated per student, they could overcome a 30 percent deficit in test scores. There can be no guarantee that student achievement will improve if there are not adequate textbooks and supplies.

The National Assessment of Educational Programs (NAEP) 2000 Mathematics Assessment asked students and teachers to report on how often they did math problems from textbooks. Respondents were allowed to select “almost every day,” “one to two times per week,” “one to two times per month,” or “never or hardly ever.” Data analysis conducted through the NAEP website found that based on student reports, there is a significant difference in math test scores when comparing students who reported using a textbook almost every day and students who reported less frequent textbook use. Specifically, the causal relationship between
more frequent textbook usage and higher scores was found positive and significant at a level of p<0.01 when students of all races are grouped together. This relationship between textbook usage and higher test scores was also found significant within the survey responded to by teachers.

Looking at the affect of textbook usage on test scores by individual racial groups yields some mixed results. When looking only at White students, this relationship is still strong and significant at the p<0.01 level within the data set responded to by students. When teachers reported on the relationship for White students, the only significant difference found was between students who used a textbook almost every day and students who never or hardly ever used a textbook.

When looking at Black students, the relationship between use of textbooks and student test scores is not significant (within the data set reported by students), except when comparing students who reported using a textbook almost every day with students who reported using a textbook one to two times per week. When looking at teachers’ reports, there are no significant differences in test scores for Black students when comparing how often a textbook was used. This may indicate that the effect of higher textbook usage may be different for Black students than for White students.

The relationship between textbooks and test scores is also not as robust for Hispanic students as it is for White students. The only increase in test scores attributable to textbooks usage were between students who reported using a textbook almost every day with students who reported using a textbook one or two times per week and with students who reported never or hardly ever using a textbook. The difference observed in test scores were positive and significantly different at the p<0.01 level. The data set sample from teachers’ reports yielded no
significant differences in Hispanic students’ test scores when comparing students who frequently used textbooks with students who have never or hardly ever used textbooks. Most of the comparisons for Asian students were not possible due to small sample size; however the effect of textbooks on test scores was significant for Asian students when comparing students who reported using textbooks almost every day with students who reported using textbooks one to two times per week. There were not enough American Indian students in this sample to perform statistical comparisons between groups, for either the students’ or teachers’ reports.

Interviews with principals from our four schools revealed that textbooks and other learning materials are considered to be critical and very important to student achievement. However, some believe the effect of textbooks and all learning materials acts in a complementary fashion to the environment in which those resources are used. For example, principals felt that access to quality textbooks and other learning materials are only useful if they can be utilized within a quiet study environment conducive to learning. More importantly, one principal believed that textbooks and learning materials are secondary to teachers—in the event of a budget shortfall (like this year), the priority would be retaining quality experienced teachers.

Among the four schools examined, variations in textbook usage and availability cannot explain the differences in school achievement. Data collected from focus groups and interviews revealed a huge variation of textbook usage within schools (i.e., teachers have discretion as to which textbooks, if any, will be used in the curriculum and/or sent home). However, we did not find any predominant difference at the school level in the usage and issuance of textbooks (i.e., we did not find that one school predominantly used textbooks while another predominantly did not use textbooks, etc.).

Table 28: Use of Math Textbooks and Other Learning Materials
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MATH</th>
<th>Sanford</th>
<th>Olson</th>
<th>Franklin</th>
<th>Emerson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of textbook</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook availability</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Textbook quality</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of other learning materials*</td>
<td>Used other materials solely</td>
<td>Used other materials solely</td>
<td>Used other materials solely</td>
<td>Used other materials solely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of other materials*</td>
<td>In-class copy and out of class copy made available to each student</td>
<td>In-class copy and limited out of class copies made available</td>
<td>In-class copy and limited out of class copies made available</td>
<td>In-class copy and limited out of class copies made available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of other materials**</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
<td>Very good</td>
<td>Excellent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Ascertained from observations at the site and focus groups conducted with teachers.
** Reported from teachers at focus groups in terms of being useful (appropriate to the students learning and comprehension levels) and in the type of format necessary for usage.

Table 28 illustrates that there is no dichotomous variable for textbooks in Minneapolis schools in the subject area of math. We discovered during observations and focus groups that among the four schools, no books that we traditionally consider “textbooks” were used in math. According to math teachers that attended our focus groups (there was at least one math teacher from each school), no books we defined as “textbooks” were used throughout the entire semester-long courses in any of the schools. Instead, some math teachers use the CMP curriculum that was adopted by the district and other math teachers use different materials, based on their own discretion. Further interviews with math teachers at 27 schools found that some considered CMP materials to be textbooks while others called them “workbooks.”

\[11\] The CMP books are soft cover “workbooks” that are not intended for the students to write in, but rather are used as textbooks even though the books are broken down into smaller sections that are easier to comprehend than traditional textbooks.
Further, all of the math teachers indicated to us that some teachers in their schools use the CMP curriculum and others do not, so we cannot rank the schools based on how much they have implemented the district-wide curriculum. Thus, the variation in test cannot be explained by textbook/workbook use or availability because there is no way to ascertain use or availability as a result of wide variations among teachers (even within the same subject area), which cannot be aggregated to an average that could accurately describe school-level results.

We have only school-level data on students’ test scores, and could not determine which students were in which sections of the math classes. However, if this student-level data were available, we would be able to compare the students’ test scores based on the curriculum their specific teacher used. Then, perhaps some inference could be made as to the affect of textbooks on student achievement in our schools. Furthermore, information about which students were in which classes of a particular subject area (based on the fact that we know there to be variation in textbook use and issuance by sections of a subject within a particular school), would allow us to draw some conclusions about how different uses and issuance policies affect student achievement.

**How severe are shortages of textbooks and learning materials nationally and in Minneapolis Public Schools?**

Textbook availability is a concern for many schools throughout the United States. The Minneapolis Public School system exists to ensure that all students learn and to support their growth of knowledge. This is hard to do when there is not adequate supply of resources. In the four schools studied, students do not have equal access to textbooks and other learning materials.
A 1999 report of New York public schools describes the severe shortage of resources. (Campaign for Fiscal Equity, 1999) Detailed questionnaires were distributed to parents, teachers and administrators. The findings show that the Governor and Legislature of New York are not providing their students with the necessary resources to meet the required standards, and are depriving students of their right to a sound education. Textbook shortages were reported at over 25 percent of the middle and high schools. One middle school teacher reports, “much of what we are presently using is old, outdated, and worn” (p. 1). Many students do not have an individual textbook they can take home to do their homework. The report concludes that students will not excel and learn without access to adequate textbooks.

Taylor and Bogotch (1993) wrote a paper describing the working conditions of an urban school district in the southern United States. Surveys and interviews were conducted in order to gauge the teachers’ perceptions of their working conditions in several areas including timeliness of receiving textbooks, sufficiency of materials and condition of equipment. Textbook availability is considered a problem in this district. They reported that 50 percent of the teachers do not have textbooks available on the first day of classes. By the third week of class over one fourth of the teachers hadn’t received books. There were also problems with access to working equipment such as duplicating machines. This poses a problem for teachers who have inadequate textbooks and rely on photocopies because they do not have access to copying devices and are limited on the number of items they can copy. One teacher in this study reported that without textbooks students could not begin to imagine what life was like during different historical periods. There is great concern among the teachers that students are not getting as much factual information as they should because of the lack of textbooks. As Taylor and Bogotch report, “to expect students to do well on exams that test their knowledge of factual
material when they don’t have books and materials is to fail to understand reality.” They conclude that a lack of textbooks and materials is likely to inhibit student learning.

A 1995 study conducted by the Association of American Publishers (AAP) found a serious textbook shortage in California. This study surveyed 750 California elementary and secondary teachers between August and November of 1995. They found that shortages of textbooks and other materials could hamper teachers’ ability to do their job. Teachers reported that instructional materials are integral to classroom instruction. Three out of four teachers use textbooks every week. According to this study one in six teachers report their students are without textbooks in class. Two in five teachers report not all students have textbooks to take home, and half of secondary teachers report they are unable to assign homework because there aren’t enough books. One in four teachers reported that the books they are using are more than ten years old.

Funding for textbooks and supplies is also an issue in many schools. According to the AAP California report, Americans spent $2 billion on textbooks in 1994 as compared to $16 billion for pet food (p. 1). In 1994 America spent an average of $41.90 per student for textbooks (p. 2). Rothman reports that each year American schools are spending less than three percent of their budgets on textbooks and other copyrighted materials (p. 1). This adds up to $5.4 billion out of a current expenditure of over $200 billion for nationwide K-12 spending. Renchler also examined funding inequalities, if they exist, how big they are, and what, if any, affect they may have on student achievement. Within almost every state the expenditure on educational materials can vary by several fold simply because of district level differences in revenue and appropriation of resources. The research into the relationship between school expenditures and student achievement has not yet provided a clear understanding of how money should be
invested (p. 3). Renchler reports that the way in which educational money is used is important. The money needs to go towards things that support new strategies to improve student achievement. Renchler noted that it is the states’ constitutional right to provide education, and therefore the federal government has not been involved in establishing and promoting policies that create equitable educational funding for every child in every state (p. 3).

At the national and Minnesota state levels, there are no existing policies regarding textbooks for public schools. At the Minneapolis district level, we found several policies relating to but not specific to textbooks. These policies addressed the selection of learning materials, disposition of obsolete materials including textbooks, procedures for the distribution of supplies and the curriculum review process. Again, although these policies are related to textbook issues, they were not specific to the issues of textbook usage, availability, quality and access. A look at the individual school budget reports of the four schools selected did not include detailed information regarding per pupil expenditure for textbooks. It is, however, included in a general per pupil expenditure amount.

At the same time, (district) selected textbooks and other learning materials are not being used at all or as fully as they could be, because many of the textbooks that teachers have access to are expensive. Teachers, faced with limited supply of resources, are often reluctant to allow expensive materials home with students whom are often low-income and cannot afford to take financial responsibility if those materials become lost.

Because textbooks are not easily replaceable and/or in adequate to high supply, they are not utilized. For example, a reading teacher in one of the focus groups said, “I wanted to get a really good set of books from the curriculum I was trained in college (SRA Reading Mastery), but I was afraid to even get it because each of the workbooks was $20 a piece.” It is important
to understand that this teacher regarded the texts as high quality, and she declined to get them for fear that her students would lose them, not because she did not think the books were at an appropriate level for the students. Many teachers thought that there was a shortage of textbooks in their schools, which can affect students having access to individual copies to take home:

- “It’s important the kids take the books home with them, but there’s not enough.”
- “We don’t have enough textbooks to send home with each kid, so we keep them in class.”
- “Our kids don’t get one single workbook to own.”
- “It’s pretty unusual for a teacher to give textbooks and let the kids take them home.”

A math teacher in one of the focus groups indicated that she has to photocopy parts of their CMP workbook daily because she has only 23 books and over 25 kids in each class. She said that the kids who get the photocopied versions of the assigned pages do not take the assignments as seriously as the students who actually get to use a book: “They don’t see the copy as important as the book, they feel left out, they feel that class is less important because they have copies.” Other teachers in different subject areas did not think photocopies negatively impacted students’ performance rather than getting their own book to use.

An interesting issue arose when we asked teachers in the focus groups if they think their students have enough books and other learning materials so they can adequately complete their homework and achieve in school. Our highest performing school (Emerson) and our lowest performing school (Franklin) had very similar levels of per pupil spending, about $6,000 per year. Yet, most of the teachers at Emerson felt like they had adequate resources for their students (through the use of photocopying and use of alternative learning materials) while the teachers at Franklin felt like their students’ academic performance was suffering from the lack of materials. One member of the Emerson focus group said, “We have a lot of textbooks, I feel we’re pretty
well supplied,” while one teacher said “I have 27 students and only 20 books so they stay in my room and no one leaves until I have all 20 copies back.”

This could be due to the difference in the proportion of lost books and other materials between the two schools, or a difference in the proportion of the $6,000 that was spent on learning materials versus other non-academic supplies. The teachers at Emerson indicated that they feel most students at middle school age do have enough responsibility to return their books, and that they should be held accountable in some way. On the other hand, the teachers at Franklin and Sanford seemed more hopeless about the prospect of getting students to return their books. A factor that might contribute to this difference is the difference in mobility rates between the two schools. A teacher at Sanford said, “you have to remember our school has a 50-60% mobility rate,” and that “we have a 40% turnover rate in our school.” Many teachers told us that students in their schools transfer in and out frequently and without notice, due to the instability of their housing and other factors that make low income families more mobile. When a student unexpectedly leaves a school in the middle of the semester, it is likely that the student did not return some or all of his or her materials to the school. Since the average mobility rate in Minneapolis Public Schools is about 50 percent, it is clear that teachers rarely end the school year with as many books as they started with.

Whether there is a difference between schools or not, it is clear from discussions with all of the teachers that students not returning books and materials is a huge problem across the district. Possible solutions to this problem, as suggested by teachers themselves, are regular locker clean-outs, charging the students a replacement fee, not allowing students to participate in
end-of-year activities and field trips, and checking out bar coded textbooks from the library so that students do not get their report cards until all books and materials are returned. One focus group participant indicated that using cheaper materials increases the likelihood of students replacing books. “Since we’ve been using the workbooks for math, the books are worth only $9 instead of $70, therefore, we get the kids to pay for the books when they lose them.”

Many teachers from every school we studied have the attitude that kids lose things, no matter what you do, and losing books is just one more difficult aspect of trying to educate inner city kids. According to one focus group participant, “kids don’t go out and try to destroy books, but they’re kids so they lose things, just like they lose their jackets, they’re going to lose books.” Furthermore, many teachers were unaware of any resources they could use to get replacement books or new materials for their classrooms, and most seemed to think that a great new set of books is a lucky find. When asked how the teachers go about replacing books, one response was, “I don’t know how we’d get replacement books.” On the other hand some teachers have access to grants to supplement their current supply of materials. One art teacher told us that she was fortunate enough to get a grant that paid for supplies so her students could make wire sculptures. An English teacher at another school said she was lucky enough to get enough “trade books” (i.e., novels and other paperbacks) so that she has one copy for each student in class and one copy for each student to bring home. When this teacher said she has two books for each of her students, most of the other teachers from her school seemed very surprised. This is the only occasion during all of the focus groups when a teacher indicated this high of a supply of materials. Another teacher stated, “I have a classroom set of each of two different textbooks.”

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12 The results of our survey indicate that most schools do not keep accurate records of how much is spent on books and other learning materials or how much money is lost each year due to non-returned textbooks and other materials.
In general, it seems as if teachers sometimes get a really good set of books or materials if their school gets a random grant. For example, the teachers at Sanford told us, “we got $90,000 in textbook money a couple years ago,” from Compensatory Education to buy books and other materials, although none of the teachers knew why or how this money was granted to them. None of the teachers said they had applied for grants on their own, and none of them seemed to be able to predict when they would be getting funds to replace the materials in their own classes. In other words, in many of these schools, it appears as if new books and materials are received by chance, with no relationship to need or request by individual teachers.

Photocopying is used as a method for providing access to good materials when teachers do not have enough books for every student. Focus groups from all of the schools revealed high use of photocopies. Participants acknowledged that:

- “We have one book and we make copies”
- “When there are not enough books what do you do? “Make copies”
- “We get one book and then make copies.”
- “I’ve had to go to day by day programs where I just copy everything for that day.”

Photocopies are also used to send homework home if the teacher does not want to risk sending expensive books home. One teacher said, “I send photocopies home whenever there’s homework (not books).” This is a concern because the practice of photocopying enough copies for an entire class of entire chapters of books could be in violation of copyright laws. If schools cannot afford to buy enough books so that each student has one, they certainly do not have enough money to pay for a lawsuit stemming from violation of copyrights. Therefore, more
investigation needs to be done as to how teachers can get replacement books and materials, such that they do not need to violate copyright laws to make sure all of their students have what they need to learn. In addition, future funding efforts could be directed at replacing copyrighted books first, so that teachers will have enough copies of the books so each student can have one.

Some teachers are spending their own money on learning materials. During observations in classrooms, one teacher indicated that he had purchased a classroom set of “trade” books with his own money, since he felt that the books owned by the school were not appropriate for his students’ comprehension levels. Therefore, any budget information we have from the schools on per capita student spending may be augmented by teachers’ purchases out of their own pockets. In the scope of this project, we were not able to assess if the amount of teachers’ spending varied between schools. This would require in-depth interviews with most or all teachers from each school of interest.

Access to textbooks and being allowed to take books and other learning materials home is a function of parental involvement. Parents who are involved can ask their students to check books out to study if they are falling behind, and teachers who have good relationships with involved parents will be more trusting of students and parents to take good care of the books, so they will be more likely to get checked out regularly. In other words, if teachers feel that students will get help with their homework at home, they will be more likely to send books home with students. If, on the other hand, teachers feel that parents are not involved with their students’ education by asking about homework and looking at books the students bring home, those teachers will be reluctant to send the books home for fear they will never be returned.

“We’ve been given enough money to buy the texts for kids, but giving the books to go home without fail we’ll lose 30% of them.” Furthermore, at all of the schools we visited, teachers
indicated that most students are allowed to check out a copy of any book to take home for one day, to make up if they missed class or to study for a test. One focus group participant indicated that, “Occasionally a student will ask to borrow one (to take home) and then I’ll just check one out.” Some teachers check the books out from the classroom, and other teachers send their students to the library to check out textbooks. Most teachers told us that all books, even textbooks, are bar coded through the school media center. In some situations, teachers are required to go to the media center and check out classroom sets of books that they want to use. In other situations, the teacher takes their class to the media center so each student can check out the books needed for class. Both of these situations were found in each of the four schools.

How does quality and appropriateness of textbooks and other learning materials impact student performance?

Besides the issue of textbook availability is the concern of textbook quality. According to Crawford and Carnine (2000) many teachers have abandoned textbooks altogether due to “the serious and pervasive shortcomings of conventional textbooks.” (p. 387). Hirsch (1996) reports that textbooks tend to be “unfocused, ill-written, bland, difficult to learn from, and lacking in discrimination in the more and the less important aspects of a subject matter.” (p. 269) He also explains that many textbooks tend to be unselective and unemphatic, because they were designed to pass committees that adopt textbooks, rather than to fit students’ needs.

Most of the teachers in focus groups at all the schools said they prefer not to use textbooks with their students, since the material in textbooks is often too dense and inappropriate for their students’ comprehension levels and attention spans. One focus group participant said, “Our average reading level is around 3rd or 4th grade a lot of the texts are 7th and 8th grade level and can’t be read without help.”
When classes are getting out of control, some of the teachers in our focus groups indicated that they take out the textbooks and get the students to read quietly until they calm down. One teacher from the focus groups said, “The time I like to use the textbook is when the kids are unsettled. Just to read the information to calm kids down.”

They might also threaten the students, “If you can’t settle down while we are doing this activity, I will put it away and take out the textbooks instead.” Teachers indicated that this type of a threat was usually sufficient to get their students to behave during class activities. The teachers think activities are a superior method of teaching than sitting over boring textbooks.

- “The more interactive the curriculum the better it is so we try to push away from textbooks.”
- “The textbook is the last option as far as I’m concerned for engaging them (students).”

In other words, textbooks are used as supplementary materials or as an alternative to class activity if the students are too rowdy. Teachers deciding to not use textbooks stems partly from them not having enough books to go around to every student, but they also indicated overwhelmingly that they prefer to use smaller, more easily digestible materials because they are more appropriate for their students. Some reasons why textbooks are not the ideal form of instruction, according to the teachers in the four schools, are:

- Many students are English Language Learners who need easier reading materials,
- These kids come from a “disposable generation” where they are more comfortable getting small handouts that they can write on rather than a big, bulky textbook, and
- Textbooks are more expensive than smaller workbooks, so teachers are more reluctant to let students take big books home.

Some of the teachers from the four schools also expressed concern that the materials they were using were not adequate, “Here there are hundreds of books for 8th grade English that are anthologies that are terrible.”
Summary

Through our research at the national and local level we were able to begin unraveling the complex nature of how student performance is affected by textbooks. In particular, we were able to establish some of the reasons why textbooks, alone, cannot be analyzed as the sole critical ingredient, but rather that textbooks must be considered as among a whole set of resources necessary for effective learning. In addition, key findings include factors of why and how textbooks are utilized for instruction.

The use of textbooks within the classroom has been shown to significantly increase student test scores. However, the effect of increasing textbook usage on test scores is not equivalent or as robust for all racial groups. This may indicate that the usage of textbooks has a different magnitude in effect for different racial groups. More in-depth inquiry into the specific effect of textbooks use and availability must be conducted (nationally and locally) in order for the effect to be fully deconstructed.

Teachers may choose to not use textbooks because they are out of date, irrelevant, or poorly written. Within the four schools used as case studies and the national literature review, textbooks were often believed to be of little assistance, because students cannot easily grasp the concepts because of such things as lower reading levels and learning English as a second language. In cases where textbooks seemed to be a small help, teachers often emphasized other learning materials.

Across the country and here locally, there is a shortage of useful textbooks. That is, teachers do not have enough copies of in demand textbooks and other learning materials for each of their students to have his or her own copy. Teachers oftentimes compensate for this textbook shortage by making photocopies and/or limiting the amount of content taken from textbooks. In
order to make any conclusions of how this shortage in learning materials affect student performance (in that teachers teach away from textbooks and other in short supply materials), further research must be undertaken.

Other factors also affect how textbooks and other learning materials are utilized and made available to students. The price of materials is of huge concern in accessing materials, especially textbooks, to students. If a resource is very expensive, then it is less likely to be used, because teachers worry that these materials may be lost. This fear of lost materials is of critical importance, when it is considered in the context of limited resources, already constrained site and district budgets, and low-income students who cannot afford to replace lost materials or purchase their own copies.

In general, Minneapolis schools are moving away from using textbooks as the resource from which the curriculum is centered and curriculum is becoming more diverse. Although at the district level there is usually the adoption of a particular textbook or learning material every four or so years, which is then paid for by the district as opposed to the site, uniform curriculum does not exist. For example, the subject of science may be taught differently across schools as well as within a school, because different teachers may choose to emphasize different materials.

Clearly, having an adequate and equal access to an array of resources-from textbooks to other learning materials-is of paramount concern not only for individual student performance, but for attaining fairness and equity in the public school system. Obviously, no teacher can teach without the necessary materials and supplies, but nor can they apply mismatched resources or afford to risk losing good materials. Our research has pointed to some of the issues with examining how textbooks and other learning materials affect student performance. At this point in time, we recommend further investigation occur documenting the magnitude in effect
attributable to the fact that Minneapolis schools are moving further away from the use of textbooks and other high priced resources that every student should have fair and equal access to.

**Recommendations**

1. **Clarify and carefully define the relationship between textbooks and performance on the Minnesota Basic Standards Test.**

   The question posed to the Roy Wilkins Center asked if student access to textbooks was a factor in explaining the gap in test scores between students of color and white students in Minneapolis Public Schools. Our literature review identified studies suggesting that having access to textbooks is valuable, compared to having no textbooks at all. Data from a national survey (NAEP 2000) shows that students whose math teachers did problems in class from a textbook every day had higher average math scores than those who did not do problems every day. These are two different ways of looking at the importance of textbooks. In interviews and focus groups, some teachers and principals interviewed for this project said that they did not believe textbooks were always appropriate as teaching tools and sometimes preferred to use alternative types of materials in the classrooms. They raised philosophical issues about the role of texts in the curriculum.

   With all these differences, it appears that we need a better definition of the problem in order to make progress. Here are several alternatives:

   * Access to printed materials that can be regularly taken home for study.
   * Access to traditional textbooks for use in class and at home
   * Access to printed materials for use in class.
   * Access to an individual copy of printed material which remains in the students’ possession.
2. Use existing Minneapolis Public School surveys to determine if there is any racial difference in the area of textbooks as redefined above by adding appropriate questions.

There is no evidence available at this time to show that student access to textbooks differs by race. No quantitative data exist and no teachers interviewed mentioned it as a concern. A first step after refining our problem as recommended above would be to include questions about textbook access and use in the annual survey of students conducted by Minneapolis Public Schools. The results could be analyzed by race to determine if there are any differences. If these results show a difference, further investigation can be designed and carried out.

3. Convene a workshop featuring national experts and local teachers and principals to discuss the importance of textbooks for learning.

National studies (some subsidized by textbook publishers) have found textbooks to be an important part of student academic achievement. Our interviews with teachers and principals in Minneapolis Public Schools found a strong feeling that textbooks are often inappropriate and a desire to replace traditional texts with other materials such as workbooks, photocopies or original materials. We propose that a one-day workshop be held to explore the issue. Scholars, publishers, teachers and others from across the country can be invited to discuss the educational importance of textbooks as part of the middle school curriculum. Related to this are questions about the level of student literacy necessary for effective use of written materials, the role of parents in assisting children with their studies at home and the relative importance of texts or

* Use of texts or other materials by students who have access.
other written materials for that purpose. These discussions should shed some light on the importance and relevance of textbooks for student achievement.

In an effort to address the issue of textbook quality and appropriateness, we recommend further analysis of this issue. Currently, we know that textbook quality and appropriateness is a problem in some schools. Further analysis at the school level will help to better define the extent of this problem and obtain more accurate information to develop more comprehensive recommendations for solutions.

SUMMARY, AND SYNTHESIS

Based on our findings, the three issues of textbooks, suspensions, and parental involvement have varying impacts on student achievement.

- The relationship between textbooks and test scores was inconclusive because of the difficulty of obtaining school and classroom level information. The inconsistency of detailed records and complexity of overall learning materials contributed to this lack of

- There are significant racial disparities in suspensions and that these do have an impact on student achievement. In this case, disparities result from inconsistently enforced district and individual school policies.

- Parental involvement varies by school and by race, and can also be linked to differences in student achievement, but this analysis did not determine the exact relationship with test scores.

- Suspensions appear to have an effect on parental involvement, with an effect that seems to be negative than positive.

- The effectiveness of textbooks and other learning materials depends to some degree on parents’ abilities to actively support and participate in their child’s education.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Clarify and carefully define the relationship between textbooks and performance on the Minnesota Basic Standards Test.
2. Use existing Minneapolis Public School surveys to determine if there is any racial difference in the area of textbooks as redefined above.

3. Convene a workshop featuring national experts and local teachers and principals to discuss the importance of textbooks for learning.

4. Continue ongoing efforts to improve parental involvement in students’ school experiences and establish a system for monitoring parental involvement with individual students.

5. Use results of monitoring to identify best practices for various types of students and families.

6. Identify the causal relationship between parental involvement and student performance, the type(s) of parental involvement that are most important and the relative size of their effect on student test scores.

7. Consistently apply the existing Minneapolis Public School suspension policies across all racial/ethnic groups.

8. Identify the relationships between suspension and other determinants of student test scores such as attendance, poverty, percent of minority staff and language spoken at home and the further indirect impact that suspension may have on test scores.

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day. These are two different ways of looking at the importance of textbooks. Adding to the confusion, teachers and principals interviewed for this project said that they did not like textbooks as teaching tools and preferred to use alternative types of materials in the classrooms.

With all these differences, it appears that we need a better definition of the problem in order to make progress. Here are several alternatives:

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4. **Continue ongoing efforts to improve parental involvement in students’ school experiences and establish a system for monitoring parental involvement with individual students.**

Minneapolis Public Schools are currently encouraged to develop and implement strategies to increase the involvement of parents and families in students’ academic, athletic and cultural experiences. These efforts should be continued. A system of monitoring the extent of parents’ involvement in the school activities of their children should be implemented which allows identification of the nature and degree of involvement with individual students.

5. **Use results of monitoring to identify best practices for various types of students and families.**

With data collected for individual students, schools can better identify the types of involvement efforts that are most successful for different types of families and students. Best practices can be identified and rewarded, encouraging their use by other schools as appropriate.
6. **Identify the causal relationship between parental involvement and student performance, the type(s) of parental involvement that are most important and the relative size of their effect on student test scores.**

Data describing parental involvement for individual students can be linked to test scores and other information to allow a quantitative answer to the outstanding questions about parental involvement and test scores:

* Does parental involvement increase test scores or vice versa?
* Which measures of parental involvement correlate best with test scores?
* What is the absolute and relative size of the impact (if any) of parental involvement on test scores?

7. **Consistently apply the existing Minneapolis Public School suspension policies across all racial/ethnic groups.**

Anecdotal evidence suggests that African American students are more likely to be suspended than White students. Consistent application of existing policies is necessary to reduce the likelihood that suspensions are awarded unevenly or in a biased manner. There is a perception in the community (as documented in the recent *Pioneer Press* reports) that suspensions are applied in a racially discriminatory manner. It is important that the District be able to show that policies are applied in a race-neutral manner.

8. **Identify the relationships between suspension and other determinants of student test scores such as attendance, poverty, percent of minority staff and language spoken at home and the further indirect impact that suspension may have on test scores.**

Our research suggests that suspension has a small direct role in the racial gap in test scores. As in previous analyses, attendance turns out to be a major factor in predicting test scores.
scores. A number of other factors (language, poverty, percent of teachers of color in the school) clearly have larger direct impacts on test scores than suspensions. There may, however, be many indirect impacts. Further research and analysis may quantify the indirect and longer-term impacts of suspension on test scores. Our current data only looks at the immediate impact of suspension in one year (6th grade) on tests cores in the next (7th) grade. A longitudinal study could identify the long-term impact of suspension, effects from labeling of students as “troublemakers” and other factors.

In addition to the policy recommendations listed in each separate section, we recommend additional data collection and analysis that will provide student level information on textbooks and actual parental involvement (e.g. conference attendance). Our findings also suggest the necessity of further exploration of the application of suspension policies.

Overall, we find that the Minneapolis Public Schools has developed policies that closely follow predominant theories and research in these three areas. However, closer scrutiny should be focused on implementation of the policies to ensure that all students in the schools are treated equally in practice as well as on paper.
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APPENDIX A -- MIDDLE SCHOOL SURVEY

It was decided on April 4\textsuperscript{th}, 2002 that a survey should be sent to all of the middle schools in the Minneapolis School District in order to obtain public data and information concerning textbook selection criteria, distribution, and budget information. Following is a list of the 30 schools to which the survey was sent. Following that is a copy of the cover letter that was attached to the survey and following that is a copy of the survey that was distributed. Each middle school principal received the survey by courier on April 19\textsuperscript{th}, 2002. The completed surveys could be returned either by fax or by way of an enclosed self-addressed, stamped envelope. As of May 11, 2002 there were only 8 usable surveys returned to us, and only one of the four schools being studied returned the survey.

Andersen Open
Anthony
Anwatin
Barton Open
Benjamin Banneker
Chiron
Cityview
Emerson
Field
Folwell
Four Winds
Franklin
Green Central Park
Jefferson
Jordan Park
Lake Harriet
Lucy Laney
Marcy Open
Nellie Stone Johnson
Northeast
Olson
Powderhorn
Ramsey
Sanford
Seward
Seward
Sullivan
Webster
West Central Academy
Windom
SURVEY ABOUT MIDDLE SCHOOL TEXTBOOK POLICIES AND PRACTICES

Q1. Does your school have guidelines for the selection of textbooks?

1. Yes  
2. No  

Is this process documented in a written school policy?

1. Yes  
2. No

Q2. Does your school have guidelines for issuing textbooks to students?

1. Yes  
2. No  

Are these guidelines documented in a written school policy?

1. Yes  
2. No

Q3. Does your school guarantee each student a copy of each required textbook?

1. Yes  
2. No  

Is this documented in a written school policy?

1. Yes  
2. No

Q4. Are books ever taken away from students?

1. Yes  
2. No  

What are the reasons this might happen?

Q5. Does your school have a guideline for replacing lost textbooks?

1. Yes  
2. No  

Is this documented in a written school policy?
Q6. Does your school have a separate fund for replacing textbooks or is it included within another budget item?

1. Separate fund
2. Included within another budget item
3. Not included anywhere

Q7. Does your school write grant applications in order to purchase or replace textbooks and other learning materials?

1. Yes ➔ Who is primarily responsible for writing those grant applications?
2. No

TITLE: ________________________________

Q8. What is the percentage of textbooks that are lost each year?

______%

Q9. What percentage of the lost textbooks come from each department?

a. English: _____%
b. Math: _____%
c. Science: _____%
d. Social Science: _____%
e. Other (__________): _____%
f. Other (__________): _____%

TOTAL _____% (should total to 100%)

Q10. Based on your school’s experience what are the MAIN reasons for lost textbooks and other learning materials? (circle all that apply)
Q11. What is the estimated cost of lost textbooks each year?

$ __________

Q12. Based on your most recent budget reports, what was the total amount spent on textbooks and other learning materials:

a. this school year?  $ _________

b. over the last three school years combined?  $ _________

Q13. Of the total amount spent this year, how much was spent replacing lost textbooks and other learning materials versus making new purchases?

a. Replacing lost books/materials:  $ _________

b. Making new purchases:  $ _________

Q14. What is the estimated value of all textbooks and learning materials currently available (in stock) within your entire school for ALL classes?

$ __________

Q15. What is the estimated value of all textbooks and learning materials currently available (in stock) BY SUBJECT AREA?

a. English:  $ _________

b. Math:  $ _________

c. Science:  $ _________

d. Social Studies:  $ _________

e. Other:  $ _________

TOTAL  $ _________  (total should match Q14)
Q16. What is the estimated value of all textbooks and learning materials currently available (in stock) BY GRADE LEVEL?

a. 7th grade: $_________

b. 8th grade: $_________

=========

TOTAL $_________ (total should match Q14)

Q17. Is there an effect of a budget shortfall (like this year’s budget shortfall) on providing textbooks and other learning materials to the students within your school?

1. Yes

2. No

Q18. How many students were at your school at the start of school (Fall 2001)?

__________ Number of students

Q19. Are there funds for your school to use for parental involvement in school activities?

1. Yes ➔ Amount: $_______

2. No Source: ______________________________________

Where have the funds been allocated to (i.e. project names)?

__________________________________________________

__________________________________________________

PLEASE FAX YOUR COMPLETED SURVEY TO

XXX-XXX-XXXX

ATTN: DR. SAMUEL MYERS, JR.
APPENDIX B -- OBSERVATION RESULTS

Observations were conducted at each of the four schools included in our study. These observations occurred in the last two weeks of April 2002. The purpose of the observations was to examine the use and distribution of textbooks among students. Our group wanted to answer the following questions with data obtained from observations:

- Are other learning materials present in the class and being used as a part of the curriculum?
- Are textbooks or other learning materials (resources) being brought in by the students- (implying that students are accessing a copy of the textbook or learning material)?
- Are there enough textbooks or copies of learning materials to be distributed among students (implying if there is even a sufficient amount of copies in order for each child to have a copy)?

At the Emerson observation visit, the all classes were taking a test. Thus, I could not enter the classrooms. I was, however, presented with the materials used for classroom instruction by the vice-principal. From the materials that I looked at and from what the vice-principal told me, I learned:

- Other learning materials were present in the class and being used as a part of the curriculum
- There sometimes enough copies of textbooks and other learning materials for each student to have a copy.

I could not establish whether or not students were actually able to access available copies of textbooks and other learning materials.

At the other three schools (Sanford, Olson, and Franklin) I was able to visit several classes.

Sanford=8 classes
Olson=8 classes
Franklin=6 classes

In each of the three schools the following was true:

- In all classes other learning materials were present in the class and being used as a part of the curriculum
- In all classes, no students were bringing in copies of the materials (implying that either students did not access learning materials (including textbooks) outside of class or did not bring them to class)
- In all classes, no teacher had enough copies of either textbooks or learning materials so that each student (in all sections of the subject) could have a copy.
APPENDIX C -- MPS TEACHER/STAFF FOCUS GROUP INSTRUMENT

I. Introduction
Welcome. We are _________ and __________ from the Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs at the University of Minnesota. We are studying the effects of certain factors on student achievement in the Minneapolis Public Schools.

“We have identified three factors that have an impact related to student test scores. These three factors are suspension, parental involvement, and textbooks. We have asked you to come today because of your expertise in the area to share with us your experiences about these topics. We will be tape recording the session to double check for accuracy. Anything you say to us will remain confidential. Any comments that you make will not be attached to you. If at any time, you want to opt out of participating, please let us know and your responses will be destroyed.”

Please read over the consent form at this time. If you consent to participate, please sign the form on the second page and return it to us. You may keep a copy for your records.

If you have any questions about this study or your participation in it, please feel free to ask us. Any questions? [Pause and answer any questions.]

OK, let’s begin…

II. Textbooks
1. Please tell me what is the procedure teachers use to get replacement texts. Are you satisfied with the procedure that is currently used? If not, why?

2. If your students are allowed to take their textbooks home with them to study, do you think they actually do this? If they are not allowed to take their books home, do you think this has an impact on their academic performance?

3. Do you think there is a problem in Minneapolis Public Schools with students not returning their textbooks? If so, do you have any ideas for how this problem could be reduced?

III. Parental Involvement
1. How would you like to see parents and families involved in their students’ education?

2. What differences do you see between students who have involved family members and those who do not?
   ○ Are any types of parental involvement particularly helpful in improving students’ achievement?

3. What do you consider to be the barriers to involvement for family members of students in your class?
What efforts do you make to reach families that aren’t involved?
What results do you get?

4. What could be done to improve parental involvement?
   Have you received support or training which has helped you to increase family involvement?
   Is there additional support or training that you would like to have?

**IV. Wrap-up**
Those are all the questions we have for you today. Does anyone have any additional comments or issues that we should consider that were not covered here today?

Thank you for your participation.
Teacher/Staff Focus Group Instrument --Background/Written Questions

1. Other than textbooks, what are some resources you use with your students?
   Check all that apply. Then rank all of your selections on the right, with one being the most important to your students’ Minnesota Basic Skills Test performance and the highest number being the least important.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Check if you use</th>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Rank</th>
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<td>Workbooks</td>
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<td>Worksheets or other handouts</td>
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<td>Other: ______________________</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. In which of the following areas have you received professional development, in-service, training, resources or guidance to help you increase family involvement?
   ____ Making schools family-friendly
   ____ Working with diverse cultures
   ____ Communicating with families
   ____ Designing homework that engages families
   ____ Others (please list):

b) What additional resources would you like to have to increase or improve family involvement?
Interview Guide for Other School Staff

These first few questions are trying to determine the extent of contact that these personnel have with families.

1. In your opinion, how much contact with parents and families is your responsibility?

2. Generally, what do most of these activities relate to (without naming specific cases)? Are you repeatedly working with the same families and groups?

3. How often do you conduct home visits? And generally, what the primary reasons for these home visits?

These next set of questions will ask you if you think your school is doing enough to keep parents involved and in particular, if your school is doing enough outreach about opportunities for parental/family involvement.

4. Each school in the Minneapolis School District has improvement plans outlined by the district. Have you heard of these plans? Are the school improvement plans are developed with your input as a staff member?

5. On a scale of 1-10, do you think that the school respects the diversity of the parents/families who come to visit the school? And why?

6. Do you think the school is doing enough to provide opportunities for families to attend school events? If yes or no, please tell us why.

7. What part of your job involves working to increase parental/family participation at these events?

8. Do you feel that the school accommodating to the families’ needs, for example, providing interpreters for parents who do not speak English as a second language at various school functions and events?

9. On a scale of 1-10, besides families, do you think the school is working with local community groups to strengthen student learning and development? For example working closely with community based organizations or centers.

10. Do parents or other family members serve on school committees and have meaningful decision-making roles? Do you find that it is the same parents/families who are involved in these committees?
APPENDIX D -- SUSPENSION REGRESSION RESULTS

These results are listed by the dependent variable, the independent variable and the sub-sample the test was run on. The regressions are coded as follows:

The dependent variables:
MATHPER = Percent correct on the math test
READPER = Percent correct on the reading test
LNMATH = Natural log of percent correct on the math test
LNREAD = Natural log of the percent correct on the reading test
ODDSMATH = Natural log of the odds of getting a percentage correct on the math test
ODDSREAD = Natural log of the odds of getting a percentage correct on the reading test

The policy variables:
SUSPEN = Was the student ever suspended or not (1 = yes, 0 = no)
SUMDAYS = Total number of days a student was suspended
TIMES = The total number of times a student was suspended

The policy variable is always an independent variable. Each model also had the following independent variables included. These variables will not be listed in the headings, as they are in every regression:

SEX = Gender of the student (1 = Male, 2 = Female)
LUNCH = Whether the student received a free or reduced lunch (1 = Free Lunch, 2 = Reduced Lunch, 3 = Full Price Lunch)
MOBILITY = the number of enrollments
TOTAL_AT = number of days of attendance
GTDUMMY = Whether the child is in the gifted and talented program (1 = yes, 0 = no)
SPDUMMY = Whether the child is in a special education program (1 = yes, 0 = no)
LANGDUMM = Whether the child speaks English at home or not (1 = yes, 0 = no)

The regressions are listed for the whole sample, then each racial group, then these are repeated for the non-special education students.