Kind discipline: Developing a conceptual model of a promising school discipline approach

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\textbf{Abstract}

This formative evaluation develops a novel conceptual model for a discipline approach fostering intrinsic motivation and positive relationships in schools. We used concept mapping to elicit and integrate perspectives on kind discipline from teachers, administrators, and other school staff. Three core themes describing kind discipline emerged from \textit{11} identified clusters: (1) proactively developing a positive school climate; (2) responding to conflict with empathy, accountability, and skill; and (3) supporting staff skills in understanding and sharing expectations. We mapped the identified components of kind discipline onto a social ecological model and found that kind discipline encompasses all levels of that model including the individual, relational, environmental/structural, and even community levels. This contrasts with the dominant individual-behavioral discipline approaches that focus on fewer levels and may not lead to sustained student and staff motivation. The findings illustrate the importance of setting and communicating clear expectations and the need for them to be collaboratively developed. Products of the analysis and synthesis reported here are operationalized materials for teachers grounded in a “be kind” culture code for classrooms.

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1. Introduction

Current school discipline approaches, particularly the use of suspension, are problematic for students and school communities. To counter this, there has been a rise in more positive, reward-based approaches, though there may be unintended consequences of these approaches. Effective alternatives to these paradigms have not been widely disseminated. This formative evaluation develops a novel conceptual model for an alternative discipline approach based on developing intrinsic motivation and positive interpersonal relationships within schools.

An astonishing number of students in the United States are suspended each year. Over 3.5 million public school students missed school due to a suspension at least once in the 2011–12 school year (Losen, Hodson, Keith, Morrison, & Belway, 2015). Suspensions last an average of three days (Losen et al., 2015). This amounts to U.S. public school children losing almost 18 million days of instruction each school year (Losen et al., 2015).

Recent data suggest that suspensions are associated with a range of negative outcomes for both the students being suspended and their school communities. Suspension has been associated with decreased high school graduation rates, increased high school dropout rates, and decreased odds of enrolling in postsecondary school (Balfanz, Byrnes, & Fox, 2015; Fabelo et al., 2011; Shollenberger, 2015). Suspensions are also associated with mental health problems, including persistent depressive symptoms and suicide (Gould, Fisher, Parides, Flory, & Shaffer, 1996; Rushton, Forcier, & Schectman, 2002).

Although suspensions have been conceptualized as removing students causing trouble so other students can work effectively, data suggest that high rates of suspension are not good for school climate, i.e., the quality and character of school life (National School Climate Center, 2016). School climate integrates the experience of life at school for students, parents, and school personnel. It also incorporates norms, goals, values, and
interpersonal relationships, as well as organizational structures and the teaching and learning practices in a school (National School Climate Center, 2016). A Kentucky study found that from all stakeholder perspectives, including administrators, teachers and students, school climate was experienced as more positive in schools that had lower rates of suspension compared to schools that had higher rates of school suspension (Bickel & Qualls, 1980). Similarly, suspensions erode school connectedness, the belief by students that teachers and school peers care about their learning as well as about them as individuals. In schools where punishments for infractions are more likely to include suspensions, students experience less connectedness to the school (McNeely, Nonnemaker, & Blum, 2002). While correlation should not be confused with causation, these associations between suspensions and negative outcomes raise concerns that warrant further investigation.

In recognition of these associations with punitive discipline, there has been a statewide shift toward a positive behavioral approach with a core focus on rewards. Perhaps the most popular approach is School Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), implemented in most states and supported by the U.S. Department of Education (Spaulding, Horner, May, & Vincent, 2008). Even with technical support available, PBIS initiatives have been difficult to maintain with fidelity in schools and have proven even more challenging across districts or at state levels (Lohmann, Forman, Martin, & Palmieri, 2008; Sugai & Horner, 2006). Studies of PBIS implementation have identified barriers to implementation and sustained use including a lack of administrative leadership; skepticism by staff about a need for this type of intervention; the perception that the intervention is not applicable or feasible; lack of staff expertise to implement the highly-manualized intervention; teaching in a high-stress environment that may make staff feel hopeless about change; and staff concerns about the reward system (Kincaid, Childs, Blase, & Wallace, 2007; Lohmann et al., 2008). Although rewards may help control behavior, critics note that they can undermine people’s sense of responsibility and motivation for regulating themselves (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999). Rewards have also been found to decrease pro-social behavior. Students paid to provide a reading for a blind person in one study reported less moral obligation to help in a similar future circumstance as compared to those not offered payment for the same activity (Kunda & Schwartz, 1983). In a different study of elementary school children, those who received material rewards for helping others were less inclined to be generous (Smith, Gelfand, & Hartmann, 1979).

There has also been growing interest in integrating restorative practices into school settings. The restorative practices movement was initiated in criminal justice arenas and has extended to include an approach to discipline that involves addressing the harms, needs, and obligations of an offense by bringing together those who have a stake in the offense to heal and put things as right as possible (Zehr, 2002). Restorative practices have been implemented widely within the states of California, Colorado, Florida, and Minnesota as well as in Australia, Canada, England, Hong Kong, Scotland, and Wales (Gregory, Clawson, Davis, & Gereutz, 2014; Schiff, 2013). Restorative practices in schools were pioneered in Australia with a 1994 restorative justice conference in response to an assault at a school-sanctioned event, followed by expansion of restorative justice to over 100 Australian schools (Fronius, Persson, Guckenbury, Hurley, & Petrosino, 2016). While no randomized controlled trials of restorative practices in schools have been completed to date, school record data have shown drops in suspensions and office referrals (International Institute for Restorative Practices, 2014; Karp & Breslin, 2001; Simson, 2012; Stinchcomb, Bazemore, & Riestenberg, 2006). Denver Public School implementation has been notable in that restorative practices have been brought to scale throughout a school district; in that setting, the district’s overall suspension rate declined from 10.6% to 5.6% (Gonzalez, 2015). Although restorative practices programs have demonstrated some promising results, implementation challenges have been identified, particularly the requirement for broad institutional commitment, tensions between restorative principles and prevailing punishment-based practices for school discipline, and assuring adequate training for staff (Sherman & Strang, 2007).

There remains a need for carefully considered revisions to the current system of school discipline to develop practices that honor the integrity of the child, support high-functioning classrooms and schools, and support long term motivation and social development. There is also a need for a school discipline approach that addresses infractions in a manner that is geared toward bringing offenders back into the fold of the school community rather than pushing them out, putting them at further risk for dropout and unhealthy behaviors.

This formative assessment defines an alternate approach for school discipline that is grounded in neither individual punitive exclusionary nor reward-based systems, but rather supports students in thriving. In partnership with a local movement focused on intentional kindness, we set out to formulate this new “kind discipline” model based on the experience of core school-based stakeholders.

2. Methods

2.1. Project goals and evaluation setting

This work grew out of a partnership amongst a research university, a grassroots community organization, and teachers, administrators, and students at schools implementing intentional kindness programming. The overall goal of the grassroots organization, the Ben’s Bells Project, is to inspire, educate, and motivate people to realize the impact of intentional kindness. “Kind Campus” is their school-based program which began in 2007 in four Arizona schools and has now been adopted in over 400 schools across the country, reaching more than 244,000 students. The Kind Campus program currently includes individual, classroom, and school-wide exercises in practicing kindness recognition, active gratitude, and intentional kindness towards oneself, one’s peers, one’s community, and one’s overall environment.

The current project was designed to seed a new “kind discipline” component of the Kind Campus program. The goal was to identify the components that stakeholders felt were key to have in place for establishing kind discipline in schools.

2.2. Design

We used concept mapping to elicit and integrate perspectives on school discipline from school teachers, administrators, and other school staff from public district, charter and private schools in Southern Arizona, as well as from other stakeholders involved in school programming.

Concept mapping is a group process of generating ideas (in this case, defining kind discipline) and articulating the relationship between these ideas (Kane & Trochim, 2007). The concept mapping methodology as described by Kane and Trochim includes: a brainstorming phase, a statement analysis phase, a sorting and rating phase, and multidimensional scaling and hierarchical cluster analysis of the collected data (Kane & Trochim, 2007). Concept mapping culminates in maps that visually represent the group’s ideas and how they are interrelated (Kane & Trochim, 2007). We used the Concept System Global MAX™ software to facilitate data collection, measurement, and analysis (The Concept System®, 2016 Concept Systems Incorporated).
Participants in this project were invited to participate in one or more of the three separate components of the concept mapping process: brainstorming statements, sorting and ranking, and data interpretation. Participants received a Starbucks gift card for participating in the sorting and ranking and were provided dinner at the data interpretation session.

This study was not considered human subjects research by the Human Subjects Protection Program at the University of Arizona and so did not require review by its institutional review board.

2.3. Brainstorming statements

A brainstorming activity was included as part of a plenary session on discipline held as part of the Ben’s Bells Annual Science of Kindness Conference in August 2015. Approximately 150 school staff (teachers, administrators, and support staff) participated, the majority of them from schools implementing or planning to implement the Kind Campus programming. Participants were invited to verbally generate statements in response to the prompt: Describe for us (in words or phrases) what kind discipline in schools would include. Please be as specific as possible. “Kind discipline in schools would include . . . ” Project staff captured these in writing on flip charts. Participants were given a link allowing them to contribute additional statements via an on-line platform. They were encouraged to provide the link to colleagues not in attendance. The link was also provided to all Ben’s Bells Kindness Coordinators (the person voluntarily spearheading the Kind Campus implementation in a school), scientific advisory council members, and governing board members.

In addition, a panel of six middle school students identified by administrators as having repeated personal experience with the school discipline system was invited to participate in an in-person brainstorming session. Their suggestions were captured in writing on a white board in the room. In total, this phase yielded 298 responses.

2.4. Statement analysis and idea synthesis

The statements collected through the brainstorming phase were analyzed and synthesized by a team of researchers evaluating the Ben’s Bells Kind Campus program. We used the criteria for synthesis recommended by Kane & Trochim: each statement expresses only one distinct idea, each statement is relevant to the focus of the project, each statement is unique and non-redundant, and each statement is clear and understandable (Kane & Trochim, 2007).

Each of the 298 statements was printed onto a small card and placed on a sticky wall. The research team clustered similar statements together and the criteria for synthesis were applied—cards that were duplicative or not relevant to the focus of the project were removed, cards that contained multiple ideas were rewritten into multiple cards each with a single idea, and cards that were not understandable were reworded into clearer language. This phase yielded 111 statements.

2.5. Sorting and ranking

A group of 35 adult stakeholders comprised of 15 teachers, 5 principals or vice principals, 6 counselors, and 9 other school staff were recruited to participate in an on-line sorting and ranking activity. Their experience in education ranged from 1 to 35 years, with a mean of 14 years. Participants sorted the consolidated list of 111 statements into virtual “piles” of items that they perceived as similar, and then rated each statement on both its relative importance and its feasibility. Both of these ratings were assessed on a Likert-type scale ranging from one to five. The importance scale, 1 indicated relatively unimportant and 5 indicated extremely important. For the feasibility scale, 1 indicated relatively unfeasible and 5 indicated extremely feasible. Thirty-two participants participated in the sorting, 33, in the importance rating, and 29 in the feasibility rating.

2.6. Analyses

The software we selected allowed us to develop a point map to visualize the relationships between the statements. In this initial process, a similarity matrix was generated in which statements were paired and assigned a numerical value based on the number of people who included that pair in the same pile. Next, multidimensional scaling was used to produce X-Y coordinates for each statement based on the bivariate distribution. Finally, hierarchical cluster analysis was used to group statements into clusters of similar themes based on empirical criteria.

There is no mathematical formula for choosing a final number of clusters, so the research team selected the number of clusters in our final conceptual model by following the approach recommended by Kane and Trochim (Kane & Trochim, 2007). We determined the highest number of clusters that would be useful and looked at which statements were merged as we moved to fewer cluster levels. Reducing to fewer than 11 clusters resulted in groupings that no longer appeared coherent; thus 11 clusters were used to organize these data.

2.7. Data interpretation

A group of seven adult stakeholders and two evaluation team members participated in the data interpretation session to name and interpret each identified cluster. Participants included teachers and counselors and represented five different school districts. Participants brought experience from careers in elementary, middle, and high schools.

Participants were introduced to the data generated from the sorting process and asked to assign a name to each of the 11 clusters describing its unifying theme. After participants had the opportunity to complete this process individually, they participated in a group discussion about each cluster. Through this process the group arrived at consensus for a name or title that could be used to accurately describe each cluster.

3. Results

Multidimensional scaling analysis located each statement within a point map as shown in Fig. 1. Each circle on the point map represents a statement. Statements that were sorted together more often were physically closer on the map than statements sorted together less often. These are demonstrated by exemplars of statements from three different clusters in Fig. 1. The stress index—a measure of the goodness of fit between the input matrix data and the distances represented on the map was 0.306. This is within the normal range of 0.285 and 0.365 (Kane & Trochim, 2007).

The group data interpretation resulted in the following labels for the 11 components of the kind discipline concept map as shown in Fig. 2: 1) Practices that facilitate students and teachers understanding each other, 2) Adult education, 3) School and community infrastructure, 4) Student centered accountability and connections, 5) Collaborative and cooperative school climate, 6) Accountability with dignity, 7) Honoring the kind potential of every child, 8) Cultivation of positive character, 9) Compassionate boundaries with empathetic reinforcement, 10) Collaborative expectations that empower growth, and 11) Developing pro-social and conflict management skills. Appendix A includes the final statement set for each cluster.
Bridging values, as shown in Appendix A, indicate how frequently a statement is sorted within a cluster as compared to other clusters. These values range from 0 to 1 with lower bridging values indicating more cohesion compared to higher bridging values, among the statements in a cluster. In this analysis the lowest bridging values were for “Honoring the kind potential of every child” 0.09, “Cultivation of positive character” 0.15, and “Compassionate boundaries with empathetic reinforcement” 0.16 suggesting that these are the most conceptually cohesive of the clusters, and thus, that these ideas represented in these clusters overlap the least with ideas in other clusters. The highest bridging values were for “Developing pro-social and conflict management skill” 0.50, and “Practices that facilitate students and teachers understanding each other” 0.58, suggesting these are relatively more interrelated with other concepts in the map. Appendix A includes the statement and cluster bridging values.

Participants rated each of the 111 statements on their relative importance and feasibility. Clusters ranged in importance from an average of 3.98 for “Practices that facilitate students and teachers understanding each other” to 4.55 for “Honoring the kind potential of every child.” Clusters ranged in feasibility from an average of 3.28 for “School and Community infrastructure” to 4.30 for “Compassionate boundaries with empathetic reinforcement.” Fig. 3 details the relative importance and feasibility of each cluster. Overall, “Honoring the kind potential of every child” and “Compassionate boundaries with empathetic reinforcement” were among the highest clusters for being both important and feasible. “Adult education,” “School and community infrastructure,” and “Practices that facilitate students understanding each other” were among the lowest rated clusters for both importance and feasibility. “Collaborative and cooperative school climate,” while ranked second in overall importance as a cluster, was at about the mid-point of feasibility ratings. “Compassionate boundaries with empathetic reinforcement” was the cluster considered most feasible; it was ranked second highest in importance.

We also plotted “go-zone” graphs – bivariate graphs in which axes representing feasibility and importance divide the space into quadrants. The “go-zone” is the top right quadrant, containing statements with ratings above the mean on both importance and feasibility. Fifty-five statements fell within the go-zone for kind discipline and are listed in Appendix B by cluster. One statement stood out as being rated both most important and most feasible by participants. The statement “clear expectations” within the “Compassionate boundaries with empathetic reinforcement” cluster was rated at 4.91 in importance and 4.75 in feasibility—the highest single item on both dimensions.

4. Discussion

4.1. Clusters

Overall, participant ratings of importance and feasibility of the statements within kind discipline were high. On a scale of 1–5, the
cluster with the lowest average importance was 3.98. The feasibility ratings were also generally high, with the lowest scoring cluster having a feasibility rating of 3.28. Feasibility was consistently rated lower than importance for every cluster. Participants may see change in this context as complex and challenging. Yet the overall high scores reflect an optimistic view of what is possible.

The clusters that emerged as most important and feasible are worth highlighting. Participants rated “Honoring the kind potential of every child” and “Compassionate boundaries with empathetic reinforcement” among the highest clusters for being both important and feasible. The statements that were considered both important and feasible for “Honoring the kind potential of every child” included: listening to all sides of the story without judgment; consistency; follow-through; and recognition of student’s assets/positive behaviors as well as behavior that warrants transformation. This strengths-based approach is supported by the principles of positive psychology (Snyder & Lopez, 2009). The cluster “Compassionate boundaries with empathetic reinforcement” included the statements considered both important and feasible: forgiveness; clear expectations; empathy; and reinforcement of good behavior. Finding ways to clarify expectations and then hold those boundaries with empathy was seen as eminently doable. The idea of clear expectations was rated both most important and most feasible of all statements within this framework of kind discipline. These areas warrant particular focus in intervention development.

Collaborative and cooperative school climate, while ranked second in overall importance among the 11 clusters, was at about the mid-point of feasibility ratings. While clearly as important, this seems to be experienced as more challenging to transform than other components. Interestingly, infrastructure was scored as the cluster least feasible overall. This cluster ranking may indicate a lack of perceived control over school-level structural issues and points to a clear challenge in school systems moving towards structural change. Individuals empowered to operate at these structural levels will ultimately need to be involved in genuine transformation of school discipline systems.

4.2. Themes

This concept mapping process helped to elucidate a conceptual model of kind discipline. Three broad themes emerged from the 11 identified clusters: (1) proactively developing a positive school climate; (2) responding to conflict with empathy, accountability, and skill, and (3) supporting staff skills in understanding and sharing expectations (Fig. 4).

The three themes are reflected in existing literature and help point the way to how schools and school districts can take action in moving towards this idea of kind discipline. The importance of the first theme, proactively developing a positive school climate, has tremendous promise as evidenced in the school climate and school connectedness developmental and health literatures. A review of 206 articles describing school climate research found sustained positive school climate to be associated with positive child development, effective risk prevention and health promotion efforts, student learning and achievement, and teacher retention (Thapa, Cohen, Guffey, & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2013). School connectedness has likewise been identified as a strong protective factor for a range of issues such as substance use, school absenteeism, early sexual initiation, violence, and risk of unintentional injury (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009).

The value of responding to conflict with empathy, accountability, and skill (the second theme) has been identified in other literature as well. Empathy can be described as the ability to understand and share another’s emotional state. Empathy has been
found to promote good communication and successful conflict management in ongoing relationships (de Wied, Branje, & Meeus, 2007). One study of adolescent boys and girls found empathy to be positively linked to problem solving and negatively linked to conflict engagement (de Wied et al., 2007). While they can be challenging to implement, restorative practices integrate components that are based on building empathy through affective statements and questions and circles and conferences that aim to promote understanding in the context of healing and putting things right. This may be at the root of the impact restorative practices have had on student-teacher relationships. Student report of restorative practices implementation has been associated with high school students’ report of greater teacher respect and fewer discipline referrals (Gregory et al., 2014).

Supporting staff skills in understanding and expectations may also be of importance to shifting discipline processes. A recent randomized field study of an online intervention that encouraged teachers to adopt an empathic mindset about discipline found that students whose teacher received the intervention were half as likely to be suspended over the school year (4.6%) compared to students who had control teachers (9.8%) (Okonofua, Paunesku, & Walton, 2016).

Teachers’ work environment, peer relationships, and feelings of inclusion and respect may also contribute to teachers’ ability to support students effectively. A study of middle schools found that teachers’ work environment mediated the explanatory path from a whole school character intervention to climate change at the school (Guo, 2012).

This model illustrates the importance of school climate and connectedness as supported in existing literature, but also suggests a role for strategies for responding to conflict with empathy, accountability, and skill and having staff in a school setting with the skills and tools to do that effectively.

4.3. Social ecological framing

It is also illuminating to explore the clusters that emerged within the context of a social ecological model that maps each cluster to the individual, relational, environmental or structural, and community levels. Fig. 5 illustrates how each of the kind discipline clusters can be categorized at these various levels. Although traditional discipline approaches tend to operate at the individual level—with a focus on fixing the problem child—this approach to discipline recognizes the need for components at all levels including the individual, relational, environmental or structural, and even community levels.

4.4. Programmatic applications

Ben’s Bells has taken the findings from this concept mapping process and integrated them into Kind Campus programming. The importance and feasibility of clear expectations and the need for collaborative expectations as well as an understanding of strategies for honoring the kind potential of every child have been operationalized in materials for teachers that describe a process for developing a “Be Kind” culture code for classrooms. This process integrates recognition of the existing strengths of students in understanding their ability to imagine a kind place and possibilities for a kind future. This culture brings student creativity and individual character strengths to thinking about how each person can contribute to making the classroom a kind place. The process also integrates recognition of the importance of skill development since as much as we all try, people sometimes make mistakes and that can be an opportunity to build kindness skills. Detailed instructions for implementing this process are included in Appendix C.

4.5. Future directions

The next stage will be to apply this conceptual work to the development of kind discipline intervention measurement tools. Each cluster within the kind discipline construct could be operationalized to develop intervening strategies as well as evaluation items that could be integrated into school-based surveys of teachers and students.
5. Lessons learned

Concept mapping was a useful approach for integrating perspectives from a broad spectrum of stakeholders into a conceptual model. The perspectives of students, administrators, teachers, and other school staff were effectively engaged in collaboratively constructing an understanding of kind discipline. This process included student perspectives in the brainstorming stage of the concept mapping process as this has been a phase in concept mapping where students have been able to participate fully (Kaplan, deBlois, Dominguez, & Walsh, 2016). This project did not integrate the perspectives of parents or families of students or of community stakeholders. Given the importance of the multiple levels of a social ecological model, future research could attempt to validate this model with broader community and parent input.

One effective methodological strategy implemented in this study was a sticky wall for the statement analysis and idea synthesis. We placed the sticky wall (a rip-stop nylon fabric sprayed with a repositionable adhesive spray mount) on one side of the room and placed each brainstormed statement on an individual card onto it. We posted the brainstorming statement and the criteria for idea synthesis on a white board in the same room. Because of the sticky wall, it was simple to reposition cards and keep them all visible while we moved through the iterative process of organizing the cards into clusters of similar ideas or words and applied the idea synthesis criteria to each cluster of cards. This methodology worked well for synthesizing and refining the large number of statements we had brainstormed. Future studies with comparable evaluation and planning goals could implement similar physical props like that used in the current study or potentially achieve comparable iteration and interaction through virtual interfaces.

6. Conclusion

The current study used concept mapping and multiple analytic methods to specify, refine and integrate an alternative school discipline approach whose core principles are neither reward- nor punishment-based. This “kind discipline” model had 11 clusters identified and clarified three core themes of (1) proactively developing a positive school climate, (2) responding to conflict with empathy, accountability, and skill, and (3) supporting staff skills in understanding and sharing expectations. The next steps for this work are to further develop intervening strategies and create evaluation tools based on the clusters from the current study. Ultimately this work has the potential to contribute to new models of school discipline that may yield better longer-term developmental growth of students and contribute to more positive education and health outcomes for participating youth and school communities.

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Appendix A. Final statement set by cluster with bridging values.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Bridging Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Practices that facilitate students and teachers understanding each other</td>
<td>restorative justice practices</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peer mediation</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>social and emotional learning principles</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>an awareness or attention to (if possible) what is going on when the child is not at school and in their home life</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actively seeking to understand nuances of culture, gender, language, developmental stage</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Adult education</td>
<td>mentoring</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>proper training for all stakeholders (staff, students, parents) to respond to misbehavior in a kind manner counseling</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teachers/staff who look into why a child is misbehaving</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>staff understanding of their own reactions to student behavior, and how to create space between blind reactions and skillful response</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rigorous analysis of race, ethnic, gender, social class, and sexual diversity in discipline</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>education on the science of kindness</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>access to medical and brain health</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more exercise/outside time</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. School and community infrastructure</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>materials for teachers, office personnel, and administration to record behaviors, administer discipline if needed, and provide communication to parents</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more support staff ratios</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communicating with all involved</td>
<td>0.34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more social workers and school psychologists</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>input from students, staff, and parents so that the discipline plans are mutually agreed upon</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>professional development</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smaller class size</td>
<td>0.41</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>data tracking</td>
<td>0.42</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>family-school systems and collaborations</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>connection with community agencies</td>
<td>0.46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>healthy good food in school</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community support</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Student centered accountability and connections</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>student buy-in</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>rules that are framed from a kindness angle (“kind code of conduct”)</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ways that teachers can quickly, effectively deal with a situation as soon as it happens</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>systems that are intrinsically rewarding</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>communication with parents</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ways for teachers and students to get to know each other so students feel comfortable sharing their stories</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Collaborative and cooperative school climate</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a focus on prevention</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>all kids keeping recess and lunch and never restricting active time</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td></td>
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<td>supportive alternatives to classroom removal, rather than strictly punitive measures</td>
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<td>an ongoing commitment from the whole school</td>
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<td>a common language</td>
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<td>guidance</td>
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<tr>
<td>creating a culture of kindness on campus</td>
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<tr>
<td>a team approach</td>
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<tr>
<td>a positive school culture</td>
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<tr>
<td>non-judgemental support for teachers and other adults on campus when they're struggling with kindness support</td>
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<tr>
<td>building positive relationships between all staff and students</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Accountability with dignity</td>
<td>meaningful and non-punitive responses</td>
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<td>0.15</td>
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<tr>
<th>Cluster</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Bridging Value</th>
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- refraining from passing judgment, even for “frequent flyers” but instead focusing on their capacity to change accountability on both parts 0.25
- transparency 0.3
- understanding that the same discipline doesn’t work for everyone 0.33
- dignity for students and discipliners 0.36
- timely responses 0.49

7. Honoring the kind potential of every child 0.09
- validating students perspective 0.02
- proactivity 0.03
- listening to all sides of the story without judgment 0.03
- considering the individual child 0.04
- disciplining students without embarrassing them 0.04
- distinguishing between behavior and person 0.08
- consistency 0.1
- finding the kindness in each child 0.1
- mutual respect 0.13
- follow-through 0.16
- recognition of student’s assets/positive behaviors as well as behavior that warrants transformation 0.24

8. Cultivation of positive character 0.15
- being calm 0.08
- patience 0.1
- not being sarcastic 0.11
- humor and lightness 0.12
- love 0.13
- humility 0.14
- fun and playfulness 0.24
- trust (especially among teachers and students) 0.31

9. Compassionate boundaries w/empathetic reinforcement 0.16
- warnings 0
- constructive feedback with heart 0.05
- forgiveness 0.08
- clear expectations 0.09
- empathy 0.12
- reinforcement of good behavior 0.12
- fairness 0.16
- positive affirmations 0.24
- self-kindness 0.34
- encouragement and acceptance of child’s emotions and the feelings they describe 0.39

10. Collaborative expectations that empower growth 0.21
- effective resolution without loss of dignity 0.04
- consequences that are corrective rather than punitive 0.04
- empowerment over enabling 0.07
- creative solutions 0.08
- opportunities to make things right 0.09
- holding students accountable for their behavior, while supporting student growth 0.09
- goal-setting 0.13
- logical consequences 0.14
- classroom contracts 0.16
- teaching responsibility 0.18
- active listening 0.22
- modeling 0.31
- student self-management 0.35
- opportunities for self-reflection 0.41
- compassionate regard for others, taught as a skill and encouraged as a shared value 0.5
- rules that are created by students and teachers together 0.55

11. Developing pro-social and conflict management skills 0.5
- alternative assignments that are pro-social in nature 0.31
- recognition that it is about teaching and learning and mistakes are a part of that process 0.32
- understanding the context of any misbehavior 0.34
- the student understanding the adverse affect of his/her behavior and an appropriate replacement behavior 0.34
- helping the student develop appropriate choices 0.4
- teaching students to cope with feelings 0.43
- discussing other possible choices and outcomes 0.46

Appendix B. Go-Zone statements: statements by cluster with ratings above the mean for both importance and feasibility.

1. Practices that facilitate students and teachers understanding each other social and emotional learning principles
   - an awareness or attention to (if possible) what is going on when the child is not at school and in their home life

2. Adult education
   - proper training for all stakeholders (staff, students, parents) to respond to misbehavior in a kind manner
   - counseling teachers/staff who look into why a child is misbehaving
   - staff understanding of their own reactions to student behavior, and how to create space between blind reactions and skillful response

3. School and community infrastructure
   - materials for teachers, office personnel, and administration to record behaviors, administer discipline if needed, and provide communication to parents
   - communicating with all involved input from students, staff, and parents so that the discipline plans are mutually agreed upon
   - professional development
   - family-school systems and collaborations

4. Student centered accountability and connections
   - rules that are framed from a kindness angle ("kind code of conduct") communication with parents

5. Collaborative and cooperative school climate
   - a common language
   - guidance creating a culture of kindness on campus
   - a team approach
   - a positive school culture
   - building positive relationships between all staff and students

6. Accountability with dignity
   - understanding that the same discipline doesn’t work for everyone
dignity for students and discipliners
- timely responses

7. Honoring the kind potential of every child
   - listening to all sides of the story without judgment
- consistency
  - follow-through recognition of student’s assets/positive behaviors as well as behavior that warrants transformation

8. Cultivation of positive character
   - being calm
   - patience
   - love

9. Compassionate boundaries w/empathetic reinforcement
   - forgiveness
   - clear expectations
empathy
reinforcement of good behavior

10. Collaborative expectations that empower growth
    consequences that are corrective rather than punitive
    opportunities to make things right
    logical consequences
    teaching responsibility
    active listening
    compassionate regard for others, taught as a skill and encouraged as a shared value

11. Developing pro-social and conflict management skills
    recognition that it is about teaching and learning and mistakes are a part of
    that process
    the student understanding the adverse affect of his/her behavior and an
    appropriate replacement behavior
    helping the student develop appropriate choices
    teaching students to cope with feelings
    discussing other possible choices and outcomes
    teaching students social skills and conflict resolution skills
    giving students practice in dealing with real-world conflicts
    students learning how to articulate their desires or frustrations

Appendix C. “Be Kind” code development instructions.

Creating a ‘be kind’ code

Clear expectations can support an environment where kindness can thrive. We used to think that asking students to participate in
developing rules would undermine a teacher’s authority. Now
evidence shows that setting limits in ways that support student autonomy supports more intrinsic motivation to learn.

Methodology

This process can be used to develop your ‘be kind’ Code. The
process may be completed in one day or stretched over a week or
two. The point is to dedicate time to exploring these ideas as a
group so that the resulting ‘be kind’ Code will be meaningful for
everyone involved.

Ground rules

• Everyone participates
• All ideas are valid
• Everything is written on a sticky note (one idea per note) or
board
• Listen, ask and be curious

Imagining a kind place

1. Ask the students the following question (have question written
on the board as well) and write their responses on post it notes –
one response per note – and stick them on the board:
   “Let’s pretend that you visited another class for a day and you
were trying to decide if that class was a kind place or not.
What things might you see, hear, or notice that would help
you know whether or not the class is a kind place?”

2. Continue brainstorming for as long as students are engaged and
contributing.
3. Ask students if they see any ideas that could be grouped
together. Move the sticky notes so that ideas that students see as
having something in common are in groups.
4. Ask students to come up with a name or title for each of the
groupings.

Imagining possibilities for a kind future

1. Ask students the following question and write their responses
on post it notes – one response per note – and stick them on the
board:
   “Imagine that it is the very end of the school year and this
class has been working exactly as you hoped in being the
most successful and kindest class you could desire. What has
made it so successful and kind?”

2. Continue brainstorming for as long as students are engaged and
contributing.
3. Ask students if they see any ideas that could be grouped
together. Move the sticky notes so that ideas that students see as
having something in common are in groups.
4. Ask students to come up with a name or title for each of the
groupings.

Kindness in action

1. Ask students to look over all of the names or titles of the
groupings from the previous two exercises and then ask the
following question and write their responses on post it notes –
one response per note – and stick them on the board:
   “What can each of us do to make our classroom a kind
place?”

2. Continue brainstorming for as long as students are engaged and
contributing.
3. Ask students if they see any ideas that could be grouped
together. Move the sticky notes so that ideas that students see as
having something in common are in groups.
4. Ask students to come up with a name or title for each of the
groupings.

Building kindness skills

1. Explain to students that as much as we all try, people sometimes
make mistakes. Ask students the following question and write
their responses on post it notes – one response per note – and
stick them on the board:
   “How do we make things right when we make a mistake or
are unkind to someone?”

2. Continue brainstorming for as long as students are engaged and
contributing.
3. Ask students if they see any ideas that could be grouped
together. Move the sticky notes so that ideas that students see as
having something in common are in groups.
4. Ask students to come up with a name or title for each of the
groupings.
Creating the “be kind” code

1. Ask students to look over all of the names or titles of the groupings from the previous exercises. Ask if there is anything else they would like to include in their ‘be kind’ Code.
2. Use the ideas that were generated to write down a ‘be kind’ Code for your class.
3. Post your “be kind” Code for all to see and revisit it often.

References


