LOOSELY CULTIVATING DISCIPLINE

LOOSELY CULTIVATING DISCIPLINE: FROM ZERO TOLERANCE TO PROGRESSIVE DISCIPLINE IN AN ONTARIO SCHOOL BOARD

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Abstract

This study explores connections between school discipline policies and educational inequality by examining the implementation of "Progressive Discipline" (PD) in an Ontario school board. By using positive reinforcements, preventions, and early and ongoing interventions, PD has replaced more punitive "zero tolerance" approaches as the official approach to student discipline in provincial public schools. This study poses two broad research questions that are guided by prominent theories of school organization and family-school relations: i) Given prevailing schooling practices, how is PD actually implemented, ii) can PD compensate for student inequalities in exposure to cultural orientations demanded by schools. To address these questions, this study draws on 36 qualitative interviews with key actors in several schools, and has two key findings. First, despite the official shift from zero tolerance to PD, student discipline continues to be managed by schools and individual school-based actors along a continuum, with some becoming more progressive, while others remaining more punitive. Thus, this policy evolution has involved a shift from a tighter to a more "loosely coupled" form of organization. But despite this variation, school-based actors are gradually embracing PD, since more progressive perspectives on student discipline appear to resonate with many educators and administrators. Second, the shift to PD is creating new forms of cultural practices in schools, and these practices are generating considerable variations in the outcomes of discipline processes. Building on these findings, this study concludes that progressive discipline policy has the potential to serve as a mechanism of "cultural mobility" and partially compensate for students' unequal exposure to the values, behaviours and skill sets that are needed to comply with schools' standards of behaviour.

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Chapter 1: Introduction: Reforming and Implementing School Discipline

> *Teaching discipline – the ability to behave according to social norms – is the heart of school socialization and, ultimately, social survival. Moreover, the issue of discipline concerns which and whose set of values are dominant to school life – one of the most crucial educational decisions.* (Ingersoll, 2006, p.53)

Progressive discipline (PD hereafter) draws on the logic of child-centred education as a proactive approach to reinforce positive behaviour as well as address inappropriate student behaviour. Progressive discipline focuses on helping students learn to identify and replace negative behaviours with positive behaviours, and therefore minimize and eventually prevent occurrences of problem behaviour.

This study examines the implementation of school discipline policies using organizational and cultural capital theory. Through qualitative enquiry, I examine how progressive discipline policy is enacted within one Ontario School Board, as well as the perceptions and experiences of school-based actors in connection to the discipline measures schools have adopted.

Organizational theory examines how structures, such as rules, routines, and norms, become established guidelines for social behaviour, as well as how these common cultural conceptions change over time (Scott, 2004). Some prominent organizational theorists distinguish between "tightly coupled" and "loosely coupled" forms of organization. If schools were to adhere to a logic of tight coupling, schools would maintain highly rational and institutionalized practices that have meaning in society (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; 1978). Processes of tight coupling would entail close coordination among organizational elements, close inspection of outcomes, and continual revision of technical processes based on those inspections. Alternatively, if schools were to adhere to a logic of loose coupling, schools would succumb to pressures emanating from the environment. According to this logic, top-down policies would be restricted from penetrating teaching and learning levels of schooling and thus preventing substantial change. Educational systems may be considered loosely coupled because at the level instructional activities and student learning, schools resort to a "logic of confidence" and have only weak implement organizational controls, evaluations or inspections (Meyer & Rowan, 1978, p. 80).

According to cultural capital theory, parents transfer cultural resources, in the form of values, preferences, behaviours, practices, and skill sets to their children through processes of socialization. Students therefore enter school with different sets of inherited cultural resources learned at home, such as dispositions and behavioural conduct (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) offer a cultural reproduction model of cultural capital, which assumes that school practices are biased generators of inequality and that education systems reproduce privileged culture through processes of social reproduction. Drawing on Bourdieu and Passeron, Lareau (Lareau 1987; 2000; 2002; 2003; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Weininger & Lareau, 2009) examines connections between parenting patterns and the

class specific cultural resources. She describes a cultural logic of "Concerted Cultivation" in which parents actively stimulate their children's abilities and skills. According to Lareau's work, middle class parents tend to adopt patterns of Concerted Cultivation which give those families advantages within the informal realms of schooling, in the form of a greater ability to comply with institutionalized standards of schools. In contrast to the reproduction version, DiMaggio (1982) offers a cultural mobility model of cultural capital, which assumes that schools can partially compensate for inequalities that exist in society by teaching neutral, unbiased skills and practices that can contribute to school success. As I show in subsequent chapters, my research on new discipline policies supports the cultural mobility version.

School discipline is a topic of interest within different areas of sociology. Discipline is seen to be a fundamental organizational imperative of schools, usually by organization-oriented theorists (for example, Ingersoll 2006, Brint et. al. 2001, Hurn 1993). Mainly, schooling practices of student discipline reinforce organizational priorities of minimizing disruptive student behaviour, maintaining order, and thus facilitate school's central learning agenda. At times, schools may be considered "battlegrounds" and teachers' work as "life in the trenches," where student misbehaviour is an everyday fact of life (Ingersoll, 2006, p.2). Fundamentally, without student discipline, education cannot proceed at all. School discipline may also be considered a prime socialization goal by those in Durkheimian traditions (such as Arum 2003). Socializing students to behave according to social norms of appropriate behaviour, as well as reinforcing social solidarity and social order have been central functions of education throughout the development of modern schooling (Durkheim, 1961, p.78). Organization-oriented research has shown that socialization messages within schools are framed by rules of conduct and behavioural ideals connected to maintaining order, work effort, and compliance with school authority (Brint et. al., 2001, p.161-164). School discipline is also seen in a more negative light by inequality theorists, ranging from Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) to Bowles and Gintis (1976). Inequality theorists tend to view discipline as a tool of control and inequality. These studies have tended to focus on processes by which the working class is progressively excluded from the schooling system and the ways schools correspond to the social structures of society. Further, some inequality theorists, such as Willis (1977), see ill-discipline as a principled reaction to its inequality function and that school discipline is essentially about preserving those inequalities.

This study explores the question: What is the link between school discipline policies and educational inequality? To examine these connections, it is important to examine how discipline policies and practices change, how reform is actually implemented, and to examine links between cultural practices in school institutions and social inequality, as elaborated in, theories of cultural capital.

Researchers, policy makers and school-based actors use an array of terms to articulate student behaviour including "challenging," "disruptive," "inappropriate," "unacceptable," "problem," "good" and "bad," "positive" and "negative." Conceptions of behavioural conduct are not value free. Student behaviours are constantly compared to

standards of institutionalized rules, as well as general conceptions of what educators deem as more appropriate or valuable displays of social conduct. Fundamentally, schooling practices of student discipline deliberately shape student conduct according to the behaviour ideals valued by educators. Based on patterns of family life and parental socialization values, however, student conduct and behavioural attributes may not be equally evaluated by institutions, creating variations in students' and parents' ability to comply with the behaviour expectations of educators and schools. According to the logic of cultural capital, social class may create unequal educational experiences for students. Building on the work of Lareau, middle class childrearing may have more compatibility and affinity with the standards of behaviour valued within schools, making it easier for middle class children and their families to comply with institutionalized standards of behaviour. I argue, however, that school policies of progressive discipline may serve as a mechanism of "cultural mobility" for students. This study examines how, in theory, progressive discipline may compensate for class differences in exposure to cultural capital, assisting students to develop cultural knowledge, skills and abilities in the form of behavioural and social literacy. In theory, progressive discipline practices may improve students' ability to comply with behavioural standards of educators.

To examine the connection between school discipline policies and educational inequality, I conducted a qualitative analysis of the progressive discipline policies, programs and initiatives within one Ontario School Board. This research employs in depth interviews with educators, and explores individual perceptions and experiences with progressive discipline. Based on interview data, this study provides insight into the institutional reality of educators and context within which cultural and organizational processes meet.

To place progressive discipline within the broader context of schooling systems, the following section describes general developments and, more specifically, a decade of change in the implementation of discipline policy from zero tolerance to today's progressive discipline era. Considering the connections between school discipline and educational inequality, the recent evolution of progressive discipline is interesting, as it involves changes from a tighter to looser form of coupling, and a newer type of cultural practice, one that applies more progressive forms of pedagogy to discipline.

From Punitive to Progressive Approaches to Student Discipline

Traditionally, school discipline involved methods of "coercive disciplinary tactics like corporal punishment, humiliation, straps, or dunce caps" (Hurn, 1993, p.135). As public opinion about corporal punishment began to change in the 1960's and early 1970's, the primary method of discipline shifted to suspensions and expulsions, and during the late 1970's and mid 1980's in school suspension (ISS) programs were common (Adams, 2000, p. 145).

Fuelled by public concern for school safety, schools shifted toward zero tolerance policies as primary methods of student discipline during the late 1980's and 1990's (Suvall, 2009, p.551; Adams, 2000, p.148). Originating in the military and criminal justice system, zero tolerance policies were initiated to deal with violence and disruptive

school offenses (Suvall, 2009, p.551). Zero tolerance policies reflect methods of detection and surveillance (i.e., police, cameras, metal detectors, locker searches), and methods of punishment reflecting policies of exclusion (Adams, 2000, p.150).

Punitive and authoritarian measures have been widely criticized. As Adams points out (2000, p.148) there is no data to suggest that zero tolerance policies reduce school violence. Further, schools without strict policies are identified as safer than schools engaging in zero tolerance approaches (ibid). Expulsion, suspensions, and strict discipline may also have negative effects on students being disciplined, which may increase the likelihood of future disciplinary problems. Suvall, describes the zero tolerance punitive approach as "speed[ing] up the removal of students from schools and their entry into the juvenile and criminal justice systems as the school-to-prison pipeline" (2009, p.551).

It is important to note, although punitive approaches were originally implemented to deal with behaviours considered more severe, such as physical and emotional abuse, Adams argues that teachers often rely on punitive measures as instruments of classroom management (2000, p.148). Accordingly, teachers may resort to punitive disciplinary methods, alleviating themselves from developing constructive strategies of resolving classroom conflict (2000, p.145). Students may face punitive disciplinary consequences for minor offences such as the use of profanity, being late and cutting class (ibid). Formalized policies to school disorder have also received considerable backlash and criticism along practical and equity lines. Punitive and authoritarian disciplinary responses are criticised as band-aid solutions, failing to address the causes or contexts that shape the disciplinary violations. Punitive methods may only temporarily deal with misconduct, and do so at a superficial level. In response to criticisms, some schools and educations are shifting away from punitive structures of formal discipline and school policies of zero tolerance, and embracing more informal disciplinary methods, such as progressive discipline.

Progressive discipline policy has been influenced not only by political pressures connected to reactions against zero tolerance that impose organizational imperatives to offer more flexible, discretionary approaches to discipline but also by cultural trends of more progressive forms of child-rearing. However, the organizational realities of schools create challenges that make policy implementation highly variable, including family cultural resources and practices of socialization that contribute to unequal schooling experiences for students. Reflecting policy and research literature as well as the perceptions and experiences of stakeholders, this research examines the implementation of progressive discipline policies and practices through the lenses of organizational and cultural capital theory.

Punitive to Progressive: Ontario Schools

The following description considers the shift in Ontario schooling practices of student discipline from policies based on the logic of zero tolerance to policies embracing more progressive ideologies. This historical shift in policy sets the stage for the broader empirical agenda of this study which examines cultural and organizational processes in connection with institutionalized practices of student discipline.

During the last decade, Ontario schools and boards have experienced drastic changes in student discipline policies, practices and initiatives. Bill 81 (the *Safe Schools Act*), often referred to as a "zero tolerance" policy, was introduced into all publicly funded Ontario schools in 2000. Strict rules for student behaviour were defined and mandatory consequences for student misconduct were imposed. Bill 81 was criticised for removing discretion and flexibility when disciplining students, especially on a case by case basis. In July 2005 the Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC) initiated complaints against the Ontario Ministry of Education[1] and the Toronto District School Board (TDSB)[2] alleging that the application of the *Safe Schools Act* and the TDSB's policies on discipline were disproportionately impacting racial minority students and students with disabilities "further exacerbating their already disadvantaged position in society."[3] In sum, the OHRC claimed that the application of the *Safe Schools Act* constituted, "a failure on the part of the TDSB to provide equal access to education services and that this constitutes discrimination and contravenes Sections 1, 11, and 9 of the Human Right Code."[4]

Settlements were reached between OHRC and TDSB (November 16, 2005) and between OHRC and the Ministry (April 13, 2007). Key elements of each settlement included the use of discretion and the consideration of mitigating factors when determining student discipline.[5] According to progressive policy, educators use professional judgment and discretion to govern their approach when selecting discipline responses they believe will facilitate a behavioural learning outcome for each student. As reflected in policy name, interventions progressively escalate to reflect the frequency of previous student behavioural issues as well as what is known historically about the student and the student's family. Both settlements emphasized that "suspension and expulsion are to be used only after the use of progressive discipline has been attempted" (ibid). Further, as mandated in the Education Act and specified in the Ontario regulation 472/07, *Suspension and Expulsion of Pupils*, mitigating and other factors are to be taken into account when responding to inappropriate behaviour. Mitigating factors include: whether the student understands the foreseeable consequences of their behaviour, in addition to factors in students' school, home or community circumstances that may be

[1] Terms of Settlement-Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Ministry of Education, online: Ontario Human Rights Commission <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/news/edsettlementen>

[2] Terms of Settlement-Ontario Human Rights Commission and the Toronto District School Board, online: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/resources/news/Nov142005Backgrounder>

[3] Ibid, footnote 1

[4] Ibid, footnote 2

[5] Following the settlement, Mitigating and Other Factors were incorporated into the Education Act, please see subsections 306 (2), 306 (4), 310 (3), 311.1 (4) and clauses 311.3 (7)(b) and 311.4 (2) (b) of the Act.

motivating the behaviour.[6] The settlements also encouraged the Ministry to provide training on racial stereotyping, anti-racism, and cultural differences. Fundamental to schooling rhetoric, both settlements identified that no reference to the concept of zero tolerance, or language suggesting the concept, should appear in any legislation, regulations or policies.[7] The words "zero tolerance" were to be removed from disciplinary language.

As part of the reform process, a Safe Schools Action Team (SSAT) was appointed (December 2004) to examine school safety and the impact of safe schools legislation. The SSAT released reports to identify priorities for action and guide improvements in policy and practice (*Shaping Safer Schools: A Bullying Prevention Action Plan*, November 2005*; Safe Schools Policy and Practice: An Agenda for Action*, June 2006).

The Education Amendment Act, Bill 212: *Progressive Discipline and School Safety*, was introduced in 2007 into all publicly funded Ontario schools in response to the OHRC complaints and the recommendations of the SSAT. With Bill 212, a progressive discipline approach to address inappropriate student behaviour became mandatory. Contrasting the strict discipline focus of Bill 81, Bill 212 emphasises discretion in determining appropriate discipline and combining discipline with opportunities for students to continue their education. Bill 212 has a rehabilitative focus and emphasizes prevention and intervention strategies. To support the legislative amendments to the Education Act, a number of policy/program memoranda (PPM) were introduced.[8] Specifically PPM No. 145, *Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour*, directed boards on the development and implementation of the progressive discipline approach to be used when addressing issues of student conduct.

Progressive discipline policies and practices provide a backdrop for the current study of student discipline. Progressive Discipline (PD) is the central student disciplinary approach and policy initiative within Ontario schools. The Ontario Ministry of Education defines PD as follows:

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[6] Ontario Ministry of Education. 2010. *Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario: Supporting Students with Special Education Needs Through Progressive Discipline, Kindergarten to Grade 12*. p. 7

[7] The OHRC and TDSB Terms of Settlement document states, "nowhere in the Safe Schools Act, regulations or related policies do the words zero tolerance occur" (section 1, par 3: 2005). As well, the OHRC and the Ministry Terms of Settlement document states, "there is no reference in the Education Act or in the related regulations or policies to the concept of zero tolerance nor should there be any language in the legislation, regulations or policies that suggest the concept of zero tolerance" (section 1, par 2: 2007).

[8] *PPM No. 128: The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct*, October 2007; *PPM No. 141: School Board Programs for Students on Long-Term Suspension*, August 2007; *PPM No. 142: School Board Programs for Expelled Students*, August 2007; *PPM No. 144: Bullying Prevention and Intervention*, October 2009; *PPM No. 145: Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour*, October 2009

> *Progressive discipline is a whole-school approach that utilizes a continuum of prevention programs, interventions, supports, and consequences to address inappropriate student behaviour and to build upon strategies that promote and foster positive behaviours. When inappropriate behaviour occurs, disciplinary measures should be applied within a framework that shifts the focus from one that is solely punitive to one that is both corrective and supportive. Schools should utilize a range of interventions, supports, and consequences that are developmentally appropriate and include learning opportunities for reinforcing positive behaviour while helping students to make good choices.* (PPM: 145, p. 3)

School boards in Ontario are required to have, and implement, policies on progressive discipline (PPM: 145, p. 1). School boards require that all schools develop and implement a school wide PD plan consistent with the Ontario Ministry PD policies, and with the policies and procedures of the board (PPM: 145, p. 13). The focus of progressive discipline is twofold: to promote positive behaviour and to address inappropriate behaviour. Drawing on the Education Act and the supporting memoranda, the overarching goal of PD is to support a safe learning and teaching environment where students can reach their full potential. PD encourages a continuum of strategies to appropriately and effectively deal with student behaviour:

> *Boards and schools should focus on prevention and early intervention as the key to maintaining a positive school environment in which students can learn. Early intervention strategies will help prevent unsafe or inappropriate behaviours in a school and in school related activities. Intervention strategies should provide students with appropriate supports that address inappropriate behaviour and that would result in an improved school climate* (PPM: 145, p.4)

Progressive discipline policy has been influenced not only by political pressures connected to reactions against zero tolerance that impose organizational imperatives to offer more flexible, discretionary approaches to discipline.

<u>Research Questions and Contributions</u>

This study questions: What is the link between school discipline policies and educational inequality? This study considers the cultural and organizational processes, and influences, in connection to schooling discipline practices that shape how policy is applied. Specifically, the following analysis considers the challenges of policy implementation that may neutralize the mobilizing potential of progressive discipline policy.

To first establish a general understanding of progressive discipline policies, Chapter 4 describes progressive discipline and asks: What are the key components of progressive discipline policy and how are they implemented within schooling practices? Second, to examine how progressive practices play out on the ground and are (variably)

implemented, Chapter 5 examines how policy penetrates the schooling level of the education system. Considering the institutional context of policy implementation, Chapter 5 asks: What organizational challenges emerge within the dynamics of policy application and practice? Third, Chapter 6 builds on the idea that cultural processes are connected to institutionalized practices of student discipline. Based on a broader cultural logic, components of progressive discipline may take the form of Concerted Cultivation and become resources for students, improving students' ability to comply with the behavioural expectations of educators. Chapter 6 explores parallels between educator practices of progressive discipline and parenting patterns of Concerted Cultivation. In addition, Chapter 6 also considers the potential role of family dynamics within student involvement in the continuum of progressive discipline stages. Finally, in conclusion, Chapter 7 reflects upon the findings and data analysis in previous chapters, and asks: Are schooling practices of student discipline compensating for differences in student exposure to cultural capital?

Drawing on interviews with 36 school-based actors (with principals, vice principals, teachers, child and youth workers, special education assistants, a behavioural education assistant, guidance councillors, special education consultants, and the Program Leader for Behavioural Services) and a variety of secondary sources, this study finds that progressive discipline is loosely coupled, with some disconnect from high level policy and on the ground implementation. Overall, however, the child-centred and behavioural learning philosophical underpinnings of progressive discipline appear to resonate with many educators and administrators. In general, educators agreed that the discretionary emphasis of progressive reform is invaluable for individualizing the treatment of students. I find that, overall, progressive discipline policies and educator practices consistent with progressive policy seem to offer a degree of cultural compensation, facilitating the transmission of knowledge and behavioural literacy valued by educators and within society. Educator practices consistent with the progressive discipline approach appear, on some level, to improve student compliance with institutionalized standards of behaviour.

By examining the disciplinary policies schools have adopted, considering how educators are applying, experiencing and perceiving these disciplinary procedures, this study makes several contributions. First, this research offers an empirical contribution by exploring how schools and school-based actors are experiencing and responding to institutionalized practices of student discipline (i.e., the rules, policies and regulations schools enact). By considering the perspectives of educators, this study contributes insight into the cultural and organizational processes connected to institutionalized practices of student discipline. This study adds original empirical data to the existing research in the area of school discipline, and contributes new conceptual insights into the existing body of such knowledge.

Second, my thesis contributes to New Institutional scholarship by considering the perspectives and practices of school-based actors to examine mechanisms of loose coupling within policy implementation. The loose coupling scholarship has tended to ignore the role of actors/agency, and instead has assumed that pressures emanating from

the environment inhibit top-down policies from penetrating the technical core of schooling and sparking change. My research findings do indicate discrepancies between policy and practice. However, findings also suggest that policy reform, to some degree, has penetrated the teaching and learning levels of schooling. Drawing on empirical findings grounded by the real life experiences of school-based actors, findings reveal that some schools and educators are experiencing success with practices consistent with progressive discipline policies, and are impacting student educational experiences.

Third, this research adds an original contribution to cultural capital research by adding an organizational dimension to cultural capital theory and to applying cultural capital theory to the realm of student discipline. My thesis adds a new twist to the cultural capital scholarship and finds that lower class students gain valuable cultural capital through educator practices consistent with progressive discipline policies. While the social reproduction theory argues that schools are mechanisms for perpetuating social inequalities, and tend to interpret school discipline as essentially preserving those inequalities. My findings suggest that ill-discipline stems from broader social problems, rather than political resistance, and that schools are forced to deal with behaviour and codes of conduct in order to achieve some basic compliance from students. I articulate progressive discipline in a cultural mobility framework, in which schools may attempt to level the playing field by teaching students some essential abilities that could be seen to compensate educational disparities.

Progressive discipline reinforces schools' broad organizational goals of minimizing disruptive behaviour and maintaining order. To achieve organizational goals, progressive discipline may assist students to learn behavioural and social literacy, assisting students to adopt behavioural ideals and therefore improve students' ability to comply with behavioural standards of educators. Based on the logic of compensation, this study examines how, in theory, policies of progressive discipline have the potential to serve as a mechanism of cultural mobility for students.

Chapter 2: Organizational Theory Meets Cultural Capital Theory

This study examines the implementation of progressive discipline policy through a lens of organizational theory and cultural capital. Organizational theory examines the processes by which structures, such as rules, routines and norms, become established guidelines for social behaviour. Consideration is given to how these social structures are created, adopted, and change over time (Scott, 2004). Organizational theorists differentiate between systems that are tightly coupled and loosely coupled based on the degree of flexibility and consistency between the institutional structures and instructional practices within the school system. This study employs a broad theoretical framework to consider organizational theories, in addition to cultural theories, connected to school discipline. According to cultural capital theory, parents transfer cultural resources, in the form of values, preferences, behaviours, practices, and skill sets to their children through processes of socialization. Students therefore enter school with different sets of inherited cultural resources learned at home, such as dispositions and behavioural conduct (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). I argue organizational and cultural processes are central within schooling practices of student discipline and how policy may penetrate and filter through the levels of the education system.

Progressive discipline reinforces schools' broad organizational goals of maintaining order, encouraging behavioural ideals and rules of conduct, student accommodation and retention, establishing a positive learning outcome for students being disciplined, as well as contributing to a positive school climate. To achieve organizational goals, progressive discipline, on some level, may be assisting students to learn behavioural and social literacy, and therefore improving students' ability to comply with behavioural standards of educators. As a means to achieve these goals, I argue, progressive discipline may compensate for class differences in exposure to cultural capital based on a cultural logic that parallels practices of Concerted Cultivation.

Although in theory, policies of progressive discipline have the potential to serve as a mechanism of cultural compensation or cultural mobility for students, there are basic realities of loose coupling that make policy implementation highly variable. This study examines cultural and organizational processes in connection to schooling discipline practices, as well as cultural and organizational influences that shape how policy is applied.

Organizational Theory

Based on the logic of New Institutional theory, education systems maintain highly rational and institutionalized practices that have meaning in society (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; 1978). At the rhetoric level of policy implementation (Labaree, 2010), schooling practices may reflect more of the tightly coupled concept of schooling organizations. As described by Meyer and Rowan, "as large-scale educational organizations develop, they take on a great deal of control over their ritual classifications of their curriculum, students, and teachers" as "these elements are institutionalized in the legal and normative

rules of the wider society" (Meyer & Rowan, 1978, p. 79). Meyer and Rowan suggest these standardized categories give meaning, definition and legitimize ambiguous internal processes and activities of school (ibid). As further described, "education ultimately becomes understood by the public as a certified teacher teaching a standardized curricular topic to a registered student in an accredited school" (Pajak and Green, 2003, p.404).

Educational reform may generate public awareness of school action, directly contributing to public conceptions of schooling practices. Through progressive reform, the Ontario education system may be viewed as responding to public outcry connected to policies of zero tolerance, effectively demonstrating rational and logical practices to the public by initiating the process of change. Policy documents outline reform rationale and goals, as well as identify protocol, roles and corresponding responsibilities, creating a degree of public awareness and transparency of schools' inner workings. In fact, policy documents can easily be accessed and downloaded from Ontario Ministry and School Board websites for public viewing. These sites further provide summaries of policy and practice intended specifically for parents, students and community members that summarize policy and practice.

Schooling practices of implementing policy at the rhetoric stage may reflect tight coupling, implementing progressive discipline policy in schools, however, may be considered more loosely coupled. Compared to tight coupling, a loosely coupled structure is defined as, "disconnected from technical (work) activity, and activity is disconnected from its effects" (Meyer & Rowan, 1978, p. 79). According to the logic of loose coupling, at the level instructional activities, schools do not implement organizational controls, evaluations or inspections. Pajak and Green (2003) provide a useful discussion of the loose coupling concept. As described (2003, p.395):

> *The term 'loosely coupled' means that school organizations are characterized by weak or relatively absent control, influence, coordination, and interaction among events, components, and processes. Such organizations are described as being held together by a 'logic of confidence' among participants, a series of tacit understandings that are characterized by avoidance, discretion, and overlooking of processes and outcomes in the name of professionalism.*

Based on this logic, educator processes and practices at the instructional levels may be inconsistent with school policies. David Labaree's book, *Someone Has To Fail* (2010), is particularly useful for examining processes of loose coupling within policy implementation. Labaree considers the organization of the school system to be the central problem contributing to the failure of policy reform. Labaree describes an organizational model of the American school system which, for purposes of the current study, aids in the conceptualization of schools' institutional structure and how policy may be implemented therein. Labaree identifies four hierarchical levels of school systems, considering the central problem of successful policy implementation is the ability of reform policy to transition through each of these four barriers. As described:

> *Each level has its own peculiar set of actors; and each set of actors occupies a distinct ecological niche, with its own language, media or expression, tools, organizational incentives, and problems of practice. From this angle, the challenge for reformers is to try to move reform down to the core levels of the system without letting it get blocked, deflected, or diluted.* (2010, p.110)

Labaree identifies rhetoric, formal structure, teaching practices and student learning as the four distinct levels within education. *Rhetoric,* the initial stage, involves generating the initial "educational visions, rationales for change, frameworks for representing that change, and norms for reconstructed educational practice" (ibid). Policy makers, lawmakers, judges, and educational leaders are considered the central actors at this stage, contributing to reform and policy papers, laws, and court rulings within education (ibid). The second level, the *formal structure*, considers, "where reform rhetoric needs to be translated into key components of the organizational structure of schooling at the district level, such as educational policies" (ibid). For Labaree, "by nature, reform is an organized change effort that states its purposes clearly and creates a structure to help it achieve these goals" (2010, p.81). *Teaching practice* is the third level identified in this model. Labaree considers that reform success at this stage may depend on the "capacity and willingness of public school teachers to practice the agenda in their classrooms" (2010, p.111). *Student learning* is the final level identified within Labaree's model of policy implementation. For Labaree, to be considered successful, policy would "transform the learning that students take away from their classroom experience" (ibid). Labaree argues that educational reform typically has the greatest impact on educational rhetoric and little impact at the instruction and learning levels of education. According to Labaree, the decoupling process increases as reform progresses through each of these levels.

Contributing to the current discussion, Richard Scott (2008) provides a useful perspective on the concept of loose coupling which further illustrates the connection between loose coupling, schooling processes and implementing policy. Paraphrasing Scott, a "loosely coupled" policy is one in which programs are allowed to operate somewhat independently of one another, i.e., they are allowed to vary across schools, reducing interdependence and the need for coordination or consistency across schools. When a loosely coupled policy is passed, actors in schools will attempt to determine its meaning and its implications for their situation. Even after a policy is enacted, schools work to shape its meaning and interpretation. Since many if not most policies are somewhat ambiguous, a period of "sense-making" (Weick 1995) ensues, in which relevant actors attempt to collectively interpret what the policy means and then act on those interpretations. These processes are often conducted at the field level, involving discussions and consultations with colleagues. Adding further complexity to the implementation of policy, progressive discipline fits the description of a loosely coupled policy.

Contributing to the current discussion, Labaree (2010) provides a useful discussion of Michael Lipsky's (1980) *Street Level Bureaucrats*. Lipsky's key theme is

that policies and laws in human services intentionally leave much discretion to front-line actors due to the unpredictable nature of human services. Those actors enact the policies, and become their human face in the eyes of the public. Labaree identifies teachers as street level bureaucrats and suggests "the bureaucracy has no choice but to allow the front-line agent substantial discretion to decide how to apply general policies to the myriad peculiarities of the cases at hand" (p.135). According to Labaree's thinking, based on their experience educators develop a personal approach to teaching and classroom management which is then adapted to the specific needs of the individual student and situation. Labaree considers that teachers are resistant to incorporate reform changes into their practices due to the personal investment they have in the way they teach. Accordingly, educators may fear altering their approach could impact their ability to manage student behaviour and may therefore "dilute" or "block" policy change from reaching student learning levels. The perspectives and actions of educators offer a layer of complexity to how policy is applied at the ground level (Coburn, 2004).

Interestingly, New Institutional theory has tended to ignore the role of actors/agency, and instead focused on broader cultural patterns and social structures in the context of organizations. In response, Hallet and Ventresca (2006) offer an "inhabited institutions approach" which considers agency, local and situational context, as well as broader organizational structures. As described:

> *Institutions are not inert cultural logics or representations; they are populated by people whose social interactions suffuse institutions with force and local meaning.* (2004, p. 226)

Drawing from the literature discussed in this section, educators may be considered front-line actors who are actively making sense of and shaping the meaning of policy, and enacting policy based on these interpretations. Considering the real life experiences and perspectives of school-based actors (which illuminate the current study) provides valuable insight into the processes of policy implementation within schooling organizations.

Labaree's organizational model (2010) described above, is particularly useful as a point of departure to conceptualize the institutional structure of schooling and how progressive discipline policy may penetrate the school system. However, Labaree's model was developed to examine curriculum policy specifically and excludes the consideration of cultural processes and family dynamics. This omission, I argue, is a clear limitation to this model within the current context.

To aid in the conceptualization of how discipline policy may impact schooling systems, I offer a slightly modified version of Labaree's model to reflect the nature of student discipline. I modify Labaree's third level slightly to consider the roles of educational professionals at the school level more generally. I consider implementation of school discipline practices that take place at inside and outside of the classroom, as well as beyond the realm of conventional schooling to consider alternative education programs. In addition, I interject family dynamics as the fourth level of policy

implementation. I argue the outcome of student learning (now the fifth level) is shaped by the impact of family cultural processes and the active engagement of parents within schooling disciplinary practices. For purposes of the current study, the levels of policy implementation are perhaps more accurately conceptualized according to: 1) rhetoric; 2) the formal structure of schooling systems; 3) practice and application of policy at the school level; 4) family dynamics; and finally 5) the student learning outcome of discipline processes. This study considers the connections between family cultural processes, the institutionalized standards of behaviour and schooling practices of student discipline. To aid in the discussion of policy implementation, all five levels of the education system are considered in this study and discussed within the previous and subsequent chapters.

Progressive discipline is a loosely coupled policy that has been influenced by political pressures that impose organizational imperatives to offer more flexible, discretionary approaches to discipline. Fundamentally, accusations of inequitable student treatment fuelled the implementation of progressive policies. Cultural capital is a useful theoretical frame to examine how family cultural processes may impact children's schooling experiences and possibly contribute to variations in students' and parents' ability to comply with the behaviour expectations and institutionalized discipline practices.

Cultural Capital Theory

The following section outlines how cultural capital theories provide a useful point of departure to examine organizational and cultural processes which are central within school discipline practices and policy implementation.

The "Reproduction" Version of Cultural Capital Theory

Cultural capital theory draws connections between family dynamics and class position. Broadly (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977), parents transfer cultural resources, in the form of values, preferences, behaviours, practices, and skill sets to their children through processes of socialization. During this process of "social conditioning" children are actively learning from their parents, internalizing the attitudes and behavioural patterns which become incorporated into their own dispositions, or *habitus*.

Bourdieu offers a "reproduction" version wherein cultural capital is transmitted through class based exclusionary cultural practices. Bourdieu argues that education systems reward privileged or elite types of cultural capital, contributing to social reproduction and the allocation of children into positions of social class (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Privileged children who are familiar with the types of cultural resources valued by schools have an advantage, and lower class children who have less familiarity or do not possess the types of cultural resources are penalised or punished. According to this logic, schools are active agents of social reproduction and serve exclusionary purposes. The core elements of cultural capital may be summarized as the ability to use

culture as a resource to gain access to scarce rewards, that cultural capital is subject to monopolization, is socially determined, and transmitted through generations (Lareau & Weininger, 2003, p.588- 589).[9] Cultural resources can provide social advantages, effectively transforming cultural resources into cultural capital. Specifically, cultural resources and capital can be used for academic advancement. According to the logic of cultural capital, parental cultural resources and cultural capital are eventually adopted and inherited by their children, social class differences are therefore reflected in the cultural resources parents and children have access to. Through processes of socialization students enter schools with different sets of inherited cultural resources such as dispositions and behavioural conduct learned at home.

Cultural capital is a useful theoretical frame to understand how family dynamics may impact children's schooling experiences. For purposes of empirical research, however, the concept of cultural capital needs to be operationally defined.

For Lamont and Lareau, cultural resources become cultural capital when signals are institutionalised as legitimate, describing cultural capital in terms of "institutionalized, i.e., widely shared, high status cultural signals (attitudes, preferences, formal knowledge, behaviours, goods and credentials) used for social and cultural exclusion" (1988, p.156). Building on the work of Bourdieu, Lamont and Lareau, and Lareau and Weininger provide useful interpretations of cultural capital and analytic structure to examine cultural processes within education by focusing on institutionalized standards of evaluation.

Schools institutionalize standards to regulate student behaviour at the provincial, school board, and individual school levels. Within the realm of student discipline, cultural capital theory can be used to analyze standards of expected behaviour and institutionalization of discipline practices in the form of policies, rules and regulations that schools enact.

Lareau and Weininger provide further clarity, describing their conception of cultural capital, which emphasizes "micro-interactional processes whereby individuals' strategic use of knowledge, skills, and competence comes into contact with institutionalized standards of evaluation" (2003, p.569). Lareau and Weininger's conception of cultural capital emphasizes the ability of the dominant social class to influence schooling evaluation criteria and how parents and students comply or fail to meet evaluation standards of schools. Further, Lareau and Weininger (2003, p.588-597) describe central elements for research examining cultural capital. Specifically, they highlight the importance of identifying formal and informal standards and expectations educators use to evaluate students or their parents, as well as the importance of documenting the variations among students and parents in their ability to meet the

[9] Lareau and Weininger (2003) suggest dominant interpretations of cultural capital may be misinterpreted on two accounts. First that cultural capital is restricted to elite status culture (p.577-580). Second, cultural capital may be interpreted as distinct from knowledge and skill, when the study of cultural capital should also include, but not be limited to, educational skills, ability, knowledge and achievement (p. 580-583).

expectations held by educators. The authors recognize students and parents will differ in their ability to comply with institutionalized expectations as well as influence how standards are applied based on social class.

Within her work, Annette Lareau discusses the limitations in knowledge and understanding of how family life transmits advantages to children. As stated, "few researchers have attempted to integrate what is known about behaviors and attitudes taught inside the home with the ways in which these practices may provide unequal resources for family members outside the home" (Lareau, 2002, p.748). By exploring the interconnection of cultural and organizational processes, this study provides such insight. Specifically, this study considers the organizational context of schools in which the behaviours and attitudes learned inside the home operate.

The following section describes connections between family cultural processes, the institutionalized standards of behaviour and schooling practices of student discipline, through a discussion of a) standards of evaluation schools use to govern student behaviour, and b) variations in ability to meet behavioural expectations.

a) Standards of Behaviour

Lareau and Weininger (2003) consider the formal and informal standards educators use to evaluate students and their parents as central to the study of cultural capital. Student behaviours are consistently evaluated within schools and compared to conceptions of what educators deem as appropriate displays of social conduct.

The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct, hereafter The Code, outline provincial standards of behaviour for students, parents, volunteers, teachers, and other staff members. The Code applies to conduct on school property, school buses, school-related events and activities, or any other circumstances that may impact the school climate. Fundamentally, The Code promotes, "Standards for respect, civility, and responsible citizenship"; "Maintain[ing] an environment where conflict and difference can be addressed in a manner characterized by respect and civility"; and to "Encourage the use of non-violent means to resolve conflict" (The Code & Subsection 301(2) of Part XIII of the Education Act). Specifically for students, standards emphasize demonstrating respect for themselves and others, respecting laws and school rules, as well as upholding responsibilities of citizenship through (what is termed) "acceptable behaviours." Standards for parents are also identified in The Code, and include familiarity with the rules of behaviour at the provincial, board and school levels. According to The Code, parents are expected to assist children in following rules of behaviour, in addition to assisting the school in dealing with discipline issues which involve their children.

The Code states, "A school should be a place that promotes responsibility, respect, civility, and academic excellence in a safe learning and teaching environment" (PPM 128).[10] The Code identifies a connection between the right to be safe and feel safe,

[10] Policy/Program Memorandum No. 128. October 4, 2007. *The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct*

and the responsibility to contribute to a positive school climate. The Code states that boards and schools should focus on prevention and early intervention as the key to maintaining a positive school environment, and identifies Character Development and Progressive Discipline as the means to achieve these objectives.

According to Annette Lareau (2003), professionals who work with children, such as teachers, agree on principals of childrearing which have come to form "a dominant set of cultural repertoires" about how children should be raised (p.4). She notes further, that "Parenting guidelines typically stress the importance of reasoning with children and teaching them to solve problems through negotiation rather than with physical force" (ibid). Overall, provincial and school board standards of student behaviour support the cultural logic of parenting described by Lareau. Both Lareau and the schooling standards of behaviour describe themes of respect, peaceful conflict resolution, and critical thinking, preparing students to become responsible, productive citizens of society.

Progressive discipline draws on the logic of child-centred education and is the Ontario approach to discipline. Progressive discipline promotes positive student behaviour and is used to address issues of student conduct through a range of interventions, supports, and consequences that educators administer based on their own professional judgement of what they consider developmentally appropriate. Character Development initiatives are central to the positive reinforcement and prevention stages of progressive discipline. Character Development focuses on "Universal attributes upon which schools and communities find consensus. These attributes provide a standard for behaviour against which we hold ourselves accountable"[11] (p.3). Character attributes are classified according to four overarching principles: 1) learning and academic achievement, 2) respect for diversity, 3) parent and community partnerships, and 4) citizenship. Character attributes identified include: "critical and analytic thinking," "making principled decisions," "questioning and anticipating problems and contributing to solutions," "self-management," "self-discipline," "interpersonal competencies," and "self-awareness." Fundamentally, character initiatives involve, "developing the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours that students require to become caring and socially responsible members of society" (p.8). Students, however, may not face punishment for failing to demonstrate preferred qualities, such as self-awareness. Although, character attributes are defined as important and valued by educators, and therefore reflect more informal standards of evaluation within schooling institutions.

Ministry Character Development documents state specifically, "Parents and families have the primary responsibility for the development of their children's character" (p.4, 5). As further stated, character development "is about all members of the community sharing the responsibility for supporting students and families in the development of character," and "is not about schools taking over the responsibility of parents and families" (p.7). Standards identify the responsibilities of parents in shaping and monitoring their children's behaviour, indicating that schools and educators will support

[11] Ministry Document, *Finding a Common Ground: Character Development in Ontario Schools, K-12*

those efforts within schools. Teaching children what are and are not socially "acceptable" behaviours is clearly identified as the primary role of parents.

b) Variations in Ability to Meet Behavioural Standards

According to the reproduction theory, cultural capital is seen to exclude lower class students, while privileged students enjoy academic success because schools reward their elite cultural practices. Cultural capital theory argues that schools are active agents of social reproduction. Class based variations may impact students' and parents' ability to comply or failure to comply with the behaviour expectations of educators and schools. Behavioural standards may exist as an indirect avenue social class impacts student's schooling experience. Lareau and Weininger (2003) consider documenting variations among students and parents in their ability to meet the expectations held by educators, as essential within cultural capital research. The following discussion explores potential variations.

In general, socialization may be understood as the process where children learn the socially appropriate conventional norms of what is acceptable behaviour, acquiring the cultural and social competencies of the society they are born into. Generally people within the same society share core values, perceptions, and norms based on similar techniques of socialization. However, social class may have an effect on children's socialization and life experiences more generally. Although students may be born into the same society, perhaps even the same neighbourhood, class based differences may shape student's understanding of what behaviours are acceptable.

Parenting values are generally conceived as the desirable standards and preferences that govern parenting practices and influence how parents evaluate and shape their children's behaviour. Melvin Kohn's research (1969, 1977) provides insight into connections between social structure and parenting practices. Specifically, Kohn identifies the relationship between social class and parental values as "remarkably pervasive and consistent," and further describes social class as having a greater impact on parenting behaviours than, for example, race, religion and family size (1969, p.72). Drawing on the work of Kohn, Weininger and Lareau (2009) describe the polarity between middle class preferences of "self direction," and working class and poor parental preferences for "conformity to external authority" (Weininger & Lareau, 2009, p. 682; Kohn, 1969, p. 18-20, 34-35). Weininger and Lareau (2009, p.682) provide the following summary of Kohn's findings:

> *A stress on self-direction "focuses on internal standards of behaviour" (Kohn, 1969, p. 35): It emphasizes the importance of the intention behind actions (Kohn, 1969, p. 35), the emergence of "personally responsible standards of morality" (Kohn & Slomczynski, 1993, p. 86), and an independent decision-making faculty. In contrast, conformity, for Kohn, is understood in terms of obedience to the appropriate authority figures, an unambiguous understanding of right and wrong, and a clear recognition of the consequences of actions (1969, p. 35). The existence of this underlying value opposition has been confirmed in data collected*

> *in numerous countries under widely varying social conditions (Kohn & Schoenbach, 1993).*

The information provided here reinforces the argument that class specific values may be imbedded within parenting practices and behaviours, which shape children's socialization. Referring back to the work of Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) and Lareau (Lareau 1987; 2000; 2002; 2003; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Weininger & Lareau, 2009), sets of cultural resources - values, preferences, behaviours, practices, and skill sets – that children and parents draw from, are linked to their social class. Based on the conception of cultural capital, some forms of cultural resources are valued more highly within dominant institutions, while other forms may not be recognized or discouraged. Specifically, school standards of behaviour outlined above seem to reflect attributes valued by the middle class culture and may contribute to students' and parents' ability to comply with this criterion.

Drawing on Bourdieu, Lareau (1987; 2000; 2002; 2003; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Weininger & Lareau, 2009) examines further connections between parenting patterns and the class specific cultural resources families use to meet schooling standards. She describes a cultural logic of "Concerted Cultivation," where parents are actively stimulating children's abilities and skills. This form of parenting draws on evolving conceptions of child development, as articulated by new specialists and professionals in medical, psychological, social work and educational fields. Although this form of parenting is not inherently middle class, Lareau identifies that middle class parents are more likely to embrace its practices. Alternatively, working class and poor parents spend resources meeting the basic family needs, allowing their children to develop according to "Accomplishment of Natural Growth."

Lareau (Lareau 1987; 2000; 2002; 2003; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Weininger & Lareau, 2009) examines differences in the "cultural logic of child rearing" in relation to social class. Her findings identify difference in patterns of conversation, discipline, interaction with authority figures and institutions, as well as parental involvement in schooling. Her findings suggest that middle class parents possess, and instil in their children, cultural resources that are absent among working class and poor families. Lareau suggests that family practices and values are not equally evaluated by institutions.

Based on Lareau's findings, middle class parents actively teach and model behaviours and skills that comply specifically with schooling standards of behaviour. Accordingly, middle class children are taught to develop self direction, critical thinking and language skills, and socially appropriate ways to interact with adults. Middle class parents are further described as providing children with explicit instruction and experience with effective problem solving, managing conflict, and how to negotiate perspectives and address their concerns. Alternatively, working class and poor children are considered exposed to language and behavioural patterns that do not align and may contradict the behavioural standards of schools. Based on Lareau's work, how students managing conflict at school, with educational professionals and peers, may reflect class specific differences in socialization and childrearing practices. As described:

> *Children and their parents interact with central institutions in the society, such as schools, which firmly and decisively promote strategies of concerted cultivation in childrearing. For working-class and poor families, the cultural logic of childrearing at home is out of synch with the standards of institutions.* (Lareau, 2003, p.3)

In general, Lareau found differences in parenting styles related to class distinctions, and that family circumstances influence parents and children's interactions in and out of school. She described strategies of working class and poor families as "generally denigrated and seen as unhelpful or even harmful to children's life chances" (2003, p.13). On the other hand, middle class families were see to actively facilitate opportunities for learning and the development of skills which shape educational success and advantages in life more generally.

Based on the information presented in this chapter, I argue that middle class parenting practices are also more compatible with behavioural expectations of educators and schools and, therefore, the cultural and social resources of the middle class may provide institutional advantages for middle class students. Based on patterns of family life, and parental socialization values, children and parents from working class and poor family backgrounds may not be culturally equipped to meet behavioural standards of evaluation. Central to the theoretical argument of cultural capital, family practices and values linked to social class may not be equally evaluated by institutions, creating variations in students' and parents' ability to comply with the behaviour expectations of educators and schools.

Schooling standards of behaviour may exist as an indirect avenue social class impacts students' schooling experience. Essentially, standards of expected behaviour may contribute to reproduction of social inequality and thus meet Lamont and Lareau's (1988) definition of institutionalized cultural signals used for exclusionary purposes within education.

The "Cultural Mobility" Version of Cultural Capital Theory

Bourdieu's conceptions of cultural capital and cultural resources provide a valuable theoretical frame to understand how social class impacts schooling experiences. However, DiMaggio's (1982) cultural mobility model of cultural capital, describing cultural capital as a "neutral" resource contributing to school success, may be more suitable to the context of progressive discipline policies.

Weininger and Lareau (2003) point out Bourdieu's work is based on the French education system which differs from the institutional context of the US. By extension, similar differences exist between the French and Canadian education system. Specifically, Weininger and Lareau address Bourdieu and Passeron's argument that schools maintain the legitimacy of their practices as institutions of upward mobility by denying the role that schools play in processes of social reproduction. According to this logic, it is to the advantage of dominant groups that academic achievement is generally

attributed to ability, rather than inherited cultural capital, and therefore the reproductive quality of education systems remain "hidden" (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Though, as noted by Weininger and Lareau, Bourdieu's understanding of cultural capital is developed in, and based on, the French education system.

Weininger and Lareau suggest within the context of US - and by extension Canada - differences in how family background and practices shape educational experiences are "visible" within educational research, policy and practices. Demands of the general public, government agencies and business interests encourage a degree of accountability from schools in connection with student academic achievement. Weininger and Lareau describe the prevalence of institutional mechanisms which intend to "harmonize" and "ameliorate" disadvantages attributed to social class (Weininger & Lareau, 2003, p.375-376, 400). To illustrate this notion, Weininger and Lareau discuss parent teacher conferences which, they note, can "clarify for parents the expectations that the institution holds for their children and the means it uses to realize them" (Weininger & Lareau, 2003, p.384). Educational institutions may implement policies, practices and initiatives to support students and their parents, alleviating disparities in schooling experiences created by differences in family cultural resources.

Lareau and Weininger's (2003) approach examining connections of micro-interactional processes consistent with cultural capital and institutionalized standards of evaluation, provides a useful point of departure for the study of student discipline. Lareau and Weininger (2003) recognize that students and their parents *enter* the educational system with class specific skills and knowledge that can impact their ability to conform to institutionalized expectations. Lareau and Weininger (2003) further suggest "encompassing both institutional standards and the actions of individuals in complying with them, is critical to any discussion of cultural capital" (2003, p.586). Reviewing Lareau's work stimulates an interesting question - How do educators and schooling processes attempt to realize and enact the preferred values commitments and behaviours within students and parents?

In theory, progressive discipline practices may provide advantages for students in complying with the behavioural evaluative criteria of schools and conventional norms of behaviour within broader society more generally. Progressive discipline policies and practices may be considered a schooling method for boosting parental and student compliance with institutional standards of behaviour. The impact of school discipline practices contributing to social inequalities is highly visible within public and political spheres due, in part, to problems attributed to practices of zero tolerance. Progressive initiatives are an outcome of institutional and public accusations, criticisms and concerns. As institutionalized within Ontario Policy,[12] every school board and school across Ontario is required to implement progressive discipline policies and programs, and draw

[12] Program Memorandum No. 145, "Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour", October 4, 2007; Policy/Program Memorandum No. 128. October 4, 2007. *The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct*; The Education Act

on progressive discipline as the approach to be used when addressing issues of student conduct.

Through progressive discipline policies and practices schools may attempt to stimulate student's development of the knowledge, skills and competencies in connection to behaviour valued by educators. The developmental stages of progressive discipline - positive reinforcement, prevention of inappropriate behaviour, and interventions – focus on improving behaviour and include opportunities for students to learn. Throughout the progressive discipline process, students and their parents are offered multiple levels of support in the form of social workers, child and youth workers, psychologists, speech and language pathologists, special education teachers, behavioural specialists, and specialized programs. The use of discretion is also central within this approach. Educators use their professional judgment to consider mitigating factors, circumstances of the behaviour, the student's life situation and personal history to choose the most appropriate way to address individual student behaviour. Discipline is administered based on the feelings and opinions of school-based actors regarding what they believe will provide the greatest learning outcome for each individual student. Fundamentally, interview data presented in this study indicates that educators bend behavioural standards to accommodate individual student circumstances.

As an alternative to the reproduction version of cultural capital theory, DiMaggio (1982) offers a cultural mobility model of cultural capital that may be more suitable for the current research purposes. According to this logic, cultural capital is a "neutral" resource that leads to school success. Cultural capital is not considered an exclusive resource of a particular class. Middle class students, however, may maintain an advantage in school because they have more exposure to cultural resources at home. Therefore, inequalities among families, rather than school biases, are the prime sources of inequalities. As described by Kingston (2001, p.97):

> *Some cultural practices tend to help everyone in school. They are no less worthwhile because of some presumed class linkage, nor are they incompatible with the maintenance of many vital subcultural differences. This is not to say that elite cultural capital goes totally unrewarded in schools, but it is relatively unimportant, especially as a mediating factor between social privilege and academic success.*

School policies of progressive discipline may have the potential to serve as a mechanism of "cultural mobility" for students. In theory, progressive discipline may provide opportunities to transmit cultural knowledge to students and improve student ability to comply with behavioural standards of educators. Progressive discipline practices and processes may compensate for class differences in exposure to cultural capital, redistributing cultural skills and abilities among students. Essentially, progressive practices could help to provide lower class students essential abilities, in the form of behavioural literacy and conduct, which could be seen to be on par with students from privileged backgrounds.

Organizational and Cultural Dilemmas of Policy Implementation

Progressive discipline has been influenced by cultural and organizational processes, and reinforces schools' broad organizational goals of maintaining order as well as a positive school climate. Binding cultural capital and organizations theories, this research considers cultural and organizational processes which shape policy implementation.

Bourdieu's conception of cultural capital provides a useful point of departure to examine education, family and social class connections. Bourdieu's theoretical orientation to the study of social class and family school connections remains useful, despite differences within institutional context of the French education system (reflected within Bourdieu's research), US system (as discussed within Lareau's work), and the Canadian education system which is the focus of the current study.

To consider an interesting perspective, Lareau and Weininger argue that institutional mechanisms are unable to reduce the impact of class based differences contributing to educational disadvantages. Lareau and Weininger argue, "the institutionalization of home-school relations can, in fact, serve to create new avenues for the influence of social class to impact children's education" (Lareau & Weininger, 2003, p.382). According to Lareau and Weininger, Bourdieu's sociological orientation remains valid because mechanisms to improve inequalities created by school standards may, in fact, be ineffective due to the remaining and sustained existence of class based cultural resources.

Within the context of the current research, in Canada, sources of unequal educational experiences have been acknowledged within schooling policy and practice. Mechanisms have been implemented to "harmonize" these disparities, i.e., policies of progressive discipline. Based on Lareau and Weininger argument, noted in the above paragraph, it is possible that sustained issues of family oriented social inequality may penetrate the potential "mobilizing" capability of progressive discipline practices. Extending this argument further, it is possible the institutional and organizational context within which "harmonizing" mechanisms are implemented may also render the "mobilizing" potential of progressive discipline practices ineffective or inconsistent. In this case, it is possible the same institution criticised for social reproduction and initiated progressive reform as a means to ameliorate claims of inequality, the educational system itself, may hinder the potential "mobility" capabilities espoused.

Examining the organizational context and the institutional arena within which cultural capital operates, provides an interesting connection between theories of organizational and cultural processes. Pajak and Green (2003) offer an interesting perspective which connects the organizational and cultural theories employed within this study. As described:

> *How loose coupling in schools is traditionally organized and the accompanying logic of confidence serve the purposes of misrecognition and social reproduction while masking the culpability of educators, even from themselves"…"loose coupling in the educational system simultaneously contributes to and conceals the*

> *failure of schools to provide access to higher status for groups outside the dominant culture and social structure*. (2003, p. 395)

Based on the logic of loose coupling, education systems conform to customary conventions of education to appear legitimate and maintain the trust and confidence of the public. The actual application of policies, however, may be inconsistent and ineffective. According to this logic, schools may appear to implement progressive discipline practices conforming to educational reform, for example to appear legitimate and maintain positive public perceptions. At the individual school and classroom level, however, the objectives of policies initiatives may have been lost through decoupling processes.

Based on the perspectives described here, the institutionalization of student discipline including formal rules, policies and regulations may be influenced by family cultural processes in addition to the organizational dilemmas of schools. In theory, policies of progressive discipline have the potential to serve as a mechanism of "cultural mobility" for students although organizational realities of loose coupling and family cultural processes may contribute to inconsistencies within policy implementation. As discussed above, Bourdieu and Passeron (Bourdieu, 1977; 1984; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977) interpreted the education systems as playing a role in reproducing social inequality, though schools denied this function of the schooling system. Due to the visible, though perhaps ineffective, efforts of school policies and practices to address social inequalities, the reproductive quality of education systems may remain "hidden."

Exploring the link between school discipline policies and educational inequality, the following analysis examines cultural and organizational processes in connection to schooling discipline practices that may neutralize the mobilizing potential of progressive discipline. To address the overarching cultural mobility thesis of this study, the following chapters ask: What are the key components of progressive discipline policy and how are they implemented within schooling practices? What organizational challenges emerge within the dynamics of policy application and practice? Do family and cultural dynamics penetrate, and perhaps neutralize, the mobilizing potential of progressive discipline practices? This study examines the implementation of progressive discipline policy through the lenses of cultural capital and organizational theory to examine the central question: Are schooling practices of student discipline compensating for differences in student exposure to cultural capital?

Chapter 3: Methods

This project explores schooling practices of student discipline, considering the individual perceptions and experiences of school-based actors with progressive discipline policies, programs and initiatives. This study provides a qualitative analysis of the major discipline policies within Ontario, and within one Ontario school board specifically.

The school board selected as a research site was chosen because of geographic proximately, as well as the personal contacts I have within the board that were willing to participate in this research and assist to generate access to interview participants. The school board studied is one of the larger district school boards in Ontario, with approximately 60000 students, 3500 teaching staff and 2000 support staff members. The school board is located in South-western Ontario and serves seven rural and urban municipalities.

Throughout this study, two main contacts at the school board facilitated my access to school research sites; one is a Superintendents of Education and the other is The Superintendent of Learning Services in charge of Equity and Inclusion, Character Development and Safe Schools. I worked in consultation with these school board officials who supported and assisted this research. My contacts sent out system wide memos informing all school in the region about this study, requesting and encouraging their participation. No school administrators contacted me in response to the memo; however, my contacts at the board also selected 13 school sites and personally contacted school administrators to request and encourage school participation. My contacts also communicated with the school board officials and school-based actors within alternative education programs to request their participation in this study. Following this initial communication, I contacted the potential participants to request their participation and make interviews arrangements. Access to educators and school staff was partitioned by administrators, who acted as the gatekeeper and in the end decided if their school would participate in this study. All interviews conducted were from willing participants who agreed on their own accord to participate.

In-depth interviews are the main source of data collection.[13] Specifically, I report data obtained from interviews that ranged from 45 min to 3 hours. A few participants spoke with me on multiple occasions. One interviewee in particular spoke with me 5 times; each interview segment lasted over an hour. I conducted 36 interviews in total. I interviewed 13 principals, 4 vice-principals, 5 teachers, 3 child and youth workers, 1 special education assistant, 1 behavioural education assistant, and 2 guidance councillors. I conducted interviews at 13 school sites, consisting of 3 junior schools (JK-grade 6), 3 composite schools (JK-8), 4 senior schools (grades 7-8 or 6-8), and 3 semestered schools

[13] The scope of this study is limited to the perspectives of school-based actors. As the perspectives of parents and students themselves are not considered, inevitably, various school based processes and family processes have not been considered. Broadening this study to include interviews with parents and students would provide a valuable direction for future research.

(grade 9-12). I have conducted 3 interviews at 2 alternative education program sites with members of the teaching and administrative staff. At the school board office I also interviewed 3 special education consultants and the Program Leader for Behavioural Services at the School Board.[14]

With permission, interviews were digitally recorded and then transcribed. Interviews were conducted at the individual school locations as well as the school board central office. All names and identifiable information were changed to protect the confidentiality of the participants. Refer to Appendix 1 for the Principal and Staff Information Letter and Consent Form.

The interview data was descriptive in nature. Descriptions and quotations included in this study are taken from the interviews I conducted. The interview schedule was broken down into three main sections, exploring: 1) how stakeholders (school based staff and school board staff) are perceiving, experiencing and responding to the disciplinary measures schools have adopted, 2) how disciplinary policies are being applied, as well as 3) the actual impact of these procedures and programs. Throughout each interview I asked participants to provide examples when possible. Refer to Appendix 2 for the interview schedule.

The first section addressed educator general perceptions of discipline policies at the board and Ministry level, and with progressive discipline policies more specifically. I asked questions about how discipline practices have changed since the implementation of Safe Schools in 2000 and how these changes have impacted students and school climates. I asked if interviewees were satisfied with policies and policy outcomes. As well, I included questions about board and Ministry level professional development and protocols connected to school disciplinary.

The second section of the interview schedule included questions to pinpoint specifically how progressive policies were applied and identify specific disciplinary practices. I asked interviewees what progressive discipline currently looks like within schools and at the board level. I questioned educators about their perceptions, practices and strategies to promote positive behaviour, as well as prevent and intervene with problem student behaviour. Within this section of interview questions, I also asked how policies are communicated to school staff, students and parents. I asked about how discipline and behavioural interventions are used and applied: a) when dealing with individual students or behavioural, b) within daily classroom activities, c) within everyday schooling practices, as well as d) within the overall school more generally (i.e., school wide strategies or protocols).

Finally, to examine the impact of schooling practices on individual students and school climates, within the third section of the interview schedule I asked specific questions about how disciplinary strategies, plans and practices shape students' schooling experiences and how strategies impact student learning outcomes. I asked how educators

[14] The terms "educator," "school based actor," "school professionals" and "education professional" are used interchangeably throughout this study to refer to interview participants.

perceived the effectiveness of discipline practices, and if they felt discipline practices adequately addressed inappropriate student behavior.

To initially organize the interview data, I used Nvivo 7 a software program that assists to organize qualitative data. I first coded the materials based on the questions pre-outlined in my interview schedule. I then organized and reorganized the data multiple times according to emerging themes. I also added additional organizational categories as themes emerged from the data. Additional phases of coding were aimed to categorize the data according to increasingly specific emerging themes connected to cultural and organizational theory.

In addition to my initial access to schools, I volunteered at one school as a "breakfast lady" every Monday during the 2010 to 2011 school year and attended fundraising events in exchange for interview access. Interestingly, at one school location the principal was leery about speaking with me. I noticed his motorcycle helmet and gear within his office, however, and was able to strike up a conversation about our mutual interest and shared pastime which immediately put him at ease. This principal spoke with me for 3 hours and was one of the most informative interviews conducted for this study. Anecdotally, at a few schools I was mistaken as a student. On one occasion, I was waiting outside of a secondary school building at the end of the school day. I was approached by a teacher who asked, "Are you waiting for your parents to pick you up?" Considering that I was, in fact, waiting for my father to pick me up. Feeling slightly embarrassed, I simply replied, "yes."

As noted, all interviews conducted were from willing participants. It is worth noting, that interviewees distinguished "closed" and "open" school dynamics (which I explain in further detail within the following analysis). Briefly, schools were considered more open or closed reflecting the level of interaction schools have with the school board and community, the level of assistance and guidance schools actively pursue, and the flexibility of staff to shift schooling processes. Interestingly, one school identified during interviews as closed agreed to participate. Though initially reluctant, the principal eventually agreed to be interviewed. At the beginning of the interview I felt he was uncomfortable with my presence and, initially, seemed to provide more politically correct responses to my questions. For example:

> Question: Can you tell me about the discipline policies in your school, what they are and about how they are applied?
>
> Response: *We are following the procedures made available by the board, and we apply them in a consistent fashion, so schools handle things in similar fashion and so in our school administrators are handling things in similar fashion. I work hard to make sure approach is consistent.* (Interview: Principal, 4)
>
> Question: Are you satisfied with the discipline policies and practices at this school?

> Response: *I think the policies are appropriate for our school, our admin team applies them fairly and consistently. So we apply the policies we have in place. I think they are doing what they need to do and for the school, they are accomplishing what they need to accomplish.* (Interview: Principal, 4)

As this interview progressed the principal did become more relaxed and, in the end, did provide useful information. Please see Chapter 5, p. 93 for a more in depth discussion of this interview. One special education consultant who discussed open and closed schools during an interview stated:

> *It's too bad you can't talk to everyone. Absolutely it's those schools who aren't going to let you come and talk to them who are the closed schools, it's those schools where the principals and administrators are not open, what does that say about the school? There is a fear, don't come into my school!* (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 2)

Unfortunately, the schools considered more closed and, by nature, were more reluctant to allow my access may have provided the greatest insight into schooling processes. During a few additional interviews other school-based actors as well offered more politically correct responses to interview questions which seemed to reflect policy documents verbatim rather than actual school practice.

Qualitative research encounters challenges of reliability and validity, and there are limitations to this method. Mainly, this study draws on second hand accounts of self-interested actors and not direct observations. Despite the challenges of qualitative research, however, precautions were taken to ensure the accuracy of research findings detailed within this study. I spent a considerable amount of time in schools conducting interviews and, as mentioned, I volunteered for a year within one school in particular. I conducted 36 interviews allowing reflection upon multiple perspectives, as well as the ability to cross-check interview data achieving a higher degree of continuity and dependability. By drawing on board and Ministry level policy documents I was able to further cross-reference my interviewee data with progressive discipline practices at each stage along the continuum, as well as the practices of educators that corresponded to progressive discipline ideals and philosophies. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed with accuracy. As well, interpretations of the data are empirical and logical. I provide clear detailed descriptions of interview findings (at times perhaps overly detailed) and also present information that runs counter to the overarching cultural mobility thesis.

Fundamentally, this study explores the disciplinary policies schools have adopted, considering how educators are applying, experiencing and perceiving these disciplinary procedures. The findings discussed in this study are empirically grounded by the real life experiences of school-based actors who have firsthand knowledge and, often daily, experience with school discipline. Conducting interviews with school-based actors provides the data necessary to achieve my research objectives. Despite the challenges facing qualitative inquiry, this research attempts to be methodologically rigorous.

Chapter 4: Describing Progressive Discipline

This chapter details the practices of school-based actors that align with the practices and strategies, as well as the child-centred principles and behavioural learning goals of progressive discipline policy. To establish a general understanding of progressive discipline policy, this chapter asks: What are the key components of progressive discipline policy and how are they implemented within schooling practices?

This chapter first describes the shift in school discipline policies from a tighter to looser form of coupling, through the discussion of: a) Tight Coupling through Zero Tolerance, and b) The Shift to Progressive Discipline: The Re-Creation of Loosely Coupled Practices. Second, this chapter describes the developmental stages of progressive discipline, consisting of: 1) Positive and Prevention Initiatives, as well as the 2) Early and 3) Ongoing Intervention stages of progressive discipline.

a) Tight Coupling through Zero Tolerance

Zero tolerance policy was built on an implicit "deterrence model" of student discipline and may be viewed as an attempt to impose a more tightly coupled discipline policy. Leaving less room for discretion at local levels, zero tolerance was perceived to be counterproductive because it assumed that automatic and inflexible penalties would eventually deter student misbehaviour, and would eventually lessen discipline problems.

Non-discretionary approaches are simpler to implement; zero tolerance was fairly clear, and likely generated more consistency in its implementation across schools. Due to inflexibility, however, zero tolerance policies generated other problems including issues of equity. Two unexpected outcomes soon emerged. First, rates of student suspensions and expulsions sky-rocketed, as might be expected, but then stayed at high levels, which was not expected. It become apparent that zero tolerance did not serve as an effective deterrent. Second, the Ontario Human Rights Commission policy accused the policy of being inequitable and discriminatory, that is, of being particularly punishing of visible minorities and students with disabilities. Labaree considers, "social reform is the offspring of social crisis" (2010, p.83). Based on this logic, the resulting discriminatory accusations and a loss of public confidence in schooling from practices of zero tolerance may be considered the crisis that provoked the implementation of progressive discipline as the possible solution.

b) The Shift to Progressive Discipline: The Re-Creation of Loosely Coupled Practices

Some policies, such as progressive discipline, are more loosely coupled than others. That is, some policies intentionally build-in much discretion at the local level, while others are more tightly coupled, and reduce that discretion. The movement from zero tolerance to progressive discipline returns much discretion to school-based actors.[15]

[15] For example, the WRDSB Student Discipline Policy, Policy 6008, outlines the board implementation procedures for the Ministry of Education Policy/Program Memorandum 145 – Progressive Discipline and Promoting Positive Student Behaviour. Accordingly,

Progressive discipline is part of a broader shift towards "progressive" forms of schooling in general. To place progressive education within a sociological context, Davies' (2002) discussion of progressive ideology within educational reform is helpful. Recognizing a lack of a precise definition, Davies describes:

> *The core* [of progressive education] *consists of a belief in active, individualized, child-centred education that is aimed at the whole child"…"most progressives advocate a more differentiated and holistic curricula that moves beyond the basics to meet children's social, emotional, psychological, and biological needs.* (2002, p.271)

Davies suggests the nature of policy reform may be framed around a double meaning or "two faces" (Williams and Benford, 2000; Davies, 2002). On one hand, policy meaning may reflect key values and beliefs held within society and, on the other, adapted to suit different local contexts. Through this framework, Davies considers three Canadian educational reforms[16] which invoke common progressive child-centred ideals, including holistic education, meeting the needs of the individual child, creative thinking, relevance, expanding social services in schools, and rejecting traditional educational practices as inequitable and inhumane (Davies, 2002, p.275-278). Each commission also shifted the meaning of progressive education to incorporate political and cultural conditions, as well as the changing educational priorities of the time.

Davies analysis sheds an interesting light on the nature of progressive education in the current context of school discipline. Similar to policy reforms of the past, the meaning of progressive continues to support core social values by retaining the enduring logic of a child-centred education aimed at the whole child. Current progressive policy also broadens the meaning of progressive to incorporate the role of student discipline in response to intense scrutiny and public dissatisfaction with schools. Progressive discipline policy also rejects punitive and deterrent traditional methods of social control. The meaning of progressive has again shifted to reflect the political and cultural conditions of current.

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this policy identifies that school administrators must consider, "the particular pupil and circumstances, including any mitigating and other factors" when addressing inappropriate behaviour (section 4.1). Further, criteria for possible suspension include, "any act considered by the principal to be injurious to the moral tone of the school" (Section 5.1.7). As a final example, Bill 212 identifies, "any activity that is an activity for which a principal may suspend a pupil under a policy of the board" as criteria for student suspension.

[16] The 1950 Hope Commission, The 1968 Hall-Dennis Commission, and The 1995 Royal Commission on Learning

> *Progressivism endures as a frame through its narrative fidelity with diffuse societal values and to the core mandate of modern schooling while, at the same time, being only loosely coupled with actual policy implementations. It speaks to both fundamental ideals and organizational realities through images of equity and student accommodation, yet as a doctrine, it is malleable and nebulous. Rather than an easily identified practice or a ready-made guide to teaching, progressivism is more of an abstract philosophy and a collection of sentiments.* (Davies, 2002, p. 283)

Progressive discipline may be considered a loosely coupled policy. Compared to policies of zero tolerance, more discretionary approaches can solve some problems caused by inflexibility, yet its flexibility can generate new problems, such as inconsistent implementation. At the rhetorical level, progressive discipline seems to generate a lot of consensus among school-based actors. However, based on the logic of loose coupling, processes of implementing policy may also be considered loosely coupled as policies often get transformed as they are implemented on the ground.

The following discussion draws on interview data as well as progressive discipline policy documents (specifically Bill 212 and PPM No. 145) to describe the developmental stages of progressive discipline. As highlighted in the methods chapter, by drawing on board and Ministry level policy documents I was able to cross-reference interview data ensuring the practices of educators described herein correspond to progressive discipline practices at each stage along the progressive continuum. Below, chart 1, outlines these stages of progressive discipline as well as the main research findings connected to the practices of educators that correspond to the fundamental principles of progressive discipline. Subsequently, the remainder of this chapter details the key components and features of progressive discipline in conjunction with interview data.

Chart 1: Stages of Progressive Discipline

	Stage 1: Positive and Preventative Initiatives	Stage 2: Early Intervention	Stage 3: Ongoing Intervention
Goal	Promoting positive behaviour, as well as preventing inappropriate behaviour.	Helping students learn to identify and replace negative behaviours with positive behaviours	Examine underlying motivators of behaviour, identify and address needs (student behavioural needs, social emotional needs, intellectual needs, or physical needs are considered)
Key Strategies	• Community • Developing	• Teacher intervention	• Involvement of school and out of school support teams, and school

	relationships • Activities • Student leadership • Student involvement in discipline processes • Teacher mentality (i.e., flexibility, discussion and accommodation vs directives) • Teachable moments	and Administrator involvement • Discussion Based Discipline	board support • Providing student and families access to specialists and professionals with expert knowledge • Implementing specialized strategies and plans • Suspension and alternative education programs • Intensive behavioural focused learning and rehabilitation
Main Findings	• Collective ownership over improving student outcomes (student, staff and parent) • Students developing self responsibility as well as enhanced levels of understanding, respecting and accepting rules and expectations • Students practicing skills to effectively communicate and problem solve, articulate thoughts, and critical thinking skills	• Educators actively involve students in conflict management • Educators train students to develop interaction strategies, social skills and competencies • Students developing skills to resolve conflict on their own	• Educators use discretion to individualize student treatment • Educators vary behavioural standards to accommodate individual student needs • Educators individualize levels of student achievement • Educators train students to develop coping strategies and skills to change problem behaviour • Educators negotiate with authority figures outside of school on behalf of students • Students experience leading conversations, negotiating, expressing opinions, delegating and receiving consequences • Students learning tolerance, empathy, fairness, emotion and anger management, problem solving and conflict resolution, to accept responsibility for own actions and how to advocate for themselves

This chapter is descriptive in nature to set the stage for the analysis of school discipline policies of progressive discipline and educational inequalities within preceding chapters. Material presented here provides context for the broader research agenda,

exploring the potential of progressive discipline practices to partially compensate for student differences in exposure to cultural capital in the form of values, behaviours and skill sets; and therefore assisting students to comply with institutional standards of behaviour. The following section is organized according to the developmental stages of: 1) Positive and Prevention Initiatives, as well as the 2) Early and 3) Ongoing Intervention stages of progressive discipline.

Stage 1: Positive and Preventative Initiatives

The first stage of intervention is positive and preventative strategies. These strategies are proactive, aimed at promoting and positively reinforcing appropriate behaviour, as well as preventing inappropriate behaviour. Initiatives at this stage include the direct teaching of social skills; building school community; promoting healthy student relationships; engaging partnerships with students, families and community; organizing school wide activities; student leadership; character development and citizenship development; and conflict and dispute resolution.[17] As stated:

> *Consistent modelling, teaching, and reinforcement of positive social skills is an important part of successfully encouraging positive social behaviour among students, helping to enhance students' self-control, respect for the rights of others, and sense of responsibility for their own actions*[18]

Instructional strategies to promote and support positive behaviours may be implemented school wide and within everyday classroom practices. The following section describes a range of strategies school-based actors associated with the positive and prevention stage of PD and identified as effectively managing student behaviour. Specifically, the following section considers: a) School Community, b) Developing Relationships, c) Activities, d) Student Leadership, e) Classroom Community, f) Student Involvement in Discipline Processes, g) Teacher Mentality, and h) Teachable Moments.

a) School Community

The notion of school community emerged as a common theme during interviews with school-based actors. Schools embracing a community mentality encouraged a sense of school unity, where staff, students and parents worked together, assuming a collective ownership over improving student outcomes. A school community, in a sense, can be seen as a micro version of the broader outside community. Interview data suggests students are encouraged to learn norms of appropriate behaviours and the social aptitude

[17] PPM:145 & WRDSB: Student Discipline, Board Policy 6008

[18] Ontario Ministry of Education. 2010. *Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario: Supporting Students with Special Education Needs Through Progressive Discipline, Kindergarten to Grade 12*. P. 34

to become functioning citizen of the school community, preparing students to successfully integrate into the broader community and society.

The CYW quoted below described issues prevalent in schools, such as alcohol and drug issues, bullying and fighting issues, recognizing "there's always going to be problems in schools," "because those things all happen out in the community and school is community" (Interview: CYW, 2). This CYW further described how perceiving the school as a community can be proactive and assist to correct problem student behaviour. As described:

> *For me, you can be punitive, but that person is still going to be in the community"…"That the difference for me, do we hold onto some of those environmental behavioural issue people and try to do things differently and try to create some hope and some change or do we just say no? No, because those are the kids that are going to steal my car and break into my house. If someone is going down a bad path, you still have to balance, what have we done, what have we implemented and what resources have we used vs. how unsafe is the rest of the school. If you kind of deem that, maybe the rest of the school isn't that unsafe yet, and there are still some resources we can use, there might be a benefit. If they can't be here, feel safe and be supported, for sure they're going to sell drugs, for sure they're going to get involved in gangs, for sure they're going to be involved in criminal activity, because they have to survive.* (Interview: CYW, 2)

School staff considered that students are socialized into the school community culture, gaining social skills and learning to develop conventional norms of socially acceptable and valued behaviour. Based on interview data, the nature of school community, to varying degrees, seems to reflect a mutually beneficial partnership with school staff, students, parents and, in some schools, members of the outside community. School community was characterised by interviewees as facilitating a whole student focus through programs, services and resources that support the academic, health and social success of students. The community dynamic is considered by interviewees as promoting self responsibility, respect, moral accountability and intrinsic motivation for students to monitor their own behaviour.

b) Developing Relationships

Engaging relationships with students was the most common approach discussed by interviewees to positively managing behaviour. Getting to know students, building mutual trust and respect, and developing relationships was described as helping to manage and reinforce behaviour in a positive way.

> *That's the key to discipline, it's the key to teaching, the key to everything, relationship building. Discipline is a part of that, if we build relationships with our students. Relationships are really at the center of discipline.* (Interview: teacher, 1)

Interviewees constantly identified developing staff-student relationships as a central means of shaping and manage student behaviour. Interestingly, interviewees recognized the varying social competencies of students among their interactions with their peers as well as interaction with authority figures. Beyond engaging in relationships with students, interviewees recognized the significance of teaching students how to have relationships. As noted:

> *It really comes down to relationships. And if you can teach kids about how to have a good relationship with people, than all the other issues go away.* (Interview: Vice Principal, 4)

As student behaviours escalate, becoming more "inappropriate" and students progress to more intensive stages of behavioural intervention, the meaning associated with developing staff-student relationships also seems to shift. To draw a comparison, school-based actors working with students at the end of the progressive discipline continuum viewed relationships as having a more significant developmental function for student learning. Interviewees described students as "only [having] negative experiences with schools and with education," and identify the importance of fostering relationships *"*because they've never had a relationship with a teacher, with a CYW, with a VP" (Interview: Alt. Ed. program teacher). Students may have had negative experiences with schooling in the past. Interviewees recognize their role in creating a positive schooling experience and nurturing environment "instead of just pushing through curriculum" (Interview: Alt. Ed. program teacher).

Interviewees described that students feel more comfortable to approach and talk about their lives with school staff when relationships have been established. According to one behaviour EA, because of these relationships she can tell when students "seem off" or "when something doesn't seem right" (Interview: Behaviour EA). This interviewee described situations where students have expressed feelings of depression and thoughts of suicide. Based on connections staff develop with students, school staff gain valuable insight into student's mental, physical, social and emotional state, and thus better support them in those ways. As described:

> *Some students are dealing with more than either of us can even fathom. The social emotional aspect has to come first, once you build those relationships, get to know that student and how that student learns, you develop respect and learning can happen.* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program teacher)

Reflecting occupational role or personality, educational professionals may actively try to engage students, building social relationships and providing emotional support. Interview data reveals the value school-based actors place on building a strong support network for students. Interviewees recognized that offering positive reinforcement and encouragement becomes more personal and meaningful for students

when relationships are in place. Students may develop more confidence in themselves and their abilities, and "want to do well for the teacher" and "start to take academics more seriously" (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 2). As suggested, teachers may have a greater influence and impact within lives of students when relationships are established:

> *So the point is, it's relational at a very fundamental level. I want to be able to relate to you as a student. So that in the context of that relationship I can ask you to do things that you wouldn't do for anybody else. And that works, that just works. I see kids that I worked with eight years later on the street, I see them in Home Hardware or in Zehrs and they will come up and say, 'What's going on?' I will be at a restaurant and they will sit down and have coffee. But the success is only possible because of the relationships* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator)

Interviewees commonly described that behaviour issues remain minor if existent when relationships have been established. When challenging behaviour does occur, however, based on these connections interviewees described that students are more responsive to their requests, are more willing to talk about their behaviour and take direction. Interviewees also suggested that students may view school-based actors as non-confrontational and perceive school staff as working with them rather than against them. Further, establishing relationships, according to interviewees, facilitates understanding, feelings of empathy and compassion for students, encouraging staff to "think outside the box, helping the student and not judging so much" (Interview: Guidance, 2). Understanding the context of a student's life as contributing to the behaviour may encourage school-based actors to alter perceptions of behaviour related situations, from dealing with a problem student to dealing with the problem behaviour exhibited by a student.

c) Activities

Positive and preventative initiatives, such as activities, are described as contributing to schools' broad organizational goal of student retention. School-based actors considered that students who are connected to school activities are more likely to enjoy their overall schooling experience and develop positive, perhaps lasting, bonds with staff and peers. Interviewees also suggested that involvement with activities can keep students in school. For example, one school professional described experiences getting students involved with activities who are struggling within their personal life (Interview: Vice Principal, 4). Noting, sport involvements, for instance, can keep students connected to school long enough for students to realize the opportunities in life that education can provide, which may lead to an increased level of motivation within academic involvements (ibid). According to interviewees, student involvements with school activities may reflect student willingness to attend school, stay in school and perhaps graduate from high school.

Programs, activities and initiatives are described as creating belongingness, connecting students to staff, activities and the physical school building. Interviewees

described numerous "community development initiatives" such as breakfast programs, lunch programs, clothing support programs, reading programs, activities connecting students with the broader community, and even "cosmo programs" where seniors in the community come to schools to have their hair done. As exemplified in the following quote, schools may offer a range of opportunities for student engagement:

> *We try to find ways to engage kids and to help them on their strengths and their gifts and the things that they're good at. But the anchoring thought was always around community. So how does this contribute to building community?"..."With the greening initiative here, we put a big focus on that to beautify not only the campus but the neighbourhood. And we really tried to engage kids in that, so that they would take pride in that. Five years ago, there were lots of overgrown things, a lot of trees in the front so kids couldn't enjoy the outdoors. We were surrounded by concrete. The outside, down the hill they've totally revitalized that space, it's an outdoor classroom now. The really beautified the area. There's fruit trees here now, a vegetable garden and all that gets used in our hospitality program. We have four chickens, they're laying hens and their eggs go to the hospitality program. So kids are learning where food comes from, but they're caring for those things – you know they're nurturing the gardens; they're taking care of the chickens.* (Interview: Principal, 1)

Interviewees described actively engaging students, helping students find their strengths, as well as nurturing and encouraging student abilities. School-based actors recognized the various initiatives contribute to a community mentality among the school population. School-based actors suggested that students develop feelings of pride and respect for the school due to high level of student involvement and contribution. As described:

> *They've built picnic tables and done the grounds, and that builds ownership in their own part. "I made that garden out there, no one is going to trash my garden because I put all my hard sweat and work into it.*"(Interview: Vice Principal, 4)

School-based actors suggested that students appreciate the efforts of school staff to support them, which leads to increased levels of student morale and an inclusive school climate. Overall, student engagement initiatives seem to facilitate a sense of goodwill and desire among students to reciprocate positive behaviours and become more involved in supporting and contributing to the school community.

d) Student Leadership

Education professionals described student leadership opportunities as methods to develop a sense of community, and build student responsibility and boost self esteem. For example selecting students to help organize and run school activities, forms of student council as well as lunchroom, office and library helpers were commonly described.

School-based actors recognized the benefits of delegating leadership opportunities to all students, especially students who struggle behaviourally. Delegating responsibilities is considered by interviewees as a proactive approach to deal with and minimize difficult behaviour as students may come to see themselves as needed and contributing to the class or school. Student leadership opportunities are considered to provide positive reinforcement of social, emotional and behaviour skill development, as well as assist to reduce challenging behaviour.

Overall school-based actors described student engagement as connected to building a school community. Through relationships, activities, programs, and leadership opportunities interviewees noted that students are developing positive connections and becoming personally invested in the school. Fundamentally, interviewees consider school wide initiatives as contributing to positive student behaviour.

Building on the school wide strategies outlined above, interview data also reveals positive and preventative strategies of behaviour management which take place at the classroom level. School-based actors identified a range of approaches including maintaining fair and consistent practices, holding class or group meetings, as well as using homeroom time to focus on strategies for student success which may include writing down homework and making sure students understand what's happening the next day. Teachers described actively managing students through these daily activities, ensuring students are organizing and planning. Topics such as equity, bullying and diversity were discussed in a number of interviews as embedded within curriculum and deliberately taught within classroom activities and through classroom reading materials. Reflecting interview data, positive and preventative practices seem to vary between classrooms based on teacher preferences. In general, however, modeling social skills and, again, building relationships were described by the majority of interviewees as effective behavioural management strategies within classrooms settings.

e) Classroom Community

Building on the idea of school community, some schools also worked to establish a positive classroom environment or community in the classroom, as described here:

> *The focus is community, so what does community look like in the classroom, and so right away you're going to be more progressive in terms of your approach. So, what are the expectations of that community, what are the values that that community holds, so respect, diversity, it's an equitable environment. Students should feel safe in that classroom community, and connected in relationships and that kind of thing. So safe, inclusive. The teacher has taken time to get to know the kids, and what they're interested in. The teacher tries to take that into account as they develop activities and assignments so that it engages kids. Kids are laughing. It is open. Develop expectations about behaviour together. There is trust.* (Interview: Principal, 1)

As illustrated here, a number of interviewees described more reciprocal student-staff relationships that are less authoritative, where teachers and students contribute and participate together within classroom activities. Some interviewees felt strongly about the benefits of these more fluid student-staff relations and advocated for less dominant hierarchical role separation.

Some interviewees identified establishing a positive class tone and atmosphere through the physical layout of the classroom as a proactive approach to managing student behaviour. For example the arrangement of tables or desks, having floor lamps, plants and fish tanks were described as ways to create a nurturing, relaxing and comfortable environment for students. In elementary grades, displaying student work was suggested as contributing to students' sense of belonging in the classroom. Interviewees made a point to differentiate conceptions of a traditional classroom as distinct from their own efforts to actively create a positive classroom environment. Throughout the interview data, school-based actors continually referred to their efforts to actively "engage" and capture the attention and interest of students through activities, curriculum, and as described here through the classroom layout.

f) Student Involvement in Discipline Processes

Involving students within discipline processes was described by school-based actors as enhancing student levels of understanding, respecting and accepting rules and expectations. Accordingly, student involvement in discipline processes can lead to increased levels of student self regulation. To provide an example, one Vice-Principal discussed situations where teachers may struggle to implement rules within classrooms. As noted:

> *So sometimes you get this clash going on* [between the teacher and student], *so we work with them and talk to them about what is reasonable. And did* [the teacher] *explain to students why they have certain rules? And for some teachers it could be, the hat piece is respect. It's respect for the building, it's respect for my classroom and part of respect is that you remove your hat when you move into this respected area. And so that's what they're trying to teach the students. And so once you tell the students and once you explain and engage the students about why a rule is there, usually they are a lot better in being able to respect that. It's the understanding why this rule is here.* (Interview: Vice Principal, 4)

Engaging students in discussions about rules and expectations is considered a proactive approach to behaviour management by some school-based actors. Interview data reveals that students may be more apt to adhere to rules enforced in a single classroom or school wide when the rationale is explained. Even if student input does not influence what rules are established, school-based actors suggested that students may feel their ideas are valued and respected when provided an opportunity to share their opinion. Students may have a greater respect for rules in place when they feel they have participated or contributed in some way to the rule setting process.

Student participation in the class management process was described by a number of school-based actors. Cooperatively developing classroom agreements with students and engaging students in classroom meetings were described by interviewees as ways to build a culture of mutual support within a class.

> *Everyone does a classroom agreement in the first week of school"…"they all must come up with a mutually agreed-upon classroom agreement. It looks different in kindergarten than it does in grade six. So classroom agreements and class meetings. All classes have class meetings once a week. I must see it on the class time table. And so kids can be part of that learning environment because in classroom meetings, classroom problems are identified and dealt with on a smaller level.* (Interview: Principal, 8)

At the elementary level, school-based actors described involving students in designing classroom discipline strategies. Interviewees considered generating classroom agreements in September as a way to set a class tone for the year. As described, students and teachers together are establishing behavioural expectations, setting rules to govern the class as well as the student consequences when rules are not followed. School-based actors suggested due to student involvement, students are more likely to become intrinsically motivated and adhere to classroom codes of conduct. The class agreement may be written out and displayed for students as a visual reminder.

Classroom meetings were discussed as a method to identify and address issues that affect and concern students at the elementary and secondary levels. Meetings are considered to provide a forum where students feel their opinions are respected and valued, where students can admit mistakes and take responsibility for their actions. Class meetings are considered methods of prevention and intervention through processes of confronting problems and practicing skills to effectively communicate and problem solve.

Classroom meetings are also suggested to facilitate class cohesiveness, building accepting relationships between students and teachers, and among students themselves. School-based actors described mediating the class discussion and trying to actively shift the power dynamic, encouraging students to take control of the conversation and, in a sense, shifting the ownership of the class to the students. Students are described as sharing what they know in their own words, and teaching and learning from each other. Interviewees described that students can practice social skills reflecting respectful interaction by taking turns and not interrupting, as well as communication skills involving articulating thoughts, thinking critically, listening and problem solving. Meetings are considered progressive discipline strategies of positive reinforcement encouraging self esteem and self empowerment. School-based actors described engaging students in discipline processes of classroom management and conflict resolution as contributing to the development of a caring class and overall school climate.

g) Teacher Mentality

During interviews it was apparent that some educators assume a degree of responsibility and shared ownership of student behavioural situations and outcomes. A few educators went so far as to indicate a degree of accountability when reflecting upon their own role within occurrences of student-teacher conflict. As described "When they do have discipline issues, they are almost always directly connected to my performance as a teacher*"* (Interview: Guidance, 2). For example, establishing mutual respect, treating students the way staff themselves want to be treated, using a positive tone of voice, and conveying concern for student wellbeing. Notions of teacher mindset and attitude with reference to how teachers interpret and respond to situations were described as instrumental in preventing and defusing challenging student behaviours in class.

School-based actors considered the ability to manage emotionality can impact processes and outcomes of student disciplinary matters. School-based actors explained difficulties dealing with behaviours and, simultaneously, maintaining an overall positive class climate. As described, how school-based actors respond to student behaviour can provoke students, aggravating the situation. Portraying an image of professionalism and composure was described by educators as essential to managing student behaviour in the classroom. Interviewees recognized that staff are always modeling behaviour for students, positive or otherwise. Demonstrating conflict resolution skill can become teachable moments for students, as well as signal to the rest of the class that the situation is under control. Educators identified methods of defusing situations through body language, saying the students' name, maintaining a calm tone of voice, proximity to the student, bending down, physically moving the students' desk closer to the teachers' desk, as well as speaking to the student out in the hall and asking them about their behaviour and what else may be going on. These strategies were described as important for managing student behaviour and essential for effective teaching.

School-based actors describe how teachers teach and deliver lessons as a means of proactive classroom management. For example providing clear objectives and step-by-step instructions were described as a way to prevent student frustration that can lead to problem student behaviour. According to one school professional, "It all boils down to giving them work that they don't have the tools for. I would say that's the biggest part of behavioural issues" (Interview: teacher, 1). How lessons are structured and organized is considered a way to facilitate classroom fluidity.

Interviewees also described the level of student familiarity teachers have about their students as contributing to effective classroom management. Teachers who are flexible in responding to student abilities, willing to adapt and modify teaching methods are described as instrumental to effectively meeting student needs. In comparison, "When it comes to a teacher's approach, teachers who aren't flexible, you know, 'You're in my class. Do your work and don't talk'" are considered to experience the highest levels of student confrontation (Interview: Behaviour EA). A behaviour EA recognized that students may have difficulty functioning in classroom settings which can motivate student disruptive behaviours in class. She described:

> *I'll talk to the student, "I can't just sit in a room all the time. This just drives me crazy. I'll blow up." So they've recognized for themselves that they'll actually get angry. They aren't capable and just shutdown. They just lose it, it's too much. So I'll identify those students and give them things to do. "Can you take this up to the office?" When they come back a little while later, "Oh, I forgot this one has to go up there too." Just to get them out. You can look at a student and know it's torture to just sit there in a class.* (Interview: Behaviour EA)

A number of school-based actors described the benefits of being flexible, as well as recognizing and accommodating individual student differences as well as student triggers and factors that may contribute to student behavioural problems. Interviewees described the importance of having conversations with students, engaging students in discussions, and questioning them about their behaviour. During interviews, educators made a point to separate themselves from *other* school staff who use directives. The use of directives within teaching methods as well as within general interaction with students was seen as ineffective. Directives were viewed as creating situations of power struggles where students "get their backs up," "shut off" and are less willing to become engaged in class and develop positive relationships with the teacher.

h) Teachable Moments

School-based actors identified that classroom intervention and prevention strategies may take the form of teachable moments. Teachers can respond to classroom behaviours and seize opportunities for student learning as situations present themselves. Teachers may stop the class and explain a concept or idea in response to student cues. Interviewees recognized that taking advantage of teachable moments may sidetrack or set back regular class activities, however, perceived these opportunities as invaluable for addressing inaccurate information and appropriate behaviours reflecting situational context.

School-based actors recognized the information sources available to students may be unreliable. School-based actors continually identified during interviews that basic skills and information may not be taught at home, and that home circumstances are not always conducive to positive student learning. Street environments and peer group may be the main source of student's out of school learning. Interviewees considered teachable moments as a method to address and correct inaccurate information. As described:

> *I think it's important to address these things as they come up. I think it's very important because often these kids don't have anyone to talk to about these things. One boy said, "Yah, I know where all the gay guys go." And I said, "Really, where?" "Well they send them to an island and castrate them." And it's like, "Ok, we need to talk about this because it's not true." They need to know, everybody does, students they need to know basic stuff. And they may have learned about some things on the street. Whether their information is accurate,*

> *who knows? But they need to get the accurate information in the classroom.* (Interview: Teacher, 5)

Beyond addressing and correcting inaccurate information as detailed in the quote above, a number of interviewees also described teachable moments as opportunities to address appropriate situational context and teach students social norms of behaviour. As noted:

> *So it might just be someone saying someone else is gay or somebody is a fag or something like that"…"It's not okay to talk like that to anyone. If you have that understanding, and it's only you and that other person or you in a private place, and that's how you choose to talk to each other that's one thing. But we're in a classroom with a lot of other people around. Here it's not the social norm* (Interview: teacher, 1)

Many interviewees spoke highly about the positive benefits of teachable moments. Educators described that student learning may be further reinforced by incorporating conventional teaching strategies into discussions derived from teachable moments, such as critical thinking and research skills, or perhaps inviting guest speakers to provide different perspectives. Themes addressed in class may branch off into related topics of discussion; for example, a discussion of disrespectful comments and bullying may lead to conversations of respecting others and self respect. The school-based actors I spoke with considered these moments of teaching as constant and within everyday classroom practices. Teachable moments are methods of behavioural intervention for students directly involved in situations, facilitate classroom management as well as contribute to positive learning outcomes for the whole class who also benefit from discussions.

School-based actors explain that students may not be learning accurate information or socially desirable norms of behaviour from home. School staff described practices that are directly teaching students to consider the perspectives of others, as well as to develop critical thinking skills, respectful interaction and social competencies valued within schools and the broader society. Teachable moments, in addition to the other positive and preventative strategies outlined, are considered by school staff to facilitate student learning of cultural knowledge and resources they may not have learned at home.

<u>Stage 2: Early Intervention</u>

Early intervention is the second stage of progressive discipline. These strategies are aimed at helping students learn to identify and replace negative behaviours with positive behaviours. Ministry and board progressive policy documents identify early intervention strategies that involve a group or an entire classroom (such as sensitivity programs, counselling and restorative justice approaches) as well as strategies for addressing

individual student behaviour (such as consulting with parents, detentions, verbal reminders, review of expectations, written assignments with a learning component that requires reflection). [19] As further described:

> *Early intervention strategies will help prevent unsafe or inappropriate behaviours in a school and in school related activities. Intervention strategies should provide students with appropriate supports that address inappropriate behaviour and that would result in an improved school climate.* (PPM:145, p.4)

Early intervention strategies enforce preferred values commitments and behaviours identified within institutionalized schooling standards. Students can learn to take responsibility for solving problems and learn to deal with challenging situations in a positive way. The following section describes a range of early intervention strategies identified by school-based actors as effectively managing student behaviour.

School-based actors commonly described the teacher as "on the front-lines," being the first to deal with behaviour in a classroom setting and if problems remain, the teacher may involve the school administration for additional support (Interview: Vice Principal, 4). Various contributing aspects influence how an event will transpire and depending on the nature of situations some of these processes may not take place. For instance, based on the teachers' professional judgement some situations at the classroom level may provide grounds for the student to be sent immediately to the office, to be dealt with by administration, without implementing progressive strategies available at the classroom level. Generally, however, initiatives at the early intervention stage of progressive discipline tend to reflect a pattern of: a) Teacher Intervention followed by b) Administrator Involvement.

a) Teacher Intervention

Based on interview data, the classroom teacher is generally considered the first level of behavioural intervention. At this stage, educators described a range of effective strategies that progress in scale to manage student behaviour and maintain a positive class environment. For example, if a student is behaving inappropriately the teacher may make eye contact, "Sending the message, I see what you are doing and you need to stop" (Interview: Principal, 7). Teachers suggested they may call the students' name and label the behaviour, reminding the student of the classroom behavioural expectations. At the classroom level, interviewees were in widespread agreement about the consistent use and effectiveness of discussion based problem solving with student which, generally, take place in the hall. Or, depending on the situation teachers may engage a classroom discussion or meeting to address behavioural issues with the entire class. If inappropriate behaviour continues, interviewees described that the teacher may proceed to contact the student's parents. If behaviour still persists, interviewees described that teachers may

[19] PPM:145 & WRDSB: Student Discipline, Board Policy 6008

direct the student to work in the in school suspension room or behaviour room, if the school has one, or at this point involve school administration for support.

School-based actors discussed efforts to engage parental involvement within the school and to include parents in discipline processes related to their child. Interviewees described an overall increase in encouragement from school administration to communicate with student homes, to keep parents informed about behaviour issues and include parents in discipline processes. The shift towards more parental involvement was recognized as corresponding to the more progressive approach to discipline (Interview: Teacher, 1). As described, when teachers are experiencing difficulty with students, administration strongly encourages the teacher to call home and talk to parents about what may be going on with students, to have a discussion about the students' behaviour with parents before referring students to the office for disciplinary support. Interviewees suggested that parents can provide a valuable perspective about their child, contributing information about how to connect and get through to their child.

b) Administrator Involvement

Once referred to the office, principals and vice principals described a variety of individualized discipline strategies to address student behaviour. Administrators, as well as teachers, were in widespread agreement that conflict mediation strategies are effective ways to actively engage students within problem solving and discipline processes. School-based actors described situations where they facilitated dialogue between students or between teachers and students as a method of managing conflict constructively and contributing to a positive learning environment overall. One principal described mediating discussions between teachers and students as a method of resolving class differences:

> *A lot of times we tried to mediate the situation, and act as a mediator having a student and teacher in here, and act as a facilitator between to try to resolve, "What does the teacher need in the classroom? What do you need as a student in the classroom? We can get it all resolved and you can let him know how you're feeling in the classroom and he can let you know how he is feeling in the classroom." Because there might be learning on both sides that can occur and therefore resolve the conflict. Let's talk about that and work through that to get them back into the classroom and functioning.* (Interview: Vice Principal, 4)

Across the Board, school-based actors described increasing efforts to involve all stakeholders in processes to resolve disputes and differences. When all contributing parties participate in the processes, as interviewees suggested, all concerns and perspectives can be considered. Stakeholders can discuss options together and arrive at a mutually agreed upon solution and decide on a course of action for dealing with future situations. One elementary principal described her preference to remain uninvolved in student conflict, suggesting she sets boundaries and guidelines for student discussions

and removes herself from the room entirely, encouraging students to work problems out on their own. As noted:

> *I put them behind the closed door, I lay the ground rules and I do a ton of letting kids talk to each other. I say, "I only want one story, I wasn't there, and I want one story, what happened? And tell me three things that are going to do about it." Like getting them to identify. Nine times out of ten that technique works so well"… "If they can come up with them and they identify what the next steps might be, to me it's worth so much more.* (Interview: Principal, 8)

The principal quoted above, described benefits of encouraging students to work through details of a problem and reach a solution on their own as facilitating student learning of critical thinking, communication and conflict resolution. According to interviewees, by encouraging students to take an increasingly active role in conflict management students are developing skills to resolve conflict on their own.

To continue describing the escalating behavioural interventions, administrations interviewed for this study shared a consensus of opinion, that discussion based discipline processes have the greatest impact on student learning and outcomes of behaviour modification. Interviewees described these conversations along similar lines. As described:

> *The foundation is respect, for kids to understand the impact of their actions on others and to try and make it right, "This is what you've done, how do you think other people feel about what you've done?" And many times they really aren't aware. "How are you going to fix it, you've really got a problem. How are you going to fix it?" And then supporting the child through that process and mediating the conflict.* (Interview: Principal, 7)

Interviewees suggested that discussions may be one-on-one between administration and the student. Reflecting the nature of the situation, interviewees noted that conversations may also involve multiple students, teachers, parents, and community members. Teachers and administrators seem to be directly training students to develop interaction strategies, social skills and competencies and, further, these strategies are identified as effective:

> *I think having to talk about it and deal with it, a kid then has to come to terms with some of their own feelings and their own behaviour, and understand and explain it. That's not always easy for an adolescent. That becomes more work for them and frankly it becomes easier just to exude appropriate behaviour just so they don't have to get into all of that. It's much easier to behave than have a discussion about it.* (Interview: teacher, 1)

Discussion based discipline approaches are recognized by interviewees as reinforcing central schooling goals - to establish a positive learning outcome for students being disciplined, teaching students to identify and change negative behaviours, and therefore proactively minimizing future behavioural problems. The following quote further highlights the behavioural learning outcomes educators attribute to discussion based discipline:

> *Teachers and kids are articulating, behaviour and bullying more articulately. Kids are able to better identify, and group problem solving skills are being taught and rehearsed and practiced more.* (Interview: Principal, 7)

Interview data reveals that school-based actors are asking questions and encouraging students to explain their actions. School staff described explaining reasons for specific rules and why behaviours are considered inappropriate, negotiating what are reasonable expectations of students, exposing students to alternative view points, and providing students choices in how behaviours will be addressed. Discussion based approaches also seem to reflect less power imbalance than what may characterize more traditional conceptions of student-teacher interaction.

Further along the continuum more intensive forms of intervention may be used at the school and classroom level. Responding to inappropriate behaviour at this stage may involve meeting with parents, requiring the student to perform volunteer services within the school and broader community, conflict mediation, peer mentoring, or a referral to counselling services.

Stage 3: Ongoing Intervention

Ongoing intervention is the third stage of progressive discipline. These strategies are aimed at identifying and addressing mental, physical, social, behavioural, and family environmental influences that may be underlying factors motivating problem behaviour. According to Ministry documents, strategies at this stage involve in school and out of school support teams, support from board level behavioural services, as well as suspension and alternative education programs.[20] As described here, persisting inappropriate behaviours are examined as potential indicators of underlying problems:

> *If educators focus only on what the student is doing, and try to eliminate the behaviour, they may find that another inappropriate behaviour arises in its place, because the underlying need has not been met. It is important to remember that inappropriate behaviour is usually a response to something in the student's*

[20] Ibid, footnote 10 & Ontario Ministry of Education. 2010. *Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario: Supporting Students with Special Education Needs Through Progressive Discipline, Kindergarten to Grade 12*. P. 20-34

> *environment and is an attempt to communicate a need, rather than being deliberately aggressive or purposefully negative.*[21]

Interviewees suggested that students with complex needs, such as achievement, equity, engagement, and health related challenges, may exhibit a range of behaviours in response to various situations. Challenging behaviours may be an indication or expression of student needs or circumstances which are not being supported. Alternatively, student needs may have previously been identified and are currently supported although implemented strategies may not be effective. At this point, student assessment and planning for on-going intervention may be considered.

The following section describes a range of on-going intervention strategies school-based actors identified during interviews. Specifically, the following section considers: a) In School Support Teams, b) Multidisciplinary Teams, c) Behaviour Services, and d) Suspension and Expulsion which is further broken down into discussions of: i) Suspension Programs and ii) Alternative Education Programs. Alternative education programs are at the end of the progressive continuum and offer detailed information about disciplinary processes that take place at this stage of intervention; therefore, this section also provides discussions of: iii) Alternative Education Program: Structure and Behavioural Guidelines, iv) Alternative Education Program: Individual Levels of Achievement, and vi) Alternative Education Program: Re-directing Behaviour.

a) In School Support Teams

In school support teams, such as the Student Success Teams (SST) and School-Based Teams (SBT) assist with observations, individual assessments, and individualized in school intervention strategies. Interviewees indicated that school teams generally comprise of a special education consultant, behavioural education assistant(s), child and youth worker(s), teachers and administrators. Interviewees described that teams meet frequently, in many schools on a weekly basis, to problem solve around students struggling with a need or combination of needs, and/or are considered by school staff as challenging to deal with (Interview: CYW, 2). Educational professionals described student needs as involving behavioural needs, social emotional needs, intellectual needs, physical needs or any student challenge where support is necessary (Interview: Principal, 6). Interviewees suggested that teams try to find ways to support students and help create conditions for student success. During an interview, a Behavioural EA discussed the minutes of a recent Student Success Team meeting. A few examples are provided from one SST meeting to illustrate the types of student situations brought up for discussion.

One student, for example, was discussed who had a history of struggling behaviourally, as well as frequently experienced family conflict and was described as recently forced to leave the home. As noted, "the student threatened Dad with a knife,

[21] Ontario Ministry of Education. 2010. *Caring and Safe Schools in Ontario: Supporting Students with Special Education Needs Through Progressive Discipline, Kindergarten to Grade 12*. P. 21

there were no charges. The parents packed her stuff and tossed her out. She's about 14" (Interview: Behaviour EA). In this situation, the student approached and involved the school CYW. Together, the CYW and the student arranged a meeting with the student's family, and Family and Child Services (F and CS). The CYW assisted in arranging the student's temporary stay with Safe Haven which is a community support organization. The school CYW continued to be involved, assisting F and CS to find the student a foster family. As illustrated in this example, school staff can become actively involved in negotiating and advocating for students, coordinating and accessing community resources and assisting students to work through a variety of issues.

Later in the meeting, another student situation was identified which further illustrates the involvement of school staff in the lives of some students. The team discussed one student's refusal to take their medication and follow through with the conditions of their probation. The VP and CYW updated the team about a plan they are developing for the student, consisting of mandatory counselling and how they have committed to generate and submit weekly reports to the student's probation officer.

In the same Student Success Team meeting, the VP also identified a student struggling behaviourally with "serious issues that have been pretty big" and had frequently been sent to the VP's office. The team was given an updated about additional issues identified by the parents consisting of depression, anxiety, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, possible autism, and self harm. The team was updated about a meeting with the VP, the student's guidance counsellor and mother, where a decision was reached about the student needing additional support from learning services and weekly meetings scheduled with the school CYW. The team was informed that a decision was reached with the family and school, involving the school pursuing program options within the community and making arrangements for the student to attend.

In general, school teams, "Try to look holistically at everything that's going on with that child, and try to figure out what is the best strategy to deal with it" (Interview: Alt. Ed. program Vice Principal). Interviewees considered student wellbeing as directly affecting problem student behaviour. Discussions during school team meetings, as noted by school-based actors, may lead to the development of student IEPs or behaviour plans, modification of plans currently in place, or referrals to special education supports. Teams may recommend and arrange any number of psychological, cognitive, or physical assessments to help students who are struggling. School-based actors described trying to work with students to develop coping strategies and teaching students the skills to change problem behaviour. Interviewees also described implementing supports within the classrooms, altering student classes, modifying the daily structure or school schedule, or referring students to the Alternative Suspension Program or Alternative Education Programs which may assist students in modifying their behaviour and contribute to successful schooling experiences.

School-based actors suggest that in school support teams may seek information and request consultation and assistance from out of school resources at the school board level or within the community to deal a range of student wellbeing related challenges. For example, schools may seek guidance from behavioural services at the school board level,

perhaps seeking help to structure an environment for a student or referrals to local treatment centres.

b) Multidisciplinary Teams

If students are still experiencing difficulties the Multidisciplinary Team is the next level of support to examine further options for student assessments and resources available. As described, "Their job is to make sure the school has done what they can," making sure students receive the support they need within the school (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader). This team is described as consisting of school and school board representatives, including a speech and language pathologist, a psychologist, the student's teacher and administrator, the child and youth worker, and the special education consultant. School board officials describe The Multidisciplinary Team as filtering and screening through causes for behavioural challenges, such as a mental health disorder, to examine options for managing students at the school level.

c) Behaviour Services

If student behaviour is unable to be managed at the school level, interviewees described the students' case is referred to behaviour services at the school board level where further supports and intervention resources are available to examine underlying motivators of behaviour, identify and address needs.

At this stage of intervention, interviewees noted the students' case is allocated to an Itinerant Behaviour Resource Teacher at the school board level who further assists the student at their school. The Itinerant teacher is provided a referral package with information about what has been done to support the student to that point. This may include, for example, any community resources currently being accessed, mental health assessment data, as well as diagnosis and medication information. Based on all the information, interviewees suggest the Itinerant teacher may modify the student's day or classroom environment, alter behaviour plans, connect the family and the student to appropriate community resources, directly teach students coping strategies and skills to change their behaviour, and/or refer students to medical professionals. The following quote illustrates the array of supports available within behavioural services at the board which, according to this interviewee, aim to "stick students under the microscope to figure out what the motivators are for behaviour" (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader. As further described:

> *We have partnerships with psychiatry, Grand River Hospital. Kids coming in have a recent psychological assessment the school is responsible for getting in place. They have a psychiatric evaluation. We actually have a psychiatrist who can be part of our Multidisciplinary Team, working with us around what these kids need"…"Sometimes we'll come up with some significant mental health issues. We will get the medical health piece in place to help them out. Also we may get medication going for the student and then all the sudden medication will stop, the student may not want to take it anymore. The parents may think, "Ok they are*

> *fixed now, they're doing well so we don't need the medication" and then sometimes things fall apart a bit. So we try to monitor that. We also have a connection to Front Door which is the single point of entry for help for kids with mental health issues. They have a Partner Program that works with parents. So here if the parents agree to this, it's coming in and we will support them through the Partners Program.* (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader)

Along the progressive discipline continuum, from promoting positive behaviour through to ongoing and more intensive forms of behavioural modification, discipline programs, practices and strategies, are described as becoming increasingly focused and designed to support students (and families) with their individual academic, social, emotional, and behavioural learning needs.

d) Suspension and Expulsion

As per the nature of progressive discipline, school level and school board level officials begin with least intrusive forms of behaviour modification and progress to more intensive forms of intervention, as described by interviewees, trying to identify and address factors contributing to challenging student behaviour. Through the process of escalating discipline interventions, suspension (in school suspension, referral to the alternative suspension program, out of school suspension) and expulsion (from the home school or from all schools in Ontario) are at the end of the progressive discipline continuum.

Although forms of suspension and expulsion may, at first, appear to reflect more deterrent, punitive, or traditional methods of behaviour intervention, school-based actors described that suspension and expulsion programs function as intensive strategies to support student needs. As mandated by the Education Act, all forms of consequences must include opportunities for students to continue their education. According to the Act and as reinforced by PPM No.141 (*School Board Programs for Students on Long-Term Suspension*) and PPM No. 142 (*School Board Programs for Expelled Students*) school board are required to provide programs for students suspended for more than five school days and programs for students who have been expelled from their home school or from all schools in Ontario.

School-based actors agreed unanimously that unacceptable behaviour needs to be addressed. Suspension and expulsion programs may be the avenue chosen by schools as a means to respond to inappropriate behaviour and facilitate intensive behavioural focused learning. The escalating stages of progressive supports and interventions are considered by interviewees as providing educators various ways to examine students and facilitate their ability to identify and address mental, physical, social, behavioural, and family environmental influences that may be contributing to students negative experiences at school.

i) Suspension Programs

In school Suspensions (ISS) are considered a less intrusive or severe form of suspension which simultaneously disciplining students for behaviour and reinforcing an academic focus. As described:

> *Generally the kids who are getting in trouble and having behavioural issues, and are getting suspended, are also really struggling academically"…"I know that some of it is, they're not in school, they're causing trouble and they're falling further and further behind. And then they're more frustrated and their causing more problems, so then they're starting to skip. And then the school thing goes right out of control. So when they come down here* [to the ISS room], *it's like, "Go get your work and let's get it done."* (Interview: Behaviour EA)

Behavioural needs may lead to a negative cycle for students where they fall behind and struggle academically, which may lead to further behavioural problems and falling further behind. Schools may have a classroom designated specifically for ISS where students spend time on their school work under supervision.

Alternative Suspension Programs (ASP) are described as school programs that support student social and emotional development and relate specifically to discipline intervention initiatives. The ASP is described as having two components. An ISS is one component and the second component involves a counselling session with the CYW focusing "social literacy and learning around behaviours" (Interview: Principal, 1). Students going through the ASP program participate in both components before being integrated back into the classroom. If an out of school suspension or expulsion is determined as the appropriate disciplinary response, students participate in an ASP as the next stage "so their eased back in" before fully integrated back into a regular classroom setting (Interview: Spec. Ed.). As described:

> *The purpose of doing ASP with me* [the CYW], *is to talk about the social, behaviour and emotional piece and talking about what happened. So the kind of things that we would talk about is anger and problem solving and why did they choose to deal with it that way and how could it have been dealt with differently. The problem is, some of these kids grow up in an environment where that's how things are dealt with. You just punch the crap out of somebody, and that's how they deal with life. As you can imagine, lots of other things come out around that. Maybe they live in an environment where that's how things have always been dealt with. So we try to come up with triggers of situations that can happen and coping skills. So, this is how you always dealt with it but there things and ways that you can deal with it differently.* (Interview: CYW, 2)

The ASP is described as allowing a forum for discussion around the situation and behaviour that lead to the student suspension. Through this discussion, however, other social, emotional, or mental health issues may surface as the cause of behaviour.

Receiving this mandatory counselling may result in positive outcomes which had the student not been in trouble may not have occurred. The CYW can then help support students based on their underlying needs and challenges, assisting to set students up for success.

ii) Alternative Education Programs[22]

Students who have been given a full expulsion (expelled from all mainstream schools in Ontario) complete Ministry approved alternative education programs, and do not return to mainstream school until program staff determine they are ready. Ontario legislation requires that students remain in school until age 18 or graduation, essentially, forcing expelled students to attend alternative programs. [23] Interviewees described alternative education programs as intensive behaviour intervention programs which provide an alternative school setting and structure for students struggling within mainstream education. Alternative education programs vary in design across the province, "everything from a boot camp to the Choices program, and everything in between. Boot camp has everything from dogs and metal detectors; it's very much on lock down" (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 3). Interviews for this study were conducted in connection with the Choices and U-Turn expulsion programs in the school region, which are described as intensive programs which examine the motivators of disruptive behaviours, specifically targeting students with social and emotional skill deficits. Fundamentally, students are expelled from mainstream school because they do not meet mainstream schooling behavioural standards of evaluation.

School-based actors discussed alternative programs in similar ways. Programs are described as covering an alternative curriculum focusing on social and emotional learning, and behavioural strategies that can help students find success in mainstream school. As indicated by an the Behavioural Program Leader for the board, "we're not teaching French and English and regular curriculum"…"At this point, the priority is around getting their behaviour in check" (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader). As further described by an alternative education program facilitator:

> *You're not expelled for academics, you're expelled for social emotional and behavioural issues"…"We tell kids, 'You didn't get expelled because you weren't performing in English class. You got expelled because you brought a knife to*

[22] Interviewees commented there are not enough spaces available in the alternative programs to meet the needs of the students. The programs have a wait lists. If a student's situation changes or a new student moves into the area and requires a space in the program, they may have to wait until the following year for space to become available (Interview: CYW, 1; Interview: Behavioural Program Leader). In these situations, schools end up "trying to house a student" and must "come up with some sort of holding pattern for the kid" which can cause problems with staff and parents at the students home school (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader).

[23] Education Amendment Act, Bill 52: Learning to Age 18, 2006

> *school, or you were dealing drugs, or you stab somebody, or you beat someone up in the community, or were involved in a sexual assault.' All those kinds of things. When they come here* [to an alternative program]*, it's a sentence. 'So until those things get dealt with, and we're comfortable that you can demonstrate that over time, you're here'"…"you won't go back* [to your home school] *because of credits, you go back to your home school because of performing socially, emotionally, and behaviourally." When we see that maintained over time, they're ready to go* [back to mainstream school]. (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator)

Programs are described as offering curriculum-based learning though focus primarily on non-academic components, such as the development of positive attitudes and behaviours. These programs were described as "turning the conventional classroom completely on its head" (Interview: Alt. Ed. program teacher). One interviewee described in the programs, students may participate in conflict resolution and restorative circles, working through various social and emotional issues, and "all day long a textbook or notebook is not opened" (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 3). Interviewees noted programs focus on developing behaviour and coping strategies that can be transferred into everyday situations and used in mainstream education settings. School-based actors describe Student Action Plans are developed for students reflecting their individual academic and non-academic needs to help support the student when they are re-integrated into mainstream school where, it is hoped, students will apply the skills they have learned and succeed.

iii) Alternative Education Program: Structure and Behavioural Guidelines

As described by school-based actors, programs may be 8 to 12 weeks in duration and individual classes may have up to 15 students, one teacher and one CYW. Alternative education programs, as described by interviewees, are structured in a way to meets the needs of students. As described:

> *The kids aren't wide awake at eight o'clock the morning, so we've actually adjusted our day. The kids started at nine o'clock, they eat first, and then we do a kinaesthetic activity. We do a program called eclipse, which is a judo program that helps with anger management.* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program Vice Principal)

Behavioural expectations are clear within alternative education programs – "No weapons, no drugs, no drug paraphernalia, and no gang wear and respect for persons, places and things. Those are the rules" (Interview: Alt. Ed. program Vice Principal). Beyond these basic rules, behavioural standards vary to meet the requirements of individual students. As noted:

> *We've modified our discipline policies to reflect the types of students that we get, so to help them find success"…"If somebody were to go off the wires, and do something that may be inappropriate like swear. They're not automatically kicked*

> *out* [of the alternative program]. *Higher baseline of behaviour, it's much different than a lot of other places because these are kids who have not been successful at regular school. We give them more warnings because we are trying to change the behaviour.* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program Vice Principal)

The alternative education vice principal quoted above described the use of discretion when determining how to appropriately respond to student situations. For instance, when students are late, if the student "doesn't have an alarm clock at home or they miss the bus all the time because the bus route is far from their house," educators "keep in mind what's going on with them" and take individual factors into consideration, "always trying to find what options are" (Interview: Alt. Ed. program Vice Principal). Within the following quote an alternative education teacher provides an example of one student situation:

> *I actually had a student today where we had an attendance issue. He comes late every day. I don't like coming down on them because that's what these kids have experienced, having authority figures coming down on them and telling them they're screw ups or whatever"…"So I try to work with them and make small steps. He's coming late five days a week. We sat down and he signed a student contract. He signed it and I signed it. We agreed he would come on time 2-3 days a week. So were not going from five late days a week to zero, we're working with him. We both agreed that that was achievable for him, and now are going to try tomorrow and see what happens"…"But it is always about working with them, and finding a solution together and taking those steps. But removing them from school is only the last resort. We want to keep them here.* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program teacher)

In mainstream school as in the alternative programs, school-based actors commonly identified keeping students in school as a central priority within progressive philosophies. Student retention is a broader organizational goal of schooling supported and reinforced by PD practices and principles. To provide an additional example, one vice principal of alternative education programs described if students arrive "under the influence," students spend time in the programs "oasis room, which is the calming room, where we send the student with two staff." Here students spend time on productive learning activities to teach, reinforce and change student behaviour (Interview: Alt. Ed. program Vice Principal). Following these incidents, interviewees explained the home and home school are informed, and the student meets with their teacher and CYW in the programs to devise a plan of action hoping to prevent future occurrences.

In order to keep students in the program and attending, the particular evaluative criteria for student behaviour seems to be more flexible to meet individual student needs and life situations. The above quotes described instances of students not complying with program standards (i.e., not being on time), though illustrate how staff consider all factors contributing to students' ability to comply with standards (i.e., not owning an alarm

clock), and demonstrate the willingness of staff to bend standards to accommodate student differences (i.e., the student and staff agreeing the student would try to be on time 2-3 days a week). Progressive discipline strategies reinforce schooling organizational goals to keep students in school. Program staff described problem solving with students around how to make that happen.

iv) Alternative Education Program: Individual Levels of Achievement

Schooling plays an important role in preparing students for successful integration into adult life as functioning members of society. Alternative education programs focus on knowledge, skills and abilities that, in some cases, may be entirely different from those commonly associated with mainstream education. As described, prior to attending the programs students and their families participate in an interview intake process, where a program intake facilitator conducts "social visits with the family which tend to involve lengthy meetings in the home" (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator). Alternative education program staff work with the students and their families to identify individual levels of achievement and specific goals the students will pursue during their time with the program.

> *Social history tends to take between 2 and 4 hours for me to do in the home. I want to know from the parents, "What are the present concerns? What are the presenting issues that you're seeing right now?" Gang affiliation, drug use. We pick and choose our battles, about what we're going to go after"…"There's one CYW and on teacher in every class and* [students] *have one-to-one meetings once a week with them. They would meet with those kids weekly and review goals. And those goals would be directly related back to what was presented during intake as the major things that needed to be worked on - whether it be anger management, peer selection or substance abuse, academic and credit accumulation. How do you set boundaries and what does that look like? It could be all kinds of things.* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator)

Goals of alternative education programs are described as focused around students adopting behaviour patterns that will help them be successful as functional members of society and within mainstream school. Building on the above quote, one vice principal from an alternative program described how students pursue individualized goals and progress towards these goals at an individual pace. As noted:

> *We're not going to fix all the issues at once. I had a man come up to me who was just furious that there were kids under 18 smoking. But he doesn't realize that we stopped them from being in a gang. You can't correct everything at once. We do have public health nurses coming in and talking about the hazards of smoking, and we have Nutrition for Learning coming in, and receiving a nutritious breakfast and lunch. But we can't solve everything all at once. Having kids stop*

> *smoking is not going to happen overnight, we have to educate them.* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program Vice Principal)

School-based actors considered that every student has their own bar which they are capable of performing, that change is a process and that students are encouraged to progress at their own pace. Interviewees also identified more generalized learning goals within alternative education programs, such as developing communication skills, citizenship, emotion and anger management, problem solving, conflict resolution, as well as addressing issues around peer influence and drug abuse. Credit accumulation within alternative programs is based on students developing, practicing and demonstrating they have learned these more general skills as well as their individualized achievement goals.

vi) Alternative Education Program: Re-directing Behaviour

Teaching and learning strategies are described as revolving around *Group* (class group meeting sessions), experiential learning during trips, counseling and modeling from school staff.

According to interviewees, *Group* discussion processes take place within every alternative education site. Group revolves around a set of routines which promote conversation directed and controlled by students. Group is described in similar ways to classroom meetings discussed previously as instructors may guide conversation but try to refrain from directed instructional strategies. Meetings at this stage of progressive discipline, however, are considered to be a more intensive process than typically found in the mainstream schooling counterpart. Within alternative programs, Group involves processes of administering discipline, involving everyone in a democratic discussion process referred to as *Business*.

> *Discipline in the class, it's a very integrated discipline process that involves everybody. There are bigger issues that we take on as a staff, like if I'm doing a search and I find you with drugs or a weapon, things could go a very different way. But if you're late and you don't do your homework, or I'm late and I don't do what I'm supposed to do, we go through a process called Business. It involves everybody"..."And we ask if someone wants to take leadership, dealing with so and so and their issue. So that student will ask, "What happened and why?"..."So they'll ask them, "What do you think you should have as a consequence?" And then they will ask the group"..."So we vote. It's gladiator style, thumbs up or down. Everybody gets one vote and everybody is then invested in a process. It's not a secret process. You're forced to declare where you are publicly. You can't change your vote but I can challenge you and ask why you voted that way. "Why did you choose to cut Emily a break when this is the 4th time she's been late?" It's an exercise in empathy as well as discipline. As a VP how does it feel to be dealing the consequences for a kid who is doing something they know they shouldn't be doing"... "And their participation in that process empowers them. That's where a change can happen. That's where they can show us that they can*

> *do these things on a consistent basis and maintain it over a period of time.* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator)

Interviewees described that students participate and take leadership roles in the re-direction of student behaviour. As a group, students discuss the nature of student behaviour, generating ideas about consequences that would provide the best learning outcome for the student and vote. A discussion may follow where students articulate and justify the reasoning behind their vote. Interviewees suggested that student opinions are taken seriously and their decisions result in action. Within the Group process, interviewees noted that students are gaining experience with tolerance, empathy, and fairness, as well as receiving consequences and taking responsibility for their choices and actions.

Alternative education programs are at the intensive behavioural level of intervention within the progressive discipline continuum. At this level, consequences for behaviour are also considered more drastic and perhaps more extreme that students would encounter within mainstream school. As described:

> *This week we are getting ready for a trip next week. Well the consequences during a trip week, tend to be much more onerous"…"we stay at a cottage, and there's just an outhouse. And you have 13 of us in the same outhouse. What tends to happens is, a cone tends to pile up in the middle of the outhouse. So we have what we call a 'fecal engineer' and you have to get a stick and mix it all down. It's a really bad job. So they may give us, or each other, that consequence, and we'll have to do that. But you know, it's part of modeling the behaviour I want to see them do. We are not above what we are asking you to do.* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator)

The alternative program facilitator, quoted above, also pointed out that staff behaviour is addressed during Group discussion; for example if a staff member is late. As a group students and staff delegate consequences to staff through the same processes outlined above regarding student behaviour. Applying behaviour and disciplinary guidelines equally, among staff and students, is described as providing school staff an opportunity to model appropriate behaviour and demonstrate how to take responsibility for their actions.

As illustrated in the quote above, staff at alternative education programs explained training exercises where students are practicing, rehearsing negotiation and communicating. The school professional quoted above further discussed these exercises as providing advantages for students during future interactions with authority figures, specifically identifying student interactions with school administration:

> *We've got to learn how to pick and choose your spots even as the recipient of the consequence. It all about learning how to deal with things in the moment, cause when you're dealing with a VP, a lot of them won't be going through the process*

> *because they're not interested in the relationship, they're interested in making a school run.* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator)

As described, every student contributes and takes on responsibilities within the Group processes. Students are considered to gain experience leading conversations, negotiating, expressing opinions, delegating and receiving consequences. As described, students are confronting each other about unacceptable behaviours, students are held accountable and are assigned consequences by their peers. As described by interviewees, Group takes place first thing every day and can run as long as it takes to get through the whole process, even into the next day. Students earn credit for participating in Group, which is considered a way for students to practice and demonstrate skill development.

Alternative education programs are, by nature, structured in an alternative way compared to mainstream schooling. Interviewees recognized that mainstream and traditional schooling practices have not been successful for students entering into alternative programs. For this reason, teaching strategies within alternative education programs are described by interviewees as drastically different from mainstream school settings. School-based actors identify engaging students in classroom activities and curriculum. Interviewees described the use of adventure based learning models within their programming as a method to make learning more relevant to students. As described:

> *Attendance is a huge issue and we want to make sure you are here. So we do adventure stuff. So, we are doing caving and climbing and snowshoeing and cross country skiing. There are all kinds of trips that tend to involve all those kinds of activities. Then our graduation trip, we are doing a sea kayaking trip up in the north of Georgian Bay for eight days"…"How they perform on this trip and any trip, how they behave and listen, performing in the moment, those are end of term exams, that's how they demonstrate they are ready to go back* [to mainstream school]. (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator)

Alternative education staff described using an experiential learning model, which shares similar philosophies around teachable moments described previously. Strategies here, however, are more intensive reflecting the escalated level of behavioural intervention. As noted:

> *They don't understand what it means to push their limits and what it means to fail. And those metaphors about physically pushing their limits, you're able to do that relatively easily physically. Well why can't you do that emotionally or academically? Those are all jumping off points where we can get into other things. But on a trip if we're on the road and something happens, we pull over and just have Group* [discussion] *right there to deal with it. In the moment it's all about asserting the behaviour modification model, where and when you do something we're going to address it and we aren't going to let it go until it's dealt*

> *with, and then we'll move on and it's history, it's water under the bridge.* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator)

Although alternative and mainstream school are structured differently, they share the same organizational goal of creating conditions for student success and achievement. Alternative education staff recognized activities and experiences as "where the magic happens" (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator). Program staff address behavioural problems "in the moment," counselling and correcting inappropriate student behaviour as situations are presented. Experience based learning is considered a way to actively involving students in their own learning and create personalized experiences for students. Debriefing discussions which follow activities, as described, help students make sense of these experiences, facilitating learning that is both relevant and meaningful for students. Interviewees described quality school curriculum based programming as facilitating student learning, enjoyment, attendance, participation, as well as effectively minimizing behavioural challenges.

Teaching and learning strategies may involve an entire class (i.e., Group) or may involve more individualized methods of re-directing and evaluating behaviour. Building on the previous discussion of strategies to correct and change student behaviour, alternative program staff distinguish students' capacity to "choose" to behave appropriately as compared to students' "ability" to behave appropriately. Staff considered the "time and place" as additional factors affecting the application of criteria used to evaluate behaviour. As described:

> *It's an indicator of the capacity to choose. It's an indicator that, 'I can really control it if I want to.' And that's a part of why we relax thing on the trips. So the language gets worse, the jokes get worse. But the point is that's ok when we are out on a trip. But when we get back in the van, to get ready to go back, we are back in civilization again and that stuff's not appropriate. I want to see how they perform, there's a time and place to do this stuff"…"Or my sons here, you're not running your mouth and dropping F bombs, time and place. That stuffs important because at school, not the time and place"… "It's not a matter of competency anymore, it's a matter of choice. 'You choose to run your mouth and you choose not to when my son is here. So why can't you choose to do it when you're somewhere else?' We're in a whole different discussion now. It's not a matter of capacity or competency; it's a matter of choice. 'You choose not to. So how do we make different choices in the moment? Why is that happening?' So you get into a little different discussion about how that works.* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator)

During the various activities within alternative education programs, staff allow for variation in what may be considered acceptable standards of behaviour. In fact, staff seem to recognize and value students' ability to alter their behaviour based on the situation and setting; to demonstrate behaviours more acceptable within the regular classroom setting

as well as the ability to "relax" behaviour during program trips. The ability for students to distinguish the "time and place" when some behaviours are more acceptable than others is described as method to evaluate students and an opportunity for teachable moments. Within the interview data, many educators seemed to characterize inappropriate behaviour as a choice and discipline strategies were considered a way to help student learn to make the "right" behavioural choices.

As previously described, alternative program staff vary the schooling structure as well as behavioural standards within the program in order to meet individual student differences and, importantly, to keep students attending the program. Interestingly, alternative program staff described their ability to influence and improve student outcomes within institutional areas beyond the schooling systems and within the broader community.

> *Kids bring things to school they shouldn't bring. Someone brought a gun, lots of knives, lots of dope, lots of drugs. I mean, it's a safety issue and we deal with it. With some things we have a lot of latitude, when people believe in you, they give you the latitude. The police will call us, or we will call them and say, 'We found 15 grams.' 'What does it look like?' 'It's packaged, 1 or 2 gram baggies.' 'Oh, so what do you want us to do* [program facilitator]*?' 'Well, this is what we are doing. I would like the latitude to let it happen and let it play out how it plays.' And the cops will say ok, where it should be a trafficking charge but they will cut him a break. We will actually get him a break, but* [the student] *will be the one making the calls to his probation officer, he'll be making the calls to his parents. He will be doing the 40hours community service. And probation will tell him he needs to get that done in a certain amount of time, that gives him the break to do it. The next time it happens, we won't get him the break and we'll just call patrol. Patrol will come and they'll just lay the charge and that will be it.* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator)

Alternative program staff described regularly intervening in the various aspects of student lives outside of the education program. As illustrated in the quote above, alternative program staff draw on the legitimacy of their own position of status as valued in the community, as well as draw on their knowledge and capacities to effectively negotiate with various authority figures on behalf of students. The interviewee quoted above described how program staff are able to effectively intervene and negotiate with police officers, probation officers, mall security, security at the bus station, and parents to improve situational outcomes for students. The program facilitator described actors in these institutional settings provide him the "latitude" to use his discretion to address student behaviours and deal with students and situations in a way he feels would serve a positive learning experience for individual students.

Students have been expelled from mainstream school because they do not meet behavioural standards of evaluation and, therefore, are provided intensive social, emotional and behavioural rehabilitation within alternative programming. Overall,

interview data reveals that students who end up expelled into alternative programs typically have limited abilities interacting and communicating with others, lack abilities interacting with authority figures, few have male role models, have difficulty expressing and regulating emotions, and typically have negative experiences with school staff and negative schooling experiences more generally. Interviewees described that students are expelled into alternative programs because they lack fundamental social, emotional and behavioural skills and abilities that are valued within mainstream school.

School-based actors acknowledge processes of family socialization and home environments as key contributors leading to student expulsion. Supporting the cultural mobility thesis, school-based actors described that alternative programs aim to identify the skills and abilities students are lacking and compensate for these gaps in student learning. As illustrated:

> *I'm really seeing the home environment as a big thing these days. That's the thing we have the least amount of impact on. In terms of kids learned behaviours, that's where programs are excellent. With the consistency and structure of the program they can unlearn those behaviours. For instance we have one child who has very strong learned behaviours, and has a lot of power over his mom. In the program staff drove to his house and picked him up. "You're going to school, you're not sick, you're going to school." He was trying to manipulate Mom to not go to school, so we picked him up and brought him to school. He's never missed school. But you have to do those things to unlearn those behaviours. Sometimes you have to let that kid flip out and say, "Look you're trying to manipulate us, it's not going to work. You can yell and scream and get a sore throat but it's not going to work." They just need to know, it's not going to work and it's not a strategy they can try.* (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader)

Fundamentally, interviewees agreed that the structure of alternative programs and alternative program staff themselves help students develop behavioural patterns valued within mainstream school. Building on the above quote, the following school professional emphasizes how intensive behavioural interventions focus on teaching students behavioural literacy that will assist students function in mainstream school, as well as within broader society.

> *We are trying to change the behaviour. We're trying to show the kids what the expectations are, and even from a societal standpoint."…"We're trying to show them how to be good citizens and how to get along with people in society. And teach them the social rules.* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program Vice Principal)

Accordingly, staff engage students in training exercises, helping identify individual student problem behaviour, equipping students with skills and knowledge which, they hope, will improve students' experiences when reintegrated back into

mainstream school as well as improve their abilities to become functional members of society.

Chapter Conclusion:

Interweaving policy literature and interview data, this section has outlined the prototypical stages of progressive discipline. Specifically, this chapter details the practices of educators that correspond to the practices, principles and philosophies of progressive discipline policy to set the stage for the analysis of school discipline policy of progressive discipline and educational inequalities within the following chapters.

Four central findings emerged from the data presented in this chapter. First, educators are attempting to improve student behaviour in relatively new ways. Interviewees described stimulating students development of knowledge, skills and competencies in connection to the behaviours valued in schools. Educators described teaching students to identify and change negative behaviours, and training students to resolve conflict on their own. Educators also described actively training students with techniques to advocate for themselves and to develop confidence interacting with peers as well as school-based actors. Second, educators view problem behaviour as an opportunity for teaching and learning. Educators described using discretion to individualize the treatment of students (i.e., the situational context, student personal history etc.) and, therefore, facilitate an impacting learning experience for each student. Third, educators are offering students and their families multiple levels of support to examine any underlying causes for problem behaviour. Educators described facilitating access to specialists and professionals with expert knowledge, such as psychologists, speech and language pathologists, psychiatrists, special education teachers, behavioural specialists, social workers, and child and youth workers. School-based actors are implementing strategies within classrooms and involving students in programs outside of regular class to support students' needs and improve students' schooling experiences. Fourth, and finally, educators described processes of bending behavioural standards to accommodate student circumstances.

The social, emotional and behavioural literacy enforced along the continuum of positive, preventative and intervention stages of progressive discipline is considered by school-based actors to help students gain practical learning experiences that are easily transferred into other areas of students' lives. Through social, emotional, and behavioural learning students can develop "a tool box" to deal with and resolve situations as they arise, well beyond rudimentary strategies of problem avoidance or walking away from conflict (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator).

Chapter 5: Implementing Progressive Discipline: Coupling and Penetration

This chapter expands the current analysis of how progressive discipline policies are implemented and enacted by school-based actors. The findings presented here specifically examine the organizational context of policy implementation and the institutional reality of school-based actors to explore how policy penetrates the schooling level of the education system.

Recall, organizational theory examines how structures, such as rules, routines, and norms, become established guidelines for social behaviour, as well as how these common cultural conceptions change over time. Standardized schooling practices are considered by organizational theorists to give meaning and legitimate schooling processes and activities (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; 1978). According to the logic of tight coupling, education systems maintain highly rational and institutionalized practices that have meaning in society (ibid). At the rhetoric level of policy implementation (Labaree, 2010), schooling practices may reflect more of the tightly coupled concept of schooling organization. Educational reform may create public awareness of school action, effectively demonstrating rational and logical practices to the public by initiating the process of change. Alternatively, based on the logic of loose coupling, pressures emanating from the environment are viewed as inhibiting top-down policies from penetrating teaching and learning levels of schooling, and thus preventing substantial change. Educational systems may be considered loosely coupled because at the level instructional activities and student learning, schools resort to a "logic of confidence" and do not implement organizational controls, evaluations or inspections (Meyer & Rowan, 1978, p. 80). Schools may refrain from close inspection of activity to avoid the discovery of inconsistencies and ineffectiveness, to appear legitimate, and maintain the trust and confidence of the public (Meyer & Rowan, 1978, p. 80). Extending this logic into the current context, there may be weak or absent organizational controls monitoring schooling practices at the level of policy implementation and application.

As previously discussed, Hallet and Ventresca (2006) offer an "inhabited institutions approach" to organizational analysis, which emphasizes the consideration of agency, local and situational context, as well as broader organizational structures within research. Reflecting a similar multi-level approach, this chapter offers a further dimension to the analysis of policy implementation by examining the personal experiences of educators and the organizational context within which policy is applied. Similar to the current study, Coburn (2004) considers the role of school-based actors and agency within organizational structures. She argues the relationship between educator practices and institutional pressures is mediated by a process of sense-making (Weick, 1995; Scott, 2008) where educators work to understand messages from the environment based on their own pre-existing beliefs, practices, and experiences with institutional pressures. Contributing to further variation in how policy is implemented, how school-based actors interpret policy may reflect their own personal pre-existing beliefs, practices, and experiences with institutional pressures (Coburn, 2004).

Below, chart 2, outlines the key forces identified within research findings (detailed within this chapter) that lead to decoupling between progressive policy and the practices of educators, as well as the lack of forces keeping policy and practice coupled. This chapter is subsequently divided into two sections. The first section explores how progressive discipline policy may be penetrating schooling practices. The second section examines the institutional context and organizational challenges of policy implementation.

Chart 2: Forces of Decoupling

Forces Leading to Decoupling
Administrator Leadership: • Admin personal philosophies on discipline impact methods used school wide • Admin awareness of policy, how to meet student needs, and willingness to access resources reflects school wide practices Outcomes Observed: • Educators may lose confidence in school discipline processes, as well as PD strategies and programs – although less success attributed to inconsistent implementation • Problem behaviours may resurface if PD strategies are not supported and maintained
Knowledge and Practice: • Lack of clear sense of policy (i.e., some have never heard of PD or don't know how to implement PD because it is vague) • PD philosophies go against many teachers' personal beliefs about managing problem behavior
Fragmented Application: • Discretion can be problematic. Educators questioned if the message 'behaviour is not acceptable,' is clearly and consistently conveyed • Varying levels of commitment to maintain consistency in practice, sometimes a general disinterest in applying strategies • Varied perspectives on discipline within a single school - not always consistent with the progressive approach • Varying policy interpretation - educators may perceive practices correspond to policy but in reality are inconsistent • Numerous educators working with one student - difficult to maintain consistency in practice and patterns of communication Outcomes Observed: • Without a formalized approach educators may, inadvertently, contradict each other – educators may feel a loss of credibility • Educators may lose confidence in school discipline processes, as well as PD strategies and programs – although less success attributed to inconsistent

implementation • Problem behaviours may resurface if PD strategies are not supported and maintained
Fragmented Communication: • Inconsistent communication between admin and teachers about discipline processes employed in class, and about admin measures taken at office • Inconsistent communication among the different educators working with single student and between differing educational programs (i.e., alternative program and mainstream school) Outcomes Observed: • When teachers are not informed of measures taken at office, teachers perceive nothing, has been done • Educators feel unsure of student behaviour and how to respond with the appropriate discipline • Student complex need gone unidentified and unsupported • Lack of communication and information sharing - reflect awareness of educators that student strategies exist, as well as if/how used and implemented
Active Resistance to PD Shift: • Resistance from majority of educators in a school, groups of staff in school, or few educators. Observed Outcome: • Overall, shift from punitive and formalized to progressive approaches slowly taking place. School staff beginning to see advantages of progressive.
Varying Focus and Concern with Discipline: • Not all educators are equally concerned with disciplinary issues, or see it as part of their job • Institutional pressures to focus on academic – student discipline may not be considered priority • May implement policies and associated strategies to conform, but school practices inconsistent with policy – implementation remain superficial
Perceptions of Evolving Policy: • Expectations of short term policy relevance • Perceptions that PD policy change was made for the wrong reasons (i.e., for public confidence) • Perceptions that policymakers don't care about the policy or if it is implemented
Lack of Forces Keeping Policy and Practice Coupled
• Admin have weak control over classroom processes due to limited ability to supervise educator practice or provide incentives to motivate staff compliance with policy objectives • Professional development optional not mandatory – no incentive to continue learning

- Educators recognize policy implementation is not monitored and no one enforces the policy
- Teachers devote their available time and resources to test scores, because of the incentives to do so – no incentives to implement PD
- School boards are fragmented, different areas focused on specific interests, "no one looking at big picture"

Section 1: Implementing Progressive Discipline, Penetration

The practices of educators that correspond to the practices, principles and philosophies of progressive discipline policy detailed in Chapter 4, provide context for the analysis of progressive discipline policy and educational inequalities. Through the consideration of: a) Educator Perspectives, and b) Penetrating the Teaching and Learning Levels, the following section considers how progressive discipline policy may penetrate schooling practices and potentially impact student learning.

a) Educator Perspectives

The section provides insight into how educators are responding to policy reform. Findings reveal varying conceptions of both the regulatory structures of formal discipline reflected in policies of Safe Schools, or as generally termed zero tolerance, as well as policies of progressive discipline. The following section considers: i) Zero Tolerance in Retrospect, and ii) The Shift to Progressive Discipline. The latter section is further broken down into the discussion of: iii) Benefits of Progressive Discipline, and iv) Mixed Perspectives.

i) Zero Tolerance in Retrospect

A few interviewees described broad interpretations of the zero tolerance approach to student discipline. For a few educators, the message taken from this policy was that incidents of inappropriate behaviour need to be addressed. One principal explicitly stated, "we didn't interpret it putatively." She further described:

> *That doesn't mean the kid needs to be suspended. It doesn't mean they need to be crucified and nailed to the cross, it means it has to be dealt with. So you didn't just let things go, 'Boys will be boys and that's the way it is.' No, that you address it. And that's what we've done.* (Interview: Principal, 7)

This principal described that her practices may have become more streamlined throughout her career; however, her practices and philosophy around managing and responding to behaviour have not changed. Reflecting the newer progressive legislation, she described having maintained the same broad interpretation of discipline, simply stating, "we still respond to what happens, that has always been our focus." A few other

school-based actors described a similar broad conception of both progressive and zero tolerance based policies, considering 'all issues are to be addressed' as the focus of both approaches. Interpreted this way, educators suggest either policy reflects what they have been doing all along.

Some educators described, in general terms, the benefits of behaviour programs and protocols that provide a specific outline for schools to follow. Suggesting structured practices that outline every step generate more consistency in its implementation within schools and across schools (Interview: Guidance, 1). The structured discipline practice of zero tolerance, however, generated problems including issues of equity as described previously. Interviewees were in agreement that policies of zero tolerance "backfired" creating "more behaviour and more dropout rates" (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 2).

Zero tolerance approaches established a clear-cut line where specific behaviours were given specific consequences. Educators described feeling a loss of control in how student behaviour was to be addressed. As one teacher described, "there wasn't even a choice. You had to fire kids out of there, left, right and center" (Interview: teacher, 1). Another school professional noted, "I remember the Board having a chart, and it said, 'If you're this age and you did this offence, this is the number of days suspension'" (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader). One school professional discussed her experience working at an alternative education program. She recalled one student who had been suspended 24 times and a different student who had been suspended 37 times before their home schools expelled them into the alternative program. In both of these cases she identified the majority of the suspensions were for truancy (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 3). The notion of suspending and expelling students for truancy and giving students a free license to continue to miss school, a mandatory consequence within policies of zero tolerance, was an ongoing joke among school-based actors.

Deterrence based zero tolerance approaches to student discipline are perceived by interviewees as methods reflecting a 'get tough with behaviour' mentality which removes the opportunity for students to learn from these experiences. School-based actors characterized zero tolerance as a "system that was designed to get rid of kids" (Interview: Principal, 1). Instead of examining the issue, zero tolerance approaches were considered by educators as conveying the message "that is what it looked like, your bad. Go home, really we don't want you in our building because we're sick of you. Go home and stay home" (Interview: CYW, 2). School-based actors recognized that structured, step by step, standardized approaches to student discipline prevent educators from administering discipline that matches student behaviour. The majority of interviewees expressed strong disapproval of the inability to consider precipitating circumstances in connection to the behaviour. Interviewees readily acknowledging 'one size does not fit all' when it comes to behaviour, and schools 'can't paint everyone with the same brush.'

To provide a different perspective, prior to the backlash created by zero tolerance schools had the liberty to suspend and expel students without consulting with school board officials for approval, which is currently not the case. Interestingly, one educator described prior to the changes institutionalized with progressive discipline, the majority of schools manipulated school board processes to gain monetary advantages. She

described in her previous school, they may have had 10 students at the beginning of every school term identified as leaders in negative behaviour. She described that administration would agree to "get rid of the top ones real fast," through what she termed a "numbers game" the school would play with the board. As this process was explained, school funding is based on enrolment. The school would keep the students until a certain date in October during the first semester and March in the second semester to receive the maximum amount of funding from the board. She described, as soon as the school received the funding the students were expelled. Depending on the level of behaviour, she recognized, some schools would resort to suspension and expulsion prior to these dates, but even if students were suspended and were not allowed in the school building, the goal was to keep students on the list of enrolment because, primarily, "you really want to keep your numbers." This interviewee suggested that most schools in the board engaged in this political game (Interview: Behaviour EA). As described here, schools may have been able to manipulate the more formalized structured school board protocol for their own monetary gains.

Compared to progressive discipline which encourages discretion and individualized treatment, zero tolerance policy may be viewed as a tightly coupled discipline policy as procedures were clearly outlined leaving less room for discretion. Educators appreciated the clarity and simplicity of this approach. In general, however, zero tolerance policies were considered a band-aid short term solution. Interviewees seemed to agree that zero tolerance approaches removed the opportunity for student learning and prevented educators from administering discipline that corresponded to students' behaviour. Reflecting the more deterrence based logic of this approach, in some cases, educators may have relied on zero tolerance approaches to "scare students into temporary compliance" (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader). Overall, interviewees seemed to agree that mandatory structured discipline processes are unlikely to change student behaviour. Safe schools, or zero tolerance as it is more commonly referred to, was generally regarded by interviewees as a regression in the ways schools dealt with student behaviour.

ii) The Shift to Progressive Discipline

Interviewees described their general perceptions on the shift to progressive discipline. Some school-based actors were vocal about their disgust of zero tolerance approaches and identified a clear separation between conceptions of zero tolerance and progressive (as opposed to the broad conceptions described above). Some interviewees strongly supported progressive philosophies, though described resistance from other school-based actors who were reluctant to shift from deterrent based practices and embrace progressive approaches.

As generally conceptualized by interviewees, through a progressive disciplinary lens problematic student behaviour is viewed as a learning process for students and school staff. For many educators, behavioural instances facilitate opportunities for students to learn socially appropriate behavioural patterns. Many interviewees considered that progressive discipline encourages staff to understand behaviour as a method and way

to learn about individual students, what their specific needs are, and what support mechanisms may help them achieve success. As described:

> *Unless a student feels safe, and calm, and grounded, and feels like they can be a learner, the learning is not going to come. So to crank out curriculum at them and say you need to be a level 3 or better to meet an EQAO, it's not going to happen for them if they are dealing with, "I'm not safe at home because I get abused all the time," or "My parents are fighting all the time and my Dad is threatening to kill my mom," or "I haven't eaten" – learning is not going to happen for those kids. When you get those kids in a better place then learning can happen.* (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader)

Some interviewees described that students who are the most difficult and challenging behaviourally are often the students who need the most help and have the greatest needs (Interview: Behaviour EA). Based on personal experience, interviewees explained that acting out is often "a cry for help" (Interview: Teacher, 1) and a "red flag that students are really struggling and need some kind of support" (Interview: CYW, 1). According to a number of interviewees, acting out can be a way students are communicating an underlying social and/or emotional need.

When applying progressive discipline, many interviewees described individualized student discipline can facilitate students learning to change inappropriate behaviours. Compared to punishing students for behaviour, philosophies of progressive discipline are generally described as identifying the root cause of behaviour, working with students to resolve underlying issues and thus minimizing future occurrences of negative behaviour. In addition, the majority of interviewees considered progressive strategies as generating more of a long-term impact on student behaviour compared to deterrent based approaches which many educators considered a 'temporary fix.' Viewed in this way, adopting progressive strategies may have real life implications for students. The majority of educators interviewed for this study had a strong grasp of progressive philosophies and shared this similar understanding.

Considering a slightly different of perspective on the shifting discipline policy from zero tolerance towards embrace progressive approaches, some school-based actors identified progressive strategies in particular, as what they have done along:

> *There has actually been a cultural shift. And the nice part about the legislation and what it allows us to do, to a certain extent, what we knew was right. And over time it has changed teacher expectation. You know teachers would send kids down* [to the office] *and want to send that kid home, you know, 'Send that kid home, send that kid home, I don't ever want to see that kid again.' 'Well first of all, you get paid to teach all kids. We are a public school. You don't get to choose who is and who is not in your class. This student is coming back, so how do we make this a positive experience for you and your student? And by the way, we have this legislation that states we need to do this, this, this, and this.' So it supports us in*

> *doing the right thing for kids. And that has been a cultural shift for staff, who in some cases, and this is certainly not across the board, they are more punitive and they come from a more punitive mindset. They believe that is what will make a difference. Or that if kids aren't prepared to be here and behave, they shouldn't be here. IT IS NEVER THAT SIMPLISTIC!* (Interview: Principal, 1)

The above quotation seems to align with Labaree's argument regarding the advantages of loose coupling within the education system. Labaree considers that harmful reforms are unlikely to "infect the system as a whole, since adoption of these reforms will be spotty rather than systemic" (2010, p.132). As described in the above quotes and consistent with Labaree's account, due to processes of loose coupling not all schools adopt reform and therefore not all schools would be impacted by harmful reforms such as zero tolerance practices of Safe Schools legislation.

Some interviewees seem to have aligned themselves with a specific way, philosophy or method of approaching student discipline. Some school-based actors seem to have chosen one camp in what they perceive as a progressive vs. punitive conflict. Other interviewees described the policy shift as having no impact on them at all; suggesting they will continue to respond to situations as they arise, using whatever discipline approach they feel is appropriate at the time. Interview data also suggests that some educators are not in complete agreement with either progressive practices or strict deterrent models, though find positive and negative aspects in both models and have tried to blend philosophies. Interestingly some interviewees had no conception of progressive discipline policy and made comments along the following lines:

> *I don't know, I have never heard of progressive discipline. I have never heard of that term.* (Interview: Teacher, 4)

As illustrated in the above quote, some educators have never heard of progressive discipline before. Interestingly, one CYW had no knowledge of PD and believed that the zero tolerance based policy was still in effect. To provide yet a further example, one teacher had never heard of progressive discipline and was under the impression that the zero tolerance based policy was still at the level of policy development and had not yet reached the stage of implementation. As stated:

> *I know the board is talking about having a zero-tolerance policy, but I don't think they've made that clear to schools, exactly what should happen with that. It's still so complicated and involved. It's left up to principals to decide what to do.* (Interview: Teacher, 5)

In general, interviewees seemed to be aware of the differing interpretations of student discipline policies and practices within schools. A few school-based actors considered that policy is open to be interpreted. One interviewee identified that interpretations happen at every level of the school system, even in the creation of

supporting documents at the Ministry and board levels, reflect a degree of inflection from the original legislation. Across the interview data, it seems every school actor has interpreted policy slightly differently and how policy has been interpreted reflects how people respond to policy changes and how policy is implemented within practice. To further detail how educators perceive the shift to progressive discipline, discussions of the benefits and mixed perspectives of progressive discipline are subsequently discussed.

iii) Benefits of Progressive Discipline

The majority of educators interviewed agree there are benefits to the discretion and the individualized nature of progressive approaches. Progressive discipline protocol calls for school staff to use professional judgment and discretion to govern their approach, selecting discipline responses they believe will facilitate a behavioural learning outcome for each student. Progressive policy identifies that interventions should progressively escalate based on the frequency of previous student behavioural issues, mitigating factors that may contribute to the behaviour, as well as what is known historically about the student. Educators interviewed for this study described that even if students are being disciplined for similar situations, each student will be disciplined differently.

> *We don't have a certain five day suspension or three day suspension for specific behaviours because every situation is different. You know it's like the smoking bylaw. It's if you catch a kid smoking on school property, the first time is a warning, second time is a suspension and the third time is - yes we have those protocols in place. But sometimes you catch a kid on a bad day, and you say, 'You know what, don't do it, what matters to me, that you are here and you are going to class'"…"What you've done now is maintained a relationship with that student, they are more likely to trust you, they're likely to see you as an advocate and as a support. They are probably more likely to engage and keep going to school.* (Interview: Principal, 1)

School-based actors seemed to agree, the appropriate type and duration of discipline should reflect the individual student and the situation. Interviewees described benefits of using discretion when responding to behavioural situations, determining within the range of progressive discipline strategies that would have the greatest benefit and learning outcome for students. As described, "we're not punitive institutions, we're institutions of learning. Helping that child learn not to repeat that behaviour" (Interview: Principal, 8). Discipline strategies can help students learn skills to handle and respond to situations constructively, which can then be reinforced when students recognize positive outcomes of modifying their behaviour, "they begin to see, 'Oh the kids are liking me more,' or 'I'm getting the results I want and I don't have to hit'" (Interview: Principal, 3).

No lost learning time was considered by interviewees as an effect of progressive discipline approaches. Compared to progressive discipline, more punitive methods of behaviour modification were described as involving *lost time* or time away from learning,

"you were told to leave and then you came back. That time was lost" (Interview: Vice Principal, 1). Efforts to keep students in school and connected to classroom material is considered a positive outcome of progressive discipline approaches. As previously described, programs and strategies throughout the progressive continuum emphasize student learning. Even in more extreme situations, where suspension and expulsion may be the outcome, programs are in place to support student behavioural and academic learning. In school suspensions and alternative education programs are a few examples of how, within the same block of time, behaviour modification strategies involve a discipline and learning piece. Students may be removed from a regular classroom setting but learning continues in a different location. As described:

> *And I think at its core, that's really what progressive discipline is all about. It's about over time putting things in place and giving kids opportunities to learn. It's about those teachable moments for them. You know even the word discipline I struggle with. I don't even think in terms of discipline, I think in terms of, ok where is the learning and what is the reasonable and appropriate consequence given some of their positions and their consequences. And discipline is sometimes part of that"… "I think teachers and administrators are getting better at identifying the importance of the relationships with the student as a learner, and the discipline is part of the learning process. I think that helped to as educators to have a better understanding of students, as learners, both academically and behaviourally*. (Interview: Principal, 1)

Through a progressive disciplinary lens, teaching around behaviour is viewed as part of the student learning process. Disciplinary situations are used as teachable moments and opportunities to learn conflict resolution, communication skills, and socially appropriate behaviour. Students can learn tools to identify and replace inappropriate behaviours with more socially acceptable behaviours. The rationale is that students will eventually learn to modify and correct their own behaviour, not repeat problem behaviour, and therefore be able to focus on learning.

Interviewees compared progressive discipline and zero tolerance approaches, considering progressive practices facilitate a clear separation from perceptions of *dealing with a problem student to dealing with the problem behavior exhibited by a student*. Accordingly:

> *Progressive has a lot of mediation and talking about choices. The message that I give kids, is never that you're bad but that you made bad choices. You're not a bad kid, you're a good kid, but you made a poor choice.* (Interview: CYW, 2)

Many interviewees described similar feelings about strict consequence based approaches, such as zero tolerance, which may be taken personally by students and interpreted as a "personal attack," and can contribute to students "building walls and they don't want to let you in" (Interview: teacher, 1). Accordingly, students may come to view

school and school staff negatively. Progressive discipline on the other hand generally involves stakeholders working together to deal with situations. Conflict or discipline matters may be considered opportunities for dialogue and problem solving. Situations may generate positive feelings among stakeholders and contribute to a positive learning environment and outcome for those involved.

As previously described, taking mitigating and other factors into account when responding to inappropriate behaviour is a practice supported in progressive discipline policies. Considering mitigating factors is considered to facilitate the shift in focus, from focusing on the student to focusing on the student's behaviour. One education professional spoke about her experiences with discipline and a student who has Tourettes Syndrome:

> *We have a student with Tourettes and one of the things with that is that he becomes really abusive. But we have sat down with the parents and made a behaviour plan, we acknowledge he has Tourettes but at some point we have to intervene with the discipline"…"There has to be a problem-solving in place and we would have to work with them"… "And you resolve it the best you can. If that student with Tourettes continues, then that is where the behaviour plan would kick in, he would have to go to a certain room to calm himself down.* (Interview: Teacher, 2)

Interviewees commonly described the benefits in using discretion to consider mitigating factors in selecting the most appropriate type and duration of consequence for individual students. As outlined in The Education Act, mitigating factors may include the inability to control behaviour, the inability to understand the foreseeable consequences of behaviour, whether behaviour is a manifestation of a disability, whether appropriate individualized accommodation has been provided, and whether behaviour is related to harassment due to race, ethnic origin, religion, disability, gender or sexual orientation or to any other harassment.[24] Although some level of intervention and/or discipline may still be required, considering mitigating factors when administering discipline provides opportunities for a more equitable approach for students who are not wholly responsible for their behaviour.

ii) Mixed Perspectives

The majority of school-based actors interviewed for this study shared a similar understanding of progressive discipline, as described above. Alternatively, some interviewees did express mixed perspectives on the shift to progressive discipline. Due to absent regulatory structures of formal discipline some interviewees described inconsistent

[24] Mitigating and Other Factors were incorporated into the Education Act, please see subsections 306 (2), 306 (4), 310 (3), 311.1 (4) and clauses 311.3 (7)(b) and 311.4 (2) (b) of the Act

and sometimes vague interpretations of the progressive concept. As well, some interviewees described frustration by the lack of a clear sense of policy.

> *While the board has definite policies around progressive discipline I find that each school applies those policies differently. I believe the intent behind the policy is good"… "I think generally the policies are a good thing if they were applied in a manner in which they were intended to be applied*. (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 2)

Interview data suggests there are some school-based actors who are unclear about the nature of progressive discipline. Some interviewees did express a degree of confusion about how and when to apply progressive discipline, when to consider mitigating circumstances and what counts as mitigating circumstances. Interviewees who were on board with progressive, described other educators as perceiving progressive discipline as "airy and fairy" and "letting the kids off the hook to easily."

In comparison, with the structured approach of zero tolerance educators explained that staff shared a clearer understanding of what behaviour was not tolerated. Without regulatory structures of formal discipline and without overarching policy or process in place, interviewees identified inconsistent perceptions and applications of discipline between teaching staff and administrators. Based on interview data, with progressive discipline the parameters around behaviour guidelines seem to be slightly blurry for some school staff. Further, some educators may be confused about how to respond to student behaviour using a progressive approach.

Although many interviewees described the benefits of discretion, a few interviewees, however, considered how discretion can be problematic in terms of fragmented implementation. Educators question if the message 'the behaviour demonstrated was not acceptable' is clearly and consistently conveyed with progressive methods of discipline. Findings suggest that progressive discipline may be viewed as too lenient by some school-based actors. Some interviewees questioned the point where least intrusive discipline stays least intrusive for too long :

> *It's based on judgement. One VP always uses the least intrusive. I look at some situations, I look at what happened, and I think, 'This is all that happened? That was the response?' That's a concern for me"…"If you were doing progressive, but the violation really warranted something more severe. And kids think, 'That's all that happened to me.' And the word gets out and spreads pretty quick. 'Yah I told the teacher to -, Yah I say it all the time with - and I'm told not to do it again and I'm back in class.' And teachers will be frustrated, saying, 'What good is it to send the student out, and then they're right back?'* (Interview: Behaviour EA)

With discretion based practices, educators described the role professional judgement plays in creating variability and inconsistency in how discipline is administered. For example, a single school with a number of administrators may all have

different temperaments; the severity and form of discipline a student receives may reflect which administrator is perhaps available at the time or which administrator the student happens to be assigned to.

b) Penetrating the Teaching and Learning Levels

Findings indicate that, to some degree, progressive policies have penetrated the teaching and learning levels of education. Findings reveal that many educators and a number of schools are experiencing success with practices, philosophies and principles of progressive discipline policy. The following example illustrates one school's success story. Reflecting schooling practices and educator perspectives, this school in particular appears to embody progressive ideals.

Educators from this school described how students were engaging in negative behaviour within the surrounding school area, prompting staff to approach community members and develop a "community alliance." This initiative aimed to partner school staff, students, and parents with the broader community. According to interviewees, the initial focus was around problem solving, though grew into a positive initiative that has continues to develop.

Interviewees described the initial group brainstorming session involved teachers, administrators, school board officials, students and parents, as well as police officers, business owners, employees and patrons. As described, stakeholders came together to discuss their concerns:

> *We had 52 people there that night. Kids, parents, community members. It was over a group of kids grade 9, grade 10, and a couple of grade 11's who were coming to school and going straight over to Tim Horton's and hanging out there all day. They were being disrespectful to the staff and patrons. They were dealing and doing drugs outside and getting into fights. They were spilling over to the medical property next door and then they were coming down and hanging out at Central Market. Elderly people were intimidated. They were coming by bus and not wanting to get off the bus and walk through this group of kids, who were swearing and pushing each other around. And then they would go into the graveyard, and go in there and steal stuff from the graves and write stuff on the stones. And then there is an apartment building in front of the graveyard, they were somehow getting into the underground parking and waiting for a car to come in and then they would run in and a bunch of them were doing stuff down in the underground parking.* (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 3)

At this school, interviewees described that students have caused, and may continue to cause, problems within the community. However, educators also described a willingness to "work with [their] neighbours" and "own the student behaviour" (Interview: CYW, 2). To that affect, the school principal approached the neighbouring businesses and residential properties around the school where student issues were taking place (Interview: Vice Principal, 4). The principal initiated discussions about the

problems the students were creating in the community and invited the community members to partner with the school. As described, student involvement was central in this process:

> *This is their community and absolutely they're given chances to be involved with decisions that go on. The students involved were the ones part of the trouble. They came together with the administration and teachers and counsellors and whoever, and they came up with a solution like one big community. We want the students to be part of it, to have a voice, and it makes them feel good about it when they can come up with a solution with us"….*"*And we said ok, "What's fair?"..."So students helped with administration and other teachers to came up with a process that everybody can live with. If something comes up in the future, we can say your peers helped us come up with these rules. But it makes them sort accountable and responsible, and we come up with a plan, then they've chosen the plan.*
> (Interview: Vice Principal, 4)

The interviewee quoted above described how students were actively involved within the resolution process, assisting to create rules to govern the acceptable behaviour for students. Drawing on the student issues connected to Tim Horton's for example, interviewees described that rules were established for the number of students allowed within the Tim Horton's at a time and where students were allowed to smoke on the Tim Horton's property, as well as rules for swearing, budding in line, being gracious to the customers. Once decided, the rules were posted on the wall of Tim Horton's as a visual reminder for students.

As described, the community partnership alliance began as an intervention initiative to problem solve around the prevalence of destructive and inappropriate student behaviour. Corresponding to the decline of negative student activity, however, the alliance transformed into a proactive initiative, focused on creating positive connections between the community, students, and staff. Interviewees suggested the outside community recognized the school was commitment to producing results and take action, and came to view the alliance initiative as worthwhile and effective. Interviewees described that positive changes were happening and generated goodwill among existing alliance members, attracting the attention of additional community organizations and businesses who wanted to join and help support the alliance. Educators described that respect and support is mutual among members of the community alliance. As described:

> *The Church was having issues* [with students]. *And one issue we saw with these kids was a need. They were coming to school without a breakfast, and the Church said, 'We have a group that would put on breakfast.' So they started a breakfast program. Now the Church runs that. So it's a positive connection the kids now have with the Church beside us because they're the ones who put on the breakfast for us 5 days a week. They're there. They're there for prom dresses and stuff. They collect from their parishioners, their daughters who have already graduated*

> *from high school and stuff. They get their prom dresses and the boys' suits and provide them to the school free of charge for the kids who can't afford that. Our grocery store provides turkeys for our community dinners. Kids know that, 'you know what, they provide free of charge for our community dinners, so we can serve 200 homeless people at Christmas time.' So it builds that community, it built a partnership feeling. It's like what you hear the kids say, 'you don't do damage in your own neighbourhood.' This is their neighbourhood and so they're not going to do damage around here, because this is a caring community around them.* (Interview: Vice Principal, 4)

The quote above provides a few examples of the positive outcomes of the school's community alliance initiative. As described by educators at this school, students recognized and appreciated the efforts of the community partners and reduced, if not stopped entirely, disrespectful behaviours. According to interviewees, students began getting involved in activities to support and contribute back to the community. Building on the community partnerships, interviewees described how teachers incorporate curriculum into experiences for students within the community. For example interviewees described the Graphics Design Program in the school designs brochures and leaflets for the Church and is working on a mural for an outside wall of the Church. The Graphics Design Program is also involved in a community project to fight graffiti and designing a mural for a building wall in a public bike trail.

According to interviewees, this school continues to experience great success with their community development initiatives. Interviewees from this school described the reduction of problem student behaviour is a direct outcome of the community alliance. These community initiatives began as a way to address negative behaviour and have become increasingly proactive, contributing to a caring school climate. Interviewees from this school described the community of students, staff, parents and broader community partners as working together toward a common goal of improving the overall community.

According to the interview data, schools and educators are experiencing success implementing progressive discipline policies and strategies. As illustrated within this section, educators appear to be shaping student behaviour to be more consistent with preferred conduct and behavioural ideals, and thus facilitating the organizational goals of maintaining order and minimizing problem behaviour. Findings suggest that progressive discipline policies, on some level, are penetrating the teaching and learning levels of the education system.

Section 2: Implementing Progressive Discipline, Organizational Challenges

This section considers the institutional context within which policy is implemented, providing further insight into the application of progressive discipline policy. Specifically, this section asks: What organizational challenges emerge within the dynamics of policy application and practice?

Interview data suggests schooling efforts to shift and reform disciplinary practices have had an unintended consequence of creating variation in outcomes by: a) Administrator Leadership, b) Knowledge and Practice, c) Fragmented Application, d) Fragmented Communication, e) Resistance to Change, f) Varying Focus and Concern with Discipline, and g) Perceptions of Evolving Discipline Policy. These themes are the focus of the following section.

a) Administrator Leadership

With any policy and any organization, the people carrying out the policy influence how it is implemented and therefore shape policy outcomes. Every school in Ontario has implemented progressive discipline policies. Although school policies are the same, school climates are completely different. Interview data reveals that quality leadership and "getting the right people on the bus" is a key contributor to experiencing success with progressive practices and policy implementation more generally. As described:

> *You can have all the policies in the world, but if you don't have caring people to implement them and you don't have connections with kids and relationships with kids, then to me it doesn't matter what policies you have because nothing is going to work.* (Interview: CYW, 2)

Successful policy implementation may reflect the perspectives, knowledge, and level of commitment of individual school staff members to progressive discipline approaches. Schools that seem to experience the greatest success around developing programs and initiatives involving students, staff, parents, and in some schools the broader community, attributed successful implementation to the leadership of the principal (Coburn, 2004).

School administrators are identified by interviewees as leading staff and students, as well as the organizational management of schools. Interviewees described schools as "top down" hierarchical systems. School administrators could potentially lead staff and students to successfully implement progressive discipline practices of student discipline within the school and classrooms. However, findings suggest this may not always be the case. As described here:

> *The principal sets the culture of the school. If you have a very negative culture, you see kids as troublemakers, 'We have to get rid of these kids because we don't want them in our school because they cause so many problems.'* (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader)

Interview data reveals the perspectives and behaviours of administrators have a direct impact on policy implementation within a school. According to school-based actors, school administrators determine the form of student discipline as well as which strategies and practices will be used to govern student behaviour. Interview data suggests

that the principal sets the overall tone of the school, and that educators and students follow.

Many school principals interviewed for this study considered acting as the gatekeeper and barrier, and essentially "protecting" staff from the Ministry, the Board, and families as part of their job. Interview data provides insight into the degree of ownership and control that some administrators develop, and how principals can shape staff perspectives of student discipline.

> *People are afraid of change, 'We've been doing this for this long, and I'm not changing.' Or, 'I'm not asking my staff to' or 'I can't believe I have to.' Principals' have that, 'This is my planet, this is how we do things here. Don't tell me how to run my school.' These are the schools that don't explore and access resources. They say, 'That's it, I'm not taking this kid anymore.' They just want to get rid of the kids and don't want to deal with the kids anymore. These are the schools that are very top down – 'It's my way or the highway, this is how it works, and when people think outside of the box it's not good.' And so people are told not to think outside of the box.* (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 2)

During interviews, administrators tended to use ownership terminology, often referring to "my parents," "my students," and "my school." One of the rudimentary questions asked during all of the interviews conducted was - W*hat are your general perceptions of the student discipline practices at your school?* Interestingly, the majority of principals responded in a similar way. For example, one principal bluntly responded, "I feel very positive about them, because I'm the principal." During this interview this principal discussed considering the input of others, though perceived decisions about school discipline processes as hers to make. She further noted, "I decide what they are going to be. So yah, I feel good about them" (Interview: Principal, 8). To provide a further example, responding to the same question a separate principal stated, "I feel great about our discipline. I'm in charge of it. I take it very seriously. I've laid the ground work" (Interview: Principal, 7). These quotes are representative of a number of interviews conducted with administrators. Perceptions of school ownership are clear.

A few school-based actors considered establishing a reputation within the student body as a way to manage behaviour within the school. Student perceptions of school staff – perhaps lenient, fair, strict – may influence students willingness to push behavioural boundaries and test limits. A number of school-based actors described the importance of maintaining consistency, establishing rules and sticking to them, as well as following through with discipline. One principal, however, seemed to take this notion to the next level. He described a recent incident involving 20 to 30 female students who, at the same time, decided to test the boundaries of the school dress code. He noted in connection to this occurrence, "For a while there, there was war" (Interview: Principal, 3). He further described, "part of the best discipline is the communication that happens out there, amongst the students" (Interview: Principal, 3). According to this principal, reminding

students that inappropriate behaviour will not be tolerated facilitates school wide behaviour management.

Building on the notion of establishing a reputation, the principal described in the above paragraph suggested that reputation facilitates setting a certain tone within the school. He further described:

> *I often say to kids, 'We can go to war or we can work together. To make this a pleasant place for you and for me to be. If we go to war, I'm winning.' So depending on the situation and depending on the student, I'm going to say and do what makes the most impact on that child"…"I believe there is a place for fear, for healthy fear. I can be very firm and be intimidating if I need to be, but that depends on the kid and the situation"…"So if I have a child who is totally beside themselves emotionally, do they need quiet time right now to sit by themselves or do they need someone to jolt them back into a place where they can refocus. Sometimes you have to be demonstrative. Sometimes when a child comes into my office, do I purposely slam the door? Yes I do. They need to know, 'Wow, I'm in trouble.' So, some of it is show.* (Interview: Principal, 3)

Students may talk amongst each other about occurrences at the office and how these events have transpired. These student discussions may contribute to the general atmosphere of the school or student perceptions of administrators. For some administrators, being tough or strict, using scare tactics and perhaps inspiring a level of fear in a school population may be a strategy to encourage student compliance and conformity to expected levels of behaviour. Administrators may feel obligated to conform to certain behaviours or portray a certain image which, they believe, are synonymous with their role or job requirement. It could be argued, as illustrated in the quote above, how some principals apply and deliver discipline may not be consistent with progressive discipline philosophies which emphasize promoting positive student behaviour and wellbeing. In general, how schools respond to students and address their behaviour is considered directly connected to the attitude and behaviours of the principal.

Findings suggest that information about policy changes, as well as supports and resources available to school staff are essentially transmitted through this top down approach. As previously described, schools have access to various inside and outside of school resources to support students experiencing achievement, equity, engagement, social and emotional related problems. School leadership may involve successfully integrating and maximizing the resources available to support teachers and create conditions for student success. The degree of awareness educators have about the resources available may be connected to the dynamic of school administration. As described:

> *If there's a good administrator in that school, they're going to make sure there's lots of support available to help that teacher out. I think the frustration happens when teachers feel they are on an island, 'There's no support mechanism, I'm not*

> *getting help with this child'"…"There are a ton of things that can be done to support that teacher, but if those things aren't happening in the school, that's where I see things getting really toxic. And really, it's the principal then who needs to make sure they are aware and supports them. And there's lots of things that can be done, but they need to be shown.* (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader)

As illustrated here, the level school staff are aware of resources and supports available may reflect the knowledge of school administrators. A Special Education Consultant for the School Board described opportunities for professional learning and training, and pointed out the following:

> *No, you can tell a principal he has to go to everything, that doesn't mean he is going to go. And when they don't go that obviously reflects how much teachers know, how much the parents and students know. There is a system memo for everything now we all get. And then you decide if you want to go, or a principal reads it and decides if they want staff to go. Everything is so top down*. (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 2)

School-based actors with limited knowledge of resources available may experience difficulty meeting student needs, creating frustration for educators. The role of school administration is considered to involve guiding and assisting staff to meet student needs. However, administration themselves may lack awareness and knowledge of resources available. Administrator philosophies of student discipline, in addition to their awareness of and willingness to access these resources, and their knowledge of how to meet student needs may directly impacts the rest of the school.

Beyond the overall school tone, interview data also reveals administrator leadership contributes to "open" or "closed" school dynamics. School-based actors described this distinction as reflecting the degree of interaction schools have with the school board and community, the level of assistance and guidance schools actively pursue, and the flexibility to shift school processes from "how things have always been done." Educators recognized with a variety of schools, there are a variety of student discipline practices and a variety of ways schools view outside of school support. Schools may be considered open or closed, or somewhere along the continuum.

> *I think schools become closed for a whole lot of different reasons"…"Often it's the schools that need the most support that don't want it. I think they're the ones who need significant support around behaviour, discipline issues. How to access supports, how to educate their staff, how to support their staff, how to support the kids. You roll your eyes sometimes when you hear the name of a school because you know pretty much how it's going to play out there. But yeah schools that have strong administrators and strong teams that have an understanding of kids specifically with behavioural challenges, and the general population too, those*

> *are the schools where they're willing to go outside their physical plant to look at what does the board offer, what does the community offer, how can we support the parents, how can we support the child. Then they're really talking about educating the whole child, as opposed to, yeah, 'We're in school six hours a day*.' (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 2)

Schools considered to be more open are described as actively seeking out resources and guidance to help specific students or help meet the needs of the broader student population. As described, "If it's an open school, they are asking 'what else is out there?'" (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader). Schools considered to be more open were described as more likely to contact the school board to learn information and ask questions about how to improve their practices, how to approach behaviour in a different way, or gain a better understanding of how to teach behavioural related skills. More open schools may contact board officials and use them as a sounding board to verify their own practices.

Alternatively, schools considered to be more closed are described as independent, self-contained, and self managing with limited interaction and collaboration with other schools, the school board or community. Closed schools are generally viewed as more set in their ways, resistant to change, as well as less likely to actively pursue inside and outside of school resources. The personnel at these schools may be knowledgeable and aware of the resources available though, as described, consciously choose not to access and use them. These schools are considered as "going underground, not dealing with issues" (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 3). During interviews, school-based actors identified a number of schools labelled as closed. There appeared to be a common knowledge of which schools in the board fit this description.

Interview data revealed a connection between closed schools and how student behavioural situations are dealt with, or if student situations would be dealt with at all. School-based actors commonly discussed efforts to work with students, to address small problems as they occur and effectively "keeping small issues small." Alternatively, interviewees described instances where problems were not addressed and schools did not access help and resources to support students, and problems continued to escalate. In particular, the special education consultants interviewed described several instances where students with significant behavioural problems and social skill deficits have gone through elementary school without any form of support or intervention. They described these students entered secondary school with extreme behavioural issues that, according to these interviewees, had been neglected and unresolved. As further described by interviewees:

> *I'll hear of kids in grade 9 or 10, and I will call* [other behavioural consultants], *and they'll say 'I don't know anything.' And that kid has typically come from a school where they have just buried him for 8 years and then he is gone to high school and then the wheels totally fall off. But then it's almost too late because nobody's done anything, nobody's intervened"…"I don't believe that someone*

> *just reaches grade 9, and BOOM. I think if you were to go through an OSR* [Ontario Student Record] *you would definitely see a trail"…"But they are those kids that you know if you could've got to earlier, you should have got to earlier, you could've done something.* (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 1)

The notion of schools unwilling to access or implement supports to assist students with behaviour problems and skill deficits was discussed by a number of interviewees. The above quote is representative of numerous instances interviewees identified and described where students did not receive the assistance they needed. In many of these instances students ended up in an expulsion program or having missed a critical developmental period of intervention that would have created a lifelong positive impact. As pointedly stated by one special education consultant, "these issues could have been dealt with, never would have progressed" (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 2). School-based actors recognized, however, that closed schools are more likely to request assistance, from the school board for instance, if a situation became completely unmanageable or out of control. Interestingly, interviewees also considered closed schools may be more likely to pursue options and request assistance if parents who are strong advocates for their children begin to question schooling practices.

Although the school-based actors I spoke with had all adopted more progressive disciplinary models and engage available resources to varying degrees, they were aware of schools that do not. Interviewee offered possible explanations for such behaviours, including insecurity, fear of critique, and reluctance to change the way "things have always been done." As well, administrators may be less inclined to disturb the status quo, spend the time to educate their staff or confront their staff about their poor practices (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 2). One school professional described the tendency for schools that experience a traumatic event to "close in amongst itself" (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 2). Simply put: some schools are open to forms of assistance and guidance available and other schools remain closed off, choosing to work through issues that occur within the school their own way.

Administrator awareness of policy, how to meet student needs, and willingness to access resources may reflects school wide practices. Based on the information presented here, school administrators may function as an additional barrier inhibiting successful policy implementation within schooling practices, as policy may first have to penetrate through the level of school administration to reach the level of teachers and other school-based actors.

b) Knowledge and Practice

Labaree discusses school administrators as lacking the resources available, which are typical of other workplaces, to motivate staff compliance with management objectives (2010, p.125-129). Specifically, he describes that administrators have a "weak control over instruction" due to administrations inability to fire or promote teachers, set teacher pay and the implications of teachers' unions. Labaree identifies this unique administrator – staff relationship as a function of loose coupling. Interview data supports Labaree's

argument illustrating how schools and administrators have a limited control of teachers' work and time.

Administrators describe there are restrictions around how much involvement they can request of staff to assist integrating reform policies and protocols into current school practices. Administrators describe further restrictions regarding requests of staff to participate in professional learning, organized at the school or board, to educate staff on new legislation. As discussed here, there are limitations around what administrators can ask and expect of school staff:

> *It all has to be voluntary. I can't mandate a meeting that's more than 15 minutes before the school day starts. So if I say to my staff, 'We've developed this new thing and it's great. We want to in-service all the staff. Can you be here at 7:30am on Monday morning?' If 4 come great. If the other 36 don't, there's nothing I can do about it. During nutrition break I can't mandate a meeting, that's their break. We can't do it after school because they only have to be here for a 15 minutes after school. I've got 1 staff meeting a month and it can be no longer that 70min long"…* "*I can only demand of my staff very little, and when can I ask them to do it? Not that often. So then I'm relying on my ability to keep them happy, so they will voluntarily want to do these things. That's another big factor that constantly comes into play.* (Interview: Principal, 3)

School staff may elect not to attend staff meetings, school training and professional learning around progressive discipline. Arguably, the degree school staff are aware and knowledgeable of progressive policies and practices of student discipline may directly impact how staff evaluate and respond to student behaviour.

Labaree discusses the nature of teaching as isolated in self contained classrooms and administrators as "architecturally barred from knowing exactly what is going on inside the classroom" (2010, p.149). Reinforcing Labaree's argument, school-based actors describe the limitations of administrators and school board officials in supervising and managing what happens in classrooms. One principal described this lack of control as "a danger," and stated "you can say what you want at the administration level, as a teacher 'When I go into my classroom I do whatever it want.' There is a danger there" (Interview: Principal, 3). This perspective is representative of many educators interviewed. As further described:

> *You have teachers who don't want people coming into their classes. They don't want to have somebody in. I think it's because they're not sure, they're not sure that what they're doing is right"…"A teacher goes into a classroom and teaches, and how do you know you're doing the right thing and would you want to speak up necessarily in their first 4 years? Which is why we probably lose most teachers in their first 4 years. And usually new teacher coming into school gets the kids in the split* [grade] *4/5 that nobody wants, "Oh let's put all the devils in her class."* (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 2)

Interview data also reveals limitations around enforcing school staff to participate in the development and implementation of student plans and strategies connected to the early and ongoing stages of progressive intervention. As described in the following quote, the implementation of class based strategies is "on the onus of the teacher" and the teachers' union is a loophole in the process of implementation:

> *It's on the onus of teacher. One boy last year, we were talking about an IEP, the teacher flipped, he flipped because it was extra paper work. He didn't want to bring it to the MDT* [Multidisciplinary Team] *and flipped because 'I don't want this paper work!' 'But he may need this support?' 'I got too much on my plate.' We were able to get some support, but we ended up having to go a different route"…"There are some loopholes. And the loopholes could be finances and your limited because of the union and the jargon with the teachers and what they're allowed and what they're going to grieve. It's really a political chess match, and that's where you really see who's with the kids and who isn't. We're not asking you to do anything more than what you're supposed to.* (Interview: CYW, 1)

Interview data supports Labaree's discussion of the weak control school administrators have over teaching practices. School-based actors identify restrictions on ensuring staff attend professional learning and the inability of administrators to influence classroom teaching and practices. Fundamentally, school administrators have little control over what teachers know and what teachers do.

Contributing to inconsistent practices, findings suggest that some school-based actors, administrators included, may be unaware of their limited knowledge and abilities to support social, emotional and behavioural student needs. To provide a specific example, during an interview one school principal explained the processes of how he administers discipline, which may suggest a vague comprehension of how to effectively support student needs during discipline processes. As described:

> *The direction you go depends on what the infraction may happen to be. If it's something like a social difficulty, it would be periods of isolation. But those aren't ideal because unless you have someone to help them learn, making them sit by themselves isn't going to help with their social skills. So that doesn't necessarily facilitate growth. So a student who has problems interacting and socially, removing them from nutrition breaks would be a deterrent but also an incentive for them to correct their behaviour.* (Interview: Principal, 3)

This school principal suggested "periods of isolation" as a disciplinary response for a student struggling with "social difficulties." The principal then acknowledged that "sitting alone doesn't necessarily facilitate growth." It was unclear if this school professional understood how to support students with social development needs or, more

generally, how to build student learning into disciplinary situations. It is perhaps also worth pointing out, this principal considers the use of discipline as "a deterrent" for student behaviour which seems to contradict progressive philosophies and may be more in line with zero tolerance approaches based on deterrence logic. The knowledge, perspectives and general leadership of school administration may shape behaviours of school staff. The perspectives described here may also be echoed within broader school practices.

The implementation of Ministry training on racial stereotyping, anti-racism, and cultural differences was part of the settlements reached between OHRC and TDSB, and between OHRC and the Ontario Ministry. Professional development is available for educators to assist in furthering their knowledge and abilities to identify, understand and support students with social, emotional and behavioural challenges. However, professional development is optional, not mandatory. As described by a special education consultant:

> *If people come in with not a wide background of working with children with a variety of needs, then that's something they certainly need exposure to"…"Classes are very very diverse. For some teachers it's a huge eye-opening experience"… "Really what I hear myself saying is, how do we help people change what they're doing in the classroom? Many* [educators] *don't have the skills that they need. We can provide all kinds of workshops but if they're not mandatory then people may not take them.* (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 1)

Educators shared a common perception that many school professionals lack the tools to support students with complex needs. According to one principal, there is no incentive to continue learning if a teacher is happy with their pay scale. This interviewee also pointed out that the Ontario College of Teachers (first established in 1996) may have come into existence after many teachers began teaching and, therefore, if these more experienced teachers do not continue with professional learning, they may not be aware of requirements to maintain their teaching certification (Interview: Principal, 2). Professional development is available, but is it being accessed? If not, to what extent is the professional development offered helping students with complex needs reach their full potential?

Interview data reveals concerns among school-based actors regarding the optional nature of professional learning, suggesting those who opt to participate may already be interested in the topic area and may already possess sympathies and awareness. Educators who have the greatest need and would benefit the most from equity oriented training, may not attend. One principal in particular described the existence of equity issues among school staff:

> *We have intentional programs to teach about character and equity issues for students but I think we have some catching up to do with the staff. I think they should be obliged to, I don't think it should be a choice. If we go back to human*

> *rights, there's a legal obligation to make sure there's no discrimination"…"We have work to do at the staff level. It's not a question of whether it's an issue, it's how are we going to address the necessity to address race and equity at the school and staff level.* (Interview: Principal, 2)

Mandating professional development was identified by many interviewees as a way to address general discriminatory attitudes, lack of knowledge, and general inconsistencies in the behaviours and practices of school-based actors. Interviewees also discussed the need for more professional learning around the distinct dimensions of equity (including culture, ethnicity, gender, physical and intellectual ability, social and emotional development, and behavioural challenges) and how to accommodate the wide range of student attributes and qualities within one diverse classroom.

Interview data reveals the lack of knowledge on the part of school-based actors may influence the degree progressive discipline strategies accomplish goals of social, emotional and behavioural student development. Although the abilities to support student needs is not consistent among all school-based actors, students may still receive the support they need due to in school resources (such as CYWs, Behaviour EAs, and school teams), out of school resources at the school board level and within the community. Despite the various supports and resources available, however, interviewees recognized that student needs may be unidentified or neglected if school-based actors do not possess some basic knowledge of student challenges, social, emotional, behavioural or otherwise.

Dealing with problem behaviour is a prevalent and predominant aspect within education, though perhaps not regularly conceptualized as a teaching and learning area. The processes of shaping behaviour may reflect more of an assumed, taken-for-granted, or peripheral aspect of education as compared to the centrality of academic priorities. Findings seem to support Coburn's argument (2004) that educators may be more likely to adhere to environmental messages when fundamental principals are compatible with their own perspectives and practices.

c) Fragmented Application

Interview data reveals varying degrees of progressive policy implementation throughout the developmental stages of progressive discipline, and, at times, a lack of implementation altogether. At the first stage of progressive intervention for example, educators considered that positive and preventative initiatives incorporated within everyday schooling practices have the most impact, reflecting a more "holistic approach" to behaviour management as illustrated in the quote below. By nature, school wide initiatives call for school wide participation and thus faculty buy in. Accordingly:

> *I remember thinking at one point that it felt out of control. That we needed to put it back into balance again. You know we did an anti-bullying kind of initiative. But you know it was all sort of band-aid stuff and it wasn't really a holistic approach"..."What I don't really buy into is the drive by shooting bully prevention assembly. That's good, but that alone isn't going to make a change. It*

> *has to be very grassroots community based, everyday, becomes part of your culture. And that is the only thing that is really going to make a difference.* (Interview: Principal, 1)

Perhaps under different labels, notions of "coaching students," "setting students up for making good choices" and "creating conditions for success" were themes discussed among interviewees. However, interview data reveals some educators have negative feelings about whole school strategies that require a degree of action, activity compliance, or shift in regular practice. For example, as illustrated in the below quote, strategies that involve educators incorporating something into their daily classroom activities or modifying their teaching style slightly may not be viewed favourably by all educators in a school. To provide an example, the special education consultant quoted below described the implementation of Ministry Character Education initiatives:

> *The word for November is respect. That word is written on the black board and the teacher says, 'We are all going to have respect this month,' and it's never mentioned again. And in the meantime, the things the teacher says and does are not respectful. The things the kids are staying in the classroom are not respectful and the teacher's not calling them on it. You know, how do you call kids on that? How do you edit what you're saying before your mouth opens? When a student does something that is terrible, how do you deal with that respectfully vs. doing it disrespectfully in front of the class? That's where money needs to be spent, it absolutely is. The money is just not put into it. What does that say about our priorities? Test Scores, we have to compete with test scores. That's the focus.* (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 3)

A number of school-based actors described that although many schools adopt initiatives (such as Ministry Character Development strategies), measures may remain superficially integrated into schooling practices and become "an entertainment form" (Interview: CYW, 1). Processes of loose coupling are evident as some schools may adopt initiatives demonstrating commitment to Ministry and Board operating directives, however, school activities may remain somewhat inconsistent with strategy objectives. A number of educators I spoke with considered that few school-based actors are committed to investing the time required to experience success with initiatives designed to be integrated school wide. This is a clear example of loose coupling, where institutional practices are uninspected and decoupled at the instructional practices.

Beyond the positive and preventative stages of progressive discipline, interviewees described fragmentation within the escalating stages behavioural intervention. Educators continually identified the importance of keeping students in school and sending students home as a last resort. According to one behaviour educational assistant quoted below, however, the extent that school-based actors are committed to keeping students in school may not be best practice and may not provide the greatest learning outcome for students. This interviewee described common patterns

where students continue to demonstrate inappropriate behaviour and continue making rounds between the class, the office, and the in school suspension room. She recognized in these situations the learning is not happening and, given the history of the student, at a certain point the next step should be sending the student home. She explained:

> *And as much as possible one of the changes is to keep them in school. A lot more students are kept in. Where there is a problem, is where they're kept too long, where the student was verbally abusive and disruptive in class to the teacher. They've maybe been sent to the VP and the VP sends them to me. And they act exactly the same way with me, so I sent them back to the VP. In my mind, being sent home would be the next step, but I find out they were just sent back to class to go to the next period. And then it's like, 'Oops!' Why did that happen? And I'm not told why that happened. So, I've challenged administration, when I make the decision that the student now has to come up to see the VP, they know at that point, the next step should've been a sent home. And when they're not, my credibility is gone.* (Interview: Behaviour EA)

The quote above illustrates how discipline based on discretionary approaches may be unintentionally complicated and contradictory when students are dealing with more than one school staff member. Educators may have different perspectives on a situation or a student, they may have preferred methods of addressing behaviour, or may choose a certain discipline strategy they feel will impact student behaviour. The interviewee quoted above further explained how these inconsistent practices can lead to educators to lose confidence in the schools' discipline processes. As further described:

> *It's like I have no say. And I've told kids to go to the VP and had kids say, 'It's just going to be a waste if you send me up there and they're not going to do anything and they're just going to send me back or to my next class. So why send me to begin with?' That's disturbing for me because it means that my call to send somebody up to the VP is not okay. It's like I have no say because nothing's going to happen when they go to the next step. And that gets frustrated when that happens and it happens all the time.* (Interview: Behaviour EA)

Without a formalized and structured approach educators may, inadvertently, contradict the response of another school professional. As indicated by a number of interviewees, feeling a loss of credibility or a loss of confidence in school discipline processes may be unintended consequences of discretionary approaches. Further, discipline based on discretion may limit students learning outcome. In the end, the message that 'behaviour is not ok' may not be clearly communicated to students.

Findings suggest fragmentation also exists within the implementation of student plans and strategies. As previously described, various processes and resources are available for educators to support students experiencing behavioural related challenges. School staff may have varying levels of commitment to maintain consistency in practice,

or perhaps a general disinterest in applying student success strategies altogether. The level of staff support may reflect the level of success that students experience. For example, a school board special education consultant described how teachers may not attend Multidisciplinary Team meetings when one of their students is on the agenda for discussion. As described:

> *We could sit at the Multidisciplinary Team and have all kinds of suggestions, but sometimes the classroom teacher isn't even there. Sometimes the Special Ed teacher is the only one there or the principal. So then I wonder, okay how is that getting communicated to the classroom teacher? It's great to have the IEP plans, but unless the teacher's onboard and knowledgeable, how is that being carried out*?"…"*I think that the work needs to happen at the school level is getting the classroom teacher onboard and knowledgeable. For them to think, 'Ok, here we have some people who can help us.' But, for whatever reason teachers don't feel that.* (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 1)

The quote provided above illustrates how educators are not consistently in support of the student success strategies. As well, this quote indicates how staff may not appreciate the advice and assistance school board consultants are trying to provide. As described in the quote below, school-based actors also discussed problems connected to the willingness of educators to become familiar and implement student plans and strategies in classrooms. As described:

> *I think the biggest challenge with the IEP is to have teachers familiar with them. I have teachers phone me, they're frustrated, they're having trouble, they don't want the student back in class. They tell me what they're doing and it completely contradicts the IEP. I'll ask if they've read the IEP, if the answer is 'Yes, I've read the IEP.' Then I'm thinking, 'Well you're not following the IEP.' That's a concern, for sure. So that plan wasn't put in place, so we are still dealing with the exact same thing through till the end of the year and that can be frustrating.* (Interview: Behaviour EA)

Implementation and monitoring of IEPs involves information sharing among school staff involved with the student. The quotes above illustrate a clear disconnection in communication among school staff working with students.

Professionals also described problems maintaining consistency of individualized plans and strategies specifically when students are re-integrated from alternative education programs back into the home school. Interviewees considered alternative programs as equipping students with skills and abilities, which they hope, students will draw on in mainstream schooling to improve their schooling experiences and outcomes. Interviewees described processes that assist student transition, for instance alternative program staff assist students in their home school for a period of time to facilitate re-integration, trying to "set them up for success for re-entering their home school"

(Interview: Alt. Ed. program teacher). Although interviewees recognized a key piece is missing in this process:

> [Mainstream educators] *view that, well* [alternative education] *programs are just a nice way to get rid of the behaviour for 6 weeks. The alternative ed people that's their job to help with that integrating piece and then when their job is done, it's like they're passing the baton off and no one is running with it. And unfortunately the student loses out. I've gone to student and I've said, 'Hey do you remember anything about the program?' 'No.' It definitely fizzles out. It's like if you leave a cap on a pop off for too long. The language is strong at the start, and towards the end it just fizzled out, and it gets diluted with everything else that's going on"…"It's unfortunate that it doesn't continue because I think the student loses out on that skill that he has learned. If we can all work together, in a way where when you pass the baton off someone keeps running with it. That's really the goal but it doesn't happen*. (Interview: CYW, 1)

A number of interviewees discussed how mainstream school staff may be initially excited that a plan has been developed to support students. Overtime, however, the excitement may wane and implementation may become inconsistent. The CYW quoted above further described that school staff may perceive programs to be ineffective because shortly after a student leave a program, they may be re-expelled and referred into another program. The CYW suggested, however, "It's not the program it's the aftercare and the school needs to take more of an ownership on that to make sure it doesn't get lost" (Interview: CYW, 1). A number of interviewees described similar perspectives. A number of school-based actors also held the common view that, "If [students] go back into a school environment and that works, than those manipulative learned behaviours can come back again" (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader). A number of interviewees suggested that other educators may perceive school discipline processes as unsuccessful and perhaps lose confidence in the effectiveness of strategies. However, interviewees commonly attributed less successful outcomes to inconsistent educator practices of implementing and maintaining disciplinary strategies.

As previously described, alternative programs help to identify student problem behaviours, assist students to unlearn these behaviours and adopt socially acceptable behavioural patterns valued within mainstream school. Fundamentally, when strategies are not supported and maintained when students are re-integrated back into mainstream school, problem behaviours may resurface. Many interviewees discussed the need to increase commitment from mainstream school staff to not only implement and maintain plans, but also to keep student plans current reflecting student progression during the school year.

Interviewees described investing time and resources into processes of identifying student needs, and developing plans and strategies to create conditions for student success. A clear reoccurring theme within the interview data identifies the reluctance of educators to implement student success strategies. Fundamentally, plans developed to

assist students are not consistently implemented. Although these plans and strategies can assist the teacher with classroom management, findings suggest that many educators feel becoming familiar and implementing plans may take too much time. There seems to be a gap here. Taking time to become familiar with plans may take time initially, however, overall implementing these plans may save time and prevent frustration. The level of commitment and degree staff continue to be committed can impact the success of individualized student plans and strategies.

Inconsistency: Two School Examples

As described, schooling practices of student discipline tended to be shaped by the leadership of school administration. Findings suggest that some schools may initially appear to implement progressive discipline policies. However, through closer inspection discipline practices may be inconsistent with progressive philosophies.

To provide an example, one school principal in particular agreed to participate in an interview, although did express a reluctance to speak with me. When I arrived at the school and met with the principal, however, I was informed that he had changed his mind. I was asked to leave the premises and not speak to any staff on my way out. I informed my contacts at the school board about my visit to this school, who then consulted with this principal. In the end, the principal did agree to be interviewed about progressive discipline within this school.

His word choice, the language he used, and how he described the practices and behaviours of staff at the school reflected the policy documents of the board and ministry, verbatim. The principal began the interview expressing agreement and practices in support of progressive policies. As the interview continued, however, he became more comfortable and our discussion began to shift. He began describing policies and student behaviours in negative terms. For example, he commented, "It's human nature when you see a student that's not doing anything that resembles being a student committed to learning, it's human nature to lose interest in that person" (Interview: Principal, 4). He identified the student population between 16 and 18 years of age as the students who have the greatest challenges with behaviour and are the most difficult to engage. He described that because students are required by the Education Act to be in a full-time program until 18 years of age does not mean students want to be in school. As described:

> *I've told* [students], *'You're wasting your time here, but I know you don't feel good about this. I know you don't enjoy being unsuccessful.' But, still* [sarcastically] *we have to be creative and come up with the right sequence of programs that suddenly is the answer to what that student needs to be successful. And sometimes that's a very difficult thing to do, particularly when they don't help the cause and they don't tell you what it is they're looking for. They just know they like coming into the building because of course they like being with their friends. They love that, they are good at that. But they aren't any good, or skilled at making any kind of commitment to what it means to be a good student*. (Interview: Principal, 4)

This principal described the efforts of school staff to engage students as burdensome and frustrating. What is interesting to note, as previously described, the philosophy of progressive discipline revolves around investigating root causes of behaviour, accessing resources to support student needs and behavioural learning, and by addressing core issues minimizing future behavioural problems. This principal described continual cycles of students who continue to struggle with the same problems. As indicated in the quote above, this principal blatantly tells students they are wasting their time at school and then questions why students do not directly communicate their needs. In comparison, interviews conducted with other educators suggest that establishing nurturing, respectful and trusting relationships facilitates openness and communication between staff and students. Based on interview data, the effect of engaging students encourages students to share and be open about their life situation or the ways they may be struggling, at which point the support that students need may be clear for staff. This principal goes on to explain his preference for deterrence and punitive approaches to student discipline. Accordingly:

> *I had a strategy that I could use if the student was 16 years of age and wasting everybody's time, I had the ability to remove them from school, that was my strategy, and that was my ability to do that"…"I think that helped with improving the tone of the school, because we were able to remove students for an indefinite period of time, we were able to remove students who made it clear that they had no desire to be here. So the corollary of that is now the age is 18, and now it's incumbent on us to be more progressive in our approach to discipline, and by that I mean a student makes a poor decision, we are ill advised to respond immediately with suspension. Because now were dealing with a population, and x number of students in the school, that are still connected with the building for an additional two years. And they're just as disengaged at age 18 or 17 as they were at 15 or 16.* (Interview: Principal, 4)

The perspectives described here are not consistent with the progressive discipline approach. This principal describes preferences for removing students who are experiencing behavioural difficulties in school. He described strategies to improve school climate by removing students from the premises, instead of supporting students and facilitating their ability to enact value commitments and align themselves with the behavioural standards. This interview provides an example of a principal who may be superficially supporting and advocating for progressive discipline strategies.

This principal informed me at the end of this interview that his perspectives and opinions were reflective of all staff and all students at the school. Following this interview, again, I was instructed to leave the premises and not speak to any staff on my way out. It is important to note here, though a brief discussion is also provided in the methods section, that all interviews conducted for this study were from willing participants who agreed on their own accord to participate. School principals were my

point of entry who allowed my access to approach and interview school staff. The interview data collected for this study may be limited in this way. Every school in The Board was approached, few elected to participate. Interestingly, the schools identified during interviews as "closed schools" were all schools who declined participation - with one exception. The school described in the above interview example was identified to me as considered within the school board as a "closed school." The schools who were not open to participate in this study, the principals who were not open to allowing me access to interview their staff, may have been the schools that provided the greatest insight into dilemmas of school organization and decoupling processes.

To provide a second example, I encountered an interesting case where the vice principal and the principal of a single elementary school where on opposite sides of the structured formal discipline and progressive discipline spectrum. The following example illustrates the inconsistencies of progressive policy and varied perspectives on student discipline within a single school.

The principal had been at this school for many years and was comfortable with his own methods of addressing discipline which he had become accustom. He believed very strongly in individualized discipline, which he termed "a hodge podge approach." From his perspective, discipline was to be customized to fit the specific situation and the specific student. He described being leery about implementing some form of "boxed program," such as Lions Quest or Tribes. Noting, "The basic premises I find are pretty consistent, but come in a different shape, with a different bow on it." As further described:

> *I don't like being locked in where there are consequences like 1 detention, 2 detentions, half day suspension and then full day suspension. In some ways, I prefer some level of greyness to be able to adjust to the needs of the kid. I think children need to know there is going to be a consequence, I don't think they need to know exactly what the consequence is going to be"…"For some people they want to see action and specific consequence, and where it's the same every single time"…"Discipline is very individualized to make sure the behaviour doesn't happen again. The same thing doesn't work for every student. I'm not one for a purely black and white system, where you do this and you get that.* (Interview: Principal, 5)

During this interview the principal described instances where students act out for different reasons. Fundamentally, he advocates for the use of discretion, corrective learning opportunities, and individualized discipline that fits the specific student scenario. For this principal, his philosophy and practices of student discipline generally seemed to align with progressive policy.

The time I entered the school, the vice principal had been at this school for seven months. She had come from a school with a formal structured discipline protocol where specific behaviour equals specific consequence. She believed very strongly in the success

of strict infraction based discipline methods. To this point, the vice principal had made little impact in shifting the discipline processes that were currently practiced. As noted:

> *I came from a school where we had a process that was absolutely clear, it was consistent. Parents knew what it was and students knew what it was. I knew what it was and the principal knew what it was. It didn't matter who saw the student, the principal or myself, everybody was on board with what happened"… "Here my day is filled with dealing with discipline. From my experience I believe it's because there isn't a very clear lock step process. For teachers, for students, for us to know what is going on. I don't think any school should be overrun with behaviour, I think this one is.* (Interview: Vice Principal, 2)

As further described, this vice principal's biggest criticism lies with the lack of consistency and clarity around rules and expectations, and how behaviour will be addressed. Accordingly:

> *I would like to see a standard process so that we're not having to think about it each time. So if this happened, this is what we do, so it's the same every time. That we're not having to think about it each time and I find that that's the difficulty right now.* (Interview: Vice Principal, 2)

The vice principal was adamant about maintaining the structured protocol from her previous school within the discipline she administered at her current school. The administrator perspectives around school discipline at this school are particular interesting because of the distinct individualized vs. structured philosophy differences represented within one school. Evidently, the forms of discipline administered at the office would vary for each student in this school depending on which administrator they met with.

As previously described, schooling practices of student discipline are shaped by the leadership of school administration. Under the direction of principals, schools may be reluctant to shift away from regulatory structures of formal discipline and embrace policies of progressive discipline. Some schools may have clear preferences for the use of strict infraction systems where the application and delivery of discipline is not consistent with progressive policy. On the other hand, some schools may appear to implement progressive discipline policies; however, discipline practices may be inconsistent with progressive philosophies.

Without a formalized protocol of student discipline procedures findings reveal that educators' practices and strategies to managing student behaviour may not always reflect progressive discipline ideals. Findings appear to support Coburn's (2004) position, that educators' interpretations of policy, combined with their individual perspectives and ritualized practices may not be consistent with policy. In particular, discipline based on discretion contributes to varied and contradictory practices among educators. Due to inconsistent and fragmented applications of discipline practices, educators may lose

confidence in progressive discipline approaches as well as in the school discipline processes more generally.

d) Fragmented Communication

Interview data reveals fragmentation in communication among school staff is a key organizational problem impacting the consistency of student discipline practices in connection to the successful implementation of progressive policies and student learning outcomes. The lack of communication between the office and teaching staff may be considered a function of loose coupling.

Interviews with principals and vice principals identifies problems of communication about the discipline processes that take place within the classrooms. One vice principal in particular discussed problems she encounters when students arrive at the office and teachers have not contacted administrators to provide information about what happened. As described by this vice principal, if she is going to "see a student" she wants to know why she is seeing that student beforehand. She describes resorting to asking students themselves, "Why are you here?" (Interview: Vice Principal, 3). This vice principal further described:

> *That's why it's so important at the beginning of the school year to have every teacher of layout, "This is what I'm doing in my classroom, this is my process, these are the good things I'm doing to reward behaviour, and these are the things I'm doing when there's bad behaviour."* (Interview: Vice Principal, 3)

During interviews, a number of administrators described that teachers may not inform the office about discipline practices within their class more generally, or the measures taken with specific students. As a result, principals and vice principals may not know what the next step in the progression of escalating discipline may be when students arrive at the office.

On the other hand, teachers also described frustration with the lack of communication about the processes that take place at the office. Teachers explained typical situations where a student is sent to the office and returns to class, and the teacher feels "out of the loop." Administration may not provide any feedback about what happened. When teachers are not informed or provided an explanation about measures taken, interview data suggests, teachers may get the message that nothing has been done or not enough has been done at the office. As illustrated within the below quote, interview data suggests this lack of communication may lead teachers to feel unsupported by administration, especially when the student returns from the office and continues to demonstrate the same behaviour they were initially sent to the office for. As noted:

> *And there's so many things that come up, so it's hard for the teacher to come and ask too because it might be class after class after class, kid after kid after kid. But what they see is that the kids left and now they're back and there's no explanation. You don't get it and then you're dealing with something else, the*

> *message seems to be that nothings being done. And sometimes nothing is being done, and that's true as well.* (Interview: Behaviour EA)

In general, school-based actors described feeling overwhelmed with the amount of work they have. It may be difficult for teachers or administrators to break away from what they are doing and actively enquire about the processes taken at the office or in the classroom. Due to a lack of communication, school-based actors described often feeling unsure of student behaviour and how to respond with the appropriate discipline. Preferably, teachers would contact administers prior to sending the student to the office and the administrator would contact the teacher following their meeting with the student. However, no schools I visited had procedures in place to communicate these processes that were considered consistent or successful.

Rotary schools create an additional layer of complexity for educators to communication and information sharing about students. In higher grades students typically travel between different classrooms each day. A few interviewees had concerns about students who potentially may demonstrate the same problem behaviours within a number of classrooms, though this connection is never been made due to lack of communication. One teacher who described this concern recognized if the student was demonstrating similar behaviours in all of their classes, it may be an indication of a bigger issue, perhaps an unidentified complex need (Interview: teacher, 1). The majority of school-based actors interviewed identified the need for improved communication among staff.

As previously described, the level of initial and continued commitment of school staff to implement individualized student plans and strategies can impact the success of these initiatives. However, an interesting pattern emerged within the interview data regarding the lack of implementation of strategies developed for students, in connection to the level of awareness among school staff that strategies exist. Accordingly, lacking knowledge of plans and strategies may affect if and how strategies are implemented.

For example, school-based actors may not participate in school team meetings. In these situations, interview data reveals inconsistent communication about information, developments and events that took place during the meetings. As described, information may not be shared with teachers:

> *Communication is a weakness in the Student Success Team, we need to communicate better. So, if you're a teacher you've referred the student, well the feedback should go back to the teacher"…"We have students who have behaviour plans and I don't think that gets communicated to the teachers. I think there's some expectation that someone knows there's a behaviour plan but it's not communicated. So that's a bit tricky when people don't know there's one in existence. With behaviour plans, a student comes in with definite behaviour concerns and there's a plan written out specifically about behaviour. And teachers don't often know they exist. A lot of teachers walk into the class and they're blind to what they're dealing with*. (Interview: Behaviour EA)

Responding to this comment, I asked about the communication process currently in place to relay information discussed at a school team meeting with the student teacher. The behaviour EA quoted above responded to my question, indicating:

> *The teacher would have to track down the team. If a teacher refers a student, I think whoever's chairing the meeting doesn't send information back. It might have something to do with how large the school is and how quickly you can get information out. How busy are people and maybe they're just overwhelmed and this is one more thing. Often people are overwhelmed, they'd rather just do the day and get out.* (Interview: Behaviour EA)

In general, school-based actors describe feeling overwhelmed with the amount of work they have. Based on the personality of the individual teacher, some teachers may actively seek out team members and follow up with reference to the outcome of the team discussion. However, other teachers may not take on this responsibility, leaving them unaware. The behaviour EA quoted above also recognized that teachers do not often refer students and put students on the agenda for discussion during team meetings. She recognized the majority of student referrals in her school come from her or the VP reflecting the frequency students are disciplined. There may be a connection here. Perhaps teachers who do not directly involve themselves in meeting procedures or do not actively enquire about meeting discussions, may not see the value of referring students and possibly feel nothing is being done. Due to the lack of communication and information sharing about the processes and outcomes of the meetings may impact the use and implementation of plans and strategies developed to assist students.

Education professionals interviewed emphasized communication as the "weakest link" throughout the continuum of student discipline processes (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader). Interviewees described that when a student is referred to behavioural services at the school board level, one person at the students' home school is identified as the students' Case Manager who is responsible for maintaining communication between stakeholders at the students' home school, the school board and any additional programming the student may be involved in (alternative education programs for example). At this stage, communication between the different stakeholders may become even more complicated and the sharing of student information may become more inconsistent.

One interviewee described a computer database that was previously set up at her school. Using this system, school staff could input and compile information about students to facilitate communication about student behaviours in the different classes, about various student plans and discipline practices in connection to each student. As described here, however, this strategy did not catch on:

> *No one wanted to take the time to fill it out, 'It's time consuming you have to fill in a couple things.' To me it was something that was very valuable and it's too bad that people didn't jump on board. They just saw it as more work. But it's less*

> *work"…"You put it all there and everybody can contribute"…"For the VPs use, like if they were dealing with something, 'Oh the CYW dealt with this person and there's some background info. Oh I better not send them home I better keep them here.' That kind of thing, or, 'Oh, they've been down to room 143* [in school suspension room] *10 times, I'm not sending them down, now we're at the point we have to do something else.'* (Interview: Behaviour EA)

Communication is a clear problem in schools considering the diversity of student populations, the various behavioural plans, strategies, the discipline practices and procedures, as well as the numerous school staff that come into contact with each student. However, interview data identifies a further complication involving issues of student confidentiality. One school professional expressed her appreciation for concerns of confidentiality, though described one student in particular in her school "who has a potential to be really violent" due to a disorder. She identified issues of student confidentiality as preventing this information from being shared among the teachers and school staff who interact with this student on a regular basis. She considered that problems associated with communication may contribute to problems of safety (Interview: Behaviour EA). Interview data identifies the level of information sharing and processes of communication among school-based actors (described above) is connected to the direction and mentality of school administration.

Teachers and administrators described communication processes that had been in place in the past, maybe at different school educators worked at previously, and perhaps at one time even successful. However, no successful process of communication among school staff was identified during interviews conducted for this study. Interview data reveals communication among school staff as a key organizational problem impacting the success of student behavioural learning and the consistent implementation of progressive discipline practices.

Findings suggest that fragmented communication can lead to educators feeling unsure of student behaviour and how to respond with the appropriate discipline. In addition, absent or varied communication can lead to educators being unaware that student strategies exist, as well as inconsistencies regarding if and how strategies are implemented. Fragmented communication may contribute to students' complex needs going unidentified and unsupported.

e) Resistance to Change

Interview data suggests the majority of educators are on board with progressive approaches. However, findings also indicate various inconsistencies between policy and school practices. Interviewees described, some school staff are struggling with the shift towards progressive models of student discipline. Educators may have lived with the strict infraction system embedded within logic of zero tolerance for years. As previously advised by the Ministry, boards and schools, educators may have incorporated deterrent based philosophies into their perspectives of discipline and classroom management strategies, and committed themselves through years of practice. Essentially, school-based

actors may resist implementing progressive discipline initiatives because they have integrated and adopted more deterrent, punitive based discipline as part of their dispositions and *habitus*.

School-based actors described difficulties in connection to staff turnover. Specifically, challenges involving a new principal entering a school were identified. As previously noted, interviewees recognized the likelihood that the principal designates the disciplinary strategies and procedures that are established within school practice. As well, groups of staff strongly advocating for progressive, structured and more punitive based philosophies were described within a number of schools. Two principals interviewed described situations where they entered a new school and replaced a principal with a more punitive mindset. In both situations, a group of staff strongly advocating for "the ways things have always been done" actively resisted the progressive based changes desired by the new administrator. One principal in particular was new to a school the current year interviews were conducted for this study. She reflected on her experiences trying to shift an uncooperative staff, and described the following:

> *You have very strong staff members who are your active resisters, or your passive resistors, or you've got your out and out terrorists, right. Those are my categories for understanding their behaviour. So there are some that are just fighting against everything you do, others that don't say anything but also don't pay attention to anything that you do, and then there are some that are just hugely vocal"..."But I think as you work through and they start to see the value, you know, 'Oh, we did help that student and we did get them into a program,' and 'That parent did take them to the doctor"…"or whatever, whatever, whatever, 'Oh, I can see.' But again, they see it's more work for them. But definitely I think they do feel good about the culture and where we landed in the end*. (Interview: Principal, 6)

This principal described how she struggled with staff who resisted the progressive changes she was trying to implement. She recognized the shift from punitive to progressive was slowly taking place and staff were beginning to see the advantages and positive outcomes of progressive strategies. She explained the difficulties of getting everyone moving and thinking the same way, recognizing she had a long way to go. Interviewees described situations of more retributive school environments, where staff have been there for a long time and, as a whole, are reluctant to adopt a more progressive disciplinary framework.

In contrast to the findings described above, a number of interviewees considered their school, more generally, to have embraced progressive philosophies and are experiencing success implementing progressive practices. However, as illustrated in the following quote, interviewees described struggling with some staff members who remain reluctant to shift from a more punitive to progressive approach to student behaviour. As described:

> *People's attitudes who maybe have been teaching for 50 years, like, "This is the way it is. And society is really going down the tubes. And I'm not going to be flexible. We should be doing it this way." Sometimes they're reluctant to change how they deal with behaviour. People are pretty set, they don't want to change*. (Interview: Behaviour EA)

Interviewees described school-based actors who are typically more resistant have relied on deterrent methods within their teaching practices for many years. As well, educators who themselves have been socialized and raised in families who have used deterrent models of discipline, and perhaps raised their own children using this childrearing logic, may be more reluctant to embrace the change to progressive. For these teachers, zero tolerance may be more in line with their own understandings, experiences and perspectives of student discipline (Coburn, 2004). For example:

> *There are people who think this way automatically, it's part of their DNA, it's part of the way they've been socialized and raised, and that's the way they are. Certainly those people who haven't retired yet and are still VPs or principals or teachers, are of punitive mindset and that's what they're doing. That's the way they're doing business and that's the way they're running their classrooms and their schools. There are people where* [progressive discipline] *that's like a foreign language to them. That's human nature that everyone is different.* (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 3)

As previously discussed (Labaree, 2010) educators develop a personal approach to teaching and classroom management based on their personal experience. Teachers may be resistant to change or modify their practices corresponding to new policies due to the personal investment educators have in the way they teach. Accordingly, educators may fear altering this approach could impact their ability to manage student behaviour.

f) Varying Focus and Concern with Discipline

As previously discussed, administrators typically establish the practices and the organizational dynamics of schools. Teachers and educational professionals within schools are also key players within processes of student discipline. Interestingly, patterns emerged within the interview data about perceptions of typical educator personalities. Interviewees considered the teaching profession itself as attracting certain personalities which may create additional barriers for successful policy implementation. School-based actors characterised those who pursue education as tending to be more traditional, preferring clear cut procedures, structure and stability, may be less willing to take risks and tend to be less flexible. Interviewees suggested these typical educator attributes generally benefit students but create challenges when implementing change.

One school professional in particular described the teaching profession attracts people with the types of skills and qualifications who could earn more money working elsewhere, although have been attracted to education because of the security and the idea

of making a positive impact on the lives of others (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader). Another interviewee identified individuals attracted to the teaching profession as either teachers or managers. She noted that some people view teaching as a "temporary gig," or may become a teacher to advance their career in some way, perhaps in pursuit of becoming a principal and managing a school (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 2). Why educators chose to teach and how educators define their role may reflect their individual willingness to implement progressive discipline policy. As illustrated in the following quotes, problems associated with educators' unwillingness to deal with student behaviour and address underlying behaviour issues was a clear theme within the interview data. As described:

> *Some teachers are just there to teach academics. I actually had a teacher at one school who came in and said, "I know what you got, but you know what this is what I'm doing, and if he can't grasp that, I don't have time for that other stuff." And there's nothing you can do because by the College of Teachers, she was meeting the needs of the student's academics*. (Interview: CYW, 1)

Some educators described their own perspectives as similar to those described in the above quote. For example, as stated by one interviewee, "I don't deal with that discipline, that's not my job and I'm not expected to deal with that" (Interview: teacher, 2). Interviewees described how students can be passed along through classes, grades and schools, considering some educators find "it's easier to do nothing" (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator). Teachers may define their role as an educator based on the parameters of the subject they are paid to teach. Educators who do not view providing behavioural, social and emotional support as not part of their job requirements can directly impact how they approach and respond to student behaviour.

How educators may define or label individual students, as well, may influence how discipline is administered. Specifically, educators may have negative perceptions of students who have attended alternative programs and have been reintegrated back into mainstream school. Educators within the mainstream school system may perceive alternative programs will be "like a miracle. Like [students] are going to come in for six weeks and come out and be completely changed" (Interview: CYW, 1). Interviewees suggested that students need to be supported and encouraged when returning to mainstream school, that changing student behaviours takes time. Interviewees described that school staff may not give students a second chance following re-integration from alternative education programs, which may create further problems for students trying to shed their previous negative image and alter their previous negative behaviours. As illustrated in the following quote:

> *Especially teachers who are negative, when a kid comes back* [from the alternative education program] *they should have a fresh slate, but usually there's a lot of stuff that's being held in their path, 'Oh they're just a problem kid, rah rah rah.' It's the attitude. And if the attitudes no good, than that kid doesn't stand*

> *a chance. It's like that kid's wearing led boots; they're just going to sink. And it's hard to change people's views and minds on things. Sometimes the students don't get that second chance. And the kids read it too, they feel it, they see it"…"But unfortunately teachers aren't letting go of that negative view on that kid, so the first time they do something wrong it's like there's no grace. It's like it's black and it's white, as soon as that kid messes up it's like, 'See I told you he was a bad kid. See he's just bad.' They're just looking for something to nail him on. They don't stand a chance, they're like a sitting duck.* (Interview: CYW, 1)

Interviewees suggested that school staff may have negative images of students, pegging students as "just bad." As described in the above quotes, students can sense the negativity from school staff. These negative images can impact students' ability to change, desire to change, or belief in themselves that they can change.

To provide an alternative perspective, educators feeling pressure to focus on areas of priority may contribute to variability within policy implementation. Interviewees described feeling overwhelmed with the amount of time and resources required to effectively implement progressive discipline strategies. As described, punishment takes less effort:

> *It's much easier just to say, 'You did that and now you're suspended, out. Come back when you're ready. And out again, out, out, out.' It's much more difficult to make everybody understand the things that you have to do to set up a positive culture, it's not as easy as safe schools culture. Safe Schools was far more easy.* (Interview: Principal, 6)

School-based actors generally agreed that progressive strategies can create positive learning outcomes for students, though questioned: When is this all going to happen? Who is going to do it and who has the time? Progressive discipline was considered labour intensive and time consuming. Educators considered stress caused by students and the stress caused by the education system pulling their energy and attention, and described confusion about where to focus their energy.

Adding to these pressures, many educators perceived the Board and Ministry as constantly changing policies in a variety of diverse areas within education more generally. Educators perceived each policy as a separate and competing focus, feeling pressured to divide their attention and focus only on areas of priority. Specifically, educators described the pressure to improve test scores and deliver curriculum as preventing the deviation from academic goals. Practices of progressive discipline may not be where schools focus attention due to academic priorities. As described in the following quote, environmental pressures may contribute to schools becoming "dysfunctional" and "counterproductive:"

> *Schools can almost be rendered dysfunctional too, given the amount of stuff that they're doing. So, if there an OHIP school, that means their scores are not that*

> *high - they're going to have a literacy coach in there trying to boost them up, they will have superintendent in there saying we need to raise the scores. The principle is going to feel the pressure and pass that along to the teachers. If you've got a bunch of anxious teachers, they're not going to be good at teaching anything. That whole process is counterproductive. I think we get overloaded and people can't do well when they're stressed.* (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader)

Many school-based actors described academics as the main objective of the Ontario Ministry of Education, creating pressure at the board and school level to increasing EQAO test scores. This pressure and resulting process to increase EQAO scores is described:

> *The message that the teachers are getting, and they really get this through training, is that work hard with the students who are level 3 and above, work hard with the students who are 3s and 4s because the 3s could become 4s and 4s could become 5s. But if they are a 2 or a 1, just kind of leave those kids because they're really not going to amount to anything. The teachers are really getting that feeling. I'm sure it's not the intention of the Ministry of Education that we would leave kids behind, but that's a very big reality with the push that the ministry has to get those test scores up. And it's a lot of work to get a level 2 student to a 3, not as much work to get a 3 to a 4, and maybe even less work to get a 4 to a 5. And by concentrating on those kids, how many kids are you leaving behind? In the push to get the message out there about getting higher test scores, that's how it's being interpreted by principals and teachers, you know, "We have to get our scores up, work with your 3s and up. Do what you have to do to get those scores up. Moving a 1 to a 2 isn't going to make much difference, but getting those 3s to 4s and 4s to 5s that is going to make a huge difference for us so concentrate there*. (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 3)

Improving academic achievement was identified as the central, and in many cases the only, focus within the board, schools and classrooms. School-based actors defined school success as predicated on academic achievement, describing this focus as a detriment to the other areas of student wellbeing (Interview: Principal, 2). Educational professionals described feeling that schools and classrooms have no room for bullying awareness and prevention (Interview: Vice Principal, 1), equity oriented education (Interview: Principal, 2), and student engagement (Interview: Principal, 3). One principal in particular described the need to increase equity and Character Development within education, and pointedly stated, "the focus is so narrowly on academics that we aren't almost given permission to do that" (Interview: Principal, 2). Experiences and perceptions described here are reflected in the majority of interviews conducted.

Beyond improving test scores and deliver the curriculum interviewees explained the pressure educators are faced with, for example changing curriculum guides, new assessment guides, new report card programs, running breakfast and lunch programs,

group review and planning processes, etc. One teacher was particularly vocal about the amount of work downloaded on teachers. He explained:

> *It's unbelievable how you get hit from every direction with an enormous amount of stuff. It just can't be done, and yet it's policy. It's just a big joke. They really don't have any one looking over at the bigger picture, asking, 'Ok, what are we really asking teachers to do?' Because the more you ask teachers to do things that are unrealistic, it changes their attitude, it makes them so cynical, so teachers just go, 'Yah, I'll let that one ride by'"… "Teachers get to a point where they just turn it all off.* (Interview: Teacher, 3)

Considering the volume of work educators have, interviewees stated it is "physically impossible" to implement everything that is required by the Ministry and School Board, indicating "there are so many things it sometimes becomes superficial" (Interview: Principal, 3). Reflecting the numerous policies and protocols, one interviewee questioned, "who is the auditor to make sure these things are actually happening? It's not being monitored" (Interview: Guidance, 1). Interviewees recognized the limited control and supervision of educator practices as connected to and facilitating a lack of policy implementation.

Interviewees were clear to identify instances where, due to varying focus and concern with discipline, students with significant behavioural problems and social skill deficits have gone without any form of support or intervention. School-based actors described specific instances where, without needed support, students ended up in expulsion programs and/or missed critical developmental period of intervention. According to one alternative education facilitator, student supports and interventions are often too, little too late:

> *For me, progressive discipline hasn't worked because they're here* [expelled into alternative education programs]. *My philosophy on that is you can pay now or you can pay later in terms of provided personal service. If you pay later this is where we're at, 67% success rate. The dollars should be spent early on in grade 5 or grade 4, when the kid needs an intervention program. You can go and backtrack through the files of the kids we serve, and there are flags all through the OSRs"…"There are huge implications to what's going on. What we are doing is we aren't dealing with this. We are going to pay a lot more when that kid turns 18, and living down the road at 401 Maple Hurst, at $400 a day, incarcerated. That's paying a lot more, than what it would cost to help kids right now"… "You're paying for it somewhere*. (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator)

Based on the logic of loose coupling, education systems have uninspected institutional practices that are disconnected, or decoupled, from teaching and learning levels. Due to processes of loose coupling, the idealized and potential benefits of progressive reform may not consistently reach the level of student learning.

Ultimately, the majority of school-based actors identified academic curriculum as the main priority. Issues implementing progressive initiatives or resistance to embrace progressive philosophies and practices may be an unintended outcome of academic pressure. Coburn (2004) considers how educators respond to messages is connected to the nature of the environmental messages themselves. Findings suggest the degree of perceived voluntariness does reflect how educators respond and adhere to environmental messages (Coburn, 2004). As outlined in this section, educators identified academics as a priority and that test scores are often where time and resources are devoted.

g) Perceptions of Evolving Policy

A few educators did considered a benefit of constantly shifting policies, suggesting with the busyness of schools "things can get lost" and "without enough attention on a constant basis policies go by the way side pretty quickly" (Interview: Principal, 3). New policies stimulate reflection on current school practices, causing school-based actors to evaluate and realign practices with the board and Ministry goals. Interviewees recognized that policies shift not "because people are looking for chaos" but "because people are looking for a solution" that has not been found (Interview: Principal, 3). In spite of this, interviewees expressed clear frustration about constantly changing policies.

Perceptions of short term policy relevance, may contribute to inconsistent policy implementation within schools. In general, school-based actors described perceptions of the guidelines, procedures and polices within which they have to operate as changing so quickly they struggle to keep on top of what is most current. One principal provided an insightful account of the reality of policy implementation at his school. The principal described the need for teachers to incorporate the philosophies behind policy into their way of thinking and behaviour. Supporting Labaree's extension of Lipsky's *Street Level Bureaucrats*, this principal recognized that teachers enact policy in the eyes of students and parents, noting that educators struggle to do so with confidence due to perceived constant policy changes. As stated:

> *From a teacher's perspective, the difficulty for a teacher in the classroom is, 'I'm functioning here, someone tells me I have to re-think, re-gig and re-assess my philosophies. I start to make that part of the makeup of who I am, so I can in some convincing way speak with parents and students who don't understand, because I'm the salesperson for that, and then it changes again.' And that's happening with everything.* (Interview: Principal, 3)

The principal described the organizational dilemmas educators encounter with reference to educational reform. Interestingly, in the quote above, this principal identified teachers as the "salesperson" for policy. This comment directly relates to Labaree's discussion of John Dewey's concept of "teaching and learning" as connected to "buying and selling." As indicated by Labaree, "You can't be a good sales person unless someone is buying, and you can't be a good teacher unless someone is learning" (Labaree, 2010,

p.136).[25] The principal's description above also provides insight into the loose coupling processes that takes place within educational systems where policies become decoupled, and perhaps transformed, within schooling practices. As further described:

> *The problem, for me, is that they come too quickly. So* [policies] *don't become part of the makeup of the school or the people within the school. They don't become part of our best practice. It doesn't become a habit for us because it changes again too quickly"… "And in some ways for those of us who have been in education for some time, and this isn't new, but we start to become callus, that I don't need to get to carried away with this because it's only going to be around for a little while. So, should I jump on this bandwagon or not because someone's going to come along and change it again?* (Interview: Principal, 3)

The principal quoted above reinforces Labaree's discussion of teachers' resistance to alter their practices in response to policy reform and the loosely coupled nature of schooling organizations.

The general feeling of school-based actors is that policies are constantly changing within the education system. Interviewees consider the desire to implement change as "typical of gurus in education on all levels" and "typical of any area in education" (Interview: Guidance, 1). Interviewees questioned the reasons behind constant changes, wondering if shifting policies are intended to appease parents, perhaps to maintain public confidence in education, or are policies changing for the benefit of student's best interest?

> *I think people are talking about progressive discipline. I mean it has been around for decades, centuries. It's not new"… "So why is it the big sexy new thing that we're talking about? I think it's the new fad. At the end of the day, what are we really doing it for? We should be doing it for what's best for them, and if we are doing things for what's best for them, we should be doing things differently. That's the bottom line.* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator)

School-based actors considered the vision of the Board and Ministry as constantly in flux and directly influenced by public opinion. As further explained in the following quote, newer policies do not necessarily equal more effectiveness and more efficiency:

> *I think the school board needs to have the guts to stick to their convictions and not be so swayed by public opinion"… "Policies are constantly changing, constantly, constantly. It's unbelievable"…"It's such a political system, and I think that's part of the issue too. I think they're trying to show they are constantly keeping on top of things that are most current. But creating new things doesn't make things more effective, yet the wheel keeps being reinvented, all the time, it's such an inefficient approach"..."It's absolutely overwhelming what classroom teachers*

[25] Labaree references Jackson, 1986, p.81, for this discussion of John Dewey

> *have to put up with. It makes them not effective. And I'm not even sure that higher groups even care. I think that they only care about: A) that it's looking good and that they're appeasing the public and B) that they continue to work to create more and more stuff. I'm just being honest. I have been doing this for 24 years and I can tell you the problem, it's so fragmented they need to have someone look at the whole picture.* (Interview: Guidance, 1)

Educators held a common perception that policies are created to put out specific fires within specific areas of education. As explained, when an issue gains media attention – such as bullying, equity, safety, declining academic achievement - a corresponding policy is developed to show the public that schools are responding and reacting. Educators consider the frequency of new policies, expanding expectations, and revisions in so many different areas. Interviewees wanted to know: How do the fragmented pieces fit together?

A few interviewees described the fragmented nature of the School Board as contributing to school ineffectiveness. One guidance councillor commented that at the board, "the right hand doesn't know what the left hand is doing" and "no one's looking at the big picture" (Interview: Guidance, 1). Interestingly, educators identified the Board and Ministry goals of policy reform may prioritize public confidence in public education as opposed to create better learning opportunities and teaching practices. The perspectives of educators described here seem to align with Davies discussion of progressive school reform:

> *This abstractness* [of progressive education] *makes sense in terms of the relationship between organizational ends and means (see, e.g., Meyer and Rowan 1992). Because progressive educational goals, such as the promotion of critical thinking, democratic citizenship, and well-rounded individuals, are vague, schools are bound to have a highly ambiguous means-end organizational relationship. Accordingly, progressivism endures as a set of ideals, rather than as a body of concrete practices. Progressive language serves more to legitimate broad goals than to tightly determine actual reforms.* (Davies, 2002, p.283)

Ontario public education system is a publicly funded education system. Labaree identifies the community as a client of the teacher and schooling systems, recognizing in public schools, it is "citizens as a whole who pay for and govern education" (2010, p.153). Further, Guppy and Davies (1999) argue that Canadian's confidence in public education has declined over the past three decades (p.271) and suggest changes in policy can be viewed "as a tool to restore some measure of public confidence" (p.279).

Accordingly, enhancing public confidence in publicly funded education is one of the three key priorities identified by the Ontario Ministry of Education.[26]

Interviewees questioned the rationale behind the evolving policies, questioning the intention of Ministry and Board officials regarding the actual implementation of policy. Specifically, many interviewees attributed evolving discipline policy to a central organizational goal of the school system: Maintaining public confidence in public education.

Chapter Conclusion:

This chapter has considered the institutional reality of school-based actors and the organizational context of policy implementation. Findings suggest that, in reality, policy is not always implemented as intended by policymakers and does not always reflect policy conceptions idealized at the rhetoric and structural levels of the education system. Findings reveal variations in the perspectives and practices of educators at the school level that are not always consistent with progressive discipline policies.

On the one hand, findings revealed instances of successful policy implementation. To some degree, progressive policies have penetrated the teaching and learning levels of education. Educators are actively stimulating student development of knowledge and skills, essentially shaping student behaviour to align with behaviours valued by educators and the broader community.

In addition, enhanced discretion was the key positive impact of progressive discipline identified by interviewees. Educators appreciated the ability to place the disciplinary emphasis on student behaviour and how individual students can learn to demonstrate acceptable behaviour consistently over time. Educators did identify drawbacks of progressive policies that were connected to absent regulatory structures of formal protocol which led to some inconsistent perceptions and practices. Overall, however, educators appear to believe that discretion is invaluable for individualizing the treatment of students.

Interestingly, the support of educators seems to correspond to three central organizational goals of schooling: minimizing problem behaviour, student retention, and student learning outcomes. First, educators appreciated the emphasis placed on identifying the root cause of behaviour, working with students to resolve underlying issues, and thus minimizing future occurrences of problem behaviour. Second, educators identified the benefit of 'no lost learning time' and appreciated that progressive discipline policies emphasized keeping students in school and connected to classroom material. Third, educators appreciated how behavioural and social emotional literacy was incorporated as part of the discipline process which corresponds to the notion that schools are "institutions of learning." These findings support the position of Brint et. al. (2001,

[26] For example see: *Reach Every Student Energizing Ontario Education*, Winter 2008, Ontario Ministry Document, can be found at: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/energize/energize.pdf

p.171) , suggesting that new ideas are more likely to be accepted if they reinforce current organizational priorities of schooling such as improving order and minimizing problem behaviour. To further extend the current discussion, New Institutional theory considers that schools face institutional pressures for efficiency and conformity to standardized schooling practices (Meyer & Rowan,1977; 1978). Accordingly, educators may be more willing incorporate progressive practices because conforming to policy may enhances their efficiency in the classroom, i.e., minimize behaviour and enable teaching to take place. Overall, educators seem to resonate with the progressive spirit and student wellbeing focus of progressive discipline far more than practices of zero tolerance. Interviewees acknowledged that school-based actors, in general, are making progress towards embracing progressive practices and seeing benefits.

On the other hand, findings also revealed organizational dilemmas of implementing discipline policy, as well as outcomes of the inconsistencies between policy and practice (summarized in Chart 2, p.65). Based on the logic of loose coupling, educators may respond to institutional pressures of reform within the structure of schooling, for example by implementing a policy such as progressive discipline, but decouple changes from influencing the teaching and learning levels (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; 1978). Findings do suggest schooling practices of student discipline are inconsistent within schools, as well as between schools across the board. Findings also suggest that shifting policies and practices have created uncertainty for school-based actors around behavioural guidelines and standards of behaviour. Due to processes of loose coupling, the idealized and potential benefits of progressive reform may not consistently reach the level of student learning. Fundamentally, students may not be consistently learning conventional norms of behaviour valued within schools and within broader society more generally. As stated in Ministry documents, "behaviour that is not addressed becomes accepted behaviour."[27] The inconsistencies between progressive discipline policy and educator practices identified may offer support for Meyer and Rowan's argument, that schools refrain from close inspection or supervision of activity to avoid the discovery of inconsistencies and ineffectiveness (1978, p. 80).

Educators interviewed for this study seem to respond in ways similar to those identified within Coburn's (2004, p. 221-226) typology of educators' organizational responses to institutional pressures. Some educators seemed to reject progressive policy if inherent philosophies were not congruent with their pre-existing perspectives and approaches to discipline. Other educators superficially or symbolically complied with reform, as inconsistencies (or decoupling) were clear between policy and practice. Some educators appeared to assimilate policy reform by integrating the progressive approach into 'the ways they have done things all along.' In addition, some educators did seem to be in the process of accommodating and engaging fundamental principles of progressive within their individual and school wide practices. Interviewees did appear to interpret

[27] *Shaping a Culture of Respect in Our Schools: Promoting Safe and Healthy Relationships*, p.9

zero tolerance and progressive in different ways within schools and between schools in the board.

Again drawing on the work of Coburn (2004, p.226-234) the nature of the policy itself seemed to shape how educators responded to reform. Educators seemed more apt to adhere to progressive discipline practices when philosophies were compatible with their own perspectives and practices of student discipline. As well, educators perceived a degree of voluntariness to adhere to disciplinary policy, recognizing that policy implementation is not being monitored or enforced. In comparison, educators were clear to identify the priority of academics and the importance of devoting available time and resources to test scores.

School-based actors seem to be getting mixed messages. On one hand progressive policies are expanding the educational focus to reflect development of the whole student, such as equitable and inclusive attitudes, social and emotional coping strategies, and problem solving skills. On the other hand, however, findings suggest that institutionalized practices within the core organizational structures of schools remain narrowly focused on academic achievement. Interview data reveals a disconnection between educational policy and practice. To draw an interesting parallel, David Labaree discussed progressive education connected to the standards movement that emerged in the 1980's and the introduction of curriculum guidelines, student reporting structures, standardized testing and test score objectives. He described these mechanisms intended to tighten the coupling of the loosely coupled education system and make teachers more accountable to administrators (2010, p.130-131). Drawing on his discussion, it could be suggested that progressive movements of the past, to a degree, may be inhibiting progressive advancements of current.

In summary, supporting Labaree's position, progressive discipline policies have made the greatest impact on educational rhetoric. However, reflecting the data presented in this chapter, overall, school-based actors are generally making progress towards embracing progressive practices at the school level of education.

Chapter 6: Progressive Discipline and Inequality: Cultural Mobility and Concerted Cultivation

This chapter considers cultural processes connected to institutionalized practices of student discipline. Contributing and expanding the current analysis of policy implementation, this chapter highlights cultural influences of middle class childrearing practices (i.e., patterns of Concerted Cultivation) as well as the relevance of family dynamics within schooling practices of student discipline.

According to the logic of cultural mobility, cultural capital is considered a neutral resource that leads to school success and is not exclusive to a particular class. Based on research findings presented in this chapter, schooling practices that align with progressive discipline policy have the potential to serve as a mechanism of cultural mobility, partially compensating for student differences in exposure to cultural capital by helping students learn and adopt values, behaviours, and skill sets.

Building from the work of Lareau, the following chapter interprets connections between cultural processes consistent with cultural resources and capital, which come into contact with institutionalized practices of student discipline. To integrate what is known about family practices, behaviours and resources, I draw on the work of Annette Lareau (1989, 2002, 2003, Lareau & Weininger 2003, Weininger & Lareau 2003, Weininger & Lareau 2009). Lareau indicates, as previously noted, that schools promote strategies of Concerted Cultivation. Progressive discipline is a relatively new approach to school discipline that has broad parallels with this form of child development. As also previously noted, middle class patterns of childrearing tend to reflect practices of Concerted Cultivation. As a result, the inherited cultural resources of middle class children may provide advantages to students and parents in their ability to comply with the behavioural standards of schools, as well as practices of progressive discipline. Progressive discipline practices, to a degree, seem to provide some advantages for students in complying with the behavioural evaluative criteria of schools and conventional norms of behaviour valued within society.

This chapter focuses on interpreting the implication of cultural capital within the context of school discipline, through the following discussion of: 1) Progressive Discipline, an Avenue Providing Concerted Cultivation to the Masses, 2) Cultural Connections, and 3) Cultural Reproduction vs. Cultural Mobility. I argue that organizational processes, as highlighted in chapter 5, as well as cultural processes, discussed herein, are connected to institutionalized practices of student discipline.

1) Progressive Discipline, an Avenue Providing Concerted Cultivation to the Masses

Based on a broader cultural logic, components of progressive discipline may take the form of Concerted Cultivation and become resources for students, improving students' ability to comply with the behavioural expectations of educators. I argue it is through educator practices of Concerted Cultivation that practices consistent with progressive discipline policies have the potential to compensate for class differences in exposure to

cultural capital. Potentially, progressive discipline may be an avenue providing Concerted Cultivation to the masses.

The following section considers similarities between middle class parenting patterns of Concerted Cultivation observed by Lareau, in connection to the patterns of educator perceptions and behaviours that emerged within the interview findings. Specifically, this section highlights the parallels of: a) Interaction Patterns and Discussion Based Discipline, b) Accommodation and Choice, c) Teachable Moments, and d) Improving Institutional Outcomes. Research findings may provide an extension of Lareau's argument, that teachers promote strategies of Concerted Cultivation.

a) Interaction Patterns and Discussion Based Discipline

Similarities are apparent between interaction patterns of school-based actors and practices of Concerted Cultivation. Lareau observed common class based differences within family language patterns (Lareau, 1989; Lareau, 2003; Weininger & Lareau, 2009). She described middle class parents as promoting reasoning and negotiation. She found middle class parents tended to ask pointed questions and provide children the opportunity to develop and practice verbal skills, including how to summarize, clarify, and amplify information (Weininger & Lareau 2009, p.686). Alternatively, working class and poor parents were described as often brief and direct, and were less likely to engage in extended conversation with their children and ask questions.

In a similar way to the behaviours of middle class parents, school-based actors described actively engaging student relationships that are more participatory, and fostering less hierarchical power imbalances within their teaching methods and everyday interactions with students. Classroom meetings within mainstream and alternative education programs provide clear examples of educator practices which parallel interaction patterns characteristic of Concerted Cultivation. Within alternative programs specifically staff recognized that students in these programs typically lack skills to effectively communicate and interact with others and described directly teaching students social competencies. Group practices within alternative programs, for example, were described as actively training and coaching students in techniques of effective communication and discussion.

The central emphasis on discussion based discipline practices further illustrates a clear connection between practices of progressive discipline and patterns of Concerted Cultivation. Accordingly, Lareau identifies "discussions between parents and children are a hallmark of middle class child rearing" (2003, p.1). Middle class parents are described as stressing language use and the development of reasoning as their preferred form of discipline. Lareau noted that children learn to address adults as relative equals and parenting strategies involve nurturing children's desire to understand how and why things happen (Lareau, 1987; 2003; Weininger & Lareau, 2009). In comparison, parenting strategies of working class and poor families are described by Lareau as relying on more directives and, in some families, physical discipline (Lareau, 1987; 2003; Weininger & Lareau, 2009). Further, patterns of parent – child interactions were described as reflected

clear-cut displays of authority, where the exercise of authority was rarely justified (Weininger & Lareau, 2009).

Discussion based discipline strategies were emphasized by school-based actors as a central approach throughout every stage of progressive discipline. Educators described practices involving teaching students to make decisions, as well as develop critical thinking and language skills, which again indicates clear similarities with patterns of Concerted Cultivation. For example, school-based actors described processes of involving students in the design of classroom discipline structures, formulating rules and determining appropriate disciplinary outcomes.

Both, Concerted Cultivation as well as educator practices aligning with progressive discipline emphasis and encourage preferred value commitments, social skills and interaction strategies. In similar ways to middle class parents, the educators interviewed seem to be activating their own cultural resources and actively training students with techniques to advocate for themselves, to develop confidence interacting with people in positions of authority, and thus transmitting skills to students which may generate potential advantages for future institutional negotiations.

b) Accommodation and Choice

Interviewees described that students' behaviour can be motivated by various reasons, including social, emotional and behavioural needs. The importance of accommodation was a clear themes expressed by school-based actors, which again offers a parallel to patterns of Concerted Cultivation. Lareau recognized the use of directives as more reflective of working class and poor family discipline strategies, and accommodation and negotiation more prevalent among middle class parent-child interactions. Interestingly, many interviewees articulated a clear separation between their own practices and the use of directives, disassociating themselves from teachers who use directives. Interviewees described actively promoting the use of accommodation and negotiation, considering these strategies as empowering students and generating mutual respect within the class.

The consideration of mitigating factors is a clear example of accommodating student differences in determining appropriate disciplinary outcomes. Progressive discipline policies encouraged educators to consider any possible mitigating factors, as well as student history and personal life circumstances, and the specific situational context of behaviours when administering student discipline. School-based actors further described that understanding student ability levels, capacities and triggers of students may prevent student-teacher conflict within the classroom.

To further illustrate the connection between educators' teaching and discipline strategies with practices of Concerted Cultivation, during interviews educators explained the desire to provide students with choice. For Lareau, providing children "choice" is described as a means of encouraging judgement, exercising self direction, and decision making abilities. She noted middle class parents are more inclined to provide their children with the ability to "choose" what to do in given situations (1989; 2003; Weininger & Lareau, 2009, p.686). For some educators interviewed within this study,

providing students with options and choice is considered a strategy facilitating classroom management, in addition to providing opportunities for one lesson to cater to different student needs and ability levels within a single class. For example, one guidance counsellor described experiences with students who feel strongly against classroom presentations, "will actually have anxiety attacks" and may create classroom disruptions as an avoidance strategy (Interview: Guidance, 2). As well, a few teachers described designing lessons and activities with different options, encouraging students to choose from a variety of themes or select a topic of their own choosing.

To provide a further example, many educators considered helping students learn to make the right choice as central to behavioural learning outcomes of progressive discipline strategies. To further highlight this connection, progressive discipline policy document PPM:145, explicitly states that progressive practices should "include learning opportunities for reinforcing positive behaviour while helping students to make good choices" (PPM:145, p.3). Alternative education program staff in particular made clear distinctions between the students' capacity to "choose" to behave appropriately, compared to students' "ability" to behave appropriately. A number of school-based actors considered offering choices and encouraging students to make the right choice as strategies to engage students in learning, as well as self direction.

c) Teachable Moments

The concept of teachable moments offers a further parallel. Accordingly, Lareau characterized middle class parents as viewing their childrens' lives as "a series of teachable moments ripe for developing" (Weininger & Lareau, 2009, p.691). The centrality of teachable moments within childrearing practices of middle class families, as described by Lareau, was mirrored within interviews conducted with school-based actors.

Many interviewees described teachable moments as opportunities to address basic skills, correct inaccurate information, and teach social norms of behaviour. As illustrated in the following quote, many educators described the importance of, in the moment, addressing appropriate situational context, the time and place, and how comments may be perceived and interpreted by others. As described:

> *Anything about racism or some kind of sexist comment, or a sexual preference kind of comment"… "And they'll explain it as, they are friends and that's the way they talk to one another and that it's ok. But then that turns into a lesson, that, 'No it's not okay to talk like that to anyone. If you have that understanding, and it's only you and that other person or you in a private place, and that's how you choose to talk to each other that's one thing. But we're in a classroom'"… "Here it's not the social norm. That's one thing I'm trying really hard to deal with. So I'm working with kids about that, respecting your own behaviour. 'Do you respect that behaviour, are you proud of what's just come out of your mouth?' It's not just about liking us, it's about liking what we do in society. And, 'Have you considered how the other person feels? You may be making people not feel comfortable around you.'* (Interview: teacher, 1)

Students may be exposed to concepts, such as bullying, through school and classroom teaching initiatives. Interview data reveals, however, discrepancies may exist between concept knowledge and application. As described by many school-based actors, addressing situations in the moment, as they occur, can provide students the opportunity to connect the knowledge of abstract concepts with students own lived experience, as well as provide opportunities to ask questions and make sense of what happened. Teachable moments are considered by educators as facilitating the shift from abstract learning into real life application.

A relationship can be observed between middle class parents and educators interviewed for this study. The following quote describing middle class parenting seems to parallel the teachers quote provided directly above:

> *She wanted her children to develop enough confidence in their own judgment to resist the pressure of their peers and understand—and empathize with—the experience of those who may be excluded from the group or ridiculed by it. Her children should learn, 'That sometimes you have to judge and think and stop before you say something. And you have to think about—if it would hurt me, should I say it to somebody else?' (*Weininger & Lareau, 2009, p.685)

School staff recognized that students come to school with different sets of skills and cultural knowledge to draw from within their daily interaction with peers and school staff. The practices of educators seem to be directly teaching students, and compensating for the cultural knowledge and resources they may not have learned at home.

d) Improving Institutional Outcomes

Further connecting the practices of educators and patterns of Concerted Cultivation, school-based actors may be activating and transferring cultural resources to students in the form of knowledge and abilities to improve their institutional outcomes. Drawing on Lareau's conception of cultural capital, social and cultural resources are provided by social class, but these resources must be invested or activated to become a form of cultural capital (Lareau, 1987, p. 84). Lareau described the knowledge of institutional systems and the ability of middle class parents to draw on this knowledge to effectively navigate through institutional processes, as a means of transforming resources into capital when used to gain advantages for their children. Interestingly, educators described training exercises which involve actively coaching students to negotiate and interact with more difficult teacher personalities.

For example, interviewees described their experiences working with various educators. One CYW described positive experiences working with teachers who are dynamic and invested in helping students achieve. As described:

> *It all boils down to the teacher and every teacher is different. It's the teachers who teach outside the box and who give that extra. It's like the Marines, 'no man gets left behind.' Or a sheppard and your sheep, no one gets lost, 'I don't care if*

> *there's one kid, he's going to get it.' Those are the teachers you just want to be around. That's what teaching is all about and that's what I get really jazzed about. When someone says, 'That kid, that kids going to make it and I'm going to make sure.' And then there are other teachers who that's just not their personality that's not their view.* (Interview: CYW, 1)

In addition to positive experiences working with teachers, the CYW quoted above also described difficulties working with teachers and school staff who are inflexible and set in their ways. A recurring pattern emerged within the interview data around educators who actively engage and intervene within student situations, helping students navigate around the inflexibility of some teachers. The CYW quoted above also described his experiences trying to work with and around difficult teachers. As described:

> *You have to be really politically correct when you do it, you can't make the teacher look bad. It's a fine line. You yourself know they're not doing their job and they're not cutting the kid any slack. But you can't paint it that way. It's almost like a chess game in a way, where you're trying to figure out the missing link more or less and have the student work with that. Where the student isn't getting what he should, without him knowing that, and that's tough because the alliance you have with the teachers. The last thing you want to do is divide that because then you're done, your done"… "It all goes back down to teachers and if they're not teaching it, you can only do so much. And it goes to show that the boundaries of bullying are not limited to the kids and the school yard. It happens in the teachers' lounge, it happens in the lunch room, it happens at home. It's not just about kids and about getting staff to understand that too.* (Interview: CYW, 1)

As illustrated here, schooling strategies and initiatives to teach students about equity and bullying may be inconsistent with staff perspectives and behaviours, and thus remain implemented on a superficial level. As previously described, not all educators are equally engaging progressive discipline philosophies or implementing progressive discipline practices. Interestingly, the CYW quoted here identified that bullying behaviours are prevalent among school staff, creating negative interactions and environments among educators themselves.

The CYW quoted above clearly identifies educators who are not consistently supporting student needs. Importantly, however, this interviewee goes on to describe how school-based actors attempt to intervene in these situations and try to improve the situational outcome on the students behalf. The CYW quoted above described further:

> *It's hard part for a CYW, the low man on totem pole. You only push so hard and then you have to stop because then you annoy the teacher and get the teacher upset. Our union is minute compared to their union. The Teachers' Association is a monster you know. So if you ever get down that route where someone is not*

> *liking how you are pushing, because you can only push so hard. There's a limit. And then the principal will say, "Back off!" I've had that happen before were the principal doesn't want you to stir things up because the teacher wasn't following through*. (Interview: CYW, 1)

Interviewees described difficulties dealing with educators who are reluctant to shift their perspectives on student discipline and embrace progressive practices. A number of school-based actors described efforts, although at times struggling, to confront, question and challenge educators about ill practices. Fundamentally, school-based actors described practices of advocating on behalf of students amongst fellow co-workers.

One behaviour EA described similar situations involving difficult teachers. She described her own efforts to teach students skills to "work around the problem teacher." As described:

> *I like to work with students when they're dealing with a teacher who is inflexible. So there's training you do with students. 'So ok that persons' probably not going to change, and yah if you keep doing this you're going to get kicked out. And that's just the way that's going to go. So what can we do differently to make it work, to work around the problem teacher?' It's sad because is almost saying to the kid, 'Ok, you're going to have to be the parent, like when you're at home and you're having issues with any adult.' So when the problem is the teacher, and there's a few of them, and administration knows. And sometimes we'll have a meeting and say, 'Well that's just a total set up, that's not going to work, so why don't we move on it now and get that student out of that class.'* (Interview: Behaviour EA)

The EA quoted here described efforts to train and coach students to work with difficult teacher personalities. She also described the general awareness among school staff about who the more difficult or "problem" teachers are. She explained that school staff are often proactive and organize student class schedules ensuring students who need extra assistance or may encounter a personality clash with a teacher are not placed in classes with those problem teachers.

Beyond the school level, consultants at the school board also described experiencing difficulties working with teachers who are not committed to helping students. For example, one special education consultant explained trying to "find ways to work around that teacher" and relying on more involvement from the CYW and special education teachers in the school to compensate for the teachers short comings by taking on the duties of the teacher and spending more time with the student (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 1). She further described:

> *There are some things you can't change. You know I can say, 'This is my opinion and I am your consultant,' I'm not the police man who comes in and says, 'You*

> *must do it this way.' So myself, and the Multidisciplinary Team are always looking at how we engage those teachers, and how do we engage those staff, how do we question them and ask them about their practices? If it's a skill deficit, maybe they don't know how to work with someone who has autism and is misbehaving. How can we give them the support they need so that they can do it differently?* (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 1)

Educators may view other educators as inflexible, difficult to work with and not performing. Interviewees explained experiences with teachers who are uninterested in investing time and effort to help students be successful. In these situations, school-based actors described intervening in schooling processes on behalf of students, activating their own skill sets, abilities and knowledge about schooling processes, assisting students to gain advantages and improving their institutional outcomes.

Interviewees did describe limitations in their abilities to request and secure efforts from the other educators in connection to their own specific location within the stratified schooling institution itself. What's interesting here, in these situations, interviewees described directing their attention to work with the student, to coach and train the student to develop skill sets to work with these more problem teachers. In these situations students may be gaining valuable skills and abilities which may provide advantages within their current and future institutional negotiations.

Expanding Bourdieu and Lareau's conceptions of cultural capital slightly, school-based actors may be transmitting cultural resources to students which, in turn, students may active through actions and behaviours transforming cultural resources into cultural capital. It could be argued that school-based actors are activating, investing and transferring their own cultural skills and competencies to improve the institutional outcomes of students. Interview data reveals school-based actors' are drawing on their own firsthand knowledge of the inner workings of the educational system, actively monitoring and "shepherding" students through various educational processes. Further, school-based actors described their involvement within processes of eliciting expert opinions, as well as initiating and intervening with student medical assessments. School-based actors' are using their own intimate knowledge and abilities to access various inside and outside of school resources and services, promoting the success of students. Essentially, school-based actors may be providing similar advantages to students that, as described by Lareau, middle class parents provide their own children.

In summary, educator practices consistent with policies, practices and philosophies of progressive discipline appear to parallel middle class parenting patterns identified by Lareau, therefore, contributing to the argument that cultural processes are connected to institutionalized practices of student discipline. In the form of Concerted Cultivation, progressive discipline practices, in a sense, may offer advantages for students in complying with the behavioural standards of schools.

2) Cultural Connections

A useful distinction can be drawn between the ways researchers, educators, as well as educational reports and documents seem to categorize negative student behaviours. First, behaviours are considered "inappropriate" according to social behavioural norms considered desirable within student conduct. For example more generalized qualities, characteristics and abilities, i.e., respectful interaction and decision making. Second, behaviours are identified as "unacceptable" and refer to specific behaviours that are not tolerated. For example, committing a sexual assault or bringing a firearm to school. Behaviours reflected by the former are generally considered to be learned through family socialization processes. Behaviours falling into the second category seem to be considered the outcome of the former, i.e., "inappropriate" student conduct that has continued, perhaps reinforced, overtime.

Based on interview data, and echoed within progressive discipline policy and program documents, "inappropriate" and "unacceptable" student behaviours are considered the result of learned behaviours that have not been unlearned. To illustrate this point, the Behavioural Program Leader of the school board stated:

> *Behaviour needs are very high and that's due to learned behaviours that have not been unlearned yet. The kid finds at home, you go ballistic and you get what you want. You try that at school, it's pretty disruptive"…"They need to know how to behave in a school.* (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader)

Family - school connections was a theme constantly discussed during interviews. Specifically, school-based actors considered family dynamics are directly related to the success of school discipline interventions. Within their approach to the study of cultural capital, Lareau and Weininger's (2003, p.588-597) consider that students and parents differ in their ability to comply with institutionalized expectations based on social origin. They also suggest further variation in students and parents' ability to influence how evaluations are applied. According to the logic of Concerted Cultivation and cultural capital, students and parents may draw on their own cultural resources to shape and negotiate the discipline processes. As briefly discussed in the Method chapter, Lareau and Weininger argue that institutional mechanisms are unable to reduce the impact of class based differences contributing to educational disadvantages, and may serve to create new avenues for the influence of social class to impact student's education (Lareau and Weininger, 2003, p.382). The scope of this study is limited as the perspectives of parents and students themselves are not considered. Based on the interviews conducted with school-based actors, however, the following discussion of unequal family dynamics and schooling practices of cultural reproduction provide a degree of insight into how family dynamics may contribute to variation in schooling discipline practices and outcomes.

Building on the idea that cultural and organizational processes are connected to institutionalized practices of student discipline, this section explores how family dynamics may, on some level, influence student involvement within the continuum of

progressive discipline stages. Specifically, the following section asks: Do organizational dilemmas and schooling processes in combination with family dynamics penetrate the potential "mobilizing" capability of progressive discipline practices?

To address this question, the following section is broken down into discussions of: a) Potential Relevance of Family Dynamics, b) Unequal Family Dynamics, and c) Unequal Student Treatment.

a) Potential Relevance of Family Dynamics

Many school-based actors described difficulties getting parents on board, cooperating and supporting the school. As stated by one principal in particular, "if you don't get the support from the parents, in terms of the kids who need help and the discipline, no matter what plan you put in place, it's going to be basically a band aid" (Interview: Principal, 9). Interviewees described that parents may have their own perspectives on discipline and perceptions of appropriate consequences, which may not correspond to progressive discipline policy. Interviewees described situations where parents became aggressive, pressuring educators to implement more severe consequences, such as suspension or expulsions for certain students. For example, one principal described how some parents perceive that schools "are soft on students and are not teaching them accountability" and "want a harder line taken, and think that behaviour has deteriorated because [schools] haven't had these higher expectations" (Interview: Principal, 2). Many interviewees also described how parents can be "really devastating and really forceful with schools" when it comes to their children (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader). Family support and involvement may contribute to the degree progressive discipline polices and program impact student learning outcomes.

The following quote provided by the Program Leader for Behavioural Services at the school board studied, identifies two separate family dynamics which educators commonly discussed during interviews:

> *I'm working with a handful of parents out of the 400 that I know. I'm working with a handful who I would say are parents who are doing everything possible for their kids and their kids are still struggling. And those are kids who have significant mental health issues. And the other parents, it doesn't mean they're not trying their best. They just have so many other issues that are going against them that even though they are trying their best it's not going to be enough to make a difference. That handful of parents, they have read and they understand what they need to be doing. They have provided that consistent environment; they don't have the financial pressures that are challenging them. They're doing everything that can be done in the schools are doing everything they can. And we're still struggling because the needs are so far beyond us. And these are the ones where the psychiatrists are saying they're not sure what to do either. So, they are just really complex.* (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader)

The perspectives detailed in the above quote are representative of the perspectives described by a number of interviewees. The above quote will therefore be used as an example to draw from within the following discussion of family dynamics within the context of school discipline.

Lareau's research examining class based cultural processes (1987, 1989, 2000, 2003) provides an interesting point of comparison to discuss the two family dynamics identified in the quote above, both struggling to deal with behavioural needs children.

In the quote above, the school professional identified one family dynamic with parents who are knowledgeable, affluent, and actively involved in their child's schooling. He described that although parents "are doing everything possible" to help their children, these students are struggling behaviourally due to significant, complex mental health issues. This interviewee identified that "out of the 400" family's involved with Behavioural Services at the school board, he works with "a handful" that fit this description.

To draw a parallel, compared to working class and poor parents, Lareau found that middle class parents tended to be actively involved with monitoring their children's schooling, more knowledgeable about their children's experiences in school, and more aware of difficulties and ways their children are struggling. Specifically, Lareau found that middle class parents tended to actively request efforts from teachers to deal with their children's needs and problems on an individualized basis, and demanded customized educational instruction, programs, and resources for their children. Accordingly, middle class parents, "asked that children be signed up to see the reading resource teacher, be tested by the school psychologist, or be enrolled in the gifted program" (Lareau, 1987, p. 78). Middle class parents were described by Lareau as inclined to work with educators to isolate and examine precise strategies and solutions to address various problems, and frequently supplemented schooling experiences outside of regular school.

To extend Lareau's work to the present discussion of the potential relevance of family dynamics within the context of school discipline, middle class parents may be first to identify, support and supplement the behavioural, social, emotional and academic needs of their children. Middle class parents may be motivated to become educated themselves in the areas their children are struggling. As well, middle class parents may have the financial resources to consult experts, acquire assistance and assessments on their own accord and not wait and rely on school officials to recommend, access, provide and pay for services school personnel deem appropriate. Essentially, middle class parents may be more capable of navigating both schooling and community institutions, ensuring their children have the support they require.

In the above quote the Program Leader for Behaviour Services also referred to a second family dynamic, in direct comparison to the first. He noted, these parents are uninvolved in their children's schooling and are unable to make a difference in their children's behaviour, inferring other issues such as financial pressures as taking precedent and the availability of fewer assets.

To draw a further comparison regarding the potential relevance of family processes within discipline procedures, Lareau suggests that working class or poor

parents, paralleled in the above quote, see their role as more passive within their children's education and tended not to actively intervene (1989, 2003). As described by Lareau, working class and poor parents tended to organize their daily lives around their own schedules of work, viewing education as the job of teachers and tended to leave the responsibility of their children's education to the school. As described:

> *Parents were unfamiliar with schooling curriculum and with the specific educational problems of their children. Parents of children with learning disabilities, for example, knew only that their children's grades weren't up to par or that their children didn't do too well in school. Moreover, these parents were unaware of the teachers' specific efforts to improve their children's performance.* (Lareau, 1987, p.78)

Lareau described that working class and poor parents tended to rely on the expertise and leadership of schooling professionals to guide and manage their children's educational experience. Lareau noted that parents were sometimes unfamiliar with their children's schooling situation, were unaware of their children's' strengths and weaknesses, and may be unaware of the severity of issues their children encountered within school. Interestingly, three interviewees identified that students at the more intensive stages of progressive discipline, specifically students expelled into alternative programs, are typically students from low socio-economic status family backgrounds (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader; Interview: Alt. Ed. program teacher; Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator).

Recall, the perspectives described in above quote from the Program Leader for Behaviour Services are representative of the perspectives described by a number of educators. It is interesting to note the similarities between the family dynamics identified by Lareau and those described by many educators. The connections described here stimulate interesting reflections. It may be possible that variation within family dynamics may play a role in students' progression through stages of more intensive examination driven and recommended by school officials and teams of schooling personnel. It may also be possible that family dynamics may play a role in students' participation in school driven behavioural intervention services. The Behavioural Program Leader offers support of these possibilities, explicitly stating, "It's the home environment that is still a challenge with kids who end up at the most intense levels of intervention" (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader). At this point, however, only speculations and possibilities can be offered as further analysis is needed beyond the current study.

To provide a further more general comparison, *The Provincial Code of Conduct and School Board Codes of Conduct* (as discussed in the Theory chapter) clearly states that parents are to be familiar with provincial, board and school level rules governing student behaviour. The Code further states the expectation that parents will assist children in following rules of behaviour, and assisting the school in dealing with discipline issues which involve their children. Again referring back to the interview quote provided above, the Program Leader for Behavioural Services described working with "a handful" of

parents "out of the 400" families involved with Behavioural Services. Accordingly, parental involvement within student discipline processes is an institutionalized standard within Ontario schools. Drawing on the work of Lareau, described above, as well as the interview data, it is possible that family dynamics, particularly patterns of parental involvement within school, provide variations in student's ability to comply with institutionalized behavioural standards.

Interview data reveals typical qualities of students involved with more intensive stages of progressive discipline, which may further suggest the a potential variation in student's ability to comply with schooling standards. The following two quotes illustrate differences in the perspectives of educators who work with students in mainstream and alternative education settings. Both of the educators quoted below reflect on their experiences with positive reinforcement, a central behavioural management strategy throughout the continuum of progressive discipline. Within in the following quote, a teacher from an alternative education program for expelled students describes successful experiences with verbal praise. As described:

> *Especially for these kids who are at risk, positive reinforcement is important because they have had such negative experiences with schools and with education. Even for the kid to make it late, I say, 'Thank you for coming today, I'm so happy you came.' I truly thank them from the bottom of my heart for coming"… "And when you say you're proud of them for doing something. Or that you know, 'Someone is getting upset with you and you didn't tell them to F off. I'm so proud of you because 3 weeks ago you would have.' I think that means a lot to them to because they've never had a relationship with a teacher, with a CYW, with a VP. The mindset may be, 'You shouldn't be telling people to F off and so why should I be congratulating you for something that you should be doing anyways?' For these students, that's what they're used to. They want to be recognized that they didn't do that and they are growing*. (Interview: Alt. Ed. program teacher)

The above quote reflects the experiences of a teacher from an alternative education program. This educator described that students appreciate and respond to verbal praise for demonstrating desirable behaviours. The teacher quoted above considers positive reinforcement as contributing to students developing intrinsic motivation to repeat behaviours which align with standards of schooling etiquette. In direct contrast to the above quotation, the following quote reflects the experiences of a teacher from mainstream school:

> *You know like, how much you are giving a pat on the back for showing up on time. At a certain point kids need to start doing things internally. There is a fear that, at what point, as soon as the kids do anything, there is an expectation they be rewarded like they have conquered the world just for doing something very ordinary*. (Interview: teacher, 1)

At the outset, these findings seem contradictory. However, an important distinction is apparent. The second quotation was from an interview conducted with a teacher in the mainstream school system, who questioned the benefits and potential counter-productivity of positive reinforcement. Comparatively, the alternative education teacher characterised his students as having "negative experiences with schools and with education" and notes further, "they've never had a relationship with a teacher, with a CYW, with a VP" (Interview: Alt. Ed. program teacher). Another interviewee from alternative program commented, "There's a great deal of success that happens that they haven't experienced before. A lot of them haven't experienced being successful." This interviewee further noted, "I would say 80% of the guys in here don't have a male role model in their lives" (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator). The interviews conducted with school staff from mainstream schooling compared to alternative programs reveals there may be a differences in the typical students attending. Interestingly, interview data further reveal a potential participating at the more intensive stages of progressive discipline typically have limited abilities interacting with peers and authority figures, in addition to difficulty expressing and regulating emotions.

Although further research needs to be done, by drawing on interview data collected for this study, as well as the work of Lareau, it could be possible that patterns of family dynamics, on some level, may influence student involvement within the escalating stages of progressive discipline interventions and services. Findings suggest a possible and potential variation in students' ability to comply with the behavioural evaluative criteria of educators. The perspectives described here are in line with the principals of cultural capital theory.

b) Unequal Family Dynamics

As previously described, within their approach to the study of cultural capital, Lareau and Weininger's (2003, p.588-597) consider that students and parents differ in their ability to comply with schooling expectations, as well as influence how institutionalized evaluations are applied based on social origin. Accordingly, the following discussion considers how unequal family dynamics may play a role within practices of school discipline.

Many educators considered their role as parenting students, and supplementing the teaching of skill sets and patterns of acceptable behaviours valued in school and society that students may not receive at home. Some educators also criticised parents for teaching children the wrong skills and the wrong knowledge that, according to interviewees, contributes to student misbehaviour at school. Interviewees described negative parental influence as a primary contributor and in many cases the root cause of the inappropriate and destructive behaviours students demonstrate at school. The Behavioural Program Leader for the board discussed difficulties developing relationships with students' parents, noting, "we know that our success can be based on the relationship that we built with the parents." As further described:

> *Then you have parents who have modeled successfully behaviours, these parents who are bullies who will come in and dictate things at the school. I don't run into many of them in* [alternative education] *programs, but I do deal with them quite a bit in schools. They come in and they're demanding this for their kid and this for their kid. And their kid is just the same. So when they're in there, the behaviours we see are these power and control behaviours and entitlement behaviours. This is a learned behaviour that isn't going to work well for* [parents]. *Although the sad thing is, sometimes it does work well for them. Those folks, sometimes when they start screaming at superintendent to get what they want. And that doesn't help them learn different behaviour. We would never do that for kids because that would enable their behaviour. But sometimes parents will threaten, and will bring lawyers and human rights.* (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader)

According to the logic of cultural capital, parents' behaviours and attitudes are inherited and adopted by children. As illustrated in the above quote, parental behaviours are not valued equally by educators. This finding supports Lareau's conception that some cultural resources, such as behaviours, attitudes, demeanours, are valued more than others, relative to the institutional arena within which individuals choose to activate them (Lamont & Lareau 1988; Lareau, 2003).

A further pattern emerged in the interview data that may reflect Lareau's notion of parental constraint and the comfort level of parents have from working class and poor families in dealing with school officials (1989, 2003). As illustrated in the following quote, a few school-based actors recognized in the process of encouraging parents to get involved, parents "push [them] away" or "lie about what's going on at home." The following quote from the Behavioural Program Leader for the board contributes further insight into the current discussion of the difficulties educators' experiences when working with parents. As described:

> *There're still parents who are really hard to get along with and unreasonable. Usually ones that are guarded about things, they think we are maybe getting a little too close to learning something, and they push us away a bit. But the parent will say that there's nothing going on at home and quite often they'll lie about what's going on at home"…"That's where we're really powerless.* (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader)

Similar to the example above, Lareau described a "clash between the parents' ideas" of what their children need and "the schools' standards for childrearing [which may], create small crises in the home" (2003, p.230). Echoed within the work of Lareau, experiences at home are connected to experiences at school. Throughout this study, school-based actors were clear to distinguish in school and out of school experiences. School-based actors described the dysfunction and emotionally damaging home environments that some students are exposed to and teachers' limited ability to impact student lives within the restrictions of typical school days.

Interviewees described that student behaviour may be one of multiple and compounding problems for students. One interviewee described progressive interventions using a billiard table metaphor, suggesting "you need to intervene with a bunch of those different balls that need to be addressed to prevent behaviour problems from happening" (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator). A number of interviewees identified family dynamics, such as parental socialization values, social economic challenges, and home life more generally, as compounding and contributing factors impacting student behaviour.

> *You are also dealing with systemic poverty and addiction. So we can get involved and try to support kids, but if the family can't afford to eat meals and the level of stress in that family is so high because of the poverty – we're not going to change that family. The only way we are going to change that family is by offering them opportunities to take the stress away. If they are addicted to substances, which a whack of them are, going in and giving them an addiction support isn't going to change that. So we have some systemic societal issues at the core of 95% of the kids that were dealing with in behaviour services. You get to know the families and the families are stressed, and not even fit the poverty criteria for Canada, financially there are stressors, relationship wise there are stressors. Maybe one of the parents have ADHD and half the kids have ADHD. You know, parents are pretty reactive, they don't think things through. And that translates into the student behaviour were getting. There are families who were okay financially but are creating a toxic home environment and that has an impact on student success*. (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader)

As illustrated in the above quote students and families may be struggling to negotiate their own environmental pressures which may contribute to variation in students' and parents' ability to comply with behavioural standards of schools. Formal schooling provides students with similar experiences. School, however, is only one part of a student's day. Through more informal learning processes, parents are often the primary educators within their children's lives. Processes of socialization within family environments shape student conceptions of appropriate behaviour. Educational professionals described difficulties supporting students who struggle to meet their basic needs, where "school isn't at the top of the list; it's just surviving day-to-day" (Interview: Alt. Ed. program Vice Principal). Life is bigger than school and more extreme life circumstances can interfere with students learning and ability to focus. School-based actors recognized that problems related to student health, social emotional problems, and home life more generally, follow students to school and are brought into the classroom.

School-based actors described helping students to unlearn destructive behaviours learned in the home and to develop coping strategies to deal with damaging experiences. Educational professionals described their ability to draw on in school and out of school resources to help students learn how to managing feelings, develop self-awareness, as well as problem solving, social skills, and empathy. Interviewees readily identified home

environments as the key to difficult student behaviour. As specifically stated by the Behavioural Program Leader for the board, "the students are the way they are because of the families they come from" (Interview: Behavioural Program Leader). Fundamentally, school-based actors questioned their ability to impact the lives of students who come from more extreme home environments.

In contrast to the family dynamics described above, interviewees considered the role of parents who are strong advocates for their children. In some situations, parents may effectively intervene on their child's behalf and manipulate situations to improve disciplinary outcomes.

A few interviewees described that parent – school negotiations pertaining to discipline issues can become situations of conflict. To provide an example, one principal described his experiences interacting with parents. Interestingly in the following example, the principal also identifies the multiple benefits of using discretion in these types of situations.

As described, this principal felt the need to protect himself from in disciplinary situations involving certain students more than others, noting, "this is maybe one student I have to be more careful, this is one where maybe not so much" (Interview: Principal, 3). The principal described selecting discipline according to what is known about the students' family, strategically anticipating and predicting how particular parents will respond to his decisions, and whether he believed "the issue will come back to haunt [him]" (Interview: Principal, 3) . The behaviours and attitudes of parents seem to affect practices of student discipline before parents are even aware the situation has occurred. As described here, this principal uses discretion to select the severity of student consequence based on how he believes parents may respond:

> *There are days I am afraid. Not everybody believes that the principal sits in their chair and isn't out to get their kid"…"Sometime we do second-guessing around discipline because you don't always get the support you hope that you're going to get. And without that support, sometimes you're banging your head against the wall. Ultimately if the action I decide for a child is supposed to help that child, and I know I'm going to get massive resistance from the family. And they're going to be talking at home about how stupid I am and about how dumb that decision was that I made, when the child is listening. I'd take more steps backward than forwards, that's a consideration. We do second guessing and these are considerations. It's sometimes hard to make a call"…"if you don't deal with it properly it could come back to haunt you.* (Interview: Principal, 3)

This principal described his preferences for individualized and discretion based discipline for the majority of the school population. Interestingly, he identified a benefit of discretion based discipline, specifically, the ability to use professional judgement to opt for more structured formal practices of discipline for situations involving certain students - or more importantly students with certain parents. As described, for parents

who will actively challenge his decisions, structured practices provide fewer opportunities for discipline to be "thrown out, based on a technicality." As described:

> *So in order to investigate an incident, and interview people, it takes hours. For those things, there has to be a lot of consistency, a lot of tight procedure. What happens is parents are sitting here in my office, and will challenge the procedure by which a decision is made which results in a consequence. They will deflect what their child has done, and will come in because they have issue with how things were handled, maybe that I didn't ask the same question of the kids"…"So in order to avoid that pointless discussion, you have to make sure you have followed strict procedure, regardless of what type of PD you believe in. It has to be tight and equitable, because you will be challenged in it right away. I liken it to a court system where someone had thrown it out, based on a technicality. Parents will act like a lawyer and look for a technicality. And that's when they'll call a superintendent or take a suspension to an appeal process or whatever"…"There are more threats about legal action these days. About suing, and people will throw those cards out almost as leverage.* (Interview: Principal, 3)

This principal described processes of collecting witness statements, engaging re-enactments with students, requesting students to provide written statements that are signed and dated about what happened. Due to these lengthy processes, this principal noted, "it might take all morning to deal with a situation that happened on the playground" (Interview: Principal, 3). This account provides key insight into the perspectives of parents, the severity of issues and how situations can escalate.

The level of parental involvement in discipline processes, the knowledge of the schooling system and how parents choose to assist their children to navigate through these processes may lead to inconsistent applications of discipline among students. Parents may draw on resources connected to social capital, educational background, occupational conditions and perhaps economic resources to assist in mediating the schooling discipline processes. Interviewees also described situations where parents may pressure the school to implement more resources to support their child, and that "parents sometimes have a strong role in advocating with how things happen within the system" (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 2). Importantly, the behaviours and attitudes of parents who involve themselves directly within schooling practices of discipline may shape disciplinary outcomes, in addition to what students are learning. Students may be watching and learning from their parents, learning skills and techniques to manipulate and negotiate the schooling system to generate various advantages.

To draw a parallel, Lareau identified differences in how children are socialized to interact with authority figures (1989, 2003, 2009). She observed patterns of middle class parents directly teaching their children socially appropriate ways to interact with adults, and therefore children had more experience, familiarity and comfort interacting with adults as relative equals. Lareau also observed working class and poor families as drawing clear boundary between adults and children, and children feeling distrustful of

authority figures (Lareau 1987; 2000; 2002; 2003; Lareau & Weininger, 2003; Weininger & Lareau, 2009). Lareau described these differences in students' abilities and skills as linked to class based resources and patterns of family socialization.

More generally, students may have acquired cultural resources from home or through life experiences outside of the home which they can actively draw from and use to gain advantages in schooling discipline processes. Students may be learning to manipulate situations to gain advantages and improve their abilities to advocate on their own behalf with authority figures and institutional arenas. Student perspectives and behaviours in connection to how school discipline processes unfold may shape what the student is actually learning.

Progressive discipline strategies which involve a more discretionary, negotiating approach seem to create some inequalities since not all actors have equal capacities to effectively negotiate. Specifically, the behaviours and attitudes taught inside the home may unequally provide resources for students to draw from during interactions with school authorities. Considering the role of parents, interview data indicates that not all parents are actively involved in their children's schooling and are willing, or able, to intervene in schooling processes and advocate with school officials on their child's behalf.

As outlined in this section, the impact of family dynamics offers further complexity to the current discussion of whether schooling practices of progressive discipline facilitate cultural mobility. Based on the information presented here, schools may be able to partially compensate for social inequalities although family dynamics may contribute to variability in policy implementation.

c) Unequal Student Treatment

Concerns of equitable student treatment, as previously described, were strong contributors leading to the implementation of progressive policies in Ontario schools. Accordingly, equity is a fundamental component of progressive policies. Within schools, however, are discipline measures being equally and fairly applied to all students or are certain groups being signed out more than others?

The education professionals I interviewed described their perceptions of equity within progressive discipline policy. One principal in particular described how progressive discipline allows school-based actors to approach discipline matters "more fairly" than the zero tolerance policies of the past:

> *I'm interested in equity issues, when we saw that certain groups were being disciplined more severely than others, students from special education, boys and students of colour, then we have to look at our practices. The zero tolerance was a very unrealistic policy and didn't take into consideration the various needs of our students and our community. PD gives us the tools to learn how to look at things more fairly and has given us a lens to look at discipline through an equity lens. So it's been helpful having the progressive discipline policy guide our decisions and having the mitigating factors. Particularly among the Spec Ed students, that's*

> *particularly a tricky area. And I think it's much more useful than the zero tolerance.* (Interview: Principal, 2)

Reflecting the benefits of discretion and mitigating factors, interviewees commonly perceived progressive discipline as allowing educators to consider individual student needs and thus minimize inequalities within the application of discipline. However, a few interviewees suggested the use of discretion may have lead to the unintended consequence of allowing the personal biases of school-based actors to impact how discipline is administered. Quite possibly, the use of discretion may have created an alternative avenue for the unequal treatment of students. To provide an example of educator biases within discipline practices, one teacher stated the following:

> *I don't know if it's policy that has singled out the groups or the people applying the policy do it through their own experience, and with making their judgements bring their own biases into it. We all have prejudices and biases; our whole culture is saturated with it. We all have our biases to overcome. It would be good to have a chance to talk about that and have time to reflect on how our behaviour, how our positions of privilege, are affecting how we treat other people"… "If it's not modeled for students by administration and staff, there is an integrity gap there between that and students. Absolutely. You can hardly expect students to demonstrate good character when it's not being demonstrated for them.* (Interview: Spec. Ed. Assistant)

A few interviewees suggest that school staff administering discipline may allow personal biases to influence how discipline matters are handled. Anecdotal evidence from interviews with school-based actors suggests that discipline measures are not equally and fairly applied to all students consistently. One principal in particular pointed out, groups of students are being disproportionately disciplined. As indicated:

> *I think we're still singling out some groups more than others and there's no way to track it. We don't track our students by race, so there's no way to look at the data"…"I know there are marginalized groups that don't do well in education generally, I suspect that the same is true with behaviour. And I know that informally through the number of problems that come to my door, that the same is true with behaviour.* (Interview: Principal, 2)

Based on personal experience, the principal quoted above indicated that equity issues are prevalent and impact school discipline processes. Interview data also reveals that students from lower social-economic backgrounds and visible minority students may be disproportionately represented in alternative education programs for suspended and expelled students. Accordingly:

> *Something you should note in your research and something that needs to be said out loud, it would be interesting to look at the socio-economic data about our students* [students who are expelled into alternative education programs], *because the kids who don't fight expulsion, tend to not have the resources to fight expulsions. Whereas the kids who fight expulsions, tend to win and they don't come here. So you can imagine what that looks like in terms of the strata in terms of the kids and the resources. Family support is part of it. I think along with that, I think you would find a significant representation of visible minorities here that would not be a representative sample of the county.* (Interview: Alt. Ed. program facilitator)

According to the alternative education program facilitator quoted above, students of low socio-economic status and visible minority students are disproportionately represented in alternative education programs for expelled students. The Interviewee quoted directly above suggested a lack of resources and parental involvement as possible contributors to this unequal disciplinary outcome. Accordingly, Bill 212 (Education Amendment Act: Progressive Discipline and School Safety, 2007) initiated a change in expulsion procedures from the previous Bill 81 (Safe Schools Act: 2000). Currently with Bill 212, principals recommend to the board that a student be expelled. As outlined in the Education Act (*Education Act Ontario Regulation 472/07: Suspension and Expulsion of Pupils*), following this recommendation, a pre-hearing conference is held where students and parents have an opportunity to become involved, exploring available options and possibilities of a resolution. At this point, the student and family have the right to appeal the expulsion. Perhaps the degree parents are familiar with school discipline processes and/or knowledge of the education system more generally may influence parents' level of involvement or ability to advocate on behalf of their children.

It is interesting to note, as previously described, Lareau (1987; 2000; 2002; 2003), suggests that students from families with higher SES and educational capital may have schooling advantages. Parents may play a more active role in their children's schooling, as well as understand institutional practices and advocate effectively on their children's behalf. On the other hand, students from more disadvantaged families may have parents who are less involved in their education and less knowledgeable about schooling processes. In single parent homes and situations where parents are working multiple jobs, parental availability to attend expulsion proceedings may also play a part. Language barriers may create additional challenges for parents of minority students. Or students living outside of parental care may not have someone to assist in negotiating through these processes. Unequal family background may influence the outcome of expulsion proceedings.

Based on the interviews conducted for this study, it is possible that returning discretion to educators and local school sites may have contributed, in some way, to the unintended consequence of allowing the personal biases and discriminatory attitudes of school-based actors to shape disciplinary processes and outcomes. Further, equity oriented behaviour may not be consistently modeled and in some cases directly

contradicted by school-based actors. Equity is a learning objective for students and equity oriented behaviour is an expectation. Students may receive contradictory messages when equity based behaviour is not demonstrated, student learning discrepancies may be an outcome.

Interestingly, as previously discussed interviewees suggested that people enter the teaching profession with different personalities and perspectives that may influence their flexibility to adopt changing philosophies embedded within policy reform. As also previously described, teacher personalities may create negative situations for students, prompting other school staff to step in and assume responsibilities to assist students. Contributing to the current discussion of unequal schooling practices, a number of interviewees pointed out that educators are hired and evaluated based solely on academic relevant criteria and the personality of teachers is generally not a consideration. As suggested:

> *The people who do the hiring, are they just looking for someone who will make their headaches go away? Oftentimes the hire ups have other things they have to do. You know the hire ups just want the problems to go away*"*…"The principal doing an evaluation, a TPA staff evaluation on the teachers, doesn't talk about the openness and honesty and those qualities. And it's really hard to fire a teacher. The principal checks the lesson plans and if the teacher has a good concept of what they're teaching, if they understand summative and formative assessment. It's not really who they are as a person. And I think if an administrator started to do that he would get in trouble with the union.* (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 2)

The academic focus in hiring and evaluating practices is perhaps one area educational systems maintain highly rational, tightly coupled, and institutionalized practices within the core organizational structure of schools. As indicated in the quote above, however, these practices may not support the whole student learning and wellbeing focus. Interview findings suggest that increased levels of discretion may have, in some way, created an alternative avenue for unequal treatment. Due to the visible policy implementation within schooling rhetoric in combination with inconsistent schooling practices to address social inequalities, elements of social reproduction may exist and may remain "hidden" within education systems.

3) Cultural Reproduction vs. Cultural Mobility

Based on the information presented in this chapter, and throughout this study, schooling practices of student discipline may reflect a continuum along cultural mobility and reproduction theories of cultural capital. Some schools and educators are engaging progressive practices and finding success, others are conforming to progressive ideals on a superficial level and not implementing progressive discipline within their practices, and some educators may be engaging in culturally reproductive practices.

Overall, however, progressive discipline policy does seem to challenge central themes of Bourdieu and Passeron's argument that schools are agents of cultural reproduction. As previously discussed, Bourdieu and Passeron's (1977) orientation to cultural capital specifies that cultural capital is exclusionary and that education systems reproduce privileged culture through processes of social reproduction. Supporting Bourdieu and Passeron's thinking, parents generally socialize their children in similar ways to how they were socialized by their parents. Negative family environments may therefore become a cycle creating, in a sense, cause and effect patterns of negative behaviours within future generations.

Contradictory to Bourdieu and Passeron's argument, however, progressive discipline may provide a means of cultural compensation in the educational process and facilitate student cultural mobility assisting students to gain advantages in school and life in broader society. Through processes of socialization and re-socialization, this study has described the potential of progressive discipline practices to facilitate the transmission of cultural resources, in the form of values, behaviours, practices, and skill sets from school-based actors to students. Specifically, school-based actors interviewed described efforts to intervene in student lives, with the hope to prevent reproduction of inequalities transmitted from one generation to the next. Although schooling may not be valued as highly within some student homes and parents may not have the ability to support their children with the skills valued by educators, school-based actors may step in and try to accommodate and compensate for educational disparities.

The following quote is representative of the perspectives of many school actors interviewed for this study. As described below, and reinforced by findings presented in this study, school-based actors appear be actively counteracting aspects of social reproduction. As described:

> *I think that's what the shift is about* [zero tolerance to progressive discipline], *trying to keep kids in school and exhaust all resources trying to help them. We have to make it better; generation after generation of 16 year old mother gets pregnant and has kids. Their kids grow up, 16 they get pregnant. Moms the drug addict, kids are drug addicts. You have to try and change that and the only way you can change that is through trying to help, so helping them get credits and doing credit rescue and credit recovery, meeting with families, talking about their alcohol and drug issues, talking about their anger issues, helping them with their problem-solving, having different support groups they can be involved with. 'Yah what you did was awful but let's try to work through it and we're going to give you another chance and let's see how that goes.' And using resources like social workers and child and youth workers and referring them to the community for counselling, all of this is about giving them a chance.* (Interview: CYW, 2)

As illustrated in the quote above, educators recognized the long term impact and benefit of addressing deficits in social and emotional learning for students during primary and secondary levels of education. Based on the quote provided here, and interview data

presented within this study, progressive discipline policies as well as educator practices, perspectives and philosophies that align with progressive discipline, in theory, may challenge Bourdieu and Passeron's argument that schools are agents of cultural reproduction. The rehabilitative focus of progressive discipline may have real life implications for student outcomes and may provide students from less advantaged backgrounds the potential for social mobility. One interviewee in particular described the potential benefits of social and emotional learning focus within progressive discipline policies, suggesting these practices are teaching students the tools to build a better society (Interview: Spec. Ed. Consultant, 3). Overall, schooling practices of progressive discipline may be a new type of cultural mobility.

Chapter Conclusion:

This chapter has extended this analysis of policy implementation by exploring the potential role that family and cultural dynamics may contribute to variation in student discipline practices and outcomes. Findings suggest a degree of added variability within progressive discipline policy implementation due to organizational dilemmas and schooling processes in combination with family dynamics. I did find that middle class families were better able to negotiate progressive discipline processes and advocate for improved outcomes for their children. Middle class students may in fact retain an advantage in their ability to comply with institutional standards. Progressive discipline appears to be implemented in a loosely coupled fashion. In reality, progressive discipline may not consistently help lower class students learn valued behavioural and social literacy, and thus improve student ability to comply with behavioural standards of educators.

However, I also found evidence for the cultural mobility thesis which I believe is better supported by the data. Based on research findings presented within this chapter, and throughout this study, I argue that overall schooling practices that align with progressive discipline policy have the potential to serve as a mechanism of cultural mobility, partially compensating for student differences in exposure to cultural capital. In the form of Concerted Cultivation, progressive discipline practices appear to be stimulating students development of skill and competencies that comply with schooling standards of evaluation outlined in the Methods chapter, i.e., self-direction and self-management, critical thinking, language and interaction skills, as well as problem solving and conflict management skills. In addition, educators are using discretion and bending behavioural standards to accommodate student circumstances and individualize student treatment. Fundamentally, educators are actively shaping student behaviour to be more consistent with preferred behavioural ideals, offering advantages for students in complying with the behavioural standards of schools.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

Exploring the link between school discipline policies and educational inequality, this study has examined the implementation of progressive discipline policy through the lenses of organizational theory and cultural capital theory. This study has considered the cultural and organizational influences that shape how policy is applied, to address the question: Are schooling practices of student discipline compensating for differences in student exposure to cultural capital? Overall, research findings support the cultural mobility thesis. Progressive discipline processes appear to partially compensate for class differences in exposure to cultural capital.

Labaree's organizational model of the school system has provided a useful aid in conceptualizing schools' institutional structure and how policy may be implemented within the various schooling levels. Overall, the findings presented in this study support Labaree's position that educational reform has the greatest impact on educational rhetoric and less impact at the instruction and learning levels of education. Corresponding to Labaree's perspective, progressive discipline policies and practices generated a lot of consensus among school-based actors at the rhetorical level. Educators, on the whole, seem to resonate with the child-centred philosophical underpinnings of progressive discipline. Further, my findings do indicate that progressive discipline policies to some degree have penetrated the teaching and learning levels of education. However, findings outlined in this study also reveal that schooling practices of student discipline vary within schools and between schools. Due to cultural and organizational influences, findings reveal inconsistencies between policy at the rhetoric level and policy in practices at the structural and schooling levels.

The main findings suggest that progressive discipline appears to be loosely coupled, characterized by a sizeable disconnect between high level policy directives and on the ground implementation. There appears to be a trade off in which schools are able to partially compensate for social inequalities and use discretion, but perhaps also allow for latitude for unequal abilities to negotiate. Findings also reveal that school-based actors, in general, are making progress towards embracing progressive practices and seeing benefits. Overall, there appears to be a net gain. Overall, progressive discipline processes appear to assist some students to adopt behavioural conduct valued by educators through practices of Concerted Cultivation, and therefore improve some students' abilities to comply with institutionalized standards of behaviour.

Recall, according to Labaree the central problem of successful policy implementation is the ability of reform policy to transition through the various barriers of the schooling system to reach the student learning levels. I have criticised Labaree's model as excluding the consideration of cultural processes and family dynamics. I argue this is a clear limitation to Labaree's model. I argue that family and cultural dynamics, i.e., unequal family practices, learned behaviours via family socialization, as well as parental involvement, are directly connected and influential to shaping "student learning" outcomes of educational reform. Supporting this argument, findings reveal empirical value in considering the role of family and cultural dynamics within policy

implementation analysis. Further supporting this argument, a number of interviewees referred to an analogy of the education process as a three legged chair, where the legs represent the teacher, student and family. Remove one leg and the chair would inevitably fall. I argue the consideration of family dynamics is fundamental within any discussion of student learning, and adds a further layer of complexity to the impact of reform on student learning outcomes. Fundamentally, unequal family dynamics do appear, on some level, to provide some students with various advantages during schooling discipline processes.

This study has offered original empirical and theoretical contributions to sociological research. First, this research has offered an empirical contribution by exploring how schools and school-based actors are experiencing and responding to institutionalized practices of student discipline. This study adds original empirical data to the existing research in the area of school discipline, and contributes new conceptual insights into the cultural and organizational processes connected to institutionalized practices of student discipline. Second, my thesis contributes to the New Institutional scholarship by considering the role of actors/agency to examine mechanisms of loose coupling within policy implementation. Third, this research has also offered an original extension of cultural capital theory into the realm of student discipline, and adds an organizational dimension to cultural capital theory by examining the institutional context of schools in which cultural processes operate.

This study has outlined theoretical and empirical connections between organizational and cultural processes, which I argue, are central within school discipline practices and educational reform. Drawing on empirical findings grounded by the real life experiences of school-based actors, findings reveal that some schools and educators are experiencing success with practices consistent with progressive discipline policies, and are positively impacting student educational experiences. To some degree, progressive discipline policy has penetrated the teaching and learning levels education.

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Appendix 1: Principal and Staff Information Letter and Consent Form

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Progressive Discipline within the Waterloo Region School Board: A Sociological Assessment of a School Discipline Programme

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Purpose of the Study

As a graduate student at McMaster University, I am writing my MA Thesis on the progressive discipline policies and programs within the Waterloo Region School Board. My project asks the question, does a major policy shift such as progressive discipline (a) change the ways people respond to a problem such as bullying or school violence, and (b) influence school climate and atmosphere more generally?

In general, studies suggest that a school's atmosphere affects student discipline, achievement, and the general well being of students. I want to hear about your experiences and perceptions regarding progressive discipline procedures implemented in your school.

Procedures of the Study

This letter is an invitation to participate in a study on progressive discipline procedures. The research for this project will be conducted through face to face interviews lasting approximately 20-30 minutes, with principals or vice-principals, school administrators, child and youth workers and/or EAs, teachers and students who are involved with the school based progressive discipline programs. Basically I am interested in how people in these roles interpret, and experience the implementation of progressive discipline policies. More specifically, I would like to find out what has changed since the

progressive discipline programs started, and how progressive discipline has impacted these roles.

This study will provide insight into how people are responding to the programs and what their attitudes are. I will ask questions such as: *Could you tell me about your experiences with progressive discipline procedures and/or initiatives at your school? Do you feel progressive discipline procedures are effective? Do you feel progressive discipline policies and procedures impacts student learning? How so? Do you feel progressive discipline impacts the development of a safe, accepting and caring school environment?*

With your permission, I would like to tape-record the interviews, so that I can take notes at a later time, which will make our conversation run much more smoothly. Any information will only be used to help me with the research project, and all information will be kept secure and confidential.

Potential Risks

The interview does not need to be recorded if it makes you feel uncomfortable and I will take handwritten notes. If you give me your permission to be tape recorded, but change your mind, the tape recorder can be turned off at any time. If any questions make you feel uncomfortable, you can skip them and still stay in the study.

Potential Benefits

While there are no direct benefits to you, this research may benefit the Waterloo Region School Board by helping them evaluate the progressive discipline policies and programs, and possibly improve them in the future.

Confidentiality

All of the information that I gain will be kept confidential, and no names or descriptions of any
sort will be used in my reports or publications. All tape-recorded interviews, and any notes will be kept in a locked cabinet and password protected computer. Only my supervisor (Scott Davies) and I will have access to the research findings. In my report, I will not identify any particular school, area, or individual. Privacy will be respected, and I will make every effort to maintain confidentiality. In rare instances, I may have to reveal certain personal information if the law requires it (for example, if someone discloses an incident of child abuse, or a situation where a child is in danger). If this should occur, only the information directly related to the child's risk will be revealed, but the rest will remain private.

Participation

It is up to you whether or not you participate in this study. If you do not want to participate, I will not contact you again. If you are willing to be interviewed, please contact me by phone or email (listed at the top of this letter), or fill out the contact information section on the consent form and return the letter to myself. If you are willing

to participate we can set up an interview at a time and location that is convenient for you. If at any point you change your mind about your participation, you can contact either myself or Scott Davies to let us know, and your request will be granted immediately. If you choose to withdraw from this study, any information you provided will be destroyed immediately, unless you indicate otherwise.

Information About Study Results
The research and final report should be completed by August of 2011. If you are interested in reading the report or a summary of the findings once this study is complete, please let me know and how you would like it sent to you.

Information About Participating
If at any point you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact Emily Milne or Scott Davies at the contact information above.

This study has been reviewed and approved by the McMaster University Research Ethics Board. If you have concerns or questions about your rights as a participant or about the way
the study is conducted, you may contact: McMaster Research Ethics Board Secretariat at 905-
525-9140, ext. 23142 or email ethicsoffice@mcmaster.ca. This study has also received ethics clearance from the Waterloo Region District School Board Research Committee.

If you are willing to participate in the research by arranging an interview, please contact
Emily Milne at milneep@mcmaster.ca or (519) 576-3020.

Sincerely,

_____
Emily Milne BA, MA Candidate
Department of Sociology
McMaster University

I have read and understand the letter of information about the research on this project and have had all of my questions answered adequately. I understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any question, and to end the interview at any time without penalty by advising the researcher. By signing this form, I give my permission to be interviewed by Emily Milne.

I am aware that excerpts from the interview may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the quotations will be anonymous.

With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study.

□ Yes. □ No.

I give my permission to have this interview tape recorded:

□ Yes. □ No.

I agree to the use of anonymous quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this

research.

□ Yes. □ No.

Would you like to receive a brief summary of what we learned about Progressive Discipline Programs?
□Yes. □No.

Where can we send this summary to you? See space for address/email below)

Participant Name (please print): _____

Participant Signature: _____

Date of Interview: _____

Appendix 2: Interview Schedule

1) What are your general feelings about the discipline policies (PD) within the school board? Are you satisfied with policies and policy outcomes?
2) How has discipline changed since the implementation of Safe Schools in 2000?
    a. How have these changes impacted students and school climates?
3) What does PD currently look like at the school level? At the board level?
    a. What are your perceptions about discipline policies, strategies or approaches that have been implemented/adopted?
        i. What are your perceptions regarding implemented strategies to **promote** (positive behaviour), **prevent**, and **intervene** (i.e., consultation with parents, detentions, verbal reminders, review of expectations, written assignments allowing reflection, volunteer services to the community, conflict mediation, peer mentoring, referral to counselling)?
    b. How are policies communicated to school staff, students and parents?
4) What are your perceptions about how discipline and intervention are used and applied (please give examples when possible)?
    a. When dealing with individual students or behavioural instances (bullying, physical altercations, drinking or using drugs, etc)?
    b. Within daily classroom activities?
    c. Within everyday schooling practices?
    d. Within the overall schooling environment?
5) What is the actual impact of progressive discipline procedures and programs (on students, school climate)?
    a. Do you feel PD progressive discipline policies and procedures impacts student learning? How so?
    b. Do you feel progressive discipline impacts the development of a safe, accepting and caring school environment? How so?
    c. Do you feel progressive disciplinary adequately addresses inappropriate behaviour?
6) What are your perceptions about teachers or school PD courses or training programs?
    a. At the board level or at the school level, can you describe the PD training strategies for teachers and school staff (ongoing or new-teacher induction programs)?
7) Do you have any additional comments regarding present discipline policies/processes or recommendations for future discipline policies/processes?