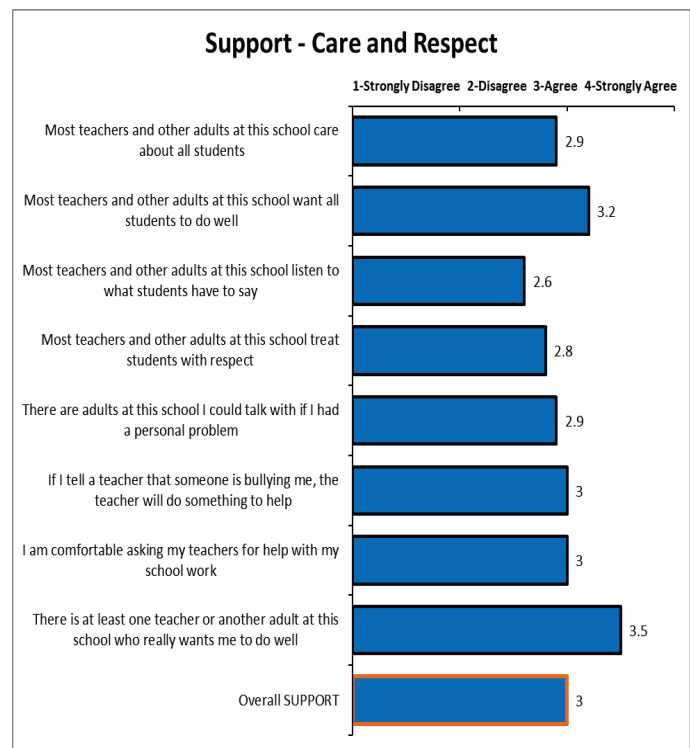
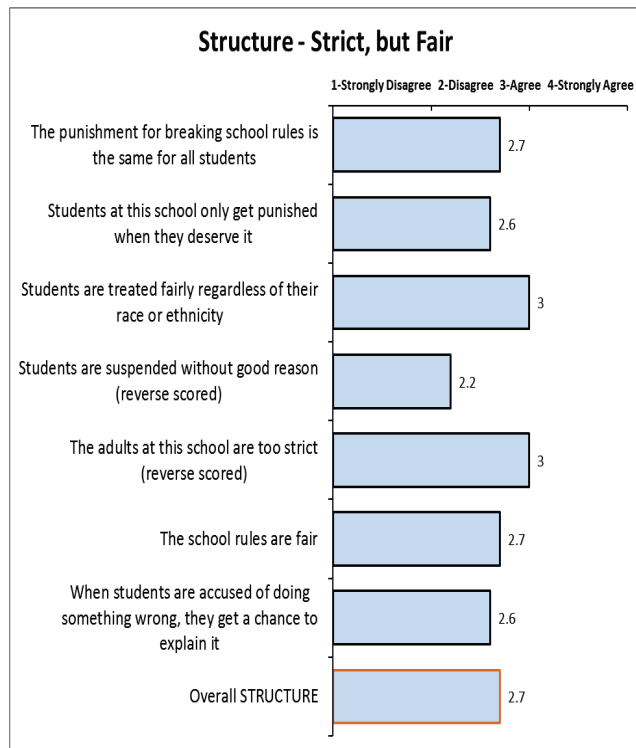


What is an Authoritative School Climate?

Research in developmental psychology has found that children are most successful and well-adjusted when their parents are both strict (high structure) and affectionate (high support). This combination of structure and support has been termed authoritative parenting. In contrast, children are less successful and well-adjusted when their parents are strict but not supportive (authoritarian), supportive but not strict (permissive), or lacking in both structure and support (disengaged). Our research has applied this model of good parenting to schools. We have found that student surveys can be used to construct highly reliable dimensions of school climate labeled *Structure* (7 items) and *Support* (8 items). The charts show 2013 state averages for the items used to measure structure and support based on 39,364 7th and 8th grade students in 423 Virginia schools. We have conducted exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses within a multi-level structural framework to demonstrate the stability and convergent validity of these measures.



Practical Suggestions. Schools can examine their levels of Structure and Support to identify areas for improvement. Authoritative schools score above the median on overall Structure and Support. Subsequent Issues will show how an authoritative school climate is linked to less teasing and bullying, better student behavior toward teachers, fewer discipline problems, and higher student achievement. Like a good parent, school staff members should be *authoritative* rather than *authoritarian*: holding high expectations for their students and at the same time communicating care and respect for them.

Study Overview. The Virginia Secondary School Climate Survey (including scales from the Authoritative School Climate Survey) was administered as a component of the Virginia School Safety Audit program carried out by the Virginia Center for School Safety of the Department of Criminal Justice Services, in cooperation with the Virginia Department of Education. The survey was designed to yield practical information on school climate and safety conditions that can be used to improve conditions for learning. The survey was developed by researchers (P.I. Dewey Cornell) with the Youth-Nex Center to Promote Effective Youth Development and the Virginia Youth Violence Project of the Curry School of Education, University of Virginia. This project was supported by Grant #2012-JF-FX-0062 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice. This is a correlational study that can support, but not prove, causal relationships. More detailed analyses are available from the Virginia Youth Violence Project: <<http://youthviolence.edschool.virginia.edu>>.