

Discipline in the Classroom

By Kaitlyn McIntyre

Introduction and Methods

Discipline is one consistent factor in classrooms everywhere around the world. It is something that becomes a major focus for teachers, but there can be unconscious biases a teacher has in regards to who is the recipient of the discipline. These biases can stem from a variety of areas, such as gender, race, or perceptions about a student. Throughout the articles and research that was conducted, one thing seemed to remain a constant: boys, especially those in minority groups, were more likely to receive discipline at a higher rate than girls. This discipline usually presented in the form of "stern reprimands and referrals to the office for punishment" (Morris, 2005). Much of this discipline was a result of implicit bias, sometimes based on stereotypes the teachers possessed about a certain race or gender. The form of discipline is often left to the teacher's discretion, resulting in some students receiving harsher discipline than other students for the same actions (Nowicki, 2018).

I wanted to look into the structure of the discipline my cooperating teacher implemented in her classroom. During observational visits before choosing this topic, it was apparent that the discipline was not being fairly doled out among the students. There were students who would get in trouble for things that others did not and some who seemed to be a "target" for discipline. The premise of this project was to investigate how frequently my cooperating teacher was disciplining the boys compared to girls. This was expanded upon to also include a comparison between the disciplining of the third grade class versus the fourth grade class. To collect this data I observed instructional times and tallied the number of times a boy was disciplined and the number of times a girl was disciplined. One of the difficulties in this data collection was determining what counted as discipline. I determined that the discipline I would be counting would include when a child lost recess time or was sent to work somewhere else. After four data collection sessions, I began to analyze the data I had gathered by creating graphs for third grade, fourth grade, and then an overall comparison for boys and girls.

Results

Third Grade

In the third grade class, there was more frequent discipline among the boys than the girls, which was consistent with the data results in the background research. The boys were losing recess or being sent to work somewhere else an average of three times more often than the girls were.

Fourth Grade

In the fourth grade class, There was more frequent discipline among the girls than the boys. The girls were losing recess or being sent to work somewhere else an average of two and a half times more often than the boys were. However, overall discipline with the fourth graders was lower than with the third graders.

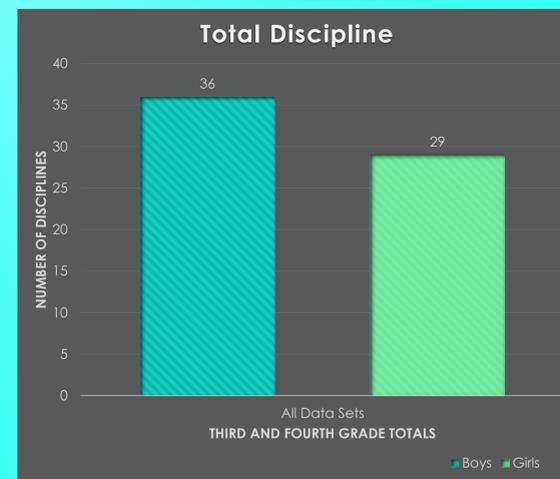
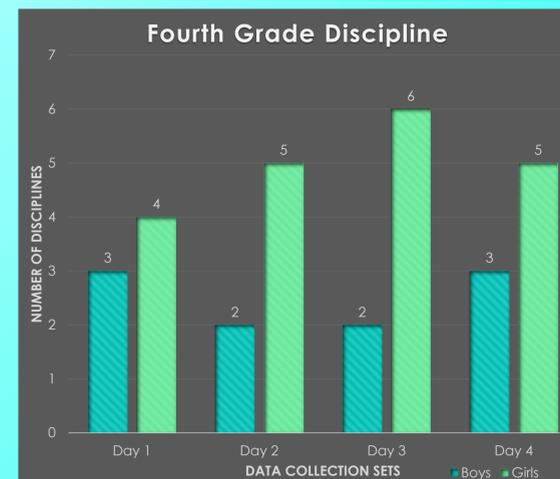
Overall

Altogether, the boys in the third and fourth grade class combined were disciplined more frequently than the girls were. They were disciplined seven more times across the data collection sessions.

References

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Data



Reflection

I was slightly surprised by the results of this project. I was anticipating my cooperating teacher discipline to be similar between the two grade levels she teaches. However, the findings indicated that she disciplines the boys more in the third grade class and the girls more in the fourth grade class. Overall, she has more instances of discipline in the third grade class than in the fourth grade class. I believe this is because she had the fourth graders last year when they were in third grade and they are aware of the rules and procedures in the room. At the time I collected my data, the third graders were still becoming accustomed to the rules of the room and therefore were more frequently seen doing something they should not have been doing. Overall, the boys in the third and fourth grade classes combined were disciplined more frequently throughout the instructional periods than the girls were. A pattern I saw arise in the third grade class was that the same students were always the ones being disciplined or sent to the hallway. Sometimes, they would be doing the same thing as another student, but they would be the only one who received that harsh of a discipline. Another pattern I saw was that when a student lost recess time, they were less likely to get back on-task at all. These students had already lost their recess time and, in their minds, had nothing left to lose. Once a student lost recess, there was rarely any discipline for subsequent misbehaviors. Another pattern I noticed in third grade was that when one of the girls got in trouble, the teacher would talk to them about what happened and why. When one of the boys got in trouble, she would just tell them to put their names on the board with very little or no explanation. Frequently they would not know why they were losing their recess. There were fewer patterns in the fourth grade class, as there was not any particular student that frequently was getting disciplined. These students were only disciplined when they were continually not paying attention or doing their work. Something I learned through this project is that teachers can have biases of their students, whether they are conscious of them or not. As teachers, we need to try to limit these biases, especially in terms of discipline. All students should be disciplined the same way for the same infraction. Students should also not be punished more based on a preconceived notion of them. As a result of this, I learned that it is important to think about what the student did and not so much which student did it when considering appropriate discipline for a student. This is when something like the frequency of the behavior would come into play when determining appropriate actions.

Future

There are a variety of ways in which the findings from this project can be carried into my future classroom. One of these ways is by focusing on the behavior that was exhibited when a student gets in trouble rather than the student engaging in the behavior. This can help to ensure that all students are disciplined fairly for their actions. Students who are exhibiting the same misbehaviors repeatedly would receive a more severe consequence than a student who has only engaged in the behavior once or twice. Something else I can use in my future classroom is setting rules and expectations in the beginning of the school year. My cooperating teacher did not do a great job with this with her third graders and, as a result, they act out more in class and see how much they can get away with. The fourth graders have already had a year to become accustomed to the rules and expectations and have a firmer grasp on what is expected of them in the classroom. I think it is important to spend the first few weeks of school continually going over the rules and expectations with students so they know what is expected of them and what they cannot do in the classroom. This can help lead to a decrease in the amount of misbehaviors and help to set up both a good behavior and classroom management system for the school year.