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## **Executive Summary**

### **Introduction:**

Discipline practices are used to address undesired student behaviors. These practices can affect the schools climate and sense of relationships between staff and students. Exclusionary practices such as out-of-school suspension, in-school suspension and expulsion continue to be the dominant method of discipline despite disproportionate representation of marginalized student populations. Restorative discipline is an alternative to exclusion and may better address students need for positive relationships with educators and increase access to opportunities for marginalized student populations.

**Problem of Practice:** Should be concisely stated in one sentence.

Exclusionary discipline practices limit students' access to services and is assigned to marginalized populations at a disproportionate rate. Despite alternative methods such as restorative practices, exclusionary policies are the predominant method used to address nonviolent student infractions in New Hampshire public schools. The loss of instruction due to exclusionary practices can have an adverse impact on students' academic experience, denying opportunities and access to education that is afforded to their peers.

### **Research Method:**

The study was a quantitative design examining the difference between exclusionary and restorative discipline based on teacher student relationships and Sense of Meaningful Work. A casual comparison method was used to examine the differences between the two discipline practices based on teacher to student relationships and Sense of Meaningful Work. An

anonymous electronic survey link was sent to ninth and tenth grade teachers in three urban public secondary schools.

### **Summary of Findings:**

The results indicated there was no difference between the two discipline practices and the teachers' Sense of Meaningful Work. The results did indicate a statistically significant difference between discipline practices based on teacher to student relationships. Teachers using restorative discipline practices ranked their relationships with students significantly higher than teachers using exclusionary discipline practices. There was no statistically significant difference between discipline practices based on the sub-scale scores of Conflict or Intimacy. However, teachers using restorative practices reported a statistically significant difference indicating a higher sense of warmth versus exclusionary.

### **Limitation(s) of Study:**

There are limitations to this study with self-reporting instruments to include participant bias that may influence the validity and reliability of the data. The sample size of this study was directly affected by the COVID 19 Pandemic and civil unrest in the neighborhoods in which two schools were located. There was less participation from teachers using restorative practices, the results of this study may not be generalizable to other schools.

### **Implications/Significance of Study:**

This study is the first to compare exclusionary and restorative discipline practice based on teacher to student relationships and teachers' Sense of Meaningful Work at the secondary level. The results provide insight to the effects exclusionary or restorative discipline practices may have on teachers' ability to foster positive student relationships. It also indicated that there was no difference between the two practices base on teachers' Sense of Meaningful Work. This

may indicate that discipline practices have little effect on teachers' perception of meaningful work. These findings suggest that educational leadership should review current discipline practices and consider alternative methods to address undesired student behavior, reduce disparities in discipline, and strengthen teacher to student relationships.