

**Washington State University
College of Education**

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Will defend the dissertation

Date: October 1, 2018

Time: NOON

Location: Vancouver – VUB 311

Spokane – SNRS 420

Faculty, students and the general public are encouraged to attend.

**REDUCING EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE: ALIGNMENT OF ADMINISTRATOR
AND STAFF PERCEPTIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR THE WORK**

Chair: Sharon D. Kruse

As schools, districts, and government entities seek to improve outcomes and equity in our public school system, increasing attention has focused on exclusionary discipline practices that have a discriminatory impact on students. District and building leaders are implementing changes in discipline practices intended to reduce the frequency of use and disproportionality in the use of suspension and expulsion. The purpose of this study was to understand the perspective of school administrators and staff as they seek to reduce the use of exclusionary discipline in their school. Furthermore, this study explored how administrator perceptions and staff perceptions align with each other and with current practices, how they differ, and the implications for addressing exclusionary discipline.

Using qualitative methods, the study, taking place over a period of three months at a mid-size Eastern Washington high school, included interviews with four school administrators, a focus group with seven teachers, and a focus group with six counselors, as well as a review of the school's discipline documents and communications.

The study found five tensions experienced by staff that create conditions of strain and disequilibrium in the school related to discipline practices. These included tensions between traditional and new expectations of schools, accountability and support for student behavior, technical and adaptive responses to change, the comprehensive high school and alternative settings, and between staff in different roles in the school. These tensions arise from differences in perceptions between administrators and staff, though areas of alignment also appeared in the data.

Implications for school leaders include a need to attend to the areas of staff capacity building, consistency, communications, and school culture to support future efforts to improve discipline practices. Policy implications include a need for lawmakers to improve the resources available for schools to provide supervision and services for students with behavior issues that would have previously resulted in exclusions from school.