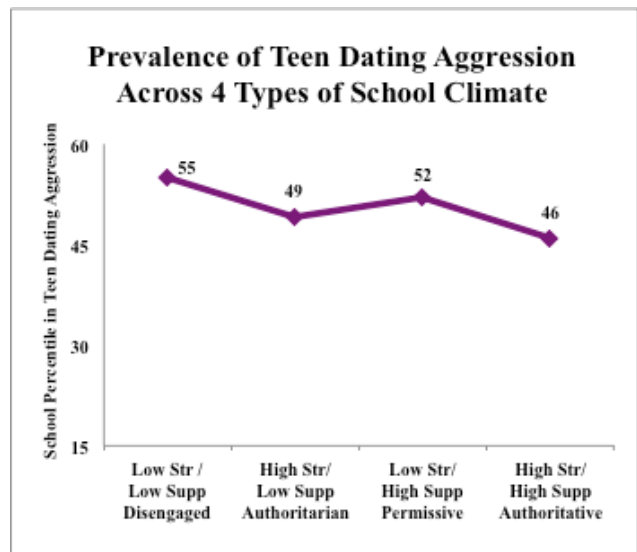
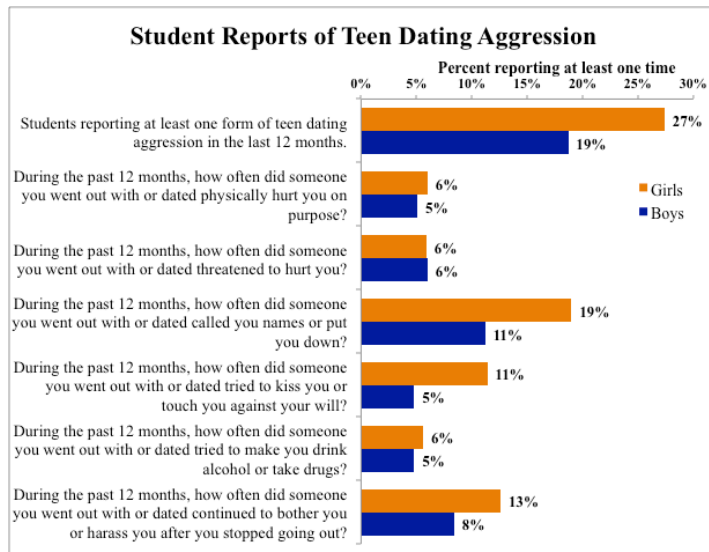


Authoritative High Schools Have Less Teen Dating Aggression

In spring 2017, the high school survey added questions about teen dating aggression. These questions help schools respond to the Dear Colleague letter of the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (2011) reminding schools of their Title IX responsibilities to curb forms of sexual violence and related behaviors among students <<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/letters/colleague-201104.pdf>>.

The survey found that both male and female students report substantial levels of teen dating aggression. The survey was completed by 62,679 students in grades 9-12 in 320 Virginia public schools. The six types of sexual harassment were summed into a total score for each student, and the average for all students in a school was used to determine each school’s percentile relative to the state. Our research found that high schools with an authoritative climate report less teen dating aggression than other high schools. As described in Issue 1, an authoritative school is one in which students report that their teachers are strict but fair in their discipline (high structure) *and* concerned and respectful toward them (high support). In contrast, there are schools with high structure but low support (authoritarian), high support but low structure (permissive), or low structure and low support (disengaged). As shown in the chart, teen dating aggression experienced by students was at the 46th percentile in authoritative schools versus the 55th percentile in disengaged schools.



Practical Suggestions. Schools should educate students about behaviors that are considered teen dating aggression, how they can obtain help, and ways to support their peers. A U.S. government website dedicated to informing youth and educators about forms of dating aggression and the need for fostering safe school climates is available: <<http://youth.gov/youth-topics/teen-dating-violence>>. To build an authoritative school climate, teachers and other school authorities should communicate high disciplinary expectations that are strictly but fairly enforced. In addition, they should build supportive relationships so that students feel cared for and respected.

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) at 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, and Grant #NIJ 2014-CK-BX-0004 awarded by the National Institute of Justice, both from the Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors 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>>.