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## Discipline Belief Self-Inventory

The Discipline Belief Self-Inventory will provide educators with a look into their individual beliefs about discipline. Inventory statements are derived from an analysis of administrator responses across all grade levels and a range of differences between traditional and innovative/alternative discipline beliefs and/or approaches.

### WHO IS THIS SELF-INVENTORY FOR?



Educators—such as teachers, school support staff, and school- and district-level administrators—who want to create effective behavior systems in their schools can benefit from this self-inventory. This inventory can also aid future educators and leaders to reflect on their discipline beliefs.

### WHY DOES THIS SELF-INVENTORY MATTER TO ME?



We have found through our research and work with practitioners the primary reason alternative discipline does not work is the beliefs of the administrator at the school or district, the person responsible for establishing the school's culture. If the leader does not believe in alternative discipline methods, they (1) will implement the discipline ineffectively,

resulting in a lack of buy-in from the staff and stakeholders, and (2) cannot justify the importance for students to be given the chance to learn behaviors similar to how they learn academics. Your school or district will not succeed in supporting behavior unless your beliefs about discipline shift to support it.



## **WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT BELIEFS ABOUT DISCIPLINE?**

Please review the statements and rate yourself on your discipline beliefs. Please be honest in your responses. Remember, this self-inventory is anonymous and designed to serve as a reflection and self-awareness of where you currently fall in your beliefs about discipline.

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1. Suspensions work to change student behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
2. Discipline should be used as a teaching opportunity.	1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
3. I prefer a black-and-white discipline handbook with exact number of days outlined for suspensions based on behavior.	1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
4. Behavior should be addressed in an individualized fashion.	1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
5. Parents need to be inconvenienced with suspensions.	1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
6. Restorative, reflective, and instructional opportunities should be part of the consequence/intervention.	1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
7. Students should be suspended when teachers or stakeholders pressure me to suspend.	1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
8. I monitor student behavior on an ongoing basis.	1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
9. I use suspension to set an example.	1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree
10. I find the function of the behavior and innovate a consequence based on identified function.	1	2	3	4	5
Strongly Disagree					Strongly Agree

*(Continued)*

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11. I need to be convinced to use alternative discipline approaches.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
12. I involve parents, teachers, and other stakeholders with the assigned discipline.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
13. There is not enough time to do alternative discipline.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
14. I establish a relationship with the student throughout the alternative discipline process.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
15. I avoid difficult conversations about alternative discipline decisions.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
16. I provide a consequence/intervention in lieu of suspension.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
17. I prefer to send students home instead of keeping them at school.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
18. I am confident enough to justify the reasoning behind using alternative discipline.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
19. I demonstrate support to teachers by suspending students.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	
20. I am comfortable with my skills to build believers in alternative discipline by demonstrating positive effects of using alternatives.	1	2	3	4	5
	Strongly Disagree			Strongly Agree	

## DISCIPLINE BELIEF SELF-INVENTORY SCORING



**Scoring Note:** If the combination of your odd and even point ranges do not fall into a disciplinarian category, please consider the following: (a) retake the inventory to make sure you are not contradicting yourself in your ratings, or (b) consider yourself in the emergent range due to the similarity of your scores supporting both traditional and innovative discipline beliefs.

**Total odd questions:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Total even questions:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Traditional Disciplinarian:** A traditional disciplinarian is a disciplinarian who prefers the black-and-white discipline handbook as a guide to how to conduct discipline. This type of disciplinarian believes this form of discipline works and prefers taking the safe route with a business-as-usual approach to discipline.

*Total odd questions in the 40- to 50-point range and Total even questions in the 10- to 20-point range*

**Emergent Disciplinarian:** An emergent disciplinarian is inconsistent with his/her discipline practices. This type of disciplinarian assigns discipline based on his/her disposition and/or pressures from others. This type of disciplinarian does not have a strong belief about discipline one way or another. An emergent disciplinarian will experiment with alternative discipline methods but does not have the skill set or tools to do so. This usually results in using alternatives ineffectively.

*Total odd questions in the 21- to 39-point range and Total even questions in the 21- to 39-point range*

**Innovative Disciplinarian:** An innovative disciplinarian believes in teaching behavior similar to teaching academics. This type of disciplinarian will innovate based on discipline incidents and takes the time to assign, implement, and monitor effective discipline. This type of disciplinarian is confident in having difficult conversations about behavior and has the ability to work with stakeholders on an appropriate assignment of discipline that addresses the behavior. This type of disciplinarian uses alternative discipline for every suspendable incident.

*Total odd questions in the 10- to 20-point range and Total even questions in the 40- to 50-point range*

### \*Discipline Belief Self-Inventory Electronic Version

Type the code [bit.ly/DisciplineBeliefSelf-Inventory](https://bit.ly/DisciplineBeliefSelf-Inventory) into a browser to take the electronic version of the Discipline Belief Self-Inventory. You will receive a completion email after taking the survey online and will be able to download a PDF version of your responses for your records.



To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

 **AUTHORS' NOTE**

If you scored in the innovative disciplinarian range, you are in a solid place to begin the alternative discipline work in this book. This is the ideal range for educators to build ownership across their campus and innovate this work. If you scored in the emergent disciplinarian range, we encourage you to reflect on the components keeping you from fully embracing alternative discipline for all suspendable incidents. Our cautionary note for educators scoring in this range is the trap of inconsistent implementation (i.e., using alternative discipline for some suspendable incidents, but not others) tends to impact equity, culture, and effectiveness of implementation. If you scored in the traditional disciplinarian range, we respect your beliefs but encourage you to consider the case we put forward in Chapter 1 and revisit the more than 25 years of research that illustrate the damaging impact suspensions have on students. Suspensions are the only facet of a child's education that rests in the hands of one person, the administrator. The administrator is the gatekeeper of choosing a path where a student has the opportunity to learn from their mistakes or is sent home on a suspension knowing the detrimental impact it has on the future life trajectory of a student.

Additionally, we often see educators in this range utilize both the suspension *and* the alternative discipline concurrently, which defeats the purpose of our work. **We wrote this book to provide educators a framework for other means of correction (alternative discipline) in lieu of the suspension, not in addition to the suspension.** In the next section, we delve deeper into the work necessary to shift from traditional to innovative beliefs about discipline.

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## Shifting From Traditional to Innovative Belief Systems About Discipline

Shifting the traditional mindset about school discipline remains to be the number one barrier for effectively implementing alternative discipline in schools. In the second edition of this book we wanted to expand on this difficult topic. Specifically, we are concerned with the dichotomy of some educators declaring the importance of equity, inclusivity, and belonging for every student, however reverting to exclusionary practices as their response to misbehavior. How do we expect students to grow and learn from their mistakes if we do not give them the opportunities to do so?

As we think about traditional discipline beliefs, we need to identify the basis for holding onto these disproven practices. Do we discipline the way we were disciplined in our youth or witnessed others being disciplined in school? Is the function fear, control, power, safety, or support? Read the traditional discipline statements (these are actual comments we have received in our experiences training schools across the country) and use these three prompts to reflect on each statement:

- 1) Do you agree with the statement?
- 2) Why do you think the educator feels this way?
- 3) What would be your response to help shift their thinking?

**Traditional Discipline Statements** (Note: We are highlighting these statements because we assure you, you will be hearing them or a variation of them as you do this work):

- *To protect other students, I guess we could make them president of the student body. That makes as much sense as no suspensions.*
- *It depends on what they did. Sometimes they need to go home and think about it, and sometimes they need to go home to protect others.*
- *If the student is fighting, they need to go. The child is angry and worked up. They need time to cool for a day without hurting the staff or students.*
- *Kids think they can do whatever they want and get away with it. Disrespectful brats.*
- *What can't be tolerated is the lack of respect the students have for authority. Let's enforce some zero tolerance on these students instead of making money on high attendance.*
- *I wonder why schools are out of control. No corporal punishment, no suspensions—doesn't that equal fewer types of consequences for bad behavior?*
- *Fewer consequences for bad behavior equals less learning for all. Deterrents to bad behavior worked in the past, why not now?*
- *They endanger themselves, faculty, or classmates and/or prevent other students from learning.*
- *A principal needs to set standards and expectations for everyone to follow.*

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- *I'm curious what the parental responsibility is. We continue to add society issues to the classroom/school without taking things off the classroom/school responsibilities list. Schools cannot be the total responsibility of fixing America's problems.*
- *At our school, students get suspended in cases where their behavior puts others in danger and we don't have the resources to deal with it. The few days gives the school time to put together a plan to deal with it. I think suspension has its place, but it should be a last resort.*
- *Maybe suspensions are issued so that parents assume the responsibility for behavior whereas teaching a student to read is the school's responsibility.*
- *Suspensions send a wake-up call to the parents; behavior is one thing that should be instilled by the parents.*
- *I was hired and trained to teach reading. When did it become the teachers' job to teach kids how to behave? Where are the parents?*

Did you feel any dissonance as you were going through this exercise? It is completely natural if you did. Typically, suspendable behaviors provoke strong emotional responses. There is a certain sense of security in using the traditional school discipline practices that have been in place for decades. Abraham Maslow has a quote we use to capture this phenomenon: "If the only tool you have is a hammer, you tend to see every problem as a nail." Not surprisingly, this quote is derived from Maslow's *Law of the Hammer*, which is a cognitive bias that involves an over-reliance on a familiar tool. We tend to simplify our responses to behavior by convincing ourselves suspensions (exclusionary practices) will change a student's behavior and keep other students physically and emotionally safe, when in fact it is a temporary fix to a more complex need and response. How would we, as adults, respond on our campus if our authoritative figures (administrators) used a traditional disciplinarian mindset (the hammer) for us in the workplace.

Rule:	Response:
Your contractual duty day begins at 7:30 a.m.	Gates will be locked at 7:31
The grading period ends Wednesday; your grades are due Thursday	You will be written up for not having them to me by Thursday at 3:00 p.m.
You questioned me in a staff meeting in front of the other teachers	Get out of my staff meeting. I need to set an example to show the other teachers this behavior is not tolerated.

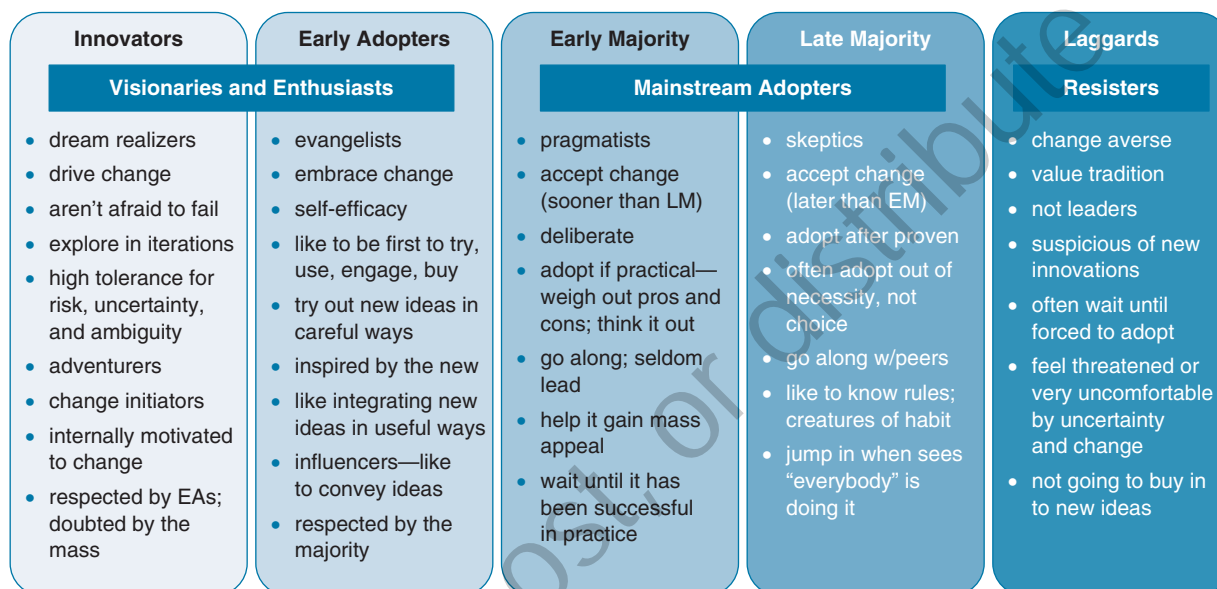
We are fairly confident this response would at worst lead to a mutiny on a campus and at best erode the relationships and culture between staff and administration. We expect grace as adults, but do we give grace to students who are learning how to navigate through life using prosocial behaviors?



## How Do We Become Innovators of This Work?

In order to change/shift thinking about alternative discipline, it is important to understand the various mindset shifts that need to occur. Figure 2.1 illustrates the natural distribution of a staff response to any new change idea.

**Figure 2.1** Characteristics: Innovators to Laggards



*Source:* Reproduced with permission from The Center for Creative Emergence, 2019. Original main sources: *Diffusion of Innovation* by Everett Rogers; *Crossing the Chasm* by Geoffrey Moore.

There will be a range of opinions and reactions regarding your decision to use alternatives to suspension. Some staff will champion this work because they know it is best for students; some will be skeptical and will want to see that it works before fully supporting it; and others will flat out oppose and share their disapproval in the staff room to anyone who will listen. It makes no difference what state or province you are in or if you are at an elementary school, a middle school, or a high school; we can guarantee that you will have this range of reactions to this work. Understanding the characteristics in each level (Figure 2.1), you can position your response to provide staff with what they need to move from their current state to a more supportive position. Knowing this natural distribution will help you lead this work on your campus.

Here are our top three ways to shift mindsets and build ownership around alternative discipline:

1. BELIEVE IN WHAT YOU ARE DOING and OTHERS WILL FOLLOW
2. TRUST IN THE PROCESS OF ALTERNATIVE DISCIPLINE and OTHERS WILL FOLLOW
3. SHARE EVIDENCE OF SUCCESS and OTHERS WILL FOLLOW

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First, *you* need to believe in this work. You need to be able to articulate your *why* and that the intentional teaching of behavior is more impactful than suspension. This is why it is so important your beliefs are in a place where you are carrying conviction to others, not just yourself.

Second, you'll need to trust that this is a process for supporting students. This is actually more time-consuming at first, but the investment of alternative discipline will pay off in the long run. The more time and effort put into teaching students prosocial behaviors, establishing relationships and trust, the less you are going to see repeated suspendable offenses. This is not a reaction to a new state metric or some new fad; it is a consistent process that is best for students. You have to trust the process so others will.

Third, the late adopters will need to see that this works. It is important to provide evidence of success. In other words, celebrate alternative discipline wins rather than focus on setbacks. One way to introduce this is by inviting a student into a staff meeting to describe what they learned through their alternative discipline consequences and how this process changed them (especially if it's a student who has a history of suspensions).

In the next chapter, we provide additional most commonly asked questions and tips for implementation no matter where you are in your implementation journey.

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