**School Choice and School Discipline:**
*Why We Should Expect the Former to Improve the Latter*

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Appearing in *Journal of School Choice*, 8(4), December 2014

**Abstract**
This paper makes the case that school choice and school competition ought to play a central role in determining school discipline policy. The basic economics of use of rules versus discretion is reviewed and provides a strong expectation that schools with policy discretion/autonomy and strong incentives is the most effective system. Unfortunately, the status quo, as illustrated by the January 2014 guidelines of the Department of Education and the Department of Justice, is to emphasize rules and protocols established by central authorities. Many aspects of our argument are illustrated by a model of tradeoffs regarding rules- versus local discretion-based school discipline policies and how school choice programs, or their absence, effect policy determination in this regard. In particular, policies that suppress school choice and competition are likely to lead to more inflexible and unsatisfactory school discipline policies; and increasingly regimented school discipline policies make it more difficult to embrace the positive aspects of school choice. Our model also shows how current policy likely leads to a troubling rules-without-incentives regime. Establishing stronger incentives for schools is expected to help remedy this situation and vigorous school choice/competition programs are likely to be an important avenue for doing