Assessing the Experiences of Students and Teachers of a High School In-School Suspension Program

by
Collin Parker Lashley

An Applied Dissertation Submitted to the
Abraham S. Fischler School of Education
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University
2011

Approval Page

This applied dissertation was submitted by Collin Parker Lashley under the direction of the persons listed below. It was submitted to the Abraham S. Fischler School of Education and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Diane Bryant, PhD Committee Chair	Date
Katrina Pann, PhD Committee Member	Date
Program Professor Review Applied Research Center	Date
Ronald P. Kern, PhD Associate Dean	Date

Acknowledgments

This applied dissertation is dedicated to my sisters and brothers: Connie, Camilla, Renee, Percy Jr., and Marcus. I thank you for your love, support, and encouragement. I would like to take a moment to say thank you to my mother and father, Mr. and Mrs. Percy Parker, Sr.; you have truly been the wind beneath my wings. To my children, Aquanta, Aeriel, and Erin, I am thanking you so deeply for your unconditional love and continuous belief in me. I grant a special thank you to my darling husband, Rory. I love you, and I am deeply honored to have you in my life. Thank you for your support and love. I would like to take a moment to acknowledge my first chairperson, Dr. Charles Faire, who began this journey with me, and Dr. Diane Bryant for completing this journey with me.

A special thanks to my Aunt Velma Jones Wiggins for encouraging me and helping me to stay focused as I traveled this path. This entire process has been in memory of my cousin, Alvena Joyce Lambert, who told me one day this dream would become a reality. I grant a special thank you to Dr. Rosemary Jones. She has felt my pain and wept my tears, and I thank you and love you because now we can laugh each other's laugh. This journey would have never been possible without each of you touching my life in some way.

Abstract

Assessing the Experiences of Students and Teachers of a High School In-School Suspension Program. Collin Parker Lashley, 2011: Applied Dissertation, Nova Southeastern University, Abraham S. Fischler School of Education. ERIC Descriptors: Suspension, At-Risk Students, Discipline, Program Descriptions, Racial Factors

This applied dissertation was designed to assess the experiences of students and teachers on the topic of a high school in-school suspension (ISS) program. The problem in this high school was the high number of students who received ISS assignments for offenses that did not warrant out-of-school suspension or expulsion.

This study investigated experiences and perceptions of students and teachers in relationship to the In-School Suspension program in an urban high school. Qualitative research was used in this study with a phenomenological approach. This combination allowed the researcher to gain key insights into the participants' experiences and perceptions of their current in-school suspension program. A sample of 25 students and 17 teachers, volunteered to participate in this study. Personal interviews were utilized to explore the experiences of teachers and students regarding their perceptions of the effectiveness of this school's in-school suspension program. Data analysis involved assessing common themes and coding.

The study demonstrated that this school's ISS program practices, policies, and procedures were ineffective in improving student misbehavior. Results of the study indicated that the ISS program could possibly be enhanced if it were designed to meet the individual student needs. The analysis of the data indicated that, by adding a counseling component as an integral part of the ISS program, students could be encouraged to take the responsibility for their own actions. This study found that a large majority of the students believed that, by speaking to the counselor, they would have an understanding of the behavioral traits that caused them to act improperly in school. By having a solution to their problem, the students' behavior would improve, and they would learn to address their issues properly. This study found a need to have goals for the ISS program that encouraged support for teachers, students, administrators, and the program.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Nature of the Problem

Safe and orderly schools continue to be an important factor in the academic achievement of students; however, students who display behavior problems in the school and classroom disrupt the learning environment. This causes teachers and administrators to spend more time responding to classroom and school disruptions and less time on academic instruction. Federal guidelines, such as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002), have placed an enormous task on public schools to both educate all children and retain them until they graduate. As a result, school discipline has come to the forefront as an educational concern (Muscott, Mann, Benjamin, & Gately, 2004).

Research has indicated that, overall, schools have responded to student misbehavior with ineffective punitive strategies (Blomberg, 2004). Other research (Scott, Nelson, & Liaupsin, 2001; Sugai & Horner, 2000) has suggested that suspension and expulsion have led to delinquency and perhaps even encouraged students to drop out of school. Punitive or exclusionary practices have been found to have little or no effect on students' behavior or academic performance (Fleming, Harachi, Cortes, Abbott, & Catalano, 2004). Morris and Howard (2003) observed that, since the earlier days of the one-room schoolhouse, educators struggle to find ways to manage disruptive students who refuse to follow school rules, yet our country continues to hold the premise that every child deserves the opportunity to have a meaningful education (Rebell & Wolff, 2008). Skiba and Rausch (2006) argued that there are assumptions underlying the use of suspension and expulsion that are universal to all disciplinary approaches. Skiba and Rausch noted that any effective disciplinary procedure should have among its goals the desire to ensure the safety of students and teachers as well as to create a climate

conducive to learning.

School districts often face a dilemma as they make an effort to strike a balance that allows students who misbehave to continue their education as well as teaching these students responsibility. One of the tools used for school discipline is in-school suspension (ISS). ISS programs were developed as a viable alternative to the placement of students outside of the regular classroom for discipline reasons (Blomberg, 2004). Administrators began developing and implementing ISS as an alternative for punishing a misbehaving student without requiring him or her to miss instructional days. The idea was that students would continue time on task in a more structured and supervised environment (Hrabak & Settles, 2003).

The target school had an ISS program in place as a means for teachers to remove troubled students from the classroom without unnecessarily disrupting the school day's regular activities. This applied dissertation assessed the staff and students' experiences of the high school's suspension program and its effectiveness.

Statement of the Problem

The problem in this high school was that there were a high number of students who received ISS assignments for offenses that did not warrant an out-of-school suspension (OSS) or expulsion. However, when these students left their regular classrooms, they returned to the ISS program at an alarming rate for the same offenses.

Background and Significance of the Problem

The school administrators became concerned when a large number of students were assigned to the ISS program repeatedly for the same or different offenses that did not warrant an OSS or expulsion. According to the school's data, a significant number of students were being assigned to ISS at an alarming rate. During the 2005-2006 school

year, this high school had an enrollment of 517 students; 23 students were assigned to the ISS program for the first 9 weeks of school, 12 of which were repeat offenders (see Table 1). At the end of this high school's 2005-2006 school year, 65 students had been assigned to the ISS program. In the 2006-2007 school year, the school had an enrollment of 535 students; 35 of these students received an ISS assignment in the first 9 weeks, 19 of which were repeat offenders (see Table 1). Unfortunately, during the 2007-2008 school year, with an enrollment of 510 students, the rate of students who received an ISS assignment saw a significant increase. The school's data show that 41 students were assigned to ISS in the first 9 weeks, 22 of which were repeat offenders (see Table 1).

Table 1

Referral Violations per School Year

Student data	2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008
Enrollment	517	535	510
First 9 weeks	23	35	41
Repeat offenders	12	19	22
Yearly in-school-suspension assignments	65	73	98

According to the school's referral data and student records, the primary reasons for ISS and OSS referrals were disorderly conduct, defiance of authority (teachers, custodians, paraprofessionals, secretaries, bookkeepers, cafeteria personnel, etc.), threats or intimidations, fighting, truancy, unauthorized absence, disruptive behavior, and the use of profanity or vulgarity.

School staff used a discipline form (see Appendix A) where the referring staff

member completed the student's name, class period, and offense of which the student was accused. The staff also indicated on the form a brief description of the incident and included a recommendation of disciplinary action. The disciplinary form was submitted to the school's administrators. The administrators verbally conferred with the student about the charges brought against him or her, and a decision was made on the appropriate disciplinary measure (see Appendix B). ISS, OSS, parent conferences, and afterschool detention were some of the behavior-management methods that the school used to discipline disruptive students or those with behavioral issues. The students' code of conduct (see Appendix C) was the standard set by the school's district board of education, which allowed administrators the right to administer any punishment they deemed necessary if a student had violated school policy. The code of conduct also included expulsion as another approach that the school utilized to manage student behavior. When a student received an expulsion, they had no rights to attend or participate in any school activities. Additionally, the student and parent had to attend a hearing held by the school board to determine any further disciplinary action.

Rausch and Skiba (2004) examined school discipline strategies for many years and found that educators failed to do the following: redirect inappropriate behavior, increase the validity of the learning environment, and provide a safety zone for students and teachers. Over the years, schools attempted to improve student behavior by implementing disciplinary practices such as time-out, corporal punishment, afterschool detention, OSS, and expulsion.

However, the proposal of an ISS provided an educational experience that was conducive to learning and was free from interruptions that impeded learning. The ISS program provided students the opportunity to learn in a positive classroom environment

in the regular school setting. Educational theorists Estes (2004) and Stringer (2008) argued that, if students were held accountable for rules they had broken, they would have been less likely to repeat their violations.

In studying one of the first ISS programs in the United States, O'Brien (1976) described the main purpose of the ISS program as a way "to teach students to accept the consequences for their actions and to make them think about what they are doing" (p. 36). The ISS program did shield the educational environment from disruptive students and protected the community by keeping unruly students off the streets.

Short (1988) noted that the predominant goal of most ISS programs was the exclusion of the problem student from the regular classroom while continuing to provide some type of educational experience for students. Sullivan (1989) recommended that the ISS goal should have been to incorporate a developmental or rehabilitative focus that assumed misbehavior as a symptom of underlying student problems that must be addressed by administrators.

Purpose of the Research Study

The purpose of this research study was to assess the students' and teachers' experiences of a high school's ISS program as a means for reducing the number of student violators and repeat offenders and develop the ISS program in a way to work with behavior offenders in making better decisions. At the end of this particular study, the researcher made recommendations to the school for potential changes to the ISS program. The researcher anticipated that the findings of the study would contribute to the effectiveness of the ISS program in the future.

Definition of Terms

The researcher defined the following terms for the purposes of this study.

At-risk students. These are students who could potentially drop out of school or engage in self-destructive behaviors that interfere with academic success.

Behavior modification. This is a treatment approach based on the principles of operant conditioning that replace undesirable behaviors with more desirable ones through positive or negative reinforcement.

Comprehensive school counseling program. This is a counseling program based on the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA, 2005) framework for school counseling programs. The ASCA developed a national model for school counseling programs that was designed to provide guidance to school counselors as they worked toward supporting the school and life success of all youth (Howard & Solberg, 2006).

Counseling. This is an integral component of the total educational program where students have opportunities for academic, career, personal, and social development.

Discipline. This is a system of rules, punishments, and behavioral strategies appropriate to the regulation of children and maintenance of order in schools.

Dropouts. These are persons who withdraw from school before graduating.

Expulsion. This is the act of expelling someone from school for the school year.

Group therapy. This is a group of 6-10 individuals meeting face-to-face and discussing a specific issue.

ISS. This is an in-house program to which a student could have been assigned for a short period in lieu of OSS. It is designed to counteract many of the negative effects of suspension.

Intervention. This is an influencing force or act that occurs in order to modify an individual's behavior.

OSS. This is the temporary removal of a student from all classes of instruction on

public school grounds.

Recidivism. This occurs when someone lapses into previously undesirable patterns of behavior (a habitual offender).

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

The current literature review examines teacher and student perceptions of the school's current ISS program as a means for reducing the number of student violators. First, the author of the study reviewed the student's route to ISS, rebellious student, and gateway to behavioral problems. Second, the researcher examined the detrimental effects that overrepresentation has on a student's behavior and evolution of the ISS program. Third, the use of effective ISS programs and suspension models, which addresses different strategies for helping students behaviorally and academically, was discussed. The literature the author reviewed also presents research on the use of a counseling component as a separate strategy because it provides interventions that address the individual student's needs. Last, the current chapter concludes with recommendations of what is needed to design a promising ISS program.

The Route to ISS

Most educators would agree that student behavior has become detrimental to a safe school environment. Zero-tolerance policies have challenged school officials to decide what to do with the disruptive student in order to ensure the other students' safety, while still providing the disruptive student with an appropriate education. According to the American Bar Association (2000), zero tolerance describes America's response to student misbehavior. *Zero tolerance*'s definition is that a school must automatically and severely punish a student for a variety of infractions. Administrators are forced to remove the disruptive student from a regular classroom environment and place them in a time-out setting. Although there is not one specific guideline or means for implementing a time-out, there are a myriad of types of time-outs and settings or criteria in which time-outs are

being used (Wolf, McLaughlin, & Williams, 2006).

Four primary types of time-out can be identified, ranging from the least intrusive to the most restrictive. According to Wolf et al. (2006), they are defined as follows:

1. A seclusion time-out is a very restrictive form of time-out. In a seclusion time-out, a student is removed from the classroom and placed in a room or other area in which the student is prohibited from leaving until the time-out period is served (Busch & Shore, 2000).

2. An exclusion time-out requires physically removing a child from a source of reinforcement. This includes moving a child to a corner or other area of a classroom or having a child sit in a quiet chair.

3. An inclusion time-out requires a student to sit on the periphery of class activities, but it still allows the child the opportunity to view the appropriate behaviors of classmates.

4. A restrained time-out, which is sometimes referred to as physical time-out or movement suppression, is the most restrictive form of time-out. This procedure combines both a restraint and time-out procedure. Its use is typically limited to younger children who refuse to comply with a teacher-directed time-out. The adult places the student into a time-out position and maintains the student in time-out with physical restraints.

If a student's behavior escalates to a point where the staff and students feel threatened, then an isolation time-out could be an option chosen by an administrator. The following guidelines were offered by Alberta Learning (2002):

1. Parental consent is necessary. Any use of an isolation time-out as part of a prearranged strategy should be a part of the students' individual behavior plan and involves full consent of the parents. The consent should be in writing and should be fully

defined and explained to the parent. The specific behaviors that lead to the use of time-out should be clearly outlined. In addition, the parent should be walked through exactly how and where the isolation time-out would occur.

2. Document to attempt to understand the antecedent to the problem behavior. The use of a functional behavior assessment or communication assessment assists in this process. Understanding the driving force behind a students' behavior is key to developing strategies that are to be implemented outside of a time-out in order to lessen the chance of the behavior reoccurring.

3. Distinguish and document attempts at positive behavioral reinforcement to be sure the proper amount of positive reinforcement is being used for appropriate behaviors and that it outweighs the use of aversive measures. Students should perceive their classrooms as much more rewarding than the time-out experience in order for it to prove effective.

4. Use a graded system of alternatives. Isolation time-out should not be used prior to the use of less exclusionary measures unless there is an immediate situation of probable harm to self or others.

5. The physical environment must be safe. Rooms should not be locked from either inside or out. Students must be in view of staff at all times. The room needs to be well ventilated and free from objects or fixtures that could cause the student harm.

6. Administrators must play a key role. All aspects of the development and implementation of time-out procedures should have involved the input of the school principal.

7. Length of time. The amount of time a student spends in a time-out area should be reasonable and take into consideration a students' age and ability level.

If students are not encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and there are not any guidelines, strategies, policy, or procedures in place, the ISS program is considered ineffective. If the student does not have a desire to participate in classroom activities, time-out is rendered meaningless and has no real effect (Ryan, Sanders, Katsiyannis, & Yell, 2007). According to research compiled by Wolf et al. (2006), an equal amount of positive results can be seen as negative results from use and implementation of time-out rooms. Although some view time-out as a positive means of behavior modification, others view it as a punisher, setting up a system whereby behaviors are punished in hopes of averting them and correcting the students. Sugai and Horner (2002) showed that positive reinforcement is far more effective as mechanisms for adjusting disruptive behavior. Some concerns addressed by teachers when using time-outs are the amount of time students lost from being isolated; the time wasted by their misunderstanding of what they had done wrong; the lack of time and clarity of assignments; and other issues caused by a lack of time, resources, or understanding (Wolf et al., 2006). The research compiled by Wolf et al. (2006) will support the assertion that the behaviors that need correcting are fully understood and explained; however, oftentimes, circumstances prevent the actions from being fully understood and explained (Mayerson & Riley, 2003).

Although positive reinforcement is often considered the most effective means of behavior modification, Boothe and Borrego (2004) showed that parents are generally willing to comply with most any behavior modification technique set forth and implemented by the schools where their children are enrolled. Most parents are often inclined to simply go with the flow of the system in place rather than question or challenge the effectiveness of the behavior-modification techniques.

The Rebellious Student

For students who are rebellious by nature and are frequently in trouble, ISS becomes a regular part of the students' school days. Administrators and teachers have been designing ways to address discipline problems in schools since the establishment of American education (Kerr & Nelson, 2002). However, the question about what is to be done with students who disrupt a classroom or those who refuse to follow school rules continues to create a perplexing dilemma for educators (Hrabak & Settles, 2004; Morris & Howard, 2003). Historically, students who created discipline problems in school were placed in programs that focused on punishment (Bayh, 1977). The rebellious student has to sit in corners, receive corporal punishment, be humiliated, be placed in the hallways unsupervised, or receive OSS and sometimes expulsion.

To establish and maintain school-wide discipline, the program must include proactive strategies for defining, teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create a positive school environment (Sugai, Simonsen, & Horner, 2008). Positive behavior support is one application of a behavior-based system approach to enhance the capacity of schools, families, and communities to design effective environments that improve the link between research-validated practices and environments in which teaching and learning occur.

Research indicated that school-wide positive behavior is associated with decreased exclusionary, reactive, and punitive discipline practices (Horner, Sugai, Todd, & Lewis-Palmer, 2005; Luiselli, Putnam, & Sunderland, 2002); increased student satisfaction (Lewis-Palmer, Horner, Sugai, Eber, & Phillips, 2002); and improved perceptions of school safety (Schneifer, Walker, & Sprague, 2000). Higher rates of office discipline referrals (ODRs) are associated with problematic behavioral climates in

schools (Irwin, Tobin, Sprague, Sugai, & Vincent, 2004).

The relationship between academic performance and problem behaviors is also being studied at the middle school and high school levels (Fleming et al., 2004). Tobin and Sugai (1999) found that individual student academic failure in high school is correlated with three or more suspensions in ninth grade. They also found correlations between grade point averages and specific types of ODR behaviors (fighting, harassing, threats of violence, and nonviolent misbehavior). Murdock, Anderman, and Hodge (2000) used a Likert discipline scale rating of 1 (*never*) to 5 (*four or more times this year*) to assess the frequency of four student self-reported discipline events with ninth graders. These events were (a) being sent to the assistant principal, (b) receiving detention, (c) receiving ISS, and (d) receiving OSS. The discipline scores demonstrated a negative correlation with grades. Murdock et al. found that academic performance and future problematic behavior were related across grade levels and higher rates of ODRs and suspensions were correlated with lower scores on academic assessments in the upper grades. The number of ODRs and suspensions a student received predicted lower scores on standardized reading and math tests.

Nelson, Benner, Lane, and Smith (2004) demonstrated that students with severe problem behaviors experience large academic deficits as compared to typical peers. In most areas, these deficits remain stable over time; however, in the case of mathematics, the deficits actually broaden over time. Finally, for externalizing behaviors, McKinney (1989) found that outcomes were the poorest for students with problems in both areas.

Fleming et al. (2004) found that students with higher reading scores in the middle and elementary school and those whose scores increased between third and sixth grade engaged in significantly fewer problem behaviors in seventh grade. Lee, Sugai, and

Horner (1999) demonstrated improvements when escape-maintained problem behavior students received academic support that made them effective with the target math tasks.

A number of these initial studies (Crone & Horner, 2003; Kerr & Nelson, 2002) illustrated that school-wide behavior support decreases problem behaviors; increases time spent in academic instruction, and is associated with improved academic outcomes. These studies are encouraging, but they remain descriptive in nature and do not have the experimental control needed to confirm a relationship between school-wide positive behavior support and improved academic performance.

The Gateway to Behavioral Problems

In the early 1970s, researchers began investigating various interventions and alternative ways of addressing students' inappropriate behavior (Gootman, 1998; Heller, 1996; Sheets, 1996). However, instead of providing the support needed, students received suspensions and other punishments that did not affect their behavior or academic achievement in a positive manner (Sanders, 2001). Verdugo (2002) showed that OSS is often misapplied, unfairly used against minorities, and ineffective at producing better future behavior. There is little evidence that students who are suspended avoid further misbehavior (Morrison & Skiba, 2001).

An important goal of OSS is determined to be the removal of the offending student from school (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2003) and to provide temporary relief to frustrated teachers and administrators (Bock, Tapscott, & Savner, 1998). The immediate removal of students through OSS or expulsion is justifiable and necessary for students who pose a danger to others. However, in many school districts across the United States, there is a near epidemic of suspensions for relatively minor or vaguely defined student offenses, such as problematic interactions with peers and adults, rather

than for serious behavior that would threaten the welfare of others (Dupper & Bosch, 1996; Mendez, Knoff, & Ferron, 2002; Richart, Brooks, & Soler, 2003; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Skiba & Rausch, 2006).

According to the Alabama State Department of Education (2007) 2006-2007 Report Card, 30,133, students received a suspension during the 2005-2006 academic year. There is evidence that a past suspension is a predictor of a future suspension (Brown, 2007); Skiba (2000) reported that as many as "40% of school suspensions are due to repeat offenders" (p. 16).

Addressing discipline problems in schools effectively requires a shift in thinking. Traditionally, our approach is reactive, responding to immediate transgressions or outbursts often in a punitive manner and offering support only after a negative pattern of behavior is established (e.g., Conroy, Hendrickson, & Hester, 2004). Indeed, the most common response to serious aggressive and oppositional behavior includes suspension and expulsion. Providing appropriate support for children and youth who experience discipline problems begins with understanding who these students are and why they continually express aggression and oppositional behavior.

Students with serious emotional, behavioral, or learning disabilities are more likely to be suspended than students without disabilities (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006). Many students with emotional behavior disorder are identified and served through special education within schools, but many remain unidentified. Epidemiological studies by Romano, Tremblay, Vitario, Zoccolillo, and Pagani (2001) showed that about 20% of children and youth experience significant mental health problems, yet most are not diagnosed.

Externalizing problems, such as conduct disorders and attention deficit

hyperactivity disorders, affect an estimated 4.2% and 4.8% of students (aged 4-17), respectively (Waddell & Sheppard, 2002). Disruptive problems such as these are often evident during childhood, underscoring the need for school personnel to be familiar with the nature and symptoms of these disorders as they might be the first to identify such problems (Kessler, Berglund, Demler, Jin, & Walters, 2005). Schools often fail to provide adequate training on discipline and school safety issues for their administrators and teachers.

Health workers and medical doctors have also advocated a decreased use of OSS (Taras et al., 2003). A committee on school health recommended that schools involve a student's pediatrician in evaluating a student who is suspended or expelled. This assessment could secure treatment and help for students who might be suffering from abuse, depression, or mental illness. By involving medical professionals, schools could make a fairer assessment of a student's behavior (Taras et al., 2003).

Detrimental Impact of Overrepresentation

Morrison and Skiba (2001) stated that OSS is often used for minor infractions such as disobedience, disrespect and attendance problems, and offenses that do not threaten school safety. Morris and Howard (2003) noted OSS is seen as a senseless answer to skipping school or skipping class. Although many educators perceived OSS to be beneficial, research does not support the effectiveness of OSS in reducing and eliminating student misconduct (Blomberg, 2004).

Minority overrepresentation and school punishment are by no means new issues. Extensive investigation of school punishments over the past 25 years is consistent in raising questions concerning socioeconomic and racial disproportionality in the administration of school discipline (e.g., Children's Defense Fund, 1975; McCarthy &

Hoge, 1987; Mendez et al., 2002; Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997; Thornton & Trent, 1988; Wu, Pink, Crain, & Moles, 1982).

Overrepresentation of African American students in ISS and expulsion appears to increase as those punishments are used more frequently (Civil Rights Project, 2000; Massachusetts Advocacy Center, 1988). Studley (2002) examined discipline data from four of the six largest school districts in California and found that African American students had the highest suspension rate of all ethnic groups across 2 years of data. Mendez et al. (2002) found similar results in their analysis of discipline data in the second largest school district in Florida based on 1996-1997 discipline data. African American males were suspended at a rate higher than any other group at the elementary, middle, and high schools studied and much higher rate than their White peers. These researchers in 2002 studied the suspension rates and demographic variables of a large diverse Florida school district. After surveying the data of the district's 146,000 students, there were several disturbing findings. Black males were the most frequently suspended subgroup of students. In both middle school and high school, Black males were more than twice as likely as their White counterparts to receive an OSS assignment. Hispanic males also had a higher percentage of suspensions than Whites although the differences were not as lopsided. Because many African American students have low socioeconomic status, it is often assumed that the student's economic background and home life lead to more disruptive behavior and, hence, more suspensions.

Ogbu (2003) suggested that a greater number of Black students are disciplined for inappropriate behavior when compared to White students in public schools. Black students are perceived as exhibiting a greater number of misbehaviors for a variety of reasons. Cultural expectations and perceptions that are displayed in behaviors through

greater physical contact and vocal assertiveness among Black students are interpreted by White teachers as inappropriate. Stereotyping and cultural expectations that school authorities hold regarding Black students as reported by students and cross-cultural misunderstandings of jokes, leads to disproportionate behavioral consequences for Black students. Ogbu conducted an ethnographic study of students at all grade levels in schools in Shaker Heights, Ohio. The ethnographers conducting the study observed 110 classrooms from the start to the finish of the lesson in classes of (a) different racial makeup, (b) the same subject taught at different levels, (c) different subjects, (d) the same teachers teaching the same courses at different levels, (e) the same teachers teaching different courses, and (f) teachers of different races and genders. The purpose of this study was to determine how the identity of African American students as an oppressed group outside the opportunity structure affected their academic achievement specifically and their school experience more generally. Ogbu observed that African American students do not perceive schooling to be a preparation for future success in the job market. Ogbu claimed that Blacks in both poor and affluent communities exhibit many of the same behaviors and attitudes that lead to school failure, namely, disengagement from academic work, inability to focus on the task at hand, blaming teachers for the impact of structural racism, and negative stereotyping on Black achievement, but he did not believe these factors could fully explain the Black-White achievement gap (Ogbu, 2003).

Foney and Cunningham (2002) found in their study that minority students remained twice as likely to either commit or be cited for a disciplinary action and twice as likely to receive OSS as a disciplinary action as compared to the majority. It is extremely important for school districts to establish a foundation that would provide an effective framework that would address situations that manifest disruptive and

inappropriate behavior in our students today.

At-Risk Students

Keeping at-risk students in school until graduation has been a main concern for schools; communities; and state, local, and federal governments since the 1970s when large cities across the country began seeing the number of dropouts rise (Alexander, Entwisle, & Rabbani, 2001; Suh, Suh, & Houston, 2007). As reported by Bemak, Chung, and Siroskey-Sabdo (2005), dropout rates for students in extremely distressed impoverished neighborhoods could be at risk as much as three times the national average. Over 1 million students who enter ninth grade fail to graduate with their peers 4 years later because they drop out of school. Seven thousand students drop out of school every day, and each year, roughly 1.2 million students fail to graduate from high school. More than half of these students are from minority groups (Editorial Projects in Education Research Center, 2009). Since that time, there have been numerous studies to determine what causes students to be at risk and how best to keep them in school. Most children become academically unsuccessful during their middle school years. Various researchers have identified specific risk factors, such as low attendance or a failing grade, which identifies future dropouts in some cases as early as sixth grade (Jerald, 2006). Academic success in ninth-grade course work is highly predictive of eventual graduation. It is even more telling than demographic characteristics or academic achievement (Allensworth & Easton, 2007). Both academic and social engagements are integral components of successfully navigating the education pipeline. Rumberger (2004) showed that a lack of student engagement is a predictive of dropping out, even after controlling for academic achievement and student background.

A long-term study by Alexander et al. (2001), which began in 1982 in Baltimore,

studied the life-course effects on that city's dropout population. The authors of the study began with students in the first grade, and follow-up studies were conducted on the students during elementary, middle, ninth grade, and high school. The authors of the study took into account the student's background, including family, socioeconomic status, race, gender, stressful family change, mother's age, mother's employment status, and family type. At each grade interval, the students were analyzed based on school experiences: school performance, grade retention, track-like placements, parent attitudes, personal resources, pupil engagement behaviors, and pupil engagement attitudes.

Alexander et al. (2001) found the risk of dropping out increased for students as early as the first grade for those who are born to teenage mothers; are living in single-parent households; or are living in stressful homes due to death, divorce, or relocations. Alexander et al. also found that boys were more prone to dropping out of school than girls. When evaluating academic risks, the researchers for the Baltimore study found that students retained, even as early as first grade, were more likely to drop out of school; during the time of this study, 85% to 91% of the low- or medium-socioeconomic status students from Baltimore who were retained in middle school became dropouts. To evaluate personal risks, Alexander et al. looked at the levels of favorable attitudes about school from both the parent and student at each grade level; the authors of the study showed these attitudes correlated with favorable behaviors at school. The results of the study indicated that students with higher favorable attitude and behavior scores during middle school cut their dropout chances in as much as half. The results of this study, which is still being conducted, indicated that, in Baltimore, if students are low socioeconomic status, their dropout risk is doubled, and prior to high school, their academic standing and school behavior drastically influence the predictability rate that

they would leave school early.

The research by Suh et al. (2007) identified the most significant risk factors and risk-factor combinations that most often characterize dropouts, indicators for different types of at-risk groups, and types of prevention strategies proven effective with at-risk groups. Suh et al. found 16 predictors that were significant to at-risk dropouts: low eighth-grade grade point average, low socioeconomic status, prior suspensions, students' expectation to remain in school next year, enrichment risk, absenteeism, two-parent household, physical environment risk, sex prior to age 15, household size, peers planning to go to college, metropolitan area resident, region, perception toward teachers, fights at school, and threat of harm. Low grade point average, low socioeconomic status, and behavioral problems, which were the three main risk categories identified by this study, had the greatest impact on students deciding to dropout, and each of the main risk categories was determined to be of equal importance.

An important aspect of this at-risk research was the implication for using early prevention and intervention counseling. Suh et al. (2007) found that, as students' risks increased, the likelihood that they would dropout also increased. Their research indicated that dropout prevention strategies and interventions were more successful with students who had fewer risk factors and interventions were least successful with students who had all three risk factors: behavior, low socioeconomic status, and low grade point average. In their research, Suh et al. found that students who fell into one or more risk categories and expected to be in school the following year showed the lowest dropout percentages for any of the positive predictors; counseling preventions and interventions that capitalize on students seeing themselves in school are related to a positive impact on the dropout rate.

Much of the research on at-risk students indicates that a lack of school

engagement is a major contributing factor leading to adolescents dropping out of school. A lack of school engagement is found to be a major contributing factor leading to other serious issues such as drug abuse, teen pregnancy, and crime. A study by Caraway, Tucker, Reinke, and Hall (2003) investigated the effect of self-efficacy, goal orientation, and fear of failure on school engagement. Their research indicated that students who have higher confidence levels generally have higher grades in school and are more likely to be engaged in various school activities and organizations. Students who display a fear of failure are found to be less engaged than their peers in school-related tasks (Caraway et al., 2003). Caraway et al.'s study, as did the study by Suh et al. (2007), suggested that increasing student involvement could lead to fewer dropouts.

Rothstein (2008) indicated that the achievement gap between socioeconomic groups is due to health and environmental issues. Poor children often have no health insurance. Therefore, they lack preventative medical and dental care and are prone to asthma, which leads to higher absenteeism and an inability to focus in the classroom. More often, children born into poverty have low birth weight, which could lead to diminished cognitive ability and more behavior problems. Environmental concerns of children living in poverty are due to frequent moves, job loss or low wage jobs, unsafe neighborhoods, and exposure to crime or drugs (Rothstein, 2008). In low-income and poor rural areas where the district's funds could not afford extra support personnel for early dropout prevention programs (Truscott & Truscott, 2005), the dropout rate is higher than average, due in part to an increase in the percentage of families living in poverty (Viadero, 2008).

The Evolution of ISS

Hrabak and Settles (2003) observed that, after 20 years of reviewing the practice

of ISS, educators discovered that the program had the potential to decrease misbehaviors. The primary goal of the ISS program should be to support the student's human, social, and career development. There is a significant difference between discipline strategies that are proactive and designed to increase social development and those that are reactive and designed primarily as punishment for misbehavior.

Zero-tolerance policies and procedures presume that removing a student from school would have a deterrent effect on future misbehavior for the offending student and his or her peers (Ewing, 2000) and the removal of certain students would yield a more productive learning climate for those students who remain (Public Agenda, 2004). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002) requires increased testing along with sanctions for schools whose students do not meet specific academic targets.

In 2006, Skiba reviewed the exclusionary and zero-tolerance policies of schools and found no evidence that the use of suspension, expulsion, or zero-tolerance policies has resulted in improvements in student behavior or increases in school safety. It was found that suspensions and expulsions are linked to an increased likelihood of future behavior problems, academic difficulty detachment, and drop out. Schools with high suspension rates score lower on state accountability tests, even when adjusting for demographic differences (Skiba & Rausch, 2005).

Zero tolerance could be defined as school-wide or district-wide policies that mandate typically harsh consequences or punishments such as suspensions and expulsions for a wide range of rule violations (Bear, Cavilier, & Manning, 2002; Cohn & Canter, 2004). Research by Evenson, Justinger, Pelischek, and Schulz (2009) indicated that zero-tolerance policies are ineffective in the end and are related to a number of negative outcomes such as school dropout, discriminatory discipline, and low academic

achievement. Zero-tolerance policies typically fail to increase school safety, and they deny students the access to an education (Skiba, Cohn, & Canter, 2004).

Furthermore, Evenson et al.(2009) showed that suspension negatively affects the mental health and physical well-being of students. According to the American Academy of Pediatrics (2003), suspension of school-aged youth with behavioral problems is associated with high rates of depression, drug addiction, and home life stresses.

It is a belief that school violence is on the rise; however, research by Bear et al. (2002) indicated that 90% of schools nationwide specified that no serious violent crimes were committed in a school year and 99% of students did not commit serious crimes while in school. Bear et al. verified that, upon removal from school, students appear to become more likely to engage in or become victims of violent crimes. The U.S. Department of Justice and Education (2004) evaluated the 2003-2004 school year, and the following data were published: Rates of serious violent crimes against school-aged youth, including rape, sexual assault, robbery, and aggravated assault, were more than twice as high outside of the school as they were inside the school.

Therefore, the ISS program could become an effective tool for the zero-tolerance policy as well as meeting the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002) regulations. Student misbehavior could be redirected, and academic success could continue by creating effective ISS programs. Many schools utilize many different designs or models for their ISS programs to assist their students in achieving academic and behavioral success. According to Morris and Howard (2003), an effective ISS program should hold its students accountable for school assignments, and it should involve some type of rehabilitation or functional and behavior assessment or replacement. According to Morris and Howard (2003), key strategies of a successful ISS program should include the

following: an established program, implementation of a task-oriented academic program, an isolated classroom away from any peer interactions, a counseling component, administrator-student communication, administrator-teacher communication, and enforced rules and procedures.

Parental Involvement

Parent involvement continues to challenge educators engaged in school reform despite being a required component of many school-improvement initiatives. Research studies (Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Simon, 2000; Van Voorhis, 2003) have shown that parent involvement improves student behavior, student attendance, and student achievement. Johnson and Duffett (2003) found that 65% of teachers said their students would have done better in school if their parents were more involved, and 72% of parents believed that children whose parents were not involved sometimes "fall through the cracks" in school.

The National Network of Partnership Schools (2005) at Johns Hopkins University designed a useful teacher-parent partnership process called Teachers Involve Parents. Teachers Involve Parents was designed as a three-way relationship among teachers, parents, and their children through a creative approach to homework. Teachers Involve Parents' goals are encouraging parents and children to talk regularly about school work, share ideas, gather reactions, interview, or encourage interaction between the student and family members. Teachers Involve Parents also keeps assignments linked to real-life situations and, according to the National Network of Partnership Schools, "enable[s] parents and teachers to frequently communicate about children's work, progress, and problems" (Goals for TIPS Interactive Homework section, para. 5). Sheldon and Epstein (2005) showed secondary school homework assignments that required parent-student

interaction predicted higher levels of reading achievement.

Parent involvement is important to the educational success of a young adolescent, and yet, it generally declines when a child enters the middle grades. *Parent involvement* is defined as having an awareness of an involvement in schoolwork, understanding of the interaction between parenting skills and student success in schooling, and a commitment to consistent communication with educators about student progress (Epstein, 2005; Jackson & Andrews, 2004; Jackson & Davis, 2000; National Middle School Association, 2003).

The research on parent involvement in the education of young adolescents addressed parents' activities in support of learning at home, in school, and in the community. Epstein is a leading researcher in the field of parent involvement who identified and studied multiple measures of parent involvement in the middle grades (Epstein, 2001; Epstein et al., 2002). Epstein et al. (2002) developed a framework of six types of involvement with associated activities, challenges, and expected results that are the following:

1. Parenting. Activities are designed to help families understand young adolescent development, acquire developmentally appropriate parenting skills, set home conditions to support learning at each grade level, and help schools obtain information about students.

2. Communicating. Activities focus on keeping parents informed through such things as notices, memos, report cards, conferences about student work, and school functions.

3. Volunteering. Activities incorporate strategies to improve volunteer recruiting, training, and scheduling.

4. Learning at home. Activities allow coordination of schoolwork with work at home (e.g., goal setting and interactive homework).

5. Decision making. Activities are designed to solicit the voice of parents in decisions about school policies and practices.

6. Collaborating with the community. Activities acknowledge and bring together all community entities (e.g., community businesses and religious organizations) with a vested interest in the education of young adolescents.

Fan and Chen (2001) examined multiple measures of parent involvement using a meta-analysis; the researchers identified three constructs of parent involvement: (a) communication, (b) supervision, and (c) parental expectations and parenting style. Communication refers to parents' frequent and systematic discussions with their children about school work. Supervision includes monitoring when students return home from school and what they do after school, overseeing time spent on homework and the extent to which children watch television. Parental expectations and parenting style are found to be the most critical of the three. These include the manner and extent to which parents communicate their academic aspirations to their children. Fan and Chen also found that high expectations of parents and student perceptions of those expectations were associated with enhanced achievement.

Communication is a vital component of parent-involvement programs (Bridgemohan, Van Wyk, & van Staden, 2005). These researchers found that parents often have limited opportunities to initiate communication with their children's schools. There is a lack of knowledge regarding the sociological teaching and organizational context within urban schools and their influence on home-school communication, which must be addressed when creating and implementing programs (Bauch & Goldring, 2000).

In order to foster parent involvement, school districts' practices and policies should build trust among families, teachers, and administrators (Feuerstein, 2000).

Sheldon and Epstein (2002) conducted a study to examine the implementation of community and family-involvement activities in an effort to reduce student discipline problems and promote student learning. Two types of involvement, parenting and volunteering, are the most predictive for reducing student discipline problems within schools. According to Sheldon and Epstein, *parenting* is defined as "helping all families establish home environments to support children as students; . . . volunteering [related to] recruiting and organizing families to help the school and support students" (p. 5).

Teachers mention the abundance of time that it takes to implement parent-involvement practices (Chavkin & Williams, 2001). Teachers surveyed by Epstein and Becker (1982) also acknowledged the various duties that parents have within the home that might have contributed to a lack of time for parent involvement in their children's education. In addition, teachers described the importance of students' out-of-school time to relax, play, and pursue their own interests. Teachers did suggest that even brief amounts of time that parents spend on home learning activities with their children could be quite beneficial if the time is used wisely. However, teachers also believed that the children whose parents did not take part in home learning activities with them were at an academic disadvantage. Many teachers described their principal's support and school climate as important aspects for successful parent-involvement programs.

With the recent legislation of the No Child Left Behind Act (2002), which reauthorized the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, parent involvement has been placed at the forefront of national policy. The law requires school districts that receive federal funds to inform parents how they can be involved in their children's schools and

requires school districts to disseminate an annual district report card to parents. Many school districts across the country have reexamined their current policies on parent involvement to ensure that they are in compliance. This act brought challenges for many school districts who struggle to meet adequate yearly progress because of low achievement scores or low attendance rates. Lapp and Flood (2004) said, "Just as no child should be left behind, so, too no parents should be left behind in the American educational enterprise" (p. 70); therefore, school districts should realize the importance that families play in children's school success and take responsibility for bridging the home and school environments.

However, if parents have a central role in influencing their children's progress in school, Epstein (2001) showed that schools in turn have an important part to play in determining levels of parent involvement. School counselors have the opportunity to change the interactions between families and the educational system. Many parents in poverty have experienced previous challenges with schools that have triggered them to become defensive when communicating with school personnel about their children. According to Amatea and West-Olatunji (2007), because of the training school counselors receive on working with at-risk and low-socioeconomic populations, they have the opportunity to train other educators in ways that would reach children and families in poverty without further alienating them. Counselors could serve as a cultural bridge between families and teachers by (a) sharing information that counters teachers' deficit views of poor families and blocking blaming of families, (b) modeling how to reach out to families and build on their strengths, and (c) mediating between the conflicting cultural expectations of the home and school.

In an effort to offer comprehensive student-centered services, counselors often

involve the family when activities are appropriate and the risk of student confidentiality is not at stake (Bardick, Bemes, Magnusson, & Witko, 2005; Hagborg, 1992). In a study conducted by Bardick et al. (2005) about parents' perceptions of their role in career planning, junior high parents perceived their roles to be providers of a supportive environment for discussing possible career paths, suppliers of career information, and educators of responsible choices and values. As students move into high school, parents perceived themselves more as guides for their children's future education and career plans (Bardick et al., 2005; Lapan, Aoyagi, & Kayson, 2007). Not all aspects of the counseling relationship should be communicated to parents, but there is evidence that providing a very general counseling report card to parents of children receiving services has been shown to be a favorable communication tool with parents (Bardick et al., 2005; Hagborg, 1992). Most parents want to be informed about their child's social development, career planning, and academic choices (Bardick et al., 2005; Hagborg, 1992). A study conducted by Rathvon (1991) with middle school students who were at risk found that parents were supportive of the extra attention their children received in preventions and interventions that were presented by the school counselor.

Henderson and Mapp (2002) noted the evidence is clear: Schools could not close the achievement gap without partnering with families. Over 40 years of research has demonstrated that engaging families in their children’s education improves student achievement, attendance, and behavior and increases graduation rates.

Effective Programs

School-based intervention programs are a step forward in the prevention of inappropriate behavior and poor academics. OSS and expulsions are utilized as deterrents for student misbehaviors. It should be noted that the most effective programs would not

prevent all student violence or misconduct. However, such programs have been shown to reduce students' rule infringements as well as maintain the integrity of their education by ensuring that they do not evade schoolwork.

Effective programs designed to increase social competences have the potential to improve school-wide behavior and safety. Successful violence-prevention programs should be implemented that incorporate a prevention curriculum, services from school personnel, and the implementation of school-wide discipline practices. Research-based prevention programs include Positive Thinking Strategies, Second Step, Let's Get Real, Life Skills, Steps to Respect, and Woven Word (Cohn & Canter, 2004; Skiba et al., 2004). Through the systematic implementation of prevention programs, problems that are more serious could be avoided while giving students the skills they need to become more successful in the school environment.

The intention of the zero-tolerance policy is to ensure appropriate consequences for serious and illegal behaviors. However, these policies have been implemented harshly and too often for nonserious incidents (talking back, no homework, or skipping class) demonstrating little benefit for the students, school, and community. Zero-tolerance policies have led to indiscriminate suspensions for all infractions, which disproportionately affect minority students' strategies that are more effective, and are available, such as violence prevention programs, social skills training, competency-based approaches, and positive behavioral support. The National Association of School Psychologists (1997) indicated that these alternatives lead to academic achievement and a reduction in the dropout rate. Therefore, school districts need to adopt a prevention or correction model to discipline instead of the current reactive or punitive model to remediate this troubling situation.

Also, Sugai and Horner (2002) indicated that the implementation of positive school-wide discipline models results in a drop in the number of discipline referrals. Positive behavior support is divided into three primary levels of support. Students were identified in one of three categories based on their risk for behavior problems. The program offers a primary, secondary, and tertiary level of intervention. Interventions are developed for each of these levels with goals of reducing the risk for academic or social failure. According to Stewart, Martella, Marchand-Martella, and Benner (2005), these interventions could be behavioral or academic interventions incorporating scientifically proven forms of instruction such as the following:

1. Primary prevention strategies focus on interventions used on a school-wide basis for all students (Sugai & Horner, 2002). This level of prevention is considered primary because all students are exposed in the same way and at the same level to the intervention. The primary prevention level is the largest by number. Approximately 80% to 85% of students who are not at risk for behavior problems responded in a positive manner to this prevention level. Primary prevention strategies include but are not limited to using effective teaching practices and curricula explicitly teaching behavior that is acceptable within the school environment, focusing on ecological arrangement and systems within the school, consistent use of precorrection procedures, using active supervision of common areas, and creating reinforcement systems that are used on a school-wide basis.

2. Secondary prevention strategies involve students (i.e., 10% to 15% of the school population) who do not respond to the primary prevention strategies and are at risk for academic failure or behavior problems but are not in need of individual supports (Kerr & Nelson, 2002). Interventions at the secondary level often are delivered in small groups

to maximize time and effort and are developed with the unique needs of the students within the group. An example of these interventions includes social support, such as social skills training (e.g., use of scientifically validated intervention programs and tutoring). Additionally, secondary programs could include behavioral support approaches (e.g., simple functional behavior assessments, pre-correction, or self-management training). Even with the heightened support within secondary-level interventions, some students (1% to 7%) still need the additional assistance at the tertiary level (Walker et al., 1996).

3. Tertiary prevention strategies focus on students who display persistent patterns of disciplinary problems (Nelson, Benner, Reid, Epstein, & Currin, 2002). Tertiary-level programs are also called intensive or individualized interventions and are the most comprehensive and complex (Tobin, Lewis-Palmer, & Sugai, 2001). The interventions within this level are strength based in that the complexity and intensity of the intervention plans directly reflect the complexity and intensity of the behaviors. Students within the tertiary level continue their involvement in primary and secondary intervention programs and receive additional support as well. These supports could include the use of full functional behavior assessments, de-escalation training for the students, heightened use of Natural Supports (e.g., family members and friends of the student), and development of a behavior intervention plan.

Although comprehensive services are important for all students, a critical aspect of the three-tiered model is the identification of students at one of the three levels. One method of identifying students in need of interventions is to analyze ODRs taken at the school (Irvin et al., 2006). ODRs could be a means of both identifying students' risk level for antisocial behavior and school failure (Walker, 2006). Researchers (Sugai, Sprague,

Horner, & Walker, 2000; Walker, Cheney, Stage, & Blum, 2005) advocated analyzing this naturally occurring data source as a relatively cheap, effective, and ongoing measurement device for positive behavioral support programs.

Strategies could be implemented by developing professional development as well as helping coordinate school efforts with other community agencies (Tobin, Sugai, & Colvin, 2000), predicting school failure in older grades as well as delinquency (Sprague et al., 2001), indicating types of behavior resulting in referrals (Putnam, Handler, & Luiselli, 2003), and determination of the effectiveness of precorrection techniques (Oswald, Safran, & Johanson, 2005). Analyzing discipline referral data could also help school personnel identify where to improve ecological arrangements within a school and recognize how to increase active supervision in common areas (Nelson, Martella, & Galand, 1998).

Parents and teachers believe that children are products of their environment. Dreikus (1968) believed that misbehavior is the result of attempts at finding a significant result in misbehaviors. Adler (1978) and Dreikus created the Mistaken Goal Chart that describes various misbehaviors and helps educators to understand the belief behind the behavior. Dreikus also found that, when attention-seeking behaviors fail, the child would next seek power. If this failed, the child sought revenge, and finally when this failed, the child avoided contact, having become completely discouraged. Dreikus' Mistaken Goal Chart is as follows:

1. Seeking undue attention (not normal attention).
2. Creating an atmosphere of caring, dignity, and mutual respect.
3. Using positive discipline classroom-management tools.
4. Holding parent-teacher-student conferences.

5. Understanding the four mistaken goals for behavior.

6. Using the teachers-helping-teachers problem-solving steps.

7. Using encouragement.

Positive behavior supports ensure that all students have access to the most effective instructional and behavioral practices and implementations.

Suspension Models

Morris and Howard (2003) determined that, during the 1990s, ISS was one of three general types: "punitive, academic, or therapeutic" (p. 157). Of these three, the punitive type seems to be the most popular. Academic models assume that, by focusing on the students' knowledge of basic skills as an effort to relieve the students' academic frustrations, their behavior would improve. The assumption of the therapeutic model is that punishment reduces misbehavior and certain students who appear to be natural troublemakers want to cause disruption within the classroom. For these students, it is assumed that punishment eliminates the misbehavior. The punitive model includes a time that could extend from 2 to 10 days. Extreme restrictions are applied, including no talking and limited restroom privileges. In addition to limited or no academic support and punitive tasks (e.g., picking up trash, cleaning the cafeteria, etc.), students have little opportunity to interact with others (Morris & Howard, 2003). The punitive model also assumes punishment will reduce behavior.

The fear of drugs, gangs, and violence is the most serious of offenses in schools today. Skiba et al. (1997) examined the disciplinary histories, office referrals, and punishment at two middle schools in the same school district. The majority of offenses that led to the office referrals were nonviolent offenses. Out of the 17,045 disciplinary incidents, 5,673 received OSS, the most prevalent method used. Townsend (2000)

concluded that school systems often reacted to problematic student behaviors with punishment and exclusionary measures, such as (a) detention, (b) reprimands, (c) fines, and (d) suspension. However, the most common form of punishment has been OSS. Dupper and Bosch (1996) suggested that there are concerns about the effectiveness of OSS. Billings and Enger (1995) believed educators perceive OSS to be an effective disciplinary measure, but research (Dwyer, Osher, & Wagner, 1998; Greenberg et al., 2003) has found OSS to be ineffective and in some cases discriminatory. Punishment, such as suspension, expulsion, and probation, keeps students away from their learning environment and students receive no discipline for their inappropriate behavior.

The academic model assumes that behavior is a direct result of academic frustration and improved basic skills would help improve student behavior or students' learning problems create personal frustrations that result in their misbehavior (Morris & Howard, 2003; Sheets, 1996). Therefore, instruction in basic skills is required to improve academic achievement. According to Morris and Howard (2003), characteristics of the academic model included the following:

> 1. Measured academic skills, diagnosed, and assessed learning difficulty used to determine progress toward identified academic goals.
> 2. Individual instruction in basic skills with support resources available.
> 3. An ISS teacher with training and skills in diagnosing learning difficulties and instructing basic skills development. (p. 158).

The academic model also assumes that discipline problems increase when students have learning difficulties that greatly contribute to their frustration. This school's student data showed that, of 18 students assigned to the ISS program in a 2-week period, 11 were reading below their grade level. According to Morris and Howard (2003), the belief is that instruction in basic skills would assist the students by eliminating negative behaviors and improving their academic skills.

Lonigan et al. (1999) found that the foundation for academic success is early reading skills. These authors indicated children with low oral language, reading, and math skills are at a higher risk for behavioral difficulties. The authors indicated that educators might focus on connecting the behavior to academic problems, such as illiteracy, that have gone unnoticed. Students who struggle with academic success and have behavioral difficulties need to be evaluated to determine if they display inappropriate behavior to divert attention away from their poor academic skills. However, this school system did not evaluate for emotional or behavior difficulties. This type of evaluation is a part of the special education provisions. Lonigan et al. stated students without reading and writing skills would experience school failure. Taylor, Hasselbring, and Williams (2001) described the cycle of failure in the following way: As the struggle to read increases, students may choose avoidance through absenteeism or behaviors that cause their removal from the class rather than experience frustration or embarrassment in front of their peers. Lonigan et al. noted that children with less developed reading skills and oral language are at a higher risk for academic disability and behavioral or emotional problems.

The therapeutic model is based on the premise that students' discipline problems result from specific personal experiences (Morris & Howard, 2003; Sheets, 1996). This model, also referred to as the discussion format, assumes active discussion with the program staff and includes activities to improve self-esteem, communication, and problem-solving skills that help develop and influence appropriate behavior. Morris and Howard (2003) explained that students are expected to reflect upon their own behavior and accept responsibility for their actions. The goal of the therapeutic model is to get students to both recognize and acknowledge their own problems and make a decision to

refrain from the misbehavior.

The ISS teacher, serving as facilitator of the process, implements activities such as the following, according to Morris and Howard (2003):

1. Focuses on improving student's self-image, communication, and problem-solving skills and understanding the school environment.

2. Uses counseling techniques (i.e., individual, group, and peer counseling; reality therapy; and outside referrals).

3. Conducts staff-development activities for regular classroom teachers, providing parent training activities, and teaching home and school survival training for students in the ISS program.

4. Follows up with students and monitors their behavior after they leave the ISS program.

The therapeutic model is utilized by teachers to begin talking with the students to assist them with the development of better problem-solving skills or direct them to other areas for assistance. Sheets (1996) referenced this model as the discussion format. This model utilizes activities to improve the student's self-esteem, communication, and problem-solving skills. Few studies have proven that discipline and group counseling decrease the suspension rate; many educators believe that group counseling is an intervention that increases the students' self-esteem, attitude, and behavior (Hochman & Worner, 1987).

Guindon (1992) reported that OSS is counterproductive and alternatives like ISS work best. Guindon conducted a 4-month study of an ISS program in an elementary school in New England. The ISS students who received counseling reported no decrease in academic studies, and 14 out of the 19 students assigned to ISS returned to the regular

classroom with few or no problems. The study also found that maintaining accurate daily records and meeting all program objectives with parental involvement aided in success. Hrabak and Settles (2003) suggested there are several reasons for involving parents: "Parent disapproval of misbehavior supported your goals, identification of additional at-risk factors could occur, [and] parents may become encouraging when they saw positive steps taking place" (Parental Involvement section, para. 1).

In order for a school to decrease its ISS rate, the ISS program needs to be more constructive than punitive (Morris & Howard, 2003). The educational goal should develop productive members of society, and the ISS program should reflect that goal. Students who are assigned to the ISS program should understand why they were suspended, what rules were broken, what attitude they had, and what actions they displayed.

The fourth and most recent ISS model is the individual model, which is based on the assumption that the reasons for misbehavior are varied and any model used should focus on changing the disruptive students' behavior by involving the students in a combined program designed specifically to meet the individual student's needs (Sheets, 1996). In the individual model, a regular classroom includes a pencil sharpener, scratch paper, dictionary, and adult supervisor. The students bring their assigned work to the ISS classroom to be completed during the day. They eat lunch in their work area and have no contact with anyone other than the teacher or supervisor who engages in conversation about the assignments with the students. Alternative activities could include self-help, decision making on discipline infractions, and study skills. In the individual model, students remain in ISS from 3 to 10 days.

The Counseling Component

Morris and Howard (2003) suggested using the therapeutic and individual models

for best results in addressing student behavior and behavioral issues. According to these authors, the combination of the two models would contain a counseling component that would concentrate on encouraging students to take responsibility for their actions. School adjustment is viewed as one of the most important goals of the guidance and counseling programs. Behavioral intervention is a specific activity for counselors due to the increasing number of disciplinary problems and disruptive behavior that consistently interferes with academic success.

The counselor's responsibilities have changed somewhat over the years as more and more attention is focused on student achievement and school success. Much of the driving force behind the changing role of the counselor is due to the efforts of the ASCA (2004) National Standards for School Counseling Programs and Transforming School Counseling Initiative. Perusse, Goodnough, Donegan, and Jones (2004) studied the perceptions of school counselors and principals to the extent for which national standards should be followed in elementary and secondary school counseling programs. Perusse et al.'s study was also interested in determining what principals thought were appropriate and inappropriate tasks for counselors. Their research indicated that elementary school counselors and principals believed the most important counseling standards to teach younger students were associated with acquiring attitudes, knowledge, and interpersonal skills to understand and respect themselves and others; the least important standards for elementary school counselors focused on career success. Secondary principals and counselors ranked school completion and academic readiness for postsecondary options highest for high school students, while school safety and survival skills were lowest on the list of national counseling standards. Perusse et al. reported that over 80% of the principals of both elementary and secondary schools believed testing, scheduling, and

record keeping were appropriate counselor duties. The results of the study indicated that both principals and counselors across all levels believed that a counselor's top priorities were to take the leadership role in guidance and counseling at their school, provide counseling at school for students and parents, and implement a comprehensive prevention program.

The ASCA (2004) found that elementary and secondary counselors differed significantly on their view of counseling focus: Elementary counselors preferred personal and social development, and secondary counselors preferred career development. In 2006, Monteiro-Leitner, Asner-Self, Milde, Leitner, and Skeleton conducted a study that compared principal and counselor experiences, but the researchers focused on rural school settings. In their research, Monteiro-Leitner et al. found that rural schools often did not have resources to fund a full-time comprehensive counseling program. Quantitative results of this study indicated that rural principals believed counselors should engage in daily supervision of duty areas (e.g., halls, cafeteria, and bus zones); in addition, they believed too much time was spent counseling individuals and small groups and more time should be spent working on individual education plans. Counselors reported opposite results. Monteiro-Leitner et al.'s study found that the counselor role confusion related to misunderstanding the counselor's role, relationship problems between key players, and immediate and significant economic and local needs were in the way of a counselor's duties of meeting the needs of students.

Part of the important responsibilities of school counselors is to fulfill a leadership and advocacy role for school, family, and community involvement in meeting academic goals. A study by Bryan and Holcomb-McCoy (2007) examined factors that were related to school counselors' perceived involvement in these partnership areas. School

counselors' attitudes about forming partnerships and attitudes about families and communities are found to be important factors in determining partnership involvement between the school counselor in relation to the school, family, and communities they serve (Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2007). A collaborative school climate, principal support, and self-confidence are related to the counselors' perceived involvement in partnerships. School counselors found advocating for school, family, and community partnerships to be important in providing support for counseling programs that meet the academic, social, and career needs of students (Bryan & Holcomb-McCoy, 2007; Field & Baker, 2004).

Ensuring academic achievement for all students is an important part of the school counselor's role as well. A study by Butler (2003) on counseling African American teens found that “this at-risk population is often placed in vocational or trade specific school tracks that are geared toward low status and often low paying occupations" (p. 51). Butler recommended that culturally relevant experiences with respected African American community members could be facilitated through the counselor's position. Counseling interventions should reinforce positive cultural messages that come from within the student's own community. According to Butler, counselors should serve as "social change agents within their school setting [to address] the discriminatory attitudes and behaviors" (p. 55) of school personnel toward African American students. Today, the leadership role of the school counselor has emerged as an important aspect of school reform in promoting systemic changes at the school level. Counselors who are successful leaders are responsible, empowered, focused on attainable goals, and self-reflective (Dollarhide, Gibson, & Saginak, 2008).

At-risk students who are identified with special needs have needs that must be

met for them to be successful in school (Sullivan & Bishop, 2005). School counselors receive specialized training that enables them to work with this at-risk population to meet their needs through the use of intervention and prevention strategies that support their specific needs (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007). Schools that utilize the school counselor's abilities to reach this at-risk population have a better chance of meeting school-wide academic and behavioral goals as well as providing an opportunity for at-risk students to achieve academic and behavioral success.

Although program designs would vary among schools and school systems, ISS programs with a counseling component would provide an opportunity for at-risk students to achieve academic and behavioral success. Hochman and Worner (1987) found that "group counseling can reduce truancy, increase attendance, raise grade point averages, and improve student behavior" (p. 93). Gootman (1998) believed that teachers should provide immediate interventions as well as long-term prevention. One method of getting students to understand their behavior and alternatives to that behavior is professional intervention by the counselor and administrator.

According to the Alabama State Department of Education's (2003) counseling and guidance plan that was developed for Alabama's public schools, counselors did not deal directly with discipline; they approached discipline from a preventive perspective. Early behavioral intervention was a legitimate activity for counselors due to the increasing disciplinary and disruptive behaviors that interfere with learning. Therefore, counselors should be involved with small-group counseling sessions and individual counseling sessions with chronic offenders.

The goal of any educational system is to help every student become academically and behaviorally successful. The ISS program is not to be punitive but to create solutions

that would support student success. Many researchers (Mendez et al., 2002; Skiba et al., 1997; Verdugo 2002) have found that an ISS program has the potential to be effective if it is designed properly. One component of an effective ISS program is to hold its students accountable for school assignments and involve some aspect of rehabilitation or functional behavior assessment and replacement (Morris & Howard, 2003). These programs have been shown to reduce students' rule infringements as well as maintain the integrity of their education by ensuring that they did not evade school work. Sanders (2001) provided key elements for implementing a successful ISS program: selectivity, consistency, and constructive supervision; student reflection on behavior; behavior modification plans, implementation, and follow ups; and parental involvement.

North Kirkwood Middle School in Kirkwood, Missouri, implemented a Student Advisory Center (SAC, Sanders, 2001). This SAC provided an alternative to OSS as well as the traditional ISS program. The focus of the SAC program was to support students and help them make positive changes in their behavior, build self-esteem, and promote academic success. Students are made aware of the standards and expectations for their behavior and the consequences for their negative behavior. The SAC program is used to help students understand the decision-making process and acknowledge that they are responsible for their own actions. By building the students' self-esteem, the students would be able to make appropriate decisions. In order to help students improve their academic and behavioral skills, staff members worked with students to set behavioral goals and objectives. Students learned to focus on the areas in which they were experiencing problems, developed a plan of action for their behavior, and received special assistance for their academic skills. Students knew that people cared about them, and they also were aware that inappropriate behavior would not be tolerated in the SAC

program. It was important that students felt confident when they returned to their regular classroom. Sanders stated that with student confidence comes the willingness to participate in the learning process and, when students feel better about themselves, they are less inclined to act out in unacceptable ways.

The SAC program was limited to a maximum of 10 students at a time (Sanders, 2001). The principal contacted the parent or guardian to explain the referral and discuss the program's purpose and procedures. The principal also discussed the referral and expectations of the SAC program with the student, and a Behavior/Study Skills Curriculum checklist was completed. The principal escorted the student to the SAC program, and a meeting with the certified teacher was held in order to review the rules, procedures, and expectations. The student was given a written copy of these rules and procedures. Students met with the counselor during their 1st day of the program. The counselor established goals and objectives and addressed the student's strengths and areas of concerns. The counselor reviewed the Behavior/Study Skills Curriculum checklist and adjusted it according to his or her findings. The counselor visited the SAC room each day in order to provide positive reinforcement. The counselor and SAC teacher met regularly to monitor student progress and make any necessary adjustments.

Students were responsible for completing daily assignments from their regular teachers during their time in the SAC program (Sanders, 2001). The certified SAC teacher monitored students' work and behavior while the students were assigned to the program. The teacher helped each student determine his or her daily schedule and worked one-on-one to help each student meet the targeted social and behavioral skills and learn how to avoid problem behaviors. The SAC teacher was responsible for forwarding students' completed assignments to the regular classroom teachers. Students were

awarded progress points; these points helped the students with recommendations when they were ready to leave the program. In order for a student to be released from the SAC program, they had to receive a recommendation from the SAC teacher, counselor, and principal. Students who continued to have disciplinary problems during their assignment to the SAC program were immediately referred to the office for alternative consequences. Before returning to the regular classroom, students had to meet with the SAC teacher and complete an exit evaluation form. Also, each student had to attend an exit interview with the counselor; principal; and under certain circumstances, his or her parent or guardian. The ultimate goal of the SAC program was to guide students toward the road of success and provide them with the skills they needed in order to walk that road alone.

Sink and Stroh (2003) suggested that school counselors and other student support service personnel could have a positive impact on improving students' academic performance. School counselors provide counseling programs in three critical areas: academic, personal and social, and career. Their services and programs help students resolve emotional, social, or behavioral problems and help them develop a clearer focus or sense of direction. Effective counseling programs are important to the school climate and a crucial element in improving student achievement. School counseling programs have a significant influence on discipline problems. Baker and Gerler (2001) reported that students who participate in a school counseling program have significantly fewer inappropriate behaviors and more positive attitudes toward school than those students who do not participate in the program.

The prevention of undesirable behaviors involves limiting the factors that encourage these behaviors while teaching students prosocial interaction skills. A solution-focused counseling model represents a positive and competency-based

perspective on student misbehavior. This model focuses on looking for what is wrong and how to fix it. Solution-focused counseling represents an approach whereby the counselor expresses confidence in the student's ability to make positive changes in his or her life by accessing and using inner resources. Solutions are constructed by identifying and capitalizing on exceptions to the presenting problem. The student's strengths and competencies are fostered and then funneled toward implementing realistic and achievable behavioral objectives. The philosophy of the solution-focused approach is that the principal, along with the school counselor, could help frame a solution-oriented structure and community for the entire school. The following five principles are used for promoting the solution-focused approach:

1. Salutary centerpieces. The problem is the problem. When the educator redescribes the problem in a salutary, health-promoting, or normalizing manner rather than a pathological manner, the problem often appears solvable to the student.

2. Exceptional ingredients. Identifying and highlighting exceptions or nonproblem occurrences are an essential aspect of solution-focused counseling.

3. Using utilities. It is human nature to seek a state of nonconflict, self-satisfaction, and comfort. Educators help students recognize and develop their strengths for building solutions.

4. Cooperation is key. One of the biggest challenges as an educator is working effectively with students who believe they have not been heard. Educators need to align themselves with students and empathize with them in a way that allows them to be heard.

5. The ripple effect. Educators help students and teachers and work with implementing a straightforward achievable task that leads them to an accomplishment.

Conclusion

After reviewing many ISS programs of the past, Sanders (2001) concluded that the success of any ISS program on decreasing misbehavior is directly related to its design. In an ineffective ISS program, there are no assignments accompanying the students, behavior modifications included and follow-up on students when they leave the program. Therefore, poorly designed ISS programs could have the same types of detrimental effects as OSS programs because, according to Sanders, "misbehaviors persist, quite often; students miss instruction just as if they had received OSS" (p. 53).

Roberts and Morotti (2000) remarked that punitive measures, primarily suspension and expulsion, are the most common strategies schools use to combat youth aggression and defiance. Smith, David, and Gravelle (2002) added that, although ISS programs are a step in the right direction, they could create an illusion of progress where little exists if viewed only in terms of the narrow goal of keeping students in the school classroom.

Counselors need to know that the counseling program they have designed or selected meets the educational goals of their school. They need to have a plan in place to meet the needs of a large group of students who are at a very critical point in their lives. The ASCA (2004) developed a comprehensive counseling plan that is research based for counselors to follow that meets the academic, personal and social, and career needs of students. By following the ASCA model and most recent research on at-risk students, counselors could develop a program that will meet the needs of a general at-risk population.

Research Questions

The following are the research questions that guided this study:

1. What are the students' experiences in their current ISS program?
2. What are the teachers' experiences in their current ISS program?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Aim of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to determine the students' and teachers' experiences in their current ISS program as a means for reducing the number of student violators. The school administrators were concerned when a large number of students were assigned to the ISS program for the same or different offenses that did not warrant an OSS or expulsion. According to the school data, 65 students received a school suspension in the 2005-2006 school year with an enrollment of 517 students; in 2006-2007, the school enrollment was 535 students, and 73 students had received a school suspension; and in 2007-2008, with an enrollment of 510 students, 98 students had received a school suspension (see Table 1).

Participants

The setting for this specific study took place in a high school located in an urban community in the central section of Alabama, and the socioeconomic status of these students ranged from low class to upper middle class. This high school served students in Grades 9, 10, 11, and 12, and these students ranged in age from 14 to 19 years of age.

The target high school qualified as a Title I school, and 98% of the school's 510 students received free or reduced-price lunches. The school had 1 administrator, 2 assistant administrators, 1 counselor, and 32 teachers. The teachers instructed in the following areas: five taught English, five taught math, four taught social studies, and four taught science. The school also had three physical education and health teachers, two Air Force Reserved Officers' Training School teachers, one computer science teacher, one foreign language teacher, one ISS teacher, one band director, and four special education teachers.

The respondents who were interviewed included 25 high school students with suspension records and experiences and 17 classroom teachers. Based on Morrissey and Higgs (2006), phenomenologist view human experiences as a cornerstone of knowledge about human phenomena; therefore, this population was selected because each of the teachers had personal experiences working with students with behavior problems and assigning students to the ISS program. Their experiences allowed them to report and discuss information concerning the suspension program and its positive or negative effects on students. Students were selected based on their shared experiences directly relating to the ISS program as a student assigned one or more times to school suspension. The students who served suspension had been assigned to a school environment that placed them in a position that helped the researcher understand the practices and procedures of the ISS program and how it affected their time in the school. The information they provided was pertinent in helping make recommendations for changing the ISS program for students to have a successful academic experience and less of a punitive practice for the school. It was also believed that the experience had a positive effect on changing students' in-school behaviors and curtailing disruptive behaviors during instructional time.

The researcher conferred with the administrator of this high school prior to the approval of the proposal and Nova Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board confirmation to reconfirm permission to conduct this study. The researcher explained the purpose, methods, procedures, and timeline for the study. The interview protocol and appropriate and approved consent forms for the students and teachers were also discussed with the school's administrator. The procedures for obtaining permission through the signatures on the consent forms by the parent, parents, or guardian of the students

interviewed were also explained. The school district's appropriately signed permission document to do research was presented to the school's administrator and accompanied the other consent forms, interview protocols, research proposal, and Nova Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board signed forms. The expectations and outcomes for the rethinking and revising of the school's suspension program were examined and clarified for the school's principal.

Using the U.S. Postal Service, the researcher provided the teachers with a written communication that included the purpose of the study, methods and procedures, and intended outcomes. A teacher's consent form was included with the document. A self-addressed stamped envelope was also included for returning the signed consent form to the researcher. Following the receipt of participation letters, the researcher developed an interview agenda for the teachers.

The same documents were provided to each of the potential student's parent, parents, or guardian. The researcher provided times and a phone number for the parent, parents, or guardian to talk with the researcher if they had any questions or were hesitant to provide permission because of confidentiality for the student. Confidentiality was explained along with the safe guards the school district and university required in order to carry out research involving students who were minors to ensure their anonymity, confidentiality, and safety.

A self-addressed stamped envelope was included for the parent, parents, or guardian to return the signed consent form to the researcher. The signed form was forwarded to the researcher via the U.S. Postal Service. Following the receipt of the parental consent form, the researcher contacted potential students individually. The selected student who agreed to be interviewed as a respondent in this study was provided

a written communication that included the purpose of the study, methods and procedures, and intended outcomes. A student consent form was included with the document. The researcher, working with the school administrator and students' daily schedules, developed an interview agenda for the students.

Procedures

This was a qualitative study using the phenomenological approach. The phenomenological approach incorporates the study of human phenomena, things, or events in the everyday world (Morrissey & Higgs, 2006). Morrissey and Higgs stated that the phenomenologist takes an experiential view toward understanding such phenomena, highlighting human experience as not only valid but of great importance to understanding human existence.

Phenomenological research is based on two premises (Becker, 1992). The first premise is that experience is seen as a valid, rich, and rewarding source of knowledge. According to Morrissey and Higgs (2006), phenomenologist view human experiences as a cornerstone of knowledge about human phenomena. The participants in this study provided a vast amount of experience and knowledge of the ISS program. This firsthand experience and knowledge provided the basis of this study. The second premise of Morrissey and Higgs' research was in the view that the everyday world is a valuable and productive source of knowledge. Furthermore, we can learn much about ourselves and reap key insights into the nature of an event by analyzing how it occurred in our daily lives (Becker, 1992). The researcher obtained information about the ISS program and its policies and procedures; however, the experiences of the participants were the primary source of information for this study.

Creswell (2003) defined the understanding of human or social problems in a

natural setting and the reporting of the detailed viewpoints as a qualitative process. By using a qualitative research design, the researcher was able to address Creswell's six steps in the research process. The six steps were as follows: (a) identifying a research problem, (b) reviewing the literature, (c) selecting participants, (d) collecting data, and (e) analyzing and interpreting data, and (f) reporting and evaluating research. The writer addressed these six steps. The rethinking and replanning of the schools' suspension program was based on the student and teacher interview responses (see Appendices B and E). The personal and detailed view from teachers and students presently involved in the school's suspension program assisted the researcher in providing documentation on the scope of the school's suspension problem. The interview responses provided a picture of how the ISS program was implemented and how it worked as a solution to school violations for misbehaving students and more specifically repeat offenders.

Data-Collection Procedures

The data collection procedure that was used in this study was a face-to-face interview method. In utilizing Creswell's (2003) 4th step to collect the data, the researcher used the interview process to gather the participants' descriptions of their experiences. This semi-structured interactive process utilized open-ended questions and comments. Participants were encouraged to give a full description of their experiences, which included their thoughts, feelings, and memories. This process allowed the researcher to follow up on any details that needed clarification.

The data collection took place as soon as the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval was granted. Twenty-five students and 17 teachers were interviewed for this study after the researcher obtained signed consent forms. The teachers' interviews were conducted in their classrooms during their preparation time and the students' interviews

were conducted in an isolated unused classroom. Each interview lasted 30 minutes to 1 hour. The interview guide (see Appendix B) was used to channel the students' interviews and (Appendix E) was used in the teachers' interviews.

In conducting face-to-face interviews, Kvale (1996) noted the importance of being directly engulfed into the environment of the interviewee. This opportunity allows the participants to have cross-dimensional discussions on issues of common interests. This study incorporated an indirect method of questioning the participants. In this technique the interviewer asked projective questions. These are questions that allow interviewees to answer questions indirectly by imposing their personal belief on others. This technique can be helpful for asking for response on a topic, which participants may be reluctant to express their true feelings openly (Powell 1997).

The interviews were placed in an envelope marked with a group name Z for the students and W represents the teachers. According to Foss and Waters (2007) 3rd step coding the data, the identifying markings on each student interview sheet were coded; A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, A-1, B-1, C-1, D-1, E-1, F-1, G-1, H-1, I-1, J-1, K-1, and L-I. The identifying marks on the teachers' interviews were marked A-2, B-2, C-2, D-2, E-2, F-2, G-2, H-2, I-2, J-2, K-2, L-2, M-2, N-2, O-2, P-2, and Q-2. This form of coding was used to enable the researcher to provide the target school with their specific data analysis. After data collection, prior to data entry, the interviews were numbered. The numbering system was used as a method for accountability to ensure correct data entry. Each interview was reviewed to ensure that data was interpreted correctly.

Instruments

Two instruments were used to collect data from the respondents: an interview questionnaire for the students and an interview questionnaire for the teachers from the

target high school. Several steps were used to develop the instruments. The researcher developed a list of interview questions for the students who were selected for this study and those who had appropriate consent from a parent, parents, or guardian and had agreed to take part in the research. The researcher used archival data from the school and data and information from the literature review to develop the initial questions. The interview questions focused on collecting data and information to answer the study's research questions. The formal interview protocol was submitted to a formative review committee to evaluate the questions and make sure they were relevant and directly related to the study's research questions. The formative review group consisted of three professional educators and a student with ISS experience, all of whom were familiar with the school, suspension program, background of the school, and students in question (i.e., those who were assigned to the ISS program). Following the review of the student interview protocol by the formative team, the researcher revised the questions as suggested and needed. Once the interview protocol was revised and questions rewritten, the students' protocols were given to a summative review group to again review and evaluate the revised list of interview questions.

The summative team consisted of four professionals, different evaluators than those who composed the formative team. Four educators, consisting of one school administrator, a school counselor, and two-classroom teachers, made up the summative review group. The summative group evaluated the questions and made sure they were relevant and directly related to the study's research questions. The teachers on the review panel were not eligible to serve as interview respondents. These questions are presented in Appendices B and E.

The researcher also developed a list of interview questions for the teachers who

were selected for this study and had signed an appropriate consent form and had agreed to take part in the research. The researcher used archival data from the school and data information from the literature reviewed to develop the teacher interview questions. These questions focused on collecting information to answer the study's research questions. The formal interview protocol was submitted to the formative review committee. The committee evaluated the questions and made sure they were relevant and directly related to the study's research questions. Following the review of the teacher interview protocol by the formative team, the researcher revised the questions as suggested by the panel.

Once the interview protocol was revised and questions rewritten as needed, the teacher's protocol was given to a summative review group to again review and evaluate the revised list of teacher interview questions. The summative review group evaluated the questions and made sure they were relevant and directly related to the study's research questions. The teachers on the review panel were not eligible to serve as interview respondents. The students' and teachers' interview protocols were formed into a precise list of questions for the researcher to use for the formal interviews with the students and teachers. The questions are presented in Appendices B and E.

Data Analysis

In line with the recommendations of Creswell (2003), the researcher allowed the method of analysis to follow the nature of the data. Organization and analysis of data began during the interview. The researcher actively listened and hand recorded the meaning of what was being said. The researcher recorded the participants' experiences within the context of other events and provided the opportunity for participants to reflect on those experiences. In addition, utilizing the Foss and Waters (2007) method for coding

the data, interview transcripts were read in order for the researcher to get a feel for what was said by identifying the key issues and points. This analysis continued as the researcher read the data several times. Information was aggregated and organized into a database according to the analysis headings. This allowed the data to be compared and identified according to the relationship to the research questions.

The data analysis process involved developing a plan for organizing the data for analysis, reviewing data from various view points, and developing in-depth understanding and interpretation of the data (Creswell, 2009). The data was obtained from semi-structured, open-ended interview sessions. Coding was used in the data analysis process. The process of coding data by searching for similar patterns from the participants' responses is a critical part of qualitative research (Foss & Waters, 2003). Participants' identification was coded in order to protect their confidentiality and to ensure the participants to respond to the questions truthfully and honestly. The following five steps were used in the coding process (Foss & Waters, 2007):

1. Collecting the data: In the data collection process the researcher interviewed the participants and hand recorded their responses. The researcher conducted a one-on-one interview with each participant. After interviewing the participants, the researcher collected the responses and arranged the data presented in order to find meaning in the information that was presented.

2. Transforming the data to codable form: The researcher articulated the participants' responses according to their relationship to the research questions in a specific way that was easily recognizable for the data to be coded.

3. Coding the Data: Each participant was assigned a letter code and each response was summarized. The interview data was transcribed and sorted according to their

relationship to the research questions. The number of related responses was counted and each was converted into their frequency of responses and categorized.

4. Develop a Conceptual Schema from the Data: In developing the schema, the researcher reviewed the participants' responses according to their categories. Each response was then examined and written according to their relationship to the research questions. The researcher developed tables to explain how the data, the literature, and the research questions are relative.

5. Writing up the Analysis: Each participant's interview responses were organized according to the category. Pertinent responses and information was examined and written according to the relationship to the interview questions.

To ensure validity and reliability, the data was checked for consistent patterns of development. The researcher established a genuine rapport with the participants in order to create an environment in which the participants felt comfortable in expressing their views and experiences openly and honestly. The researcher was able to summarize each statement the participants addressed and ask further questions. Creswell (2003) explained that the interpretation of collected data should include adequate and detailed meanings which could establish a common venture between interviewer and interviewee. Therefore, the researcher's intention of this study was to explore, describe and interpret the experiences of the participants with regard to their perceptions of the In-School Suspension program.

Expected Outcomes

It was expected that the findings of this study would determine the positive and negative experiences of the ISS program. It was also expected that recommendations for changes would be provided to the school in the form of a plan of action that focuses on

academic and social behaviors.

Ethical Considerations

In order to follow protocols required by the school district's research requirements and Nova Southeastern University's Institutional Review Board regulations, the researcher discussed the study's purpose, data-collection procedures, and confidentiality with all respondents. The nature of the topic, student school suspension, is a sensitive one involving students, families, and teachers and, therefore, was treated with utmost consideration. All student and teacher respondents and the parent, parents, or guardians of students under the age of 19 years signed a consent form and were required to hear from the researcher an explanation of the purpose and procedures of the study. In obtaining the consent forms and informing all parties in the study, the researcher minimized any coercion issues for participation in the study. The respondents were asked to maintain a high level of confidentiality concerning all information discussed in the interview sessions. Notes (recorded by hand) of all interview sessions were transcribed without disclosing the participants' identities to maintain anonymity. Each participant was assigned a code letter or number, which was attached to his or her data and information records. These records were stored in a locked file cabinet at the researcher's home.

Trustworthiness

The use of more than one data source helped ensure the accuracy and credibility of the data and information that were collected and analyzed. During the student interview sessions and teacher interview sessions, the researcher kept the respondents focused on the rethinking and revising of the ISS policy and program in an attempt to note the contributions and perceptions of the two participant groups. This follows the

research technique of triangulation; one method to ensure that the work was carefully done (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). This technique helped to establish the data sources that reflected the views of those involved in the school suspension process, which further ensured the credibility of interview data. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) defined in-depth interviewing as

> Interviewing designed to get a rich understanding of the subjects' way of thinking. They are usually long, an hour or more, less structured than a typical interview and involve the researcher probing into topics that that the subjects bring up. In-depth interviewing often involves more than one session with the same subject. (p. 272)

The nature of the research topic, suspension, is a critical, personal, and sensitive area of study. It was important for the researcher to ensure that interviewee responses were accurate and focused on their experiences and views of suspension. This approach increased the dependability of the study. The researcher accurately described, categorized, coded, and analyzed the interview data. The researcher also transcribed and coded the data and kept a focus on the purpose of the study to maintain reliable research procedures.

Potential Research Bias

Each stage of this study was influenced in part by the researcher's subjectivity. The identification of the problem was based on the researcher's tenure as a counselor for adjudicated boys, an elementary and middle school counselor, and more recently as a high school counselor. The researcher integrated subjectivity into interpretations of data and information as it was analyzed.

In order to control for researcher bias, several steps were employed. Formative and summative committees were used to provide objectivity in developing the research instruments. The data obtained in this study were generated from interpretations of the

responses from students and teachers. In order to minimize obvious and avoidable sources of bias, steps were taken to recognize and record personal viewpoint responses according to their subjectivity.

Conclusion

The intent of the study was to understand, rethink, and recommend current and more efficient practices for an ISS program in a southern county high school. Students and teachers who had experiences in various aspects of the school suspension process were interviewed through an in-depth one-on-one process (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Qualitative methods were used to analyze the interview data and information collected from the respondents. These data were used along with archival data from the school, district, and current literature to determine recommendations for rethinking and revising the suspension program and making it a less punitive process and more of a character development and academic program.

Chapter 4: Results

The purpose of this research study was to improve the suspension program's immediate and long-term outcomes and attain educational benefits for all school stakeholders. The analysis of data that the researcher accumulated while evaluating teacher and student perceptions of an ISS program is presented in this chapter. The following research questions helped guide this study:

1. What were the students' experiences in their current ISS program?
2. What were the teachers' experiences in their current ISS program?

In order to have a precise understanding of the findings, it is important that the reader understand the process through which this study progressed. Table 1 indicates the number of student violations per school year. The responses to the students and teacher interviews (see Appendices B and E) indicated the student and teacher volunteers' perceptions of the current ISS program. The related literature indicated that, if ISS programs are designed and implemented properly, then these programs have the potential to become an effective disciplinary tool.

The responses to the student questionnaire were analyzed first, and the teachers' responses followed. The research questions integrated the student and teacher responses, and the related literature helped guide effective strategies for a successful ISS program. By utilizing Foss and Waters (2007) 3rd step the researcher was able to utilize coding in processing the data analysis. The process of coding data by searching for similar patterns from the participants' responses is a critical part of qualitative studies because coding is the part that contributed to the discipline (Foss & Waters, 2003).

Student Data

The students were asked their perceptions of the ISS program as it related to

redirecting their behavior and academics. Twenty-five students participated in the study; 10 of the students were female, and 15 were male. Foss and Waters (2007) 5th step was utilized in order for the researcher to develop tables 2 and 3 which explains the results to the student questionnaire; the results are discussed according to their relationship and number of participants.

Question 1 from the student interview asked the students to describe the purpose of the ISS program. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Twenty of the 25 students who were interviewed stated that the purpose of the ISS program was to help the students become academically and behaviorally successful.

2. Four of the 25 students had the perception that ISS was used for punishment.

3. One of the 25 students had no idea about the purpose of ISS. This student stated that the reason he or she was assigned to ISS was to give the teacher a break.

Question 5 asked the students what they were to do academically while receiving an ISS assignment. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Thirteen of the 25 students stated that ISS did not help them academically; these students believed that, although they were in ISS, they were not responsible for any school work.

2. Six of the 25 students stated that they believed the ISS teacher was not capable of helping them with their regular class assignments.

3. Four of the 25 students referred to ISS as a fun place to be.

4. Two of the 25 students indicated that the ISS teacher was only there to keep them separated from the other students and fuss at them all day.

Question 6 addressed the students' perceptions of ISS as a solution to their behavioral problem. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Twenty of the 25 students stated that ISS did not help their behavioral problem. Eight of these 20 students stated that the ISS teacher could not help them because she (ISS teacher) was not a real teacher, and 5 of these 20 students stated that the ISS teacher spent the day gossiping with them.

2. Four of the 25 students thought that ISS should help them with their problems, but ISS did not; these students stated that the ISS teacher was not serious enough.

3. One of the 25 students was under the impression that ISS was used to protect the teachers. These students stated that, when they were assigned to ISS, it made the teacher think he or she was right and, most of the time, the students stated they believed the regular classroom teacher was wrong.

Question 8 asked what the student thought they were supposed to do while assigned to ISS. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Fourteen of the 25 students believed they should have nothing to do while in ISS.

2. Six of the 25 stated the time should have been used to catch up on their class work, but no one cared whether they learned or not.

3. Five stated they did not care whether someone helped them or not because they did not want to be in school and their plan was to drop out (see Table 2).

Question 2 asked the students, “On how many occasions were you sent to ISS and what were the reasons?” Several reasons were stated by the 25 students as reasons they received ISS: (a) skipping class, (b) arguing with other students (c) refusing to follow directions, (d) cursing the teacher and other students, (e) leaving class without permission, (f) using cell phones, and (g) hostility towards the teacher.

Below is a breakdown of the above behaviors and frequency of the referrals:

1. Eleven of the 25 students stated they had been sent to ISS twice, 5 of the 11 students' skipped class, 3 of the 11 were arguing with other students, and the other 3 refused to follow directions.

2. Seven of the 25 students had been assigned three times; 4 of these 7 students had cursed the teacher, 3 of the 7 had cursed other students, and 1 left the class without permission.

3. Six of the 25 students had been assigned to ISS more than five times; 3 of these 6 students were caught using their cell phones, and 2 were hostile to the teacher or another student.

4. One of the 25 students had taken someone else's iPod without permission.

Table 2

Students' Perception of the In-School-Suspension Program

Variable	*n*
Gender	
Female	10
Male	15
Statement	
1. Describe the purpose of the ISS program.	20
5. Provide the details of what you have to do academically as a student when you are sent to the ISS program.	17
6. Explain how you feel about the ISS Program being a solution to your behavioral problems and other student's behavioral problems.	21
8. Describe what you as a student are supposed to do during your assignment to the ISS program.	14

Note. ISS = in-school suspension.

Question 7 addressed the issue of the students receiving counseling while they were assigned to ISS. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Thirteen of the 25 students expressed a desire receive counseling; 7 of the 13 students stated the counselor could help them figure out why they got so angry, 4 of the 13 students stated that the counselor would not take anyone's side, and 2 of the 13 students stated they had so many problems they needed to talk to someone.

2. Twelve of the 25 students stated it would not do any good if they spoke with the counselor. Five of these students stated that the counselor would take the teacher's side because all adults stick together, and 3 of the 12 students stated that, because the administrator did not like them, it did not matter what the counselor had to say.

3. Four of the 12 students believed that it would be a waste of time because no one listened to the counselor anyway.

Question 9 asked the students to describe the punishment aspects of ISS. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Fourteen of the 25 students stated that ISS was all punishment. Five of the 14 students stated they had done nothing to be in ISS, 9 of the 14 students stated they were put in ISS to be kept away from their friends, and 5 of the 14 students stated the administrator assigned them to ISS so they could not learn.

2. Seven of the 25 students stated that ISS was used to redirect their path; however, these students further stated they acted the way they wanted to act. Only 4 of the 25 students stated that ISS was used because the teachers did not want to be bothered with them.

Question 10 asked the students how their parents were informed about their assignment to ISS. The answers are summarized as follows: Fifteen of the 25 students

stated by the telephone as well as a letter; 9 of the 25 students stated that their parents received a letter, and 1 of the 25 students stated by the telephone.

Questions 3, 4, 11, and 12 of the student questionnaire asked the students to describe the discussions they had with their teachers, administrators, parents, and counselor or social worker about their assignment to the ISS program.

Question 3 asked what discussion had the students had with their teacher prior to being sent to ISS. The answers are summarized as follows: Twenty of the 25 students stated they had a discussion with their teacher after they had gotten in trouble and they had been removed from the classroom, 4 of the 25 students stated they had never had a discussion with their teacher, and 1 of the 25 students indicated that they did not want to speak with anyone.

Question 4 addressed the discussion the student had with their administrators prior to receiving an ISS assignment. The answers are summarized as follows: Seventeen of the 25 students interviewed responded to this question. Fifteen of the 17 students stated they spoke with their administrator after they had received a disciplinary referral. Thirteen of the 15 students believed the administrator had already made up his or her mind of their guilt before the students explained their side of the situation; 7 of these 13 students added that the administrator had decided on their punishment prior to them speaking to him. These students explained they were given their referral form when they entered the administrator's door. Two of the 17 students stated the administrator listened to the teacher and assigned ISS to them with no explanation.

Question 11 asked what discussion had the student had with their parents after being assigned to the ISS program. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Fifteen of the 25 students stated they had no discussion with their parents.

2. Eight of the 25 students had discussed their ISS assignment with their parents; 5 of the 8 students stated that their parents were very upset with them, and they lost all their privileges (telephone, visitors, shopping, etc.).

3. Two of the 25 students stated that their parents did not care what they did because they had gotten in trouble so many times in the past until their parents were tired of them.

Question 12 asked what discussion had the students had with their counselor or social worker. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Sixteen of the 25 students stated they had no discussion with their counselor or social worker.

2. Six of the 25 students stated they had discussed their ISS assignment with their school counselor after they were sent back to their regular classroom.

3. Six of the seven students believed that their counselor helped them to realize what they had done wrong and how they should have reacted when they believed the teacher was doing them wrong. One of the seven students believed the counselor gave them some good advice, but this student believed that it did not matter what students did as the teacher was out to get them. Two of the 25 students stated they did not want to speak to anyone; these students believed that all educators were out to get them (see Table 3).

Question 13 asked what effect ISS had on the students when they returned to the regular classroom. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Eleven of the 25 students stated ISS had no effect on their behavior or academics

2. Nine of the 25 students stated they acted okay for a little while and then

someone bothered them and they usually got to arguing with them and received another disciplinary referral.

Table 3

Students' Discussion of the In-School-Suspension Program

Variable	*n*
Teachers	20
Administrators	23
Parents	16
Counselors or social workers	24

3. Five of the 25 students stated that they acted the way the teachers and students treated them. These students stated they were always being picked on by the teacher and other students, the teacher always wrote them up when a confrontation began, but she never wrote anyone (other students) else up.

Question 14 addressed the issue of what alternative they would have chosen for receiving a disciplinary referral. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Fifteen out of the 25 stated they would choose OSS because they would not have to waste their time getting up in the morning and coming to school. These students preferred to stay in bed all day or play video games.

2. Five of the 25 students stated they would like to clean up because they would have something to do besides sit in the classroom all day.

3. Three of the 25 students preferred paddling (corporal punishment); these students stated that, because the punishment would be over, they could continue with

their normal school routine.

4. Two of the 25 students did not have a preference of what punishment they received; these students believed the administrators were going to do what they wanted to do anyway.

Question 15 addressed the reasons the students had behavioral problems. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Sixteen of the 25 students responded the teacher did not like them because every time they asked a question the teacher told them (students) to be quiet. These students further stated that, if they continued to ask a question, the teacher stated the students were disturbing the class. These 16 students also believed that, anytime they had a conflict with another student, they would receive the reprimand and other students would not receive anything.

2. Eight out of the 25 students believed someone was always picking on them; these students stated that people (peers) could say anything to them; the teacher waited on them to say something back; and when they responded, they got into trouble. The students also believed that the teachers would get them in trouble by lying about them.

3. One of the 25 students stated he or she did not like the teacher and the teacher did not like him or her.

Teacher Data

The teachers were asked their perceptions of the ISS program as it related to redirecting the students' behavior. Seventeen teachers participated in the study; 11 of the teachers were female, and 6 were male. Questions 1, 5, and 7 also addressed the counseling services and punishment issues included in the ISS program. Foss and Waters (2007) 5th step was utilized in order for the researcher to develop tables 4 and 5 which

explains the results to the teacher questionnaire; the results are discussed according to their relationship and the number of participants.

Question 1 asked the purpose of the ISS program. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Eleven of the 17 teachers revealed that the purpose of the ISS program was supposed to redirect the students' behavior; however, ISS did not help the students' behavior at all. The teachers stated that the students did not receive any services for their behavior and their parents were no help at all.

2. Five of the 17 teachers indicated that ISS did help a small percentage of the students with their behavior; however, these students had parents who shared in the responsibility of educating their children.

3. One of the 17 teachers stated that the students who were assigned to ISS usually did what they wanted to and, whether they received any services or not, they knew how to behave; they just choose not to behave.

Question 5 addressed the students receiving counseling for their behavior while in ISS. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Fifteen of the 17 teachers indicated that students should receive counseling; these teachers believed that the students who had behavioral problems would greatly benefit from being able to speak with someone. These teachers further stated that students needed someone who was not judgmental, would listen to them (students), and advise them in the proper way to handle situations.

2. Two of the 17 teachers stated that students did not need counseling; these teachers believed that the students needed to be sent to an alternative school because it was usually the same students who continued to do the same thing. One of the two

teachers believed that parents were at fault because the parents were the ones who should be talking to their children.

Question 7 addressed the issues of the punishment aspects of ISS. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Fifteen of the 17 teachers stated that ISS is not punitive at all; these teachers revealed that being assigned to ISS was the only punishment for misbehaving that the students received.

2. Three of the 15 teachers referred to ISS as being a baby-sitting service; 5 of the 15 teachers stated that most of the students asked to go to ISS when they misbehaved.

3. One of the 17 teachers stated that the students received punishment because they were not allowed to associate with their friends. The 17 teachers also believed that the students enjoyed going to ISS because they were not required to do anything.

4. One of the 17 teachers stated that the students who were sent to ISS probably received punishment at home (see Table 4). Results are addressed according to their relationship.

Question 2 asked the teachers for the reasons they sent students to the ISS program. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Fourteen of the 17 teachers stated they did not send students to ISS, the administrator did.

2. Seven of the 17 teachers stated that students were sent to ISS for cursing and talking back.

3. Five of the 7 teachers stated they were lenient when students cursed as long as they were not cursing at teachers or other students.

4. Two of the 17 teachers stated that, if they sent them anywhere, they would send

them home. These teachers also stated that students may receive a disciplinary referral for a variety of reasons.

Table 4

Teachers' Perceptions of the In-School Suspension Program

Variable	*N*
Gender	
Female	11
Male	5
Statement or question	
1. Describe the purpose of the ISS.	11
5. Do you think students should receive counseling while they are assigned to the ISS program? Why or why not?	15
7. Describe the punishment aspects of the school's ISS program.	15

Note. ISS = in-school suspension.

5. Three of the 17 teachers stated that it was according to the student and what they had done.

6. Two of the 17 teachers stated the students who often misbehaved received a disciplinary referral if they broke the smallest of rules.

Question 8 addressed the discussions the teachers had with administrators, teachers, or staff concerning changes or improvements to the ISS program. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Twelve of the 17 teachers stated that the program was developed by the school board and there was nothing they could say or do. Four of the 12 teachers stated that the school board did not try to help students with their behavior problems; these teachers believed no one cared about what they had to deal with. Five of the 12 teachers stated that, when they complained, they were labeled as not having classroom management, and 3 of the 12 teachers stated some of their students became so disruptive and disrespectful they were left with no choice but to put the disruptive student out of their class.

2. Three of the 17 teachers stated they had not had a formal conversation with the administrator because the rules were set and they were afraid that, if they said anything, they would be labeled as a troublemaker.

3. Two of the 17 teachers stated they had not spoken to anyone because there was no one with whom they could speak.

Question 9 addressed the teacher discussing the ISS program with the counselor or social worker. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Seven of the 17 teachers stated they had not spoken to the counselor or social worker because they (teachers) had been informed that the counselor had no authority over the ISS program. The teachers furthered stated that counselors were not included in the school's discipline plan.

2. Six of the 17 teachers stated they had discussed the ISS program with the counselor, and the counselor wanted to help but had not been allowed to help the students in ISS.

3. Four of the 17 teachers stated they had not spoken with anyone formally because counselors did not handle discipline.

Questions 4, 6, 10, and 11 of the teacher interview asked the teachers about the

effect of ISS as it related to solutions to student behavior and academic obligations. Question 4 addressed the question on the teachers' beliefs about ISS being a solution to the student's behavioral problems. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Ten of the 17 teachers stated that ISS was only effective because the students with the behavior problem were removed from their classroom. By sending the disruptive student to ISS, the classroom environment became conducive to learning.

2. Four of the 17 teachers stated that ISS helped the students who wanted to be helped and the ones that were disruptive all the time would never be helped.

3. Three of the 17 teachers perceived that ISS was an effective solution to student behavior because the students had time to think about their actions.

Question 6 addressed the issue of whether ISS met the students' academic obligations. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Twelve of the 17 teachers revealed that ISS did not meet the students' academic needs. These students did not take any initiative in completing their work. The answers are summarized as follows:

2. Six of the 12 teachers stated that, when they sent the student's daily assignments to ISS, the assignments were rarely returned, and if they were returned, they were often incomplete. Three of the 17 teachers stated that ISS did meet the students' academic needs; these teachers stated the few students who completed their work were usually students who possessed high academic abilities.

3. Two of the 17 teachers stated that students could do their work if they wanted to and the ones that did not do their work did not want to. These teachers also indicated that some students were not capable of completing their work without teacher assistance.

Question 10 asked what effect the ISS program had on the students when they

returned to regular class. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Twelve of the 17 teachers revealed that ISS did not affect the student's behavior. Seven of the 12 teachers stated that there was nothing in place for the students to receive help on their behavior. Five of 12 teachers stated that students did not have a sense of pride or shame. Therefore, getting in trouble did not faze them.

2. Three of the 17 teachers believed ISS did affect the students' behavior. These teachers indicated that students got the reputation of being the worst students in the school and it was a reputation they needed to make it in their home environment.

3. Two of the 17 teachers stated that the students did not care one way or the other about being sent to ISS.

Question 11 addressed the teachers' estimation of the effectiveness of the ISS program. The answers are summarized as follows:

1. Twelve of the 17 teachers stated that, in their estimation, the ISS program was ineffective and the entire program needed to be dismantled or redone. These teachers stated that students were not required to take any responsibility for their actions.

2. Four of the 17 teachers stated that the current ISS program and effectiveness of the ISS program was alright but it needed improvement.

3. Two of the 17 teachers stated that the students did not deserve to be sent to ISS; the students needed to be sent home to their parents (see Table 5).

Table 5

Teachers' Perceptions of the Effectiveness of the In-School Suspension Program

Statement or question	*N*
4. Explain how you feel about the ISS program being a solution to student behavioral problems.	8
6. Explain how the ISS program helps the student meet his or her academic obligations.	10
10. Describe the punishment aspects of the school's ISS program.	12
11. Does the ISS program, in your estimation, have any effect on student behavior following an assignment to the ISS program?	12

Note. ISS = in-school suspension.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The focus of this study was to determine the students' and teachers' experiences concerning the effectiveness of this high school's ISS program. The teachers and students provided pertinent information regarding the practices, procedures, and policies of this ISS program. An ISS program is seen as a viable alternative to the placement of students who have behavioral problems (Flanagan, 2007). This high school had an ISS program in place because of the high number of students who had behavior problems. However, when the assigned students left for regular classrooms, they returned to ISS at an alarming rate; disciplinary incidents totaling 425 in one academic year with a student enrollment of 510 helped prompt the initiation of this study.

This 6-week study evaluated the practices, procedures, policies, and student and teacher experiences with this high school's ISS program. The initial approach to addressing these issues began with the development of reliable and valid data that could compare teacher and student responses. The data from this study supported the view of many concerned educators, parents, and community leaders that student behavioral problems and methods to address these problems should be a major priority of the teacher-preparation programs and continuing staff-developmental concerns (Oliver & Reschly, 2007).

The findings in this study converged to suggest that practices, policies, and procedures were ineffective in improving student misbehavior. The research in this study indicated that participants expected administrators to provide a safe and supportive educational environment that allowed the student the opportunity to learn and teachers the opportunity to teach (Oakes, Rogers, Blasi, & Lipton, 2008).

Interpretation of the Results

The answers to the two research questions are addressed in this section. Each finding has been interpreted to achieve a better understanding of the results.

Research Question 1 was the following: What are the students' experiences in their current ISS program? According to the participants in this study, they perceived the current ISS program as ineffective in its purpose. The majority of the participants believed it to be punishment for their behavior. Another set of students agreed that the ISS program did not help their behavior or academics; they believed the reason they were assigned to ISS was either because the teacher did not like them or someone was bothering them. The researcher observed that the students never took responsibility for their own actions. They seemed to blame someone else for their misbehavior. The students reported they never spoke with their counselor about being assigned to the ISS program, and they only spoke with the administrator after they received a disciplinary referral. Many of the students were not aware of the purpose of ISS. They stated that no one had explained the ISS program to them. However, the students were given a student handbook, and the student, parent, and teacher had to sign the student code of conduct form, stating they understood the code of conduct.

The students stated they would like to speak with their counselor when they were assigned to ISS because they would be able to tell their counselor how they felt about certain things. The students believed that the counselor would not take sides and would listen to them. The students also stated that the counselor would tell them what they should have done when they were angry. The students believed that sometimes they needed to get away from their environment and talk to someone before they got in trouble and the counselor was the person they needed to see. The students overall seemed to

believe that it would not do any good to speak with administrators because they always took the teacher's side.

Students who were sent to ISS believed their behavior did not improve at all when they returned to the regular classroom. The students preferred to receive OSS rather than receive an ISS or receive no disciplinary actions at all. The students responded they did not have to complete any assignments when they were in ISS because either they did not have current work nor had no work at all. However, one of the requirements of this ISS program was for the students to work on their academic subject areas. They also stated that sometimes the work was too hard and they could not get anyone to help them because the ISS teacher was not certified. Overall, the students found the current ISS program to be ineffective in helping them behaviorally or academically.

Research Question 2 was the following: What are the teachers' experiences in their current ISS program? According to the teachers interviewed, the current ISS program fell short of its goal to redirect the students' behavior. The students continued to misbehave when they returned to the regular classroom. The teachers believed there were no set rules for ISS and no strategies when the students continued to misbehave. The teachers also expressed concerns that the students did not receive counseling or interventions while they were assigned to ISS, which was a problem because the students were unable to express their inner feeling and they had no one to help them take responsibility for their actions. A large number of teachers stated that counseling was a major intervention that the students needed in the ISS classroom.

Data collected in the study indicated the ISS program needed to focus on connecting the students' behavior to their academic problems. Teachers indicated that there were no checks and balances on the student's academic work; if the teachers sent

the work, it was never returned, or if it was returned, it was never completed. A large number of teachers believed that a certified teacher was needed in the ISS classroom. Because most of the students were usually behind when they were assigned to ISS, they fell behind further when they returned to the classroom. Noncertified teachers were not familiar with the curriculum, and they could not assist the students. Therefore, the students' behavior may continue to worsen because they are academically insufficient and ashamed to ask for help.

The teachers further stated that ISS was not punitive enough and the students were under the impression they were on break. The students had no consequences for their actions or any responsibility. The only requirement that the students faced was that they could not return to the regular classroom. No one spoke with them about their behavior, and no one ensured they completed their class work.

This study's findings also indicated that the teachers were not part of the constructing of the ISS program. Teachers were not allowed to help develop a plan of action for the ISS program. The teachers had not spoken directly with the administrator about developing a plan of action as they believed it was not their place. The findings also indicated that the counselor had no input regarding strategies of ISS. Discipline does not fall under the counselor's duties; therefore, the counselor did not work with the ISS students.

Conclusions

This study was developed to assess the students' and teachers' perceptions of the ISS program. Opportunities were given for the students and teachers to discuss their thoughts and feelings regarding how the ISS program at this high school occurred daily.

Morris and Howard (2003) suggested that, if an ISS program was properly

administered, the program could be effective in changing inappropriate student behavior. The results of this study led to the following conclusions:

1. There was a need expressed by both students and teachers for a counseling component to be part of the ISS program.

2. Academics should be addressed as a major component of the ISS program.

3. A plan of action must be developed for the ISS program to be successful.

4. Teachers, staff, and administrators should ideally work together to develop this plan of action.

The researcher observed that the participants' perceptions were that ISS was a waste of time because there were no strategies or goals in place to help the students' behavior or academics. Participants stated that this ISS program was not punitive at all. It was found that this ISS program carried no label of being academic, therapeutic, or punitive (Morris & Howard, 2003).

Implications of the Findings

These results indicate that the students displayed identical behavior in returning to class as they did when receiving the behavioral referral. The participants believed the ISS program would greatly benefit if redesigned to include a counseling component. This counseling component would help the students take responsibility for their actions. Morris and Howard (2003) suggested using therapeutic and individual models for best results in addressing student behavior and behavioral issues. According to the authors, the combination of these models would concentrate on encouraging students to take responsibility for their actions.

Key findings in this study revealed that the students who displayed inappropriate behavior on a continuous basis were behind in their academic studies. Morgan, Farkas,

Tufis, and Sperling (2008) found that students who were frequently suspended were usually students who displayed low academic achievements. The data showed that 11 out of 18 students who were assigned to ISS were reading below grade level. Students assigned to ISS felt as though they did not have to complete any assignments. The research found that ISS assignments were not forwarded to their perspective locations, students did not receive them in a timely manner, and the assignments were usually redundant. This was because there were no lines of communication between the ISS teacher and classroom teacher.

Limitations of the Study

The results of this research study should be interpreted with caution. The school that provided the data for analyses was urban and composed primarily of students from the same racial and socioeconomic background. One limitation to this project was the small sample size of students and teachers who were respondents of the questionnaire. Because the participants were at the same school, it would be difficult to apply the results of this study to another school. It would also be difficult to generalize the information gathered in this study to another school because of the differences found in each school, which included but were not limited to students' demographics, the school's location, type of school, staff demographics, and composition of the staff. Finally, the participants were interviewed by the researcher a guidance counselor, which may have influence the participants into answering the questions in a more cautious manner.

Recommendations for Future Research and Practice

Despite the limitations, it appeared that the findings of this research provided some valid insight regarding efficient interventions to provide students with the abilities to become academically and behaviorally successful. The significance of the study

suggested that there was a great need for the ISS program to be well planned, goal oriented and implemented as a school wide discipline program. There was a need to have goals for the ISS program that encouraged support for the teachers, students, administration and the program.

It is the opinion of this researcher that this high school decision makers must consider the implementation of a Positive Behavior Support (PBS) program. Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is a set of research-based strategies used to increase quality of life and decrease problem behavior by teaching new skills and making changes in a person's environment. Positive behavior support combines: valued outcomes; behavioral and biomedical science; validated procedures; and systems change to enhance quality of life and reduce problem behaviors.

The literature reviewed in this study substantiated there are many In-School Suspension models that are effective in helping student behavior and academics. This study found positive outcomes academically and behaviorally in relation to ISS models. This study verified that the current ISS program did not prepare the students for behavior and academic success. School-wide Positive Behavior Support is a systems approach to establishing the social culture and behavioral supports needed for all children in a school to achieve both social and academic success. SWPBS is not a packaged curriculum, but an approach that defines core elements that can be achieved through a variety of strategies. Students are identified in three levels of intervention according to their behavior problems; primary, secondary and tertiary levels.

Berkowitz and Bier (2005) stated that in order for schools to reduce suspension rates and produce students with upstanding character, they must establish and maintain a caring community. It is the opinion of this researcher that future studies add to the needed

support of programs that embrace school wide interventions and implementation, and that requires extensive professional development for its staff.

One recommendation for further research is the relationship between school characteristics and suspension rates. Future research should also; focus on categorical data on suspended students and consider studying the frequency of student suspensions and their offenses. Finally, future research should further study the involvement of the students and staff toward their school's practices of its disciplinary policy and its organizational structure.

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Appendix A

Student Discipline Form

Student Discipline Form

Student: _____ Grade: _____ Date: _____

Teacher's Signature: _____ Period/Time: _____

Referred for: (Check appropriate area)

___ Disrespectful/rude to school personnel
___ Defiant
___ Tardies/No. ____
___ Uniform Dress Code
___ Shirt tail out and/or sagging pants
___ Fighting/Instigating a fight
___ Improper Language ____
___ Skipping class
___ Inappropriate Bus Behavior
___ Bringing weapon on school property
___ Other _____

Principal Signature _____

Disposition of Teacher/Principal

___Out of school suspension/day(s) ____
___ ISS/day(s) _____
___ Referred for counseling
___ Parental Conference
___ Bus suspension/day(s) _____
___ Corporal punishment
Witness: _____
___ Corporal punishment
Student Signature _____

Remarks:

_____
_____
_____
_____

A copy of this report will be sent home for the parent, a copy for the student's records and a copy for the student. Please feel free to request additional information as to the incident or corrective action taken.

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Students Concerning the Schools' In-School Suspension Program

Interview Questions for Students Concerning the Schools'
In-School Suspension Program

1. Describe the purpose of the In-School Suspension Program (ISS).

2. Explain the number of occasions and the reasons you were sent to or were assigned as a student to the ISS Program.

3. Describe the discussions you had with your teacher prior to him or her sending you to the ISS Program?

4. Describe the discussion you had with a school administrator prior to him or her assigning you to the school's ISS Program?

5. Provide the details of what you have to do academically as a student when you are sent to the ISS program.

6. Explain how you feel about the ISS Program being a solution to your behavioral problems and other student's behavioral problems.

7. Do you believe students' should receive counseling while they are assigned to the ISS program? Explain why or why not. .

8. Describe what you as a student are supposed to do during your assignment to the ISS program.

9. Describe the punishment aspects of the school's ISS program.

10. What is the process used to inform your parents that you have been assigned to the ISS Program?

11. Provide the details of discussions you have had with your parents following your assignment to the ISS Program.

12. Describe discussions you have had with counselors or social workers about your ISS Program experiences.

13. What effect has the ISS Program had on you as a student when you return from the ISS Program?

14. What would you provide as an alternative to an IN-School Suspension program?

15. What do you feel are the reasons that you have behavioral problems in school?

Thank-you

Appendix C

Students' Code of Conduct

Students' Code of Conduct

Students, while on Board property, or during school sponsored events, are expected to comply fully with the laws of the State of Alabama. If a student, while on Board property, or during school sponsored events, shall violate any laws or statute, the violation of which may subject the student to imprisonment, fine, or penalty, such violation shall subject the student to a wide range of sanctions including, but not limited to verbal or written warning, suspension, or expulsion.

The question or issue of whether or not a student has violated any law of this State shall be determined by the Board.

Appendix D

Classification of Violations and Sanctions

Classification of Violations and Sanctions

It is fundamental that an orderly school have clearly defined behaviors to which students must conform. Non-conformity to these behaviors becomes violations of the code of conduct. Violations are grouped in four classes (Class I, Class II, Class III, and Class IV) which range from the least to the most serious. School officials shall investigate, verify, and take the necessary action to resolve student misconduct. After determining that a violation has occurred, and the class of the violation, the principal shall impose the appropriate sanction. Violations apply to student conduct on a school campus, at school related events, or while being transported to or from school related events.

A listing of each class violations and possible sanctions are listed in the code of conduct. As the violations increase in seriousness, the severity of the possible sanctions increases. Definitions of violations are based upon the 1975 Code of Alabama, Title 13A (Criminal Code), Title 28-3-1 (Alcoholic Beverages), and Title 20-2-2 (Controlled Substances).

Appendix E

Interview Questions for Teachers, Concerning the Schools' In-School Suspension Program

Interview Questions for Teachers, Concerning the Schools'
In-School Suspension Program

*1. Describe the purpose of the In-school Suspension program (ISS).

2. Explain the reasons you send or have assigned students to the ISS program.

3. Provide the details of what you have to do academically for the students when you send them to be assigned to the ISS program.

4. Explain how you feel about the ISS Program being a solution to student behavioral problems.

5. Do you think students' should receive counseling while they are assigned to the ISS program? Why or why not?

6. Explain how the ISS Program helps the student meet his or her academic obligations.

7. Describe the punishment aspects of the school's ISS program.

8. Provide details of discussions you have had with administrators, teachers, or staff concerning changing or improving the ISS Program.

9. Describe discussions you have had with counselors or social workers about the ISS Program?

10. What effect has the ISS Program had on students when they return from an ISS program assignment?

11. Does the ISS Program, in your estimation, have any effect on student behavior following an assignment to the ISS Program?

Thank-you