

A Study of Two Urban Middle Schools:  
Discipline Practices Used to Control Disruptive Behavior of Students

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(ABSTRACT)

Schools are facing challenges in their efforts to educate children appropriately and safely. Students who demonstrate inappropriate, anti-social, and/or disruptive behaviors are becoming more prevalent. School personnel are dealing with disruptive behaviors that occur more frequently and that affect staff and student safety. Additionally, the lack of discipline or management of disruptive behaviors has been identified by the public as the most persistent and possibly the most troublesome issue facing schools (Cotton, 2001; Elam, Rose, & Gallop, 1998; Fitzsimmons, 1998; Killion, 1998).

An assumption in managing problem behaviors in many urban schools is that punishment will change behavior. According to Skiba and Peterson (2000), severe and penalizing disciplinary policies frequently produce a negative school environment rather than improving student behavior. In general, urban schools across the nation rely on suspensions, loss of privileges, reprimands, and or expulsion as means of discipline. Unfortunately, these reactive consequences only help a small number of children learn to “comply with general expectations” and are insufficient for many students who exhibit more challenging behavior problems.

This study examines the disciplinary practices being used in two urban middle schools to control disruptive behavior of students. It will reveal what aspects of certain disciplinary practices are viewed as helpful as well as areas needing improvement. It will also give insight into whether selected urban school principals and other stakeholders are using proactive strategies and techniques demonstrated in the research literature as being the most effective in terms of changing inappropriate behavior. Undertaking this study through the application of qualitative research methods of inquiry as a study using interviews, examining relevant documents, and observations will allow me an opportunity to explore my personal reactions to the defined disciplinary practices in the identified schools.

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## CHAPTER 1

### OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

Escalating concern regarding disruptive behavior in schools has led to intensified efforts to understand its causes and consequences, and to identify effective practices and strategies to reduce its occurrence. These efforts have been described in recent reports by federal agencies (U. S. Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2001), books (e.g., Flannery & Huff, 1999; Gottfredson, 2001), and special issues of journals (e.g., Pettit & Dodge, 2003; Weist & Cooley-Quille, 2001). Society expects public schools to provide children with a safe environment where they can be academically and socially successful. For over a quarter of a century, the primary apprehension facing America's public schools has been discipline (Fitzsimmons, 1998; Killion, 1998; Levin & Nolan, 1996). Sustaining a proper classroom environment with appropriate behaviors can be a complicated ordeal (Daniels, 1998; Farmer, 1999). As children become adolescents, they experience a variety of physical, emotional and interpersonal changes while simultaneously transitioning from elementary to middle school. If the transition is stressful and the climate of the school appears unwelcoming, low self-esteem, a decline in academic achievement and inappropriate behavior problems may follow (Kupermine, Leadbeater, Emmons & Blatt, 1997). What educators are discovering with alarming clarity, however, is that the source of the problem goes further than rule breaking. "Many of today's students require more than just firm and consistent discipline policies. They also need positive behavioral instruction (Research Connections, p.1).

#### Context for the Inquiry

In recent years, increasing national attention has focused on disruptive behavior exhibited in schools, particularly urban schools. Although overall homicides in the United States have declined since 1993, nonfatal, disruptive type behaviors among youth remain at historically high levels (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2001). This is also reflected in a proposal by President Clinton (Safe and Drug Free Schools, 1999).

Effective classroom management is practical instinctively; it not only is concerned with discipline problems, but also keeps future problems from occurring. Research has suggested that an effective teacher plays an essential role in student achievement (Center on English Learning and Achievement, 2000; Cotton, 2001). Research also has suggested that improving the climate

of the school may decrease disruptive behavior (Farmer, 1999). According to Skiba & Peterson (2000), harsh and punitive disciplinary policies often can create a negative school climate rather than improving student behavior. Schools have a long history of expelling and suspending students because of their disruptive, dangerous, or otherwise challenging behavior (Skiba & Peterson, 1999; 2000; Sugai, 1996; Townsend, 2000). In addition, discipline policies, such as suspensions and expulsions, do not attempt to modify behavior or provide students with skills for improvement (Maag, 2001). Consequently, these policies may increase the chances for school dropouts, school failures, and delinquencies (Skiba & Peterson, 1999; 2000; Townsend, 2000). There is an obvious need to implement discipline practices and/or educational plans that attempt both to decrease a student's inappropriate behavior and improve the student's quality of life at school. Students, especially those with challenging behaviors, often are subjected to behavior management plans that focus on decreasing specific target behaviors. This is done generally before support plans have been implemented that ensure the best possible match between a student's current wishes and needs and what is offered in the educational program.

### *School Discipline Policies*

School-wide disciplinary policies are “typically designed to react to rather than to prevent dangerous and disruptive behaviors (Nelson & Scott, 1999, p. 55).” By contrast, research validates that school-wide practices that include policies (proactive discipline handbooks, procedural handbooks), behavioral support teams, staff development, data-based decision making, structure and routine, and family/community involvement greatly enhance a school's potential to provide an environment safe for learning (Langland, Lewis-Palmer & Sugai, 1998; Sugai, 1998; Sugai & Horner, 1999). Furthermore, punishing problem behaviors without a positive school-wide system of support was associated with increased aggression, vandalism, truancy, tardiness, and dropouts (Mayer & Sulzer-Azeroff, 1990; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; 2000; Townsend, 2000). Suspended students are usually excluded from regular daily activities without receiving instruction in proper prosocial behavior (Townsend, 2000). These suspensions often increase the hostility of the school environment, fostering a sense of resentment in the student, rather than teaching responsibility (Elias & Tobias, 1996; Fagan & Wilkinson, 1998; Farrell, Meyer, & White, 2001). Prosocial classroom management promotes healthy emotional development in order to teach students how to interact “without resorting to dishonesty or violence” (DiGiulio, 2000, p.12).

Not surprisingly, an abundance of “best practices” and “effective strategies” to accomplish these outcomes are available (Colvin, Sugai, & Patching 1993; Mogan-D’Atrio et al., 1996). Perhaps unexpectedly, the challenge is not identifying and developing new strategies, but effectively delivering and maintaining these strategies in schools (Colvin, Kameenui, & Sugai, 1993; Walker et al., 1996).

Schools have conventionally dealt with problematic behavior by implementing reactive behavior management plans concentrating largely on disciplinary measures such as detention, abridged access to favored activities, and suspension. This approach has been shown to be ineffective in meeting the needs of many students, especially those who display patterns of problematic behavior (Mayer, 1995; Sugai & Horner, 1994). Today’s children are living in communities where violent and aggressive behaviors are an everyday occurrence in their lives. If they are to grow up to be productive adults, there must be an arena in their lives that is safe and where they can learn and practice the appropriate social skills to solve problems without aggression or violence. This has to be the school environment (Mayer, 1995).

Consequently, educators have been in search of new ways to move past traditional "punishment" and offer opportunities for all children to learn self-discipline (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Simultaneously, researchers have begun to study and advocate for broader, proactive, positive school-wide discipline systems that include behavioral support (Braaten, Simpson, Rosell, & Reilly, 1988; Maag, 2001, Skiba & Peterson, 2000).

One promising opportunity for achieving the goals of teaching self-discipline and managing behavior is a school-wide behavior, discipline, or management plan. A review of the research illustrates the importance of a school-wide system of positive behavior supports and interventions. This claim is based on the fact that prevention is much more effective than waiting for problems to happen. The cumulative weight of the research shows that if practices are only reactive and punitive, they will fail (Horner, R. H., Sugai, G., & Horner, H. F., 2000).

### *Concerns with School Safety*

The information synthesized in this study is intended to have implications for educators regarding disciplinary interventions. In addition, this study should provide guidance to those who have or are considering implementing a school-wide approach to discipline.

Finally, this topic is of interest to me because of personal experiences that included school violence and disruptive behavior, and my desire to implement a comprehensive school-

wide program to improve antisocial, challenging and inappropriate behavior. As a former special educator working with severely emotionally disturbed youth and a current middle school principal at a school with a high rate of office referrals for disruptive conduct, I believe that it is important that educators vigorously explore better ways of managing students safely in schools today.

Classroom discipline and disruptive behavior are major concerns in schools (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1998; Fitzsimmons, 1998). Students in schools today are different compared to 20 years ago. Defiance toward authority figures is occurring at startling rates (Killion, 1998; Becker-Fritz, 2000). Students are attending school without the ability to adequately problem-solve when conflict arises and resolutions to differences are too often in the form of verbal abuse and physical aggression (Koop & Lundberg, 1992; Sorenson, 1990). This not only puts teachers at risk for injury, but students, as well. In a 1988 study by Brown and Payne (1988), teachers ranked the biggest discipline problem in public schools as a lack of motivation and poor parental support. In contrast, a 1998 study reported the most common disciplinary problems as “not completing assignments (78%), absences from class (57%), cheating (47%), disruptive, inappropriate classroom behavior (45%), and cutting class (41%)” while more serious problems such as attacks on teachers, carrying weapons, etc. ranged between 2% and 7% (Krajewski et al., 1998, p.7).

The disruption caused by inappropriate behavior of students in our country’s public schools is a national concern (National Center for Education Statistics, 1998; U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). Disruption threatens the well being of students, school, and communities (U.S. Department of Education and U. S. Department of Justice, 2000). Rose and Gallup (2003), in a recent Gallup Poll, asked respondents to identify the biggest problems with which the public schools in their communities must deal. Respondents reported that lack of discipline was at the top of the list, closely followed by fighting, violence, and gangs. In addition, teachers have traditionally ranked individual students who have serious or persistent behavior problems as their chief cause of stress (Jones, 1996; Krajewski et al., 1998).

Escalating this challenge are children and youth who exhibit behaviors that contribute to and promote antisocial lifestyles (Biglan, 1995; Farrell, Elliott & Tolan, 1999; Sugai & Horner, 1994). By exhibiting behaviors that are hazardous to other students, educators, families,

community members, and themselves, these youth interrupt the teaching and learning process in schools (Farrell, Meyer, & White, 2001; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995).

### Background of the Problem

According to several sources, it has been concluded that one of the most significant barriers to improving the achievement of students is disruption, disorder, and misbehavior in our schools (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1989; Shanker, 1996). Shanker (1996) noted that “classroom disruption is more pervasive than school violence and just as fatal to learning.” Effectively training all teachers to be experts in the behavioral management of aggression is time consuming and unrealistic. Although this may be the goal, immediate action is needed to reduce the disruption in classrooms and schools (Gottfredson, 2001; Maag, 2001; U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 2000).

Increased levels of observed aggression seem to indicate that previous methods of behavior management used by teachers and administrators are not working or are not being employed. Educators have experimented with many different techniques throughout the years to address behavior. Methods range from corporal punishment to assertive discipline and from aversive techniques to token economies. Developing successful behavior interventions is a complex process that must take into account the child’s motivation for misbehaving and his or her likes and interests.

### *Characteristics of Disruptive Students*

Charles (1996) defined disruptive behavior as behavior that is deliberate, intentional, and inappropriate during a particular time or a particular event. He further explains that students exhibit five types of misbehavior or disruptive conduct.

1. Aggressiveness, including physical or verbal assaults on school personnel or other peers;
2. Immorality, which includes acts such as stealing, lying, or cheating;
3. Defiance of authority figures;
4. General classroom disruptions, including yelling, talking without permission, making unnecessary noises, clowning around, throwing objects, or other acts that distract the teacher from teaching; and
5. Daydreaming, refusing to complete assignments, playing or goofing-off.

Teachers detest having to contend with aggression, defiance, verbal abuse and other disruptive behaviors that distract them from teaching. Teachers work and live in an age of instructional accountability and the task of dealing with inappropriate behaviors wastes an enormous amount of academic learning time and negatively affects learning.

Volenski and Rockwood (1996) define disruptive students as students who challenge or negatively confront their teachers, display defiant and/or deviant behaviors, and disregard school rules and regulations. As a result, these students spend a lot of time in detention or on suspension. These absences from the general classroom results often times leads to lower achievement.

Levin and Nolan (1996) present four definitions for “disruptive students”.

1. Disruptive students violate school expectations;
2. Disruptive students display behavior that interferes with the teacher’s ability to teach;
3. Any behavior that disrupts the teaching act or is psychologically or physically unsafe constitutes a disruptive behavior; and
4. Disruptive behavior is behavior that interferes with the rights of others to learn. It includes defacing property, running, threats, teasing, horse playing, abusive language, fighting, stealing, bullying, yelling out, and other acts that prohibit having a conducive learning environment.

Becker-Fritz (2000) offers a list of behaviors, which are characteristic of disruptive students:

1. Monopolizing class discussions;
2. Challenging others;
3. Bullying or teasing other students;
4. Non participation in school activities;
5. Non compliance of completing class or homework assignments;
6. Speaking out of turn;
7. Sleeping in class;
8. Asking irrelevant questions;
9. Exhibiting unacceptable behavior;
10. Eating or drinking in class; and
11. Physically or verbally threatening others.

It should be clarified that disruptive behavior is subject to interpretation by the observer. While some may consider certain acts disruptive, others may view them as non-detrimental to the learning process.

Wallis (1998) states that student disruption is a result of the school culture that lacks respect, and many students will exhibit the following problems:

1. Pushing, shoving, fighting;
2. Tardiness to class;
3. Inappropriate behavior toward peers and adults;
4. Truancy;
5. Disregard for rules, dress, or compliance issues;
6. Inappropriate language;
7. Alcohol or drug activity; and
8. Inappropriate sexual displays.

Wallis (1998) further states that schools must take an active stance on reducing such behaviors.

#### *Application to Specific School Populations*

Classroom and behavior management with children showing evidence of behavioral problems commonly has been the sphere of the special education teacher. But, as inclusive school reforms stipulate that all students are to be included in the regular education environment to the maximum extent appropriate, the challenge of managing these children no longer can be viewed solely as a special education issue. While inclusionary practices could increase the number of students in general education classrooms that need specific behavior management plans, inclusion is not the primary cause of the escalating rate of disciplinary challenges in regular classrooms (Nelson & Scott, 1999).

Students recognized under the federal definition for emotional disturbance (also known as emotional and behavioral disorders or E/BD), traditionally have been suspended or expelled from school due to inappropriate, disruptive, or assertive behaviors (Spring, J. 2004).

Traditionally, disruptive, aggressive, non-compliant and challenging behaviors were thought to be characteristic of emotionally disturbed children or children with behavior disorders or conduct disorders. Although, these students account for a considerable portion of those students who display inappropriate behaviors in schools today, perhaps surprisingly, this group of children is

not responsible for most disruptive school behavior. In fact, the perpetrators of disruptive behavior in schools are a heterogeneous group of students who cannot be characterized by an identified disability (Gable et al., 1999).

### *Discipline and Special Education*

The Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), reauthorized in 1990 partially because of concerns of the disabled students' rights as they related to discipline, has helped to protect students with special needs in addition to requiring schools to understand the motivation behind their behavior (Butera, Klein, McMullen & Wilson, 1998). This is a step toward discovering the root of a student's misbehavior in order to apply the most effective and appropriate discipline techniques. According to Gable et al. (1999), one "fundamental change in the 1997 revisions to IDEA is that schools must acknowledge the relationship between student behavior and classroom learning (p. 167). There are several methods of positive discipline that schools can implement to improve school climate and potentially decrease disciplinary problems. Studies have shown that smaller schools or smaller class sizes can make student management easier on the staff in addition to creating a sense of community among the students (Maag, 2001; Williams, 1998).

The currently used and most traditional approach to school discipline consists of providing statements about school expectations and violations and administering strict sanctions for rule violations in order to inhibit recurrences of problem behavior (Sugai, G. & Horner R. 1999). A review of literature shows that this approach is ineffective for reducing problem behavior (Maag, 2001; Mayer, 1995; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Townsend, 2000).

### *Inadequacies of Traditional Approaches*

When confronted today by community and school challenges, such as meeting strict academic standards, reaching a wide range of diverse learners, avoiding violence in schools, including special needs students in the regular classroom, and an array of other accountability issues, educators across America depend greatly on traditional management systems. Regrettably, traditional models have two main problems: (a) a failure to consider staff development issues, and (b) a restrictive and reactive approach to discipline problems (Colvin & Kay & Ryan, 2000; Horner, Sugai, Horner, 2000; Sugai, 1998).

### *Inadequacy of Staff Development*

At the core of every movement to reform and improve schools is a proposition to change teacher performance in the classroom (Cotton, 2001; Landau & Gathercoal, 2000). Needless to say, changing teacher behavior is not an easy task. Likewise, starting and maintaining teacher change through staff development programs intended to augment the professional skills of teachers is even more complicated. According to Guskey (1986), “Nearly every major work on the topic of staff development has emphasized the failings of these efforts” (p. 5). He theorized that the majority of staff development programs failed to consider two features: “What motivates teachers to engage in staff development, and the process by which change in teachers typically takes place” (p. 6). Guskey proposed three principles to consider when planning and implementing staff development programs: “(1) Change is slow, difficult, and a gradual process for teachers; (2) teachers need to receive regular feedback on student learning outcomes; and (3) continued support and follow-up are necessary after initial training” (p. 59).

### *Inadequacy of School Discipline Approach*

Long-established methodologies for managing challenging behavior are frequently reactive, and sometimes punitive (Cotton, 2001; Jones, 1996). By experiencing these reactive consequences, it is assumed that students will “learn” and begin conforming to the norm. Unfortunately, many children are not motivated to comply with the rules of the school simply to avoid reactive or punitive measures. A different approach is often needed.

Many schools utilize packaged school discipline programs to manage problem behaviors. Chard, Smith and Sugai (1992) reviewed some commonly used discipline programs, such as “Assertive Discipline (Canter, 1993) and Positive Discipline (Nelson et al., 1997), as well as specific problem solving approaches (Glasser, 1977). While many distinctive and encouraging features were evident, the primary limitation of packaged discipline programs was a lack of clear procedural implementation guidelines (Chard et al., 1992). For example, a school recommended the use of school-wide awards to acknowledge demonstrations of appropriate behavior, but failed to include information on critical variables such as features of the awards, format for presentation, dissemination procedures, and particularly, how to obtain consistency of implementation among staff. Fidelity of the implementation to the precepts of a pre-designed

model is key. Without faithfulness to implementing the packaged program as recommended, success cannot be predicted.

### Purpose of the Study

The central purpose of this study is to go beyond the reasons for disciplinary problems by examining what disciplinary practices are being used in two urban middle schools to control disruptive behaviors of students. Additionally, the purpose is to determine if these two schools are using methods deemed effective by recent research--those practices that have been shown to be positive and proactive.

### Research Questions

Substantial research has examined the challenges faced in creating safe, effective learning environments (Krajewski, Martinek, & Polka, 1998; Rutherford & Nelson, 1995; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). It is well documented that to be an effective learning environment, a school needs to be safe and orderly (Farmer, 1999; Fitzsimmons, 1998; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). The intent of this study is to add to that knowledge base, specifically focusing on what disciplinary practices are being used in two urban middle schools to control disruptive behavior of students. The focal question that guides this study is this: What practices are being used in two urban middle schools to control disruptive behavior of students? Sub questions for this study are: (1) How do these two middle school principals, teachers and other stakeholders describe the practices, strategies, and habits used to maintain discipline in their schools? (2) How are the described practices, strategies, and habits used in these schools implemented? (3) How do the stakeholders in these two schools assess the effectiveness of these practices, strategies, and habits? (4) How are the practices, strategies, and habits similar or different between two middle schools within the same school district? (5) How do leadership styles exhibited by each of the two school principals influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts?

Approaching the topic of what disciplinary practices are being used to control disruptive behavior of students by discussing the possible causes of disruption would only serve to describe the complexity and the magnitude of the problem, where as an approach that examines what is considered to be currently working would serve to guide policies and practices within new and existing middle schools.

### *Delimitations*

1. This study is limited to selected middle schools in one urban school district;
2. The study will be limited to analyzing the results of using collaborative involvement in the school operating plan and will not be examining in depth the impact of other factors which may influence making schools safe for learning; and
3. Because the subjects of this study were from schools that were part of a school district and were not randomly selected, the results must be cautiously generalized to other schools and localities.

### *Definition of Terms*

For purposes of this study, the following terms are described as they apply to this study.

*Aggression*: physical and verbal attacks on the teacher or other students (Butchart, 1998).

*Aggressive Behavior*: acts as bullying, verbal or physical threats, shoving, fighting, and other simple assaults (Gable, Manning & Bullock, 1997).

*Antisocial Behavior*: recurrent violations of socially prescribed patterns of behavior (Walker, Colvin, and Ramsey, 1995).

*Challenging behavior*: any behavior that can be described as aggressive, acting-out, self-injurious, and/or anti-social (DiGiulio, 2000).

*Class disruptions*: talking loudly, calling out, walking around the room, clowning, tossing objects, and the like (Farmer, 1999).

*Discipline*: a set of procedures that focus on control (Sugai & Horner, 1999).

*Disruptive behavior*: behavior that (a) interferes with the teaching act; (b) interferes with the rights of others to learn; (c) is psychologically or physically unsafe; and (d) destroys property (Levin and Nolan, 1996).

*Immorality*: acts such as cheating, lying, and stealing (Charles, 1996).

*Misbehavior*: behavior that is considered inappropriate for the setting or situation in which it occurs (Townsend, 2000).

*Stakeholders*: A plethora of persons including, but not limited to: students, parents, teachers, administrators, unions, employers, school boards, professional organizations, universities, city, state, and national governments, religious pressure groups, and any other parties interested in the welfare of education (Branson, 2000).

*Universal Interventions:* A standard set of proactive practices used in schools throughout the nation such as tangible rewards, punishment, suspensions, and time outs (Nelson & Scott, 1999).

*Violence:* the use or threat of physical force with the intent of causing physical injury, damage or intimidation of another person (Berg, 2000).

### Significance of the Study

Student discipline and effective classroom management is a critical part of sustaining a school environment that is conducive to student learning and overall academic success. Use of effective discipline techniques serves a major role in having a school that allows for a better learning environment. School leaders must constantly review and evaluate whether their practices, strategies and habits actually reduce inappropriate behaviors.

The number of nonfatal, but disruptive acts in public schools has reached crisis proportion (Fitzsimmons, 1998; Killion, 1998; Levin & Nolan, 1996; Rutherford & Nelson, 1995). The prevalence of challenging behaviors in our schools has begun to demonstrate an effect on the overall quality of education. A wealth of research indicates that students with problem behaviors pose a significant risk for failure, exclusion, and are destined to have problems in the home and community (Farmer, 1999; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1996; Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Townsend, 2000). In addition, one of the most common requests from teachers is for help in “managing problem behaviors” (Cotton, 2001; Todd, Horner, Sugai, & Colvin, 1999). Teachers across the nation report that dangerous and disruptive behavior in the classroom is the most difficult issue they face daily (Krajewski et al., 1998; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). The challenges facing educators are significant and persistent. These data suggest that students with severe challenges need assistance from school personnel in their attempts to achieve success in school. Consequently, if teachers have any hope of redirecting these students to being more positive and appropriate in school and the community, they must be given the necessary tools and most effective techniques and strategies available to provide safe learning environments conducive to learning. Affording children the opportunity to receive social and academic skills of prevention is less expensive than providing them with social and correctional services for the rest of their lives (Farrell, Meyer, & White, 2001; Nelson & Scott, 1999).

Schools are confronted with a difficult challenge to educate all students and guarantee their physical safety. Antisocial behaviors can greatly impede and interfere with the ability of

teachers to educate and the ability of schools to be safe (Farrell, Meyer, & White, 2001; Sprague & Colvin, 1996). Research indicates that punishment and exclusion from school remain the most common responses to problem, disruptive, and or inappropriate behavior (Farmer, 1999; Gottfredson, 1989; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Reprimands, detentions, and exclusions are well documented as ineffective strategies for improving the behavior in schools (Charles, 1996; Farmer, 1999; Sugai, 1996; Williams, 1998; Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). Moreover, recent reviews of the literature reveal that the least effective responses to violence in schools are counseling, psychotherapy, and punishment (Farrell, Meyer, & White, 2001; Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1996; Lipsey & Wilson, 1993; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; 2000; Townsend, 2000).

The actual importance of the present study is that it provides data to determine the practices being used to control disruptive behavior in middle schools. The present study attempts to qualify the need for further research in this growing area of concern in schools.

More specifically, this topic is significant because if one of the goals of America's schools is to provide a safe learning environment where maximum student achievement can occur, then a significant reduction in the incidence and prevalence of antisocial behaviors is absolutely necessary. A review of research suggests that approaches to discipline must be comprehensive, proactive, school-wide, collaborative, high priority, integrated, systematic, supported, and policy driven (Sugai & Horner, 1999).

### *Organization of the Material*

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 includes the introduction, statement of the problem, purposes, research questions, delimitations, definitions, and significance of the study. Chapter 2 presents a review of the literature relating to disciplinary practices being used to make schools safe for learning. Chapter 3 outlines the methods of research, including a discussion of the context, the instruments, research procedures, data collection, and data analysis. Chapter 4 presents the findings and analysis of the data organized around the research questions. Chapter 5 summarizes the results of the study and offers conclusions and recommendations for further research that are based upon the findings of the study.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND RESEARCH STUDIES

Disciplinary problems have been consistently ranked as one of the biggest concerns facing America's schools (Fitzsimmons, 1998; Killion, 1998; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). The 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Gallup Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools has repeatedly documented "lack of discipline" as one of the most critical problems facing our school system. Parents, students, and educators across the country are disturbed about so much disorder and danger in our schools and the high incidence of classroom disruptions that result in millions of student suspensions annually (Harvard Education Letter, 1987; Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Townsend, 2000).

According to Levin and Nolan (1996), a disciplinary problem exists when a student's behavior interferes with the teaching process and the ability of others in a classroom to learn. It also exists when behavior is psychologically or physically unsafe and when a student destroys property (Levin & Nolan, 1996). Students typically receive exclusionary punishments for aggressive behaviors, such as fighting, profane language, or disrespect of authority, and for passive behaviors, such as truancy or lack of interaction. Wilcox et al., (1998) described aggressive students as living "in a world in which interactions are based on hostile intent" (p.18). They would rather force someone to comply to their will than maintain a positive relationship.

Discipline has become such an issue in schools today that it is to blame for a sizeable segment of lost instructional time (Cotton, 2001). In 1998, the National PTA stated that, "discipline should be a positive way of helping and guiding children to achieve self-control" (Marshall, 1998, p.38).

Simultaneously, however, there are numerous schools that report safe and orderly classrooms. As the literature points out, these safe, orderly, and efficient schools did not occur by accident. They are a result of intensive, structured, and comprehensive school-level disciplinary practices.

A number of factors offer confirmation of the need for school-wide prevention and support strategies including traditional disciplinary practices that are ineffective, and educational groupings that are poorly conceptualized and supported. On the other hand, expansions in early

detection and early intervention have amplified schools' potential to meet the need for more effective approaches.

Current research on disciplinary strategies reveals an array of classroom behavior management practices such as corporal punishment, in-school and out-of-school suspension, policy structures, special alternative programs, counseling programs, behavioral reinforcement practices, cooperative learning, and peer tutoring. What is of interest generally to researchers is to what degree these programs are effective and which ones can be considered "best practices."

As individuals with challenging behaviors are increasingly being included into the community, reacting to their problematic behaviors in a positive and appropriate manner becomes critical. Examining the implications of positive programming for the future role of aversive procedures is essential to the continuing success of schools. Positive programming is a gradual educational process for behavioral change, based on a functional analysis of problems that involves systematic instruction in more effective ways of behaving.

This chapter presents the literature that informs the current study as it pertains to the discipline practices being used in two urban middle schools to control disruptive behavior of students. Figure 1 shows the sequence in which the literature supporting this study is presented. Mandates and policies affecting supervision are examined first. Literature is then presented on what is now perceived as ineffective disciplinary practices. More effective school wide disciplinary practices are then presented followed by various school wide behavior management/disciplinary models that are used in some schools. This chapter concludes with a summary of literature on these topics.

To complete this review of literature, computerized database searches of ERIC and Dissertation Abstracts International were researched. References found in books, journal articles, and dissertations related to safe, orderly learning environments also led to the discovery of additional sources. In analyzing literature on discipline practices and disruptive behavior in general, search terms including, but not limited to, discipline, behavior management, classroom management, effective schools, aggressive and violent behavior in schools, school-wide behavioral support, school climate, functional behavioral plan, school disruption, and school-wide discipline were used.

### *Mandates and Policies Affecting Supervision*

Federal and state legislation have played a predominant role in fostering safe learning environments via the discipline practices used in schools to control disruptive behavior of students. States took a major step forward in 2000 when Congress passed a comprehensive SAVE (Safe Schools Against Violence in Education) legislation (Project Save, 2001). This law provides a framework to assist schools address such issues as student suspension and removal, codes of conduct, school safety plans, and character education.

This legislation, as well as state and local policy and educational reform initiatives, carry implications for teachers and administrators in today's public education settings. Administrators must possess knowledge of laws, rules, regulations, and policies, as well as best practices, in order to supervise the work of educators who provide instruction to students, and of educators who must maintain appropriate classroom or school-wide management.

Establishing and ensuring a safe environment for learning is one of the primary objectives of local school boards recommended by the National School Boards Association (Bryant, 2000). Cultivating a positive school climate, which embraces all children, takes commitment and work. State law compels all school districts to notify, at least yearly, parents and students of policies governing student conduct and discipline. It is recommended that this be done during Parent Teacher Association meetings, contained in student/parent handbooks or school newsletters, school and district websites, and on presented community television access channels. It is also suggested that local school boards troubled with violence and/or disruptive behavior by students thoroughly examine their discipline policies. This policy review should, wherever possible, involve discussion with teachers, administrators, other school personnel, students, parents and representatives of other community agencies including the local police, juvenile authorities, and mental health agencies.

The Code of Virginia (2001, §22.1-278.3) refers to two types of detention. The first, traditional detention is routinely used for minor classroom or school violations and is usually assigned by a certificated employee. The student must be informed of his or her violations and cannot be detained for more than a couple of hours after school. A certified school employee must keep a record of issued detentions. The second form of detention is a work/study program. This program is typically used in place of suspension for a student whose behavior requires greater disciplinary action. The work/study is typically longer and equal to one day of

suspension. The time can be spent in community service, including campus cleanup or a teacher assistance.

Suspension is defined as the removal of a student from classroom instruction. Expulsion is dismissal from school attendance and is typically used as a last resort when other efforts have failed, or when the nature of the violation requires severe action (Code of Virginia, 2001, §22.1-278.3). Reasons for suspension or expulsion include the cause or threat to cause physical injury, use of force or violence, possession, selling or furnishing of firearms, knives, explosives, or other dangerous objects, controlled substances, alcoholic beverages, or any intoxicant, robbery or extortion, damaging to school or private property, stealing or attempting to steal school or private property, possessing or using tobacco, committing obscene acts, engaging in habitual profanity or vulgarity, possessing or selling of drug paraphernalia, disrupting of school activities, knowingly receiving stolen school property, possessing imitation firearms, committing sexual assaults and harassment, and threatening or intimidating other students (Code of Virginia, 2001, §22.1-278.3).

Consistent implementation throughout a school system of a code of conduct demonstrates a commitment to ensuring a safe environment for learning and helps students and school personnel feel safer. The code/policy should clearly explain school rules and consequences for infractions. Policies pertaining to discipline in a number of areas affect safety and should be reviewed for their content and effectiveness of implementation.

School districts must also closely scrutinize school security measures, including the way in which students are supervised as they travel throughout a school building, and in the areas where they normally congregate, such as in certain halls, restrooms and cafeteria. The policy implications of using security personnel and/or on-site police presence should be strongly and seriously considered. Other policy implications include the use of monitoring devices, including video surveillance, or using school personnel as hall monitors.

There are other issues, with policy implications, to consider in managing disruptive behavior in schools. Behavior modification programs that teach thinking skills to high-risk youth on an ongoing basis seem to have promise. Training in anger management, impulsivity, and conflict resolution skills can help prevent youth from engaging in disruptive or violent behavior. Other disruptive behavior prevention programs include the establishment of a School Safety Committee, consisting of school employees and community leaders who review all policies and

related issues of a safe environment and to develop an action plan designed to increase school safety.

Consequently, anxiety about the escalating disruptive behavior observed in schools should be a catalyst for school boards and legislative entities to review school safety plans and related policies. It should be noted that throughout this planning and review process, the reality is that some disruptive behavior cannot be prevented, but that there are steps that can and should be taken to lessen the risks. Excuses do not exist for failing to take this issue seriously and to take practical steps to prevent disruptive and/or violent incidences in the schools (Cotton, 2001).

### *The Connection Between Classroom Management and Achievement*

Effective classroom management not only addresses current discipline problems, but also keeps future problems from occurring. Part of the preparation for effective classroom management is preparation for effective instruction. This was shown clearly in a set of studies on classroom management conducted by Cotton (2001); Finn (1998), and Wang, Haertel, & Walberg (1998), which revealed that important differences between successful and unsuccessful classroom managers were not in responses to student misbehavior. Instead, they were in the planning preparation that goes into effective instruction and use of techniques of group management that teachers employ to prevent disruption.

If classroom management is a qualification to classroom learning, efforts to improve discipline provide a vital first step to laying the foundation for improved school climate. Studies have shown that student outcomes such as reducing the number of administrative referrals, suspensions, disciplinary actions, increasing attendance, and obtaining perceptions of safety and security can be improved by creating a climate more conducive to learning (Levin & Nolan, 1996). Additionally, undesirable relationships between discipline and dropout rates suggest that as student's sense discipline to be unfair, the number of dropouts increases (Skiba & Peterson, 2000).

### *Ineffective Disciplinary Practices*

School discipline has two primary goals: (1) to guarantee the safety of students and staff; and (2) to establish a climate and/or an environment conducive to learning. When Johns Hopkins University researcher Gottfredson (1989) scrutinized data from over 600 secondary schools nationwide, she established that the following school characteristics were connected to discipline

problems: (a) rules were unclear or perceived as unfairly or inconsistently enforced; (b) students did not believe in the rules; (c) teachers and administrators did not know the rules or disagreed regarding the proper responses to student misconduct; (d) teacher-administration cooperation was poor or the administration was inactive; (e) teachers tended to have punitive attitudes; (f) misconduct was ignored; and (g) schools were too large and/or lacked adequate resources for teaching.

Cotton's (2001) analysis of studies on student behavior aligns with many of Gottfredson's findings. Disorderly schools, he maintained, usually aren't able to balance clear established and communicated rules with a climate of concern for students as individuals. Successful classroom management and discipline involves not only responding effectively when problems occur, but also preventing the frequent occurrence of problems.

Research examinations, which have generated information on effective disciplinary practices, have also offered findings about ineffective practices. Ineffective practices include: (1) vague rules (Cotton, 2001; Gottfredson 1989; Landau & Gathercoal, 2000); teachers ignoring misconduct (Cotton, 2001; Rademacher, Callahan, & Pederson-Seelye 1998); inconsistent responses to misbehavior (Gottfredson, 1989; Rademacher et al., 1998); excessive punishment (Cotton, 2001; Skiba & Peterson, 2000); use of corporal punishment (Doyle, 1989; Landau & Gathercoal, 2000); and over reliance of suspensions and expulsions (Cotton, 2001; Maag, 2001).

To understand why children and youth engage in challenging behavior, researchers have established compelling evidence that parents and communities contribute to the development of the most severe forms of antisocial behavior by failing to provide necessary prerequisite social skills and support and by modeling inappropriate social interactions (Lewis & Sugai, 1999b). Since children often come to school with learning histories that set them up for further behavioral problems, schools must be able to respond proactively and consistently. High rates of antisocial behavior in school often are associated with punitive disciplinary strategies, lack of clarity about rules, expectations, and consequences, lack of staff support, and failure to consider and accommodate individual differences (Levin & Nolan, 1996; Mayer, 1995; Wilcox et al. 1998).

#### *Out-of-School Suspension/Expulsion*

According to Dupper (1994), suspension is the most widely used form of school discipline in the public school system. The most frequent arguments against out of school

suspensions and expulsions are that they do not help to modify behavior, they increase chances of dropouts, school failure and delinquency, and they are consistently ethnically disproportionate (Dupper, 1994; Skiba & Peterson, 1999, 2000; Townsend, 2000). The urgent concern over school violence has escalated the use of exclusionary techniques as punishments, yet both Skiba and Peterson (1999, 2000) and Dupper (1994) stated that suspensions are more likely to occur currently over such minor offenses as truancy, tardiness, dress code violations, disrespect and disobedience.

Suspensions and expulsions have not proven to be effective in modifying negative behavior or creating more positive and productive behavior (Dupper, 1994; Elias & Tobias, 1996). The students are excluded from everyday activities without gaining instruction in prosocial behavior (Townsend, 2000). This exclusion increases the hostility of the school environment and may foster a sense of resentment by the student rather than teaching personal responsibility (Elias & Tobias, 1996). Providing disruptive students with training in problem solving, conflict resolution and anger management skills have been shown to decrease negative behavior while simultaneously increasing a sense of personal responsibility (Elias & Tobias, 1996; Farrell et al., 2003).

The use of suspensions and expulsions may be a tool for “pushout” to encourage “troublemakers or those perceived as unlikely to succeed in school” to leave early (Skiba & Peterson, 2000, p.339). In addition, Skiba and Peterson (2000) quoted a principal as saying “You don’t get it. We don’t want to understand these kids; we want to get them out” (p. 340). Suspension is a high predictor of future school dropout (Dupper, 1994; Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Townsend, 2000). One study reported by Skiba and Peterson (2000) stated that 30% of high school sophomores who dropped out of school had been previously suspended.

Repeatedly suspended or expelled students are also more likely to have academic difficulties and a higher risk of retention (Dupper, 1994; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). A high correlation exists between poor academic skills and school suspension. This places suspended students at an even greater risk for academic failure because they miss learning opportunities while out of school (Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Townsend, 2000). While students are out of school, their chances of engaging in illegal behaviors increase because they spend time unsupervised on the streets (Townsend, 2000). Skiba & Peterson (2000) stated, “Suspension may actually

accelerate the course of delinquency by providing a troubled youth with little parental supervision and a few extra days with deviant peers” (p.339).

Schools with elevated degrees of poverty, usually located in inner cities, are particularly challenged to design discipline programs that promote student self-discipline in order to create a school climate conducive to learning (Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Townsend, 2000). A highly consistent finding of racial disproportionality has been found in the overrepresentation of the suspension of African-American students (Skiba & Peterson, 2000; Townsend, 2000). A review of literature suggested that this population is exposed to more punitive discipline policies in addition to being underrepresented in milder disciplinary procedures. Skiba and Peterson (2000) suggested that the discrepancy may be a correlation between socioeconomic status and race, which Townsend (2000) supported by stating that low socioeconomic status, underachievement, and a minority ethnicity places students at risk for school exclusion. This is particularly important for those working with ethnic minority youth to gain a better understanding of teachers’ perceptions of school discipline policies as well as their level of support for using alternatives.

### *In-School Suspension*

In-school suspension (ISS) has been used as an alternative to suspension for decades. It has even been referred to as the “top alternative of the 1970s” (Shannon & McCall, 2001, p.17). Although ISS began as an alternative to out of school suspension, in some schools, it has become just as punitive as suspension itself. When ISS is used in collaboration with counseling, decision-making skills, parental involvement and continued academic exposure, it can be very effective in modifying student behavior and protecting the community and the school environment (Gushee, 1984; Shannon & McCall, 2001). According to the Code of Virginia (2001), each pupil placed in a supervised suspension classroom should have access to appropriate counseling services. When the lack of resources prevents schools from effectively implementing such a program and support services are not offered for student, the approach becomes punitive (Shannon & McCall, 2001).

Anne Wheelock, a research associate with the Progress through the Education Pipeline program at Boston College’s School of Education, has analyzed school suspension programs in Massachusetts and written about national school reform issues. While keeping students in school is better than suspending them, according to Wheelock, schools need to ensure that their in-

school suspension programs are not just "holding tanks." Ideally, schools should develop programs to help students and faculty resolve conflicts in order to reduce the need for suspensions.

We know that caring relationships in schools can reduce student alienation. In-school suspension programs must be viewed in the larger context of school climate. When teachers examine their school climate and school routines and explore the impact of school structures and routines on student engagement, they sometimes identify ways to change harmful routines into more nurturing school communities.

### *Zero Tolerance*

“Zero tolerance” became a common term in the 1980’s with the inception of drug policies. It has primarily been associated with behaviors that will not be tolerated, and by penalizing all offenders harshly. By the 1990’s, zero tolerance had expanded from drugs to weapons; then to fighting (Petrillo, 1997), threats (Bursuk & Murphy, 1999) and abusive language (Nancrede, 1998).

Since the enactment of the Gun Free Schools Act of 1994, some type of zero tolerance has emerged in most school districts. “Zero Tolerance is another example of the road to hell paved with good intentions (Curwin & Mendler, 1999).” Although policies have been installed, schools still have difficulty finding support for a more positive approach to discipline, which has to battle a long time history of negative disciplinary practices in public schools (Gable et al., 1999). Policies that create an authoritarian and intimidating environment, such as zero tolerance, presently receives a great amount of public and political support chiefly because of recent attention on school violence and the country’s concern for safety (DiGiulio, 2000; Farmer, 1999; Gable et al, 1999; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; 2000). As indicated previously, the idea of zero tolerance began in the 1980s due to state and federal drug enforcement policies. Further salience was evident in the Goals Educate America Act (2000) signed into law by President Clinton in 1994, which established that by the year 2000, “...every school in the United States will be free of drugs, violence, and the unauthorized presence of firearms and alcohol and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.” This act made zero tolerance policies federally mandated (Blair, 1999; Skiba & Peterson, 1999) and authorized each state to enact legislation that permits public school officials to expel students who bring weapons to school (Zirkel, 1999). This act has been heralded as a means to “change the manner in which students are disciplined”

(Zukowski, Kelly, & Griswold, 1998, p.9), and a belief was generated that the new regulations would create proactive measures to reduce the incidence of problem behaviors and give school districts greater discretion to remove students who threaten school security (p. 9). Zero tolerance refers to policies that punish all offenses severely, both minor and serious (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). The extension of zero tolerance to a wider range of students' behaviors is sometimes referred to as "get tough policies" (Farmer, 1999).

Due to the increasing alarm surrounding the upsurge perceived increase of disruptive behavior in schools, zero tolerance policies were sometimes expanded to include not only weapons and drug and alcohol possession, but any other behaviors the school deemed unacceptable, such as truancy, defiance, disrespect, or other disruptive behaviors (Blair, 1999; Zirkel, 1999). The overall objective of zero tolerance policies is to keep schools safe and conducive for learning by sending a clear message to potential violators that inappropriate behaviors will not, under any circumstances, be tolerated. The sad reality however, is that the policies appear to appeal more to the administrators, teachers and parents than for their overall effectiveness with students (Skiba & Peterson, 2000).

If the National Center for Education Statistics (1998) data on school violence is correct, it is not surprising that the broad net of zero tolerance will catch a host of minor misbehaviors. Since there are few incidents of serious violence and many incidents of minor disruption, policies that set harsh consequences indiscriminately will capture a few incidents of serious violence and many incidents of minor disruption.

In fact, data on suspension and expulsion suggests that zero tolerance policies were intended to address only a small portion of the numbers of suspensions and expulsions. Data on suspensions consistently show that, as the National Center for Education Statistics (1998) has reported, referrals for drugs, weapons, and gang-related behaviors constitute but a small minority of office referrals leading to suspension. Fighting among students is the single most frequent reason for suspension, and the majority of school suspensions occur in response to relatively minor incidents that do not threaten school safety, but is considered disruptive to the learning process (Skiba, Peterson & Williams, 1997). At the middle school level, disrespect and disobedience are among the most common reasons for suspension, and a significant proportion of suspensions are for tardiness and truancy. In one of the reported studies of school expulsion, the majority of offenses were committed by students who would not generally be considered

dangerous to the school environment (Morrison, & D'Incau, 1997). In their study, as in many that have explored suspension and expulsion, poor academic skills proved a strong predictor of school exclusion.

School administrators will inevitably face unclear situations because there are many more incidents of minor disruptions in the schools than incidents of serious violence (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). According to Martin (2000), school administrators have the difficult position of weighing the rights of the student against the rights of the student body. The principal runs the risk of criticism from both those who support zero tolerance and those who oppose it (Martin, 2000). In addition to unclear expectations, there also remain too few alternatives for the large number of students expelled under zero tolerance (Blair, 1999).

Finally, schools with effective discipline have implemented plans and procedures to deal with the disruptive behaviors that inevitably occur. School safety teams or behavior support teams -- composed of regular and special education teachers, personnel from related services, administrators, and parents -- ensure a consistent and individualized response to disruptive behavior (Blair, 1999; Wager, 1993). Individual behavior plans and a functional assessment process for developing these plans provide consistent consequences for offenders and teach disruptive youngsters alternatives to aggression (Skiba et al., 1997). Emergency and crisis planning before serious incidents occur can help ensure that, if violence erupts, its negative short- and long-term effects will be minimized (Blair, 1999). In short, effective interventions emphasize building positive prosocial behaviors rather than merely punishing inappropriate behaviors. Whether at the level of the school or the individual, effective intervention requires a wide spectrum of options that extend significantly beyond a narrow focus on punishment and exclusion.

### *Negative Teacher Approaches to Classroom Discipline*

Teachers repeatedly mention that they would like to receive more extensive and continuous training in classroom behavior management (Maag, 2001). Many teachers approach their classrooms with controlling rules and punitive punishments in order to prevent disruptive behavior from occurring. Using punishment has, by tradition, been reinforcing to some teachers because it quickly eliminates inappropriate behavior. Just as society views punishment as an effective way to control its members, teachers use punishment as a way to control the microcosm of their classrooms (Maag, 2001). Classroom management, at its best, involves creativity and

provides an optimal situation for the teacher to teach and the students to learn. However, as its worst, it can become negative and adversarial (DiGiulio, 2000). Teachers are human and can instinctively react as adversaries while under stress or while suppressing fear of losing control in the classroom (DiGiulio, 2000).

According to Nichols (2000), several ineffective teaching methods can lead to a lack of classroom control and potentially deflate a student's self esteem. A teacher who gives vague or abstract directions leaves room for miscommunication and misunderstandings. Without clear definitions of terms and expectations, a student's interpretation of the directions may be different from the teacher's intended meaning. Students often think in more concrete terms than adults and need specific clarification (Valentine, 1987). Sarcastic statements of the obvious can create conflict between the teacher and the adolescent student. A teacher who uses sarcasm to stop an inappropriate behavior rather than a clear directive statement can often expect a sarcastic response. Teachers need to give students specific directions rather than stating the obvious to avoid similar student responses (Valentine, 1987). Teachers who exhibit enthusiastic, dynamic and upbeat behaviors have been associated with higher levels of achievement and lower levels of disruptive behavior. In addition, teachers who remain task-focused and organized have an advantage in classroom management (Wilcox et al., 1998).

Valentine (1987) also mentioned the use of classification systems. Giving the students a negative label such as "lazy," "stupid," or "attitude problem" (p.61) can direct students into an attitude of limited expectations. For many students the stigma of disruptive behavior can result in year after year of diminished potential. Similar to labeling is the use of predictive consequences. Teachers make predictions when they use statements such as "You will end up in jail," or "You will never amount to anything" (Valentine, 1987, p.61). These predictions can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies to which students might eventually conform. The use of threatening punishment also leads to a lack of control. Some teachers will give the student an option such as "If you don't stop that behavior, you will be in detention today" (Valentine, 1987, p.62). This option gives the student the opportunity to decide if the punishment is worth the continuation of the behavior. With this statement, the teacher has surrendered power to the students and may not be able to get it back (Valentine, 1987).

DiGiulio (2000) mentioned three reactive rules that threaten punishment but do not prevent misbehavior. The first, as mentioned above, are rules that threaten. These rules take

away the students' opportunities to make prosocial decisions and give them opportunities to choose their punishment. Second, rules that mislead include rules that are worded negatively. These rules draw attention to them and tempt students to test what is forbidden. In addition, they do attempt to change the attitude of the students that are behind their disruptive behavior. Finally, rules that distort can keep students from being accountable for their inappropriate behavior. The third set of rules is worded so that they allow for an undesirable behavior up to a certain point. For example, a rule that states "three missed homework assignments equal no recess" will allow students to miss two homework assignments without any consequences (p.19). Overall, classroom rules contain the potential for optimal learning and a safe environment, but if used incorrectly they can lead to further discipline problems. Rules that focus more on internal motivations, rather than external preventions can more effectively reduce behavior problems in the future (Nichols, 2000).

### *Effective Disciplinary Practices*

#### *Discipline and School Climate*

Although there is a wealth of research regarding school-wide discipline programs, considerable research has been written on the importance of school climate relative to school discipline and management, particularly the research entitled "effective schools." A positive school climate is an indispensable component of an effective school (Farmer, 1999; Levin & Lezotte, 1990; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Schools that perform well have environments where disorder is not prevalent. "One of the more negative effects of disruptive behavior is its ability to shift the focus of the school from academic pursuit to that of order. The end product of this change is lowered academic expectations and a custodial climate (Johnson, 1989, pp. 2-3).

The climate of each school can further add to disciplinary problems. Inconsistency among staff in the implementation of discipline procedures may cause dissention among students and perceived unfair treatment (Williams, 1998). Consistent enforcement of rules can help to ensure student cooperation. Consistency of policy among staff involves agreement and commitment to the details of the design of the discipline policies (Williams, 1998). In order to obtain agreement and a sense of teamwork, all parties must participate in the design of discipline policies, including school staff, parents and students (Williams, 1998). Another aspect that can inhibit effective disciplinary policies is the lack of communication. All students, parents and

school staff should be informed of the policies and/or student conduct code and the information should be both accessible and readable (Gushee, 1984). Extraordinarily large schools can also contribute to discipline problems. Two studies illustrate that smaller schools are likely to have fewer disciplinary problems and fewer students involved in gangs, drugs or vandalism (Killion, 1998; Kuppermine et al., 1997). The climate within smaller schools may improve discipline because student management is easier and more effective with fewer students, and the smaller populations create a greater feeling of community and connectedness (Killion, 1998).

There are many opportunities for school personnel to get involved in improving the disciplinary environment of a school. Programs geared toward teaching problem solving, conflict resolution and social instruction can improve the school climate, thus making it a place where students feel safe and free to learn (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). The Clinton Administration stressed the importance of teaching students conflict resolution as an alternative to violence after the Littleton, Colorado incident (Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Helping students develop problem-solving skills can encourage them to develop a sense of responsibility in evaluating their own behavior (Dupper, 1994). School personnel can use their knowledge and expertise in the areas of conflict resolution and social problem solving to develop curricula that can be used as both prevention of future violence and intervention for behavior problems. They can also help to develop peer mediation programs (Maag, 2001; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Teachers can use peer influence in the classroom by developing group management techniques (Maag, 2001) and counselors or social workers can oversee a peer counseling program in their schools. These interventions create positive attachments among students, improving the overall climate of the school.

A school that is in poor physical condition with graffiti, needed repairs and unsanitary conditions can negatively affect students' attitudes (Dwyer, Osher & Hoffman, 2000). Additionally, an untidy school can make the teachers feel as if they lack control and cause students to perceive teachers as being out of control (Toby, 1998). Students may then feel free to litter, write on walls and deface property, which may lead to further misbehavior (Toby, 1998). Creating a clean, safe and caring environment in the school will communicate a sense of security to the students, school staff and parents (Dwyer et al., 2000). Reducing class and school size, increasing the visibility of adults in the school, and initiating clean-up days can also help improve the climate of the school (Dwyer et al., 2000).

Students who have attendance and discipline problems also tend to have more academic difficulties, as well as peer and familial stressors (Elias & Tobias, 1996). Using punitive punishments for these students may increase isolation and pessimistic attitudes about the possibility of success. The disinterest and alienation that often follow can increase the potential for anger, violence and self-destructive behavior (Elias & Tobias, 1996).

### *Administrator's Role in Discipline*

The research on effective schools consistently has pointed to the principal as the key figure in shaping the climate of a school. Since the 1970s, the importance of the principal as it relates to school discipline and overall school climate has surfaced in almost every study of effective schools (Haberman, 2003; Scheerens & Bosker, 1997; Teddlie & Reynolds, 2000). Given the tremendous influence of the principal on school climate, a basic issue confronting principals is how to exercise that influence in a positive way.

As indicated by Abraham Maslow's oft-cited hierarchy of needs, people cannot attend to their higher order needs until their basic needs have been satisfied. Thus, peoples' essential physiological needs must be met before they will consider such higher needs as security, belonging, esteem, and, ultimately, self-actualization. Applying a similar theory to the social structure of a school, the need for the safety and orderliness that accompany good discipline must be satisfied before the school can address such higher needs as a well-articulated curriculum, instructional effectiveness, teacher empowerment, and, ultimately, sustained educational excellence.

According to Killion (1998), an administrators' success depends greatly upon how they manage discipline problems. Haberman (2003) asserts that it is the principals who have the greatest input into reshaping the school culture. Teddlie & Reynolds (2000) stated that principals are almost always held accountable for the behavior of the students. Principals must endure the pressures of improving school attendance and discipline policies in order to restore public confidence in local schools (Shupe, 1998). In addition, principals face the political challenge of balancing what the community desires with what is best for the students, especially in regard to the increased awareness of school violence by the media (Martin, 2000). The utilization of metal detectors, zero tolerance policies and security guards are just a few examples of recent policies that provide a reassurance of safety for the community, rather than working through the underlying issues that lead to infractions of the rules and incidences of school violence (Skiba &

Peterson, 2000). Principals must be able to balance delicate issues because, as Martin (2000) reported, the parents who insist on stricter and more severe rules will be the same parents who vigorously protest when their own children face punishment.

Shannon and McCall (2001) reported that when it comes to dealing with student misbehavior, administrators feel constrained by their communities, parental support, availability of resources, and the willingness and availability of staff. Administrators are aware of the alternatives to suspension and expulsion, such as student courts, behavior management programs, school-wide disciplinary programs, and alternative classes, but recognize that these alternatives require resources and staffing that are often unavailable (Shannon & McCall, 2001).

Administrators can have a positive impact on their schools' discipline policies by providing support to their teachers and staffs (Fitzsimmons, 1998). In a study conducted by Brown and Payne (1988) teachers reported "poor administrative support: as one of the biggest discipline problems in their schools (p. 298). In contrast, a middle school principal in Florida provided support teachers the opportunity to work with him in creating the school discipline policies. The result was an empowered staff that worked collaboratively with their principal to make disciplinary decisions (Shupe, 1998).

### *Positive Teacher Expectations*

As mentioned earlier, punitive classroom rules can lead to further discipline problems, however, positive classroom management can help to prevent misbehavior. DiGiulio's (2000) response to the previously mentioned reactive rules included a list of proactive rules. He recommended teachers discuss the concept of mutual respect with their students, spend time talking about and demonstrating appropriate behavior, model respectful and caring behavior and involve students in rule making. DiGiulio (2000) also suggested teaching limits and boundaries, utilizing cooperation and including all students in class activities. When presenting rules to the classroom, DiGiulio (2000) suggested communicating the rules in a variety of ways to order to reach the diverse learning styles of students. Rules can be posted, discussed, reviewed, illustrated and even dramatized. Nelson, Lott and Glenn (1997) suggested that class meetings be held in order to teach the students problem solving skills. The steps of a classroom meeting included forming a circle, practicing compliments and appreciation, creating an agenda, developing communications skills, learning to separate realities, recognizing reasons people do what at they

do, practicing role playing and brainstorming, and focusing on non-punitive solutions (Kay & Ryan (2000); Nelson & Colvin (1995)).

A study conducted by Robert Rosenthal and Leonora Jacobson in 1968 explored the possibility that a student's academic achievement is related to teacher expectations (Nash, 1976). According to Nash (1976), the researchers informed teachers that randomly chosen students in their classes were intelligently gifted. When the students were later retested, their I.Q. scores were significantly higher than the students in a control group. The idea that teachers' expectations are communicated to their students became known as the "Rosenthal effect." The expectation interaction is most often subconscious on the part of both the teachers and the students. The Rosenthal study suggested that students who are labeled with potential will receive the encouragement, support and motivation from their teachers that will allow for academic or behavioral improvement (Nash, 1976). Negative expectations can also have the opposite effect on students. Valentine (1987) suggested that students who are given negative labels will often not reach their full potential.

One method of raising student self-confidence involves focusing on the strengths of the student and adapting the discipline procedure to fit the situation. Krajewski et al. (1998) reported that when school staff takes the time to discover the problems behind disruptive behaviors, practical solutions occur. If administrators, counselors or teachers discover the underlying issues behind the misbehavior and identify the strengths of the student, future outbreaks of misbehavior often can be avoided. By focusing on a student's strengths, or discovering creative motivation techniques based on the students' individual interests may involve the students in more productive activities and reduce their desire to act out (Krajewski et al., 1998).

### *Classroom Organization*

In an unstructured classroom, rules, purposes, procedures and required behavior are so vague that when behavior deviates from the norm, it goes undetected (Thelen, 1981). According to Thelen (1981), the personality of the teacher is the "organizing principle of the classroom society" (p. 104). How teachers structure their classrooms contribute to behavior expectations for their students. Marshall (1998) created an approach to classroom discipline that emphasizes social responsibility, empowerment and self-evaluation. He suggested teaching the classroom four levels of social development: Anarchy, Bullying, Conformity, and Democracy. When students begin to act out, the teacher should first determine the behavioral level of the students

through self-determination. This approach separates the students from their behaviors and does not come across as attacking. If the behavior does not change, the next step is self-correction. The teacher gives the students a simple form that asks them to reflect on their behavior and how future occurrences may be prevented. The students are given choices as to how and when the forms are completed which places primary responsibility on the students and gives them both power and respect. Marshall recommended discussing the situation after class and throwing away the form to show that the situation had been resolved. If the unacceptable behavior continues, a third and slightly longer form should be administered that allows the students to reflect on a deeper level about their behavior. According to Marshall (1998), this approach should increase students' internal motivation to behave appropriately rather than to rely on external rewards or punishments.

### *Efficient Use of Time*

The effective use of instructional time as it relates to classroom management has been cited as an important characteristic of an effective teacher (Strauss, 2002, online). Instructional pacing is one way teachers make efficient use of time. In their review of research focusing on teacher behavior and student achievement, Brophy and Good (1986) state "the most consistently replicated findings link achievement to the quantity and pacing of instruction" (p. 360). The relationship between classroom management and student engagement time is well documented. Researchers have found that one of the hardest tasks teachers face is keeping students focused on a lesson for a sustained period of time. Engagement rates have been found to depend on the ability of teachers to organize and manage the classroom as an efficient learning environment where academic activities run smoothly, transitions are brief and orderly, and little time is spent getting organized or dealing with inattention or resistance. Subjects deemed interesting by students, along with a mix of activities and discussion to break up time, help keep students actively and positively engaged. According to one teacher, changing activities frequently lets her students get their wiggles out before they start poking their friends when they should be completing an assignment (Watkins & Slocum, 2004).

### *Smaller Class Size*

Class size reduction (CSR) has been a complicated and often debatable issue for the last twenty-five years. While there is an instinctive sense that reducing class size can have a positive

effect on improved behavior and student achievement, it is a costly approach. Consequently, educators have relied on research to provide them with an answer to one basic question: Does class size reduction really make a difference?

Many teachers desire smaller classes so that they can offer more individualized instruction and more “hands on” learning opportunities. Some research studies support this opinion. Smaller classes were related to higher achievement and improved classroom management when students were in such classes for at least 100 hours (Watkins & Slocum, 2004). Research and lessons from practice indicate that CSR has potential benefits, including improvement in student behavior and achievement gains, especially poor and minority students or students in the early grades (Finn & Achilles, 1999). Other potential benefits include: increased individualized attention, improved identification of special needs, earlier intervention, and less remediation.

Expanded flexibility by teachers to use different behavioral and instructional approaches is also a potential benefit, as is more in-depth coverage of content. Some teachers practicing under CSR have reported fewer distractions for students, more time for students to speak while the others listen, reduced level of noise in a class and reduced discipline problems (Finn, 1998). Research further suggests that CSR allows teachers to better track the academic progress of each student, makes it easier for students to develop positive relations with classmates and the teacher, and provides additional time for teachers to devote to working with students' parents (Finn & Achilles, 1999)

Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver (2004) reviewed data in excess of 800 Texas school districts containing more than 2.4 million students, and discovered significant relationships among teacher quality, student behavior, class size, and student achievement. For first through seventh grades, using student/teacher ratio as a measure of class size, he found that district student achievement fell as the student/teacher ratio increased for every student above an 18 to 1 ratio. He also found that measures of teacher quality (i.e., teacher literacy skills and professional experience) were even more strongly related to higher achievement.

What does ‘small class’ mean? Research on class size has been conducted according to high scientific standards; this cannot be said of any other educational intervention to improve pupil achievement. A 4-year class study conducted by the Tennessee State Department of Education, Project Student Teacher Achievement Ratio (STAR), has received praise from

educators and policy makers. It has provided the starting point for several national conferences of researchers concerned with the need to base educational decisions on empirical evidence.

Many studies have argued that smaller class sizes will help to increase academic achievement among students. Small classes can have a positive impact on increasing student interest and engagement in school because teachers are able to allocate additional time for individuals and classroom instruction (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver 2004). According to the Senate Office of Research Issue Brief (1998), class size reduction increased student attitudes and interests, and students learned to function better as members of a group. Further, classroom management became easier for teachers because discipline took less time and focus. Studies have shown that students who had been in smaller classes were, in later years, less disruptive than their peers who had been in regular size classes. Disciplinary referrals have also been shown to decrease after several years of smaller class sizes (Watkins & Slocum 2004).

#### *Teacher Training/Staff Development*

As the nature of staff development has changed over time and teacher participation hours have increased, there have been very few studies investigating the links between staff development, teacher behavior, classroom behavior, and student achievement. According to Guskey (1997), much of the research exploring the effects of this training has been unsuccessful. With the recent emphasis on accountability, however, staff developers are being compelled to show that in-service training is changing teacher behavior and, ultimately, is improving classroom discipline and enhancing student achievement.

Peters and March (1999) stressed that it is not enough to simply tell teachers, just to do a better job and sign them up for a week-long in-service. One day or one week training sessions are not enough to have a lasting and positive impact on classroom procedures. Improvement in teaching methods will only occur when teachers assume responsibility for their own professional growth and permanent changes take place (Peters & March, 1999; Sparks & Hirsh, 2000).

Joyce & Showers (1995) affirms that disruptive behavior has given new urgency to improving professional development. Training should include the direct problem of disruptive behavior in the classroom as well as how to diffuse potentially more harmful acts of violence. Training should also be extended to help teachers better understand the issues that affect disruptive behavior: parenting, community violence, insecurity, poverty, irrelevant curricula, and insensitivity to student diversity, low teacher expectations, neglect, and many others.

Gable, Manning, and Bullock (1997) propose the following recommendations for school personnel who are searching for ways to better prepare teachers to cope with disruptive students:

1. Staff development should include curricular elements that prepare teachers to work with disruptive students. This would include: (a) identifying warning signs of disruptive behavior; (b) establishing and maintaining an orderly and conducive school environment; (c) minimizing potentially hostile or aggressive situations;
2. Staff development sessions should train teachers to make the instructional environment conducive for learning. This means modifying the class or other school areas to prevent possible problems;
3. Staff development should prepare others to serve as resources, mentors, or on intervention teams;
4. Staff development should emphasize wide-ranging approaches that incorporate programs of prevention and intervention; and
5. Staff development should emphasize the importance of collaboration, problem-solving, and the team approach.

Staff development is an essential tool for school districts in preventing and ensuring a safe environment for learning. Local school boards should guarantee that their personnel, through all-inclusive and continuing training, are properly trained in the effective and lawful means of curbing school disruption and violence (Maag, 2001). Comprehensive and unending training can reduce the frequency of disruptive behaviors and instructional personnel feel more secure. Programs can include the development of the ability to identify students who are likely to exhibit anti-social behavior for the purpose of preventive intervention, to identify and diffuse potential disruption, and to deal safely with violence should it erupt. Conflict resolution and violence prevention programs should also be strongly considered.

### *Extracurricular Activities*

According to Kane and Duryea (1991), extracurricular activities can help prevent students from experiencing future social and health problems. Many adolescents are more susceptible to peer pressure during the unsupervised hours of 3:00-6:00 p.m. because of the absence of adequate supervision. The goals of after-school programs include providing safe and supervised activities in order to increase practical skills and knowledge. Students involved in

after-school programs have increased contact with potential adult role models. Extracurricular programs have also been shown to decrease juvenile delinquency (Kane & Duryea, 1991).

### *Social Skills Training*

One method of increasing social responsibility is teaching social or decision-making skills. Students with discipline problems are often rejected by their peers and do not have the opportunity to learn appropriate social skills through normal peer interaction (Dupper, 1994). These students often turn to disruptive or *acting-out* behavior. Providing them with the opportunity to learn and practice social skills can break the negative interaction cycle (Dupper, 1994; Skiba & Peterson, 2000). Elias and Tobias (1996) described a computer program called the “The Student Conflict Manager/Personal Problem Solving Guide” (p. 93) used to intervene in place of detentions or suspensions. The program promotes thoughtful decision-making and problem solving for both everyday decisions and serious or crisis situations. The program takes the student step-by-step through the decision-making process with dialoging and open-ended questioning. The computer uses the responses given by the students instead of a preset list of problems, goals, solutions and consequences. It offers prompting and focuses on the problem from a variety of perspectives in order to engage resistant or minimally expressive students. School personnel can advocate installation of such a system in their schools and help develop its use as a method for discipline that would teach students appropriate behavior (Elias & Tobias, 1996).

### *School-Wide Interventions*

To date, there has been limited research on school-wide behavioral management or school-wide discipline programs. Many *off the shelf* curriculum packages have been developed to address violence prevention, conflict resolution, peer mediation, anger management, and social skills training. As a result, there are limited data to inform decision makers about which specific strategies or practices work best with which populations. Regrettably, most of the programs have had little or no empirical support for their ability to positively affect youth behavior (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 1998; Tolan & Guerra, 1994; U. S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). Moreover, many programs that are considered most promising have produced rather modest effects that are often of limited duration (Gottfredson, 2001). In many cases, positive effects reflect changes in knowledge, attitudes and

responses to hypothetical situations rather than changes in actual behavior (Howard, Flora, & Griffin, 1999). The general pattern appears to be that once the programs have ended with apparent success, the changes are often fleeting. “The students often reveal renewed antisocial behavior when the intervention ends” (p.32).

While it is premature to offer guaranteed solutions for success, the work of key researchers and their school-based colleagues are providing some encouraging developments. Although there are different variations of school-wide systems of behavioral support, most have certain universal features. The emphasis is generally on consistency both throughout the building and across classrooms. The total school staff, including cafeteria workers and bus drivers, is expected to adopt strategies that will be uniformly implemented. When these programs are implemented correctly and consistently, behavioral techniques accelerate learning, decelerate undesirable responses, and help maintain learned responses.

#### *Roots in Effective Schools Research*

The gap between research and practice has been an ongoing issue in the professional literature (Gersten, Vaughn, Deshler, & Schiller, 1997). That gap appears to be especially acute in the areas of school discipline and behavior, leaving schools with insufficient resources to cope with current serious problems of disruption. Despite the gap, school reform in the 1990s has focused on school-based restructuring. A school that operates successfully in the 21<sup>st</sup> century will need an integrated approach. This approach considers procedures that are associated with four systems: (1) School-wide procedures for all students and settings; (2) Specific-setting procedures for all students and staff for specific school settings (e.g., cafeteria, hallways, playground, bus; (3) Classroom procedures for specific teachers and their students during structured instructionally-focused contexts; and (4) Individual-student procedures (Colvin, G., Kameenui, E., & Sugai, G., 1993; Sugai & Horner, 1994).

Cotton (2001), Duke (1989), and Kay & Ryan (2000), indicate that the following components are essential for preventive discipline problems: (1) a commitment from the staff; (2) maintaining high expectations; (3) establishing clear rules; (4) providing a warm climate; (5) having a visible instructional leader; (6) empowering teachers to discipline, and (7) establishing and maintaining good community relationships. Cotton (2001) reports that schools are characterized by commitment to appropriate student behavior and clear expectations. Duke (1989) agreed and indicated further that well-disciplined schools incorporate teacher-student

problem solving activities as well as activities to promote student self-esteem and that this is more effective in reducing behavior problems than punishment (p.3). Lastly, Kay & Ryan (2000) noted that, in well-disciplined schools, staff share decision-making power and maintain an environment in which everyone wants to achieve self-discipline.

Researchers have also observed schools that are so burdened with chaos and safety concerns that a more multifaceted approach is required to bring about a positive change. One such approach is called the Organizational Development Approach. Gottfredson (1989) and Gottfredson, Karweit, and Gottfredson (1989) led many research projects in which instructional and discipline programs were restructured, resulting in noteworthy improvements in student behavioral and academic outcomes. In these projects, (1) school based management teams were established to fulfill the mission of the improvement project; (2) disciplinary policies and practices were reviewed; (3) innovative and creative instructional practices were implemented; (4) school climate was reviewed for improvements; (5) extracurricular activities were instituted; (6) career readiness/awareness classes were added to the curriculum; and (7) parental involvement was enhanced.

Kounin (1970) reported the results of studies done from the kindergarten level to the university level and identified strategies and processes used in effective and ineffective schools. More recent research conducted during the past 30 years has accentuated Kounin's findings. The following validated practices are identified in the work of Landau & Gathercoal (2000); Morrow (1999); Rademacher, Callahan, & Peterson-Seeyle (1998); Teddlie & Reynolds (2000), and Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampston (1998): (1) Maintaining high expectations for student learning and behavior; (2) establishing clear rules and expectations; (3) specifying consequences to student behavior; (4) enforcing classroom rules consistently; (5) sharing with students the responsibility for classroom management; (6) maintaining a brisk pace for instruction; and (7) monitoring classroom activities and providing feedback and reinforcement.

Researchers have identified additional methods that have proven to be successful in creating and preserving positive, orderly environments. For instance, engaging in misbehavior is often coupled with school failure, and some researchers (Cotton 2001), have noted improvements in classroom order when marginal students are given opportunities to experience academic and social success.

Brophy (1983) and Gottfredson (1989) have also noted that the use of cooperative learning structures can increase student task engagement. The work of Wilcox et al. (1998) also revealed that it is beneficial for teachers to use humor to hold student interest and reduce classroom tensions. Butchart (1998), Cotton (2001), DiGiulio (2000) and others have identified verbal, symbolic, or tangible reinforcement as effective in improving the classroom conducted of misbehaving students.

A primary focus of this literature review was to examine the use of specific strategies or programs used to change the behavior of disruptive students. A brief description of this literature is indicated below.

#### *Positive Behavior Support (PBS)*

PBS addresses high rates of problem behavior, ineffective and inefficient disciplinary practices, lack of general and specialized behavioral interventions, and negative school climate. It emphasizes social skills instruction, self-management strategies, school-wide discipline practices, behavioral interventions and classroom management, and teacher assistance team planning. PBS is a carefully designed approach to increasing the capacity of schools to provide support to all students. PBS focuses on enhancing communication, increasing implementation consistency, identifying, implementing, and sustaining the use of effective practices, and formalizing problem solving. It is based on empirically sound practices and applications in schools.

#### *Effective Behavioral Support*

One PBS model, perhaps the one most widely researched, is Effective Behavioral Support (EBS). This approach, researched extensively by Sugai (1996), emphasizes a school-wide system that defines, teaches, and encourages appropriate behavior in children in elementary and middle schools. This model, developed from studies conducted at the University of Oregon, is rooted in the fact that about 85% of students have the social skills to be successful when they are placed in an environment supported by universal interventions at the school-wide and classroom levels. Students at risk for problem behavior and students with chronic behavior disorders are described as needing more specialized support. To address the behavioral support needs of all students within a school context, this model provides support from four major perspectives:

1. School-wide support. One such perspective includes the idea of school-wide support. This includes procedures and processes that are intended for all students, all staff, and all settings. The most important element of support is a building-wide team that oversees all development, implementation, modification, and evaluation activities;

2. Specific setting. A second major item provides specific setting support. This is a team-based mechanism for monitoring specific settings that exist within the school environment, e.g., the cafeteria. In settings where problem behaviors occur, teams should develop strategies that prevent or minimize their occurrence;

3. Classroom support. A third perspective is that of classroom support. This involves the processes and procedures of the individual classrooms where teachers structure the learning opportunities. Classroom support should parallel the positive behavioral support features and procedures that are used school-wide; and

4. Individual student support. Lastly, individual student support is extremely important. This contains immediate, relevant, effective, and efficient responses to those students who present the most significant behavioral challenges. There must be processes and procedures for high-intensity, specially designed and individualized interventions for the estimated 3-7% of students who present the most challenging behavior.

Strategies for the school-wide and classroom levels include having a clearly stated positive purpose and a set of positively stated expectations for behavior. Strategies also include procedures for teaching school-wide expectations, a continuum of procedures for encouraging students to display expected behaviors, and a continuum of procedures for discouraging violations of school-wide expectations. Finally, strategies include a method for monitoring implementation and effectiveness (Warger, 1999).

At the student level, procedures include functional assessment strategies, social skills instruction, self-management training, and direct instruction. For implementation of the procedures at the individual student level to be effective, the school-wide positive behavioral support system must be in place and functioning efficiently.

In summary, many programs have been initiated with promising interventions on how to effectively manage students who have a history of behavior problems. Certainly, one may conclude that when more is known about the cause or causes of students' behavior, then appropriate interventions can be identified and provided. The programs reviewed herein are

designed to prevent problem behaviors from recurring or escalating among children with antisocial behavior. Undoubtedly, there are many techniques schools can employ to avert challenging behavior and to approach it appropriately when it does occur. “Multiple interventions are necessary for improving the behavior of most students...Just as behavior problems and risk factors come in packages, so should interventions (NICHCY, 1999, p. 5).

### *The Underutilization of Positive Behavior Supports*

Research in the fields of applied behavior analysis (Horner & Carr, 1997) and special education (Rademacher et al., 1998) has generated effective strategies of individual programming, classroom management, and instruction to improve the behavioral climate for students with and without disabilities. Despite research support as validated practices, there is bounteous evidence that these strategies are drastically underutilized in the public schools. The effectiveness of positive consequences for managing student behavior, for example, has been widely demonstrated (Gottfredson & Gottfredson, 1993; Horner, Sugai, & Horner, 2000; Rademacher, Callahan, & Pederson-Seelye, 1998). The failure to balance positive and negative consequences may indeed yield a coercive cycle that increases the likelihood of disruptive behavior (Cotton, 2001; Shores, Gunter, & Jack, 1993, Horner, Sugai, & Horner, 2000). Yet, negative consequences appear to outpace the use of positive reinforcers both in regular education (Shores et al., 1993) and special education (Butchart, 1998; Gable et al., 1999). Some have suggested that the underutilization of effective behavioral strategies is due to school resistance (Axelrod, Moyer, & Berry, 1990), while others (Fantuzzo & Atkins, 1992) have placed the blame on ineffective models of research and dissemination.

Over the last few decades, several school-wide interventions have been advocated for handling challenging, disruptive and antisocial behavior in schools. Many of these practices have been supported by empirical research and should be considered as an essential foundation in developing school-wide discipline plans. Unfortunately, extensive research on the effectiveness of these programs is limited, much is technically faulty, and often the results are inconclusive.

### *Increased Need for Behavioral Support*

Being an educator in the 21<sup>st</sup> century demands more than just teaching reading, writing, and arithmetic (Lewis & Sugai, 1999b). Today’s educator is required to be able to accommodate the needs of students with significant learning and behavioral problems. The impact of these

additional changing responsibilities is felt in schools, neighborhoods, and families in a variety of ways (Lewis & Sugai, 1999a). Problem behavior, not the inability to learn, is the single most common reason why students are removed from regular school, work, and home settings (Reichle, 1990; Skiba & Peterson, 1999; Townsend, 2000). Up to 25.6% of eighth-grade students reported they have been involved in a physical conflict with peers (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2001). Three years after leaving school, 70% of antisocial youth have been arrested (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995). “If antisocial behavior is not changed by the end of grade 3, it should be treated as a chronic condition much like diabetes (Elliott & Tolan, 1999). That is, it cannot be cured, but managed with the appropriate supports and continuing intervention (p.6). These facts emphasize that preparing children and youth to succeed in a visibly changing world is a primary challenge for families, schools, and community agencies.

Many children adjust reasonably well to these changes and challenges. Unfortunately, not all children have the same opportunities. Instead, for some children, social experiences are best characterized as reactive, aversive, infrequent, haphazard, and trial and error learning experiences. (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). In fact, children who are likely to display antisocial behavior are an ever-increasing concern in American schools and communities. Extreme forms of problem behavior, such as aggression and violence, have reached epidemic proportions (Koop & Lundberg, 1992; Rutherford & Nelson, 1995). As a result, school discipline continues to be one of the top concerns of American educators and the American public (Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1998).

#### *Establishing a School-Wide Behavior Management Plan Using Positive Behavioral Support*

Schools that implement school-wide systems of PBS focus on implementing a team-based system approach and teaching appropriate behavior to all students in the school. Schools that have been successful in behavioral interventions and supports obtain many benefits. Some of the benefits include an increase in attendance, and a reduction in the number of behavioral disruptions. Additionally, there is a reduction in the proportion of students who engage in behavioral disruptions and an increase in teacher reports of a more positive and calm environment (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984).

The school-wide PBS endeavor has at least six crucial components: (1) statement of purpose; (2) school-wide expectations; (3) procedures for teaching school-wide expectations; (4) continuum of procedures for encouraging school-wide expectations; (5) continuum of procedures

for discouraging problem behaviors; and (6) procedures for monitoring the impact of the school-wide PBS implementation (Lewis & Sugai, 1999).

Additionally, there are common features of a school-wide behavioral management system. The features include: (1) total staff commitment to managing behavior, regardless of approach; (2) clearly defined and communicated expectations and rules; (3) consequences and clearly stated procedures for correcting rule-breaking behaviors; (4) an instructional component for teaching students self-control and/or social skill strategies; and (5) a support plan to address the needs of students with chronic, challenging behaviors. Table 1 differentiates the differences between 6 crucial components of a school-wide PBS and 5 common elements of school-wide behavior management systems.

Many teachers already take the following actions, which have been identified by research as supporting positive behaviors:

1. *Respond to individual needs.* PBS requires that services and programs are responsive to the preferences, strengths, and needs of individuals with challenging behavior. For example, some school systems may need to add self-determination skills to their curriculum;
2. *Alter environments.* If something in the individual's environment influences the challenging behavior, it is important to organize the environment for success. For example, clearly defined work places and quiet work areas may assist students who are noise-sensitive;

Table 1

*Comparison of School-Wide Features of PBS and School-Wide Behavior Management Systems*

<b>Common features of a School-wide PBS</b>	<b>Common Elements of school-wide behavior management system</b>
Statement of purpose	Total staff commitment to managing behavior
School-wide expectations	Clearly defined and communicated expectations
Continuum of procedures for discouraging problem behaviors	Consequences and clearly stated procedures for breaking rules
Continuum of procedures for encouraging school-wide expectations	Instructional component for teaching self-control/social skill strategies
Procedures for teaching school-wide Expectations	Support plan to address the needs of students with challenging behaviors
Procedures for monitoring the impact of the school-wide PBS implementation	Yearly evaluation of plan

3. *Teach new skills.* Explicitly teach new skills to the students with challenging behaviors and members of their social network. Students frequently need to learn alternative, appropriate responses that serve the same purpose as their challenging behavior;

4. *Genuinely appreciate positive behaviors.* It is important to reinforce and acknowledge all positive behaviors consistently.

Tim Lewis (1996) suggested that several factors foster PBS success. First, the staff must be of the same opinion that school-wide behavioral management is one of their chief priorities and will in all likelihood require up to 5 years for completion. Second, teams must start with “achievable” objectives that meet their needs and offer some initial successes. Finally, administrators must assist by respecting team decisions, affording time for teams to convene, securing ongoing staff training, and encouraging all staff to participate.

#### Future Research Potential for Positive Behavioral Support

There is relatively little research on the success of PBS used as a school-wide approach outside of university sponsored programs. Because of the dimensions unique to special education students, as well as non-disabled students, there is much to be investigated. Public schools in Virginia are now required to address character education. The models in PBS may suggest

researched-based mechanisms to support well-meaning, but less structured or validated character education approaches. The time may be right to study how Virginia schools are responding to these challenges.

### Emerging Models

Several school-wide interventions are being advocated for handling challenging, disruptive and antisocial behavior in schools. These practices have been supported by empirical research and should be considered as an essential foundation for developing school-wide discipline plans. Although extensive research on the effectiveness of these programs is scarce, much is technically faulty, and the results are commonly inconclusive.

A brief summary of these and of additional models can be found in Appendices L and M. The models described have components that include school, home, and/or societal factors. Additionally, the school-based models have been selected to demonstrate how different features of a school-wide behavioral management system can be utilized in a variety of settings.

#### *Project PATHE (Positive Action Through Holistic Education)*

Project PATHE (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 1999) is a comprehensive program that reduces school disorder and increases students' bonding to the school. It is characterized as a school-based delinquency prevention program that combines an environmental change approach with direct intervention for at-risk youth. It is geared toward middle and high school students where school-wide academic weaknesses and discipline problems are diagnosed and strengthened through innovative teaching techniques. Evaluations are conducted after implementation one year for high schools and two years for middle schools. These evaluations demonstrate significant improvement for PATHE schools, compared to selected control schools. Some of the improvements include: (1) decrease in drug involvement, suspensions, and school punishment; (2) school alienation decreased in all treatment schools; (3) attachment to school increased in the treatment middle schools, while decreasing in the control schools; (4) school climate and discipline management improved in all the treatment schools; (5) higher rates of graduation for at-risk high school seniors in all the treatment schools; (6) higher scores on standardized tests of achievement in all schools; and (7) increased school attendance in treatment schools.

PATHE is not exclusively a “program.” It is a process used for achieving extensive school improvement, considering each school's assets and weaknesses. Important changes must take place at the school level, with assistance from the district level. A school-based transformation is fundamental to the PATHE approach; school personnel must be involved in the overall process.

Five middle schools and 4 high schools participated in the evaluation study for PATHE. The evaluation used a pre and post test design and various survey instruments. Survey instruments assessed delinquency and drug participation, educational performance, social relationships to the school, self-esteem, and school safety issues, perception of school administration, staff morale, and clarity and fairness of rules. School and court reports supplied supplementary data.

Research data reveal noteworthy improvement for PATHE schools, compared to control schools after one year for high schools and two years for middle schools. Self-reported delinquency, including serious delinquency, drug involvement, suspensions, and school punishments lessened for PATHE high schools, while it increased in the control schools. The PATHE program (Gottfredson, 1989, p.726), also revealed unquestionable improvements for the at-risk students, compared to control students, including:

1. Higher rates of graduation for high school seniors;
2. Higher scores on standardized tests of achievement; and
3. Increased school attendance.

The goals of the PATHE program include intensifying educational skills, diminishing antisocial behavior, and enhancing educational and career development. The conception of PATHE was initiated by educators in the Charleston City School District, South Carolina, and is presently being modeled in a Maryland school district by researchers at the University of Maryland, College Park. PATHE has been selected by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence as one of its “Promising” programs.

#### *STEP (School Transitional Environmental Program)*

STEP (Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence, 1999) is a program that was designed to benefit those students at greatest risk for behavioral problems in urban middle and high schools. It's aim is to reduce the complexity of school environments, increase peer and teacher support, and decrease students' vulnerability to academic and emotional difficulties. The

role of homeroom is redefined and the schools' physical settings are restructured. Together, these changes are designed to increase students' beliefs that school is stable, well organized, and cohesive. Teachers act as administrators and counselors, help students choose classes; counsel them regarding school and personal problems, etc. This increased attention is intended to reduce student anonymity, increase student accountability, and enhance students' abilities to learn school rules and expectations. STEP is geared toward secondary education students.

Assessments exposed at the end of ninth grade indicated that STEP students, in comparison to control students, demonstrated:

1. A decline in absenteeism and improved grade point average scores;
2. Improved self-concept (compared to decreases for control students); and
3. An improved perception of the school

Long-term follow-up showed that STEP students, compared to students in a control group, had:

1. Lower dropout rates (21% versus 43%); and
2. Elevated grades and a decrease in the number of absences in 9th and 10th grades.

A duplication of the program in two high schools and three middle schools revealed that STEP students, compared to control students, had:

1. Fewer increases in drug use and misconduct in school and the community;
2. Fewer decreases in academic performance and self-concept; and
3. A decline in the dropout rate.

This program has been listed by the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence (1999), at the University of Colorado at Boulder, as an intervention program that meets a strict scientific standard of program effectiveness. It is considered a "promising program" because evaluations completed at the end of ninth grade revealed that STEP students, in contrast with control students, showed decreases in absenteeism and increases in Grade-Point-Average (GPA), more positive feelings about the school environment, and perceived the school as more supportive. Long-term follow-up indicated that STEP students, compared with controls, had lower dropout rates (21% versus 43%), and higher grades and fewer absences in 9th and 10th grades.

#### *Resolving Conflict Creatively Program (RCCP)*

Another school based prevention program designed to promote constructive conflict resolution and positive inter-group relations is the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program

(RCCP) (Triune, 2000). This program, introduced in 1985 as a group effort of the New York City Public Schools and Educators for Social Responsibility's New York chapter, was designed to reduce early risks for later aggression and violence and was designed for all students in K- 12 grades, not just those classified as "at risk."

The program (DeJong, 1994), which focuses on using decision-making and negotiation skills, is built around the following set of core skills: (1) communicating clearly and listening carefully; (2) expressing feelings and dealing with anger; (3) resolving conflicts; (4) fostering cooperation; (5) appreciating diversity; and (6) countering bias (p. 3-6). These skills are learned through a curriculum taught by teachers receiving both initial training and ongoing follow-up. The principal goal of RCCP was to make certain that students acquired the skills needed to diminish violence and develop more caring relationships.

A rigorous study of the Resolving Conflict Creatively Program was conducted in schools in New York City by Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR, 1993). The study, conducted over a couple of years, included 5,000 students and 300 teachers, and was one of the largest evaluations of a school conflict resolution program ever performed. The findings revealed that children receiving substantial RCCP instruction, compared with other children, developed more positively. Developing more positively meant that they viewed their environment as less violent, perceived hostility as an improper alternative, and desired non-aggressive ways to resolve conflict. The most noticeable improvement was observed in students who received continuous instruction over the two-year period. Further outcomes illustrated that RCCP benefited all children regardless of risk-status, sex, or grade. Moreover, students who received extensive instruction in the RCCP curriculum achieved appreciably higher scores on standardized achievement tests. The research project was funded by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Metis Associates released an independent evaluation of three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school in Atlanta, Georgia in May 1998. Some of the key findings were:

1. Sixty-four percent of teachers reported less physical violence in the classroom;
2. Seventy-five percent of teachers reported an increase in student cooperation;
3. Ninety-two percent of students felt better about themselves;
4. Over 90% of parents reported an increase in their own communication and problem solving skills;

5. The in-and-out-of-school suspension rates at the RCCP middle school decreased significantly while non-RCCP middle school rates increased during the same period; and
6. The dropout rate at the RCCP high school decreased significantly while non-RCCP school rates increased during the same period.

### *Assertive Discipline*

First publicized and marketed in 1976 by developer Lee Canter, the Assertive Discipline model is well respected and widely used. Assertive discipline is a planned, methodical approach intended to assist school personnel in operating an organized classroom environment. Lee and Marlene Canter, after many years of research and performing consultant work for various school districts around the country, discovered that many teachers were powerless in establishing desirable behavior in their classrooms. The Cantors determined that this was due, at least in part, to a lack of adequate staff development in the area of classroom and behavior management. Based on their research, they outlined and prescribed a logical, easy-to-grasp method to aid teachers in becoming the commander of their classrooms and positively affecting their students' behavior. This method is one of the most-widely used behavior management programs. Assertive discipline has progressed since the 70's from a dictatorial approach to one that is more self-governing and cooperative. The Canter model emphasizes:

1. Stating rules/expectations clearly;
2. Applying positive consequences when expectations are met and negative consequences when they are not met; and
3. Being assertive rather than passive or hostile.

Assertive discipline is further described as a classroom management method that focuses on the rights of the teacher to regulate the behaviors of students. It clearly encourages teachers to (1) take charge of their classroom; set clear, consistent limits and specify consequences for disregarding those limits; focus on student needs, class rules for behavior, and consequences for misbehavior; (2) provide uniform follow-through; use assertive responses to teach children how to behave responsibly; and (3) offer students warmth, support, and rewards for appropriate behavior.

Through the years, Assertive Discipline has been found to be an effective classroom management approach by some, and ineffective by others. It received extensive fame because of

effectiveness in preventive and supportive classroom control. In contrast, the model has been criticized for being too insensitive. Some research (e.g., Mandelbaum, et al. 1983; McCormack, 1987) is supportive, but most is inconclusive about the effectiveness (Emmer and Aussiker, 1989; Gottfredson, 1989).

One study indicates that Assertive Discipline improves student behavior, results in fewer office referrals, and reduces classroom disruptions (McCormack, 1987). Opponents of the program, however, assert that this behavior management tactic is temporary and may have enduring negative effects on children's attitudes toward school (Long, 1991). Apprehension has been expressed that the environment of the classroom becomes hostile and that the Assertive Discipline model is directed toward punishment (Curwin, & Mendler (1988). Longitudinal studies by Fox (1991) indicate that initially improved student behavior declines after time and those teachers eventually become negative about the program.

*GREAT (Guiding Responsibility and Expectations for Adolescents for Today and Tomorrow)*

The GREAT student program seeks to nurture in students those skills, behaviors, and attitudes that enhance the likelihood of healthy outcomes for themselves, their peers, and the school environment. Beyond an emphasis on concrete behavioral training is the attention given to student empowerment by assisting students in understanding the dynamics and personal power exercised by making informed and reasoned choices. By providing this attention, GREAT assists students with the development of skills important to effective decision-making and problem solving currently, with applicability to situations they will face throughout their lives. It is a universal social-cognitive violence prevention program. Its goal is to promote effective social-cognitive problem-solving skills, motivation and self-efficacy for using those skills, and school norms that support those attitudes and skills, while at the same time reducing the appeal and perceived effectiveness of inappropriate behaviors and attitudes (Meyer & Farrell, 1998).

A subcomponent of the GREAT program is RIPP (Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways). This program is based on a conceptual framework and program objectives derived from a review of the research and feedback sessions with the evaluation and implementation teams of GREAT (Meyer & Farrell, 1998); Meyer et al., 2001). It was originally developed for urban middle schools that serve a predominantly African American student population, but has also been evaluated at schools serving ethnically diverse populations. This program is currently being implemented in the two schools used for this study.

RIPP focuses on the transition year to middle school (Meyer, Farrell, Northup, Kung, & Plybon, 2000). The fact that early adolescence is considered a critical time for youth makes this a particularly relevant focus for intervention efforts.

RIPP is the end product of a series of studies in which interventions were implemented, evaluated, and then revised based on process and outcome findings (Meyer et al., 2000). Its primary components are focused at the individual level and include a 25-session sixth grade curriculum (RIPP-6), and 12-session curricula for the seventh (RIPP-7) and eighth (RIPP-8). RIPP is based on a health promotion model that emphasizes the development of social-cognitive skills (Meyer & Farrell, 1998). The program uses an adult role model to teach knowledge, attitudes, and skills that promote non-violence, and is designed to be implemented with a peer-mediation program that attempts to promote school-level change. Educational techniques include team-building activities, repetition and mental rehearsal, small group work, and role playing. A problem-solving model is the backbone of the RIPP curriculum (Meyer et al., 2001).

The impact of RIPP-6 and RIPP-7 was initially evaluated in studies using within-school designs in urban schools with a high percentage of African-American students. Farrell, Meyer, & White (2001) randomly assigned students in half the classrooms at three urban middle schools to RIPP-6. Compared to students in the control condition, those in the intervention obtained higher scores on a knowledge test, but did not differ on measures of other social-cognitive variables expected to mediate the impact of the intervention on violent behavior. In terms of primary outcomes, RIPP-6 participants had significantly fewer disciplinary violations for violent offenses, fewer in-school suspensions, and reported fewer fight related injuries at posttest compared to the control groups. The effects were not, however, maintained at 6-month and 12-month follow-ups. Although the intervention did not produce any significant main effects on self-report measures of problem behavior frequency, analyses of interactions with pretest scores indicated that students who reported high pretest rates of problem behavior tended to benefit from the intervention.

A similar design was used to evaluate RIPP-7 with seventh graders at two schools that had implemented RIPP-6 on a school-wide basis the preceding school year (Farrell, Meyer, Sullivan, & Kung, 2003). Significant intervention effects were again found on a knowledge test, but not on other mediating variables. RIPP-7 participants had fewer disciplinary code violations

during the eighth grade school year, but the intervention did not produce any significant main effects on self-reported frequency of problem behaviors.

RIPP was also evaluated in rural middle schools serving an ethnically diverse population. Farrell, Valois, and Meyer (2002) evaluated RIPP-6 at a rural school where students were randomly assigned to two separate “pods.” RIPP-6 was implemented with students in one pod, with the other pod serving as a control group. Significant effects were found across several mediating variables at posttest. Significant intervention effects were also found on the reported frequency of disciplinary code violations.

The literature also offers a variety of preventive and corrective techniques from various perspectives. Henley (1997) suggests 6 strategies that will keep classrooms more focused and provide more instructional time:

1. Teacher should move around the classroom;
2. Schools should include social skills in the curriculum;
3. School personnel should have a sense of humor;
4. School personnel should refrain from taking the disruptive behavior personally;
5. School personnel should identify the causes of the misbehavior; and
6. School personnel should help students to be responsible for their own behavior.

Hawley (1997) offers seven strategies for teachers in creating a conducive classroom:

1. Be genuinely interested in your students; greet them positively each day; stand at the door to greet them; offer encouragement and praise;
2. Communicate, enforce and post classroom rules; Be fair and consistent;
3. Don't be judgmental;
4. Demonstrate to the students that you are human; Use humor at times; admit mistakes;
5. Minimize any power struggles;
6. Address problems immediately; and
7. Collaborate with students; offer choices; solicit students' opinions.

Skiba (2000) offers some general guidelines for handling disruptive students who are defiant and/or aggressive.

1. Remain calm;
2. Refrain from getting physically involved;

3. Don't humiliate the student;
4. Suggest another person speak to the student;
5. Assist the student in finding alternative solutions to the problem; and
6. Remain non-confrontational; speak to the student in private.

Most teachers respond optimistically to resolution that promote an orderly school environment and provide a positive approach to student misconduct. Many teachers think it would be effective to put more emphasis on effective classroom management in staff development sessions, particularly since there are a growing number of students with emotional and behavioral problems in the general education classrooms. Though proactive school-wide approaches are considered best practice in addressing the challenge of maintaining discipline, Carpenter (2000) has disappointedly noted that most of the reform efforts have produced "embarrassing and depressing results". The strategies were embarrassing because they "have produced limited gains", and depressing because most of them were good strategies (p.383). The directive for change is evident, the assurance of change is impressive, but the ineffective policies and practices that created this situation in the first place continue their course (Ohanian 2000).

#### *Summary of Related Literature*

Several themes on classroom management and handling disruptive behaviors emerged from this research. Many of the themes were generalized around effective teaching, productive classrooms, proactive leadership, and the school climate.

Discipline should foster a sense of responsibility that emphasizes long-term benefits rather than short-term solutions (Krajewski et al., 1998). Current punitive punishment policies utilized in schools may have harmful effects on some students. These students typically come from lower socioeconomic status and ethnic minority groups. They are the ones who struggle academically and behaviorally. If the school continues to use the same techniques to correct behavior, increasing amounts of students will lose hope and succumb to low expectations. Skiba & Peterson (2000) stressed the importance of socialization, instruction and correction in school discipline methods because "children are developmentally incomplete" (p.342). Parents, school board members, and other stakeholders can intervene to advocate for more effective discipline procedures, educate school staff on positive discipline techniques, and develop alternative methods to improve the environment of the school for all students.

Many authorities in the field of classroom management stated that the first step in developing the proper learning climate in the classroom is for teachers to model good behavior and demonstrate a caring attitude for their students from the first day of school. Personal qualities of the teacher enhance effective classroom management. Furthermore, Evertson (1989) highlights the critical relationship between classroom management and instruction:

The job of a teacher is first and foremost to instruct, not to manage. Yet management and instruction are inherently interdependent-in order for the learning environment to be at its best, both elements must be present and working side by side, all the time (p.2).

The key to successful classroom management and an orderly school environment is prevention. Teachers do not have to deal with misbehavior that never occurs. Many problems originate when students are crowded together, forced to wait, or idle because they do not know what to do. Students must know what is expected and afforded the proper learning environment for total involvement. Providing an environment in which they actively focus on learning is critical. Horner, Sugai, & Horner (2000) suggests that schools should work conscientiously to build a social culture among students where there is great clarity about what is appropriate and inappropriate.

In everyday teaching, it is important to specify desired behavior in positive terms, to provide instruction and opportunities to practiced routines, to monitor students for compliance with expectations, and to specifically praise students for meeting those expectations. Teaching strategies should maximize student attention to lessons and involvement in productive activities. A positive approach toward management can produce beneficial results. When teachers identify and or reward good behavior, they are providing a model for all students in the classroom as to what is good behavior. Also, some students are more likely to pay attention to positive comments than to criticism of what they are doing wrong (Kay & Ryan, 2000).

Much misbehavior can be ignored when it is fleeting and not disruptive. Such interventions should be brief, direct, and focused on desirable behavior. Questions, flaunting of authority, threats, and nagging should be avoided because punishment is a stopgap control measure rather than a solution, and because it involves many undesirable side effects, and it should be used only as a last resort. If used, it should be related to the offense, as brief and mild as possible, and flexible enough to allow students to redeem themselves by correcting their

behavior. Research from Hewitt (1999) indicate that if you disregard disruptive behavior that is noncompliant but does not jeopardize the physical or psychological safety of others, the negative behavior habitually stops because the student understands that you are not going to engage in a verbal battle.

From a preventive perspective, research based on multiple models of disciplinary support suggest that schools can profit from having in position a plainly defined, consistently enforced behavioral management system designed to support all students in controlling their own behaviors. There is little disagreement about the necessity to improve our ability to provide educational success for all children. Concisely, before students can be taught, teachers have to first create a secure learning environment for them. This means that teachers must use their power wisely, and use it to manage the classroom positively. It means addressing the environment and essentially, doing what is necessary so that teachers can teach and students can learn.

Effective classroom management has been found to contribute more to school learning than does curriculum design, classroom instruction, student demographics, motivation, home support, and school policy (Wang, Haertal, & Walberg, 1998). Classroom management tactics should not be abandoned when planning realistic strategies for inclusive schooling in diverse, contemporary schools. In reality, these tactics almost certainly should be given priority status in the planning process.

Educating students is a tough, challenging, and complex job, but the rewards for a job well done is a professional responsibility. Through preparation, reflection, and a willingness to meet the professional obligations, teachers can help students succeed. Research over 30 years suggests that a whole-school-wide approach for the management of discipline through use of positive behavioral support encourages appropriate student behaviors. Many factors affect a successful program and the challenges are difficult, especially due to the growing diversity of students in our public schools.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

Chapters 1 and 2 provided an overview of the proposed study and an examination of interrelated literature. This chapter describes the design of the study, context, instrumentation, methods of data collection, and methods used for analyzing the data.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to examine the practices being used in two urban middle schools to control disruptive behavior of students. This study is intended to augment the understanding of what two selected schools are doing to provide safe learning environments, and provide a guide to action for schools whose circumstances are similar to those presented in these cases across the nation.

#### Research Questions

An underlying question frames the focus of the study: What patterns of practice are being used in two urban middle schools to control disruptive behaviors of students? An examination of the literature helped to formulate subsequent questions that guide the inquiry: Sub-questions for this study are: (1) How do these two middle school principals, teachers and other stakeholders describe the practices, strategies, and habits used to maintain discipline in their schools? (2) How are the described practices, strategies, and habits used in these schools implemented? (3) How do the stakeholders in these two schools assess the effectiveness of these practices, strategies, and habits? (4) How are the practices, strategies, and habits similar or different between two middle schools within the same school district? (5) How do leadership styles exhibited by each of the two school principals influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts?

#### Significance of the Study

The need for developing effective school practices in an effort to provide a safe learning environment in schools is essential, apparent, and critical. Research indicates that a child's success in school is significantly influenced by having a safe and orderly learning environment (Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1998). Researchers have documented that certain practices are essential in developing positive school behaviors. In 1997, Congress endeavored to act in response to school administrators' apprehensions about how to create safe school environments.

As part of its role in implementing the amendments to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (1997), the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services in the U.S. Department of Education has funded research and technical assistance to provide schools with information about what works to create safe, effective learning environments for all children. To date, the challenges of educating students in a safe learning environment have surfaced as a main concern among school professionals and community leaders. These data suggest that schools are facing severe challenges in their attempts to provide safe learning environments. If they are to achieve success, schools must use the most effective strategies and techniques available to educate our children.

### Design of the Study

The current investigation will be conducted in two selected middle schools from an urban school district consisting of nine middle schools. The school district is located in a large urban setting in a southeastern state. By definition, this inquiry is classified as a qualitative case study. Therefore, the respondents' words will serve as the primary data, supported by data collected from document reviews and on-site observations.

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) will be the conceptual model used in this study. "This design permits the simultaneous investigation in the form of specific hypotheses referred to as a process-person-context-time (PPCT) model" (Moen, Elder, Luscher, 1995, p.621). The model ranges from the face-to-face immediate interaction of the microsystem to the molar influence of the macrosystem.

Bronfenbrenner's (1989) system is characterized by the examination of various roles, expected behavior, and different relationships across settings. His model comprises four basic types of environments: (a) the microsystem, (b) the mesosystem, (c) the exosystem, and (d) the macrosystem. The microsystem is the immediate environment in which a person is operating, such as the classroom. The mesosystem defines and views the relationship between the child's school and home. The exosystem is the environment that is external to the child's experience, but affects him in some way, and the macrosystem is the larger cultural context in which the overall system is important. The model is useful in understanding the sociological influences on child development and behavior. This model should be helpful in collecting and analyzing data across the school environment.

The study will involve five stages: (a) identification and selection of two urban middle schools; (b) data collected from four perspectives that comport with Bronfenbrenner's system: (classroom, school, community, district and state); (c) a document review of policies and procedures from each school; (d) an analysis of the information obtained through the interviews; and (e) on-site observations in each school.

The study is designed to be qualitative so that a number of different contextual influences on the issue might be examined closely. Rossman & Rallis (1998) pointed out that qualitative research allows the researcher to search for ways to understand systematically people's lived experiences. Furthermore, through this type of research, the complexities and interactions of many variables may be considered.

### *The Researcher's Role*

The role of the researcher in this study was to act as an observer and recorder. As the primary data collector, the personal thoughts, experiences and perceptions of the respondents were observed and recorded. Lincoln & Guba (1985) indicated that using the researcher as the data collector is advantageous and significant in qualitative research. Some characteristics identified by Lincoln and Guba (1985) include the ability of humans to: interact with the situation, respond to environmental cues, request verification of data, explore aberrant responses and collect data on multiple levels simultaneously. Denzin & Lincoln (2000 p3) view qualitative research as a value-laden interactive process that is shaped by the personal background of the researcher. In this study the researcher was a member of the school system who served as both an outside observer, and as an insider engaged in community development. The researcher shared common beliefs with the respondents and may be more biased than someone unfamiliar with the school. However, every attempt was made to refrain from allowing personal experiences to interfere with data collection. The researcher tried to relay empathy to make the respondents feel more comfortable during the interviews in order to facilitate open and candid thoughts and opinions.

The researcher acquired her initial experience with school wide discipline and the issue of safe schools in 1980. She was faced with the challenge of trying to teach students with emotional disturbances who had been withdrawn from regular schools because of severe behavioral problems that threatened the safety of others. Subsequent experiences with discipline and safe school challenges have spanned more than two decades. The researcher has instructed

special education students and regular education students for over 11 years and served in an administrative capacity for the past 20 years.

Her interest in school wide discipline and safe schools piqued while she was serving as an assistant principal in a high school where a shooting incident occurred. One teacher and one instructional assistant were injured and the news of the incident spread worldwide. She was asked to serve on various committees in an attempt to identify workable solutions to end violence in the schools. Because of her contributions to that cause, coupled with her background in behavior management/behavior modification, and experiences with challenging students, she was selected to spearhead a major initiative on improving discipline in the school district. These experiences afforded her the opportunity to converse with others about school-wide discipline strategies and to become more informed about behavior management techniques.

Although the inquiry will take place in her school district, she will not be studying her school. It was understood that certain ethical dilemmas were likely, and that she could be required to protect the privacy of the subjects, avoid conflicts of interest, maintain objectivity, and abide by professional responsibilities. Due to her relationship with the research subjects and the possible conflictive nature of the study, she was especially careful with issues of confidentiality and the manner that data was collected and stored (Bernard, 2001).

No research is value free, as our values and interests influence the issues we choose (Mitchell & Draper, 1982), the methods we use, the manner in which we convey our results, the facts we stress, and our relationships with informants. Researchers have a responsibility to both safeguard the interests of those involved or affected by their work, and to report all findings accurately and truthfully.

## Procedures

### *Gaining Access and Entry and the Selection of Schools*

The executive director for secondary education was asked to identify middle schools that he perceived as using effective practices addressing disruptive behavior. This person was perceived to be a knowledgeable source that could provide information regarding schools that demonstrate good supportive practices. This was accomplished through a two-step process. The first step was to contact the Executive Director of Secondary Education by letter asking him to identify schools that appear to have effective practices to control disruptive behavior of their

students. Subsequent participation by the schools was voluntary. The following criteria will be given to the director to be used in identifying the schools:

1. Schools that are similar in size;
2. Schools with a similar number of children on free or reduced lunch;
3. Schools having a similar racial component;
4. Schools having similar test scores; and
5. Schools having similar disciplinary data filed.

From the identified schools, two schools were selected for comparison in this study.

### *Setting, Selection and Population*

The second step in the selection process involved contacting the schools nominated by the Executive Director of Secondary Education for the study. If any principals of the schools nominated declined to participate in the study, another school was selected until two principals agreed to have their schools participate. The principals were contacted initially by phone and later by letter that addressed the study design. When the principals were contacted by telephone, the study was explained and they were asked to participate. If they accepted the invitation to be included, a time and place for the various interviews were arranged. Selected schools were identified as schools A and B. Respondents were selected from populations who have direct involvement and knowledge about the learning environment and disruptive conduct of students.

### *Participant Selection*

Six interviews were used at each school for the purpose of obtaining various individuals' perspectives on what practices are being used to control disruptive behavior of students. According to Marshall and Rossman (1989), qualitative research is a process that does the following:

values participants' perspectives in their worlds and seeks to discover those perspectives that view inquiry as an interactive process between the researcher and the participants, and that is primarily descriptive and relies on people's words as the primary data. (p. 11)

“Qualitative researchers usually work with small samples of people nested in their context, and studied in depth” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.27). With that thought in mind, participants were carefully selected for the study; 3 teachers in each school were selected by the

principal. A teacher was selected from grade 6, 7, and 8. Each of the 6 teachers met the criteria of having completed at least 3 years of teaching experience at their current school. This served as a two-fold purpose: (1) participants were vested in their work and had some knowledge of the strategies being used in their school to provide a safe learning environment, and (2) participants possessed knowledge of the practices being used in their school to control disruptive behavior of students.

In addition, personal, semi-structured, open-ended interviews with the principals at each school were conducted, and their words were included with the data including a review of policies and documents from each site. The data from the two schools were analyzed separately, and then compared across cases.

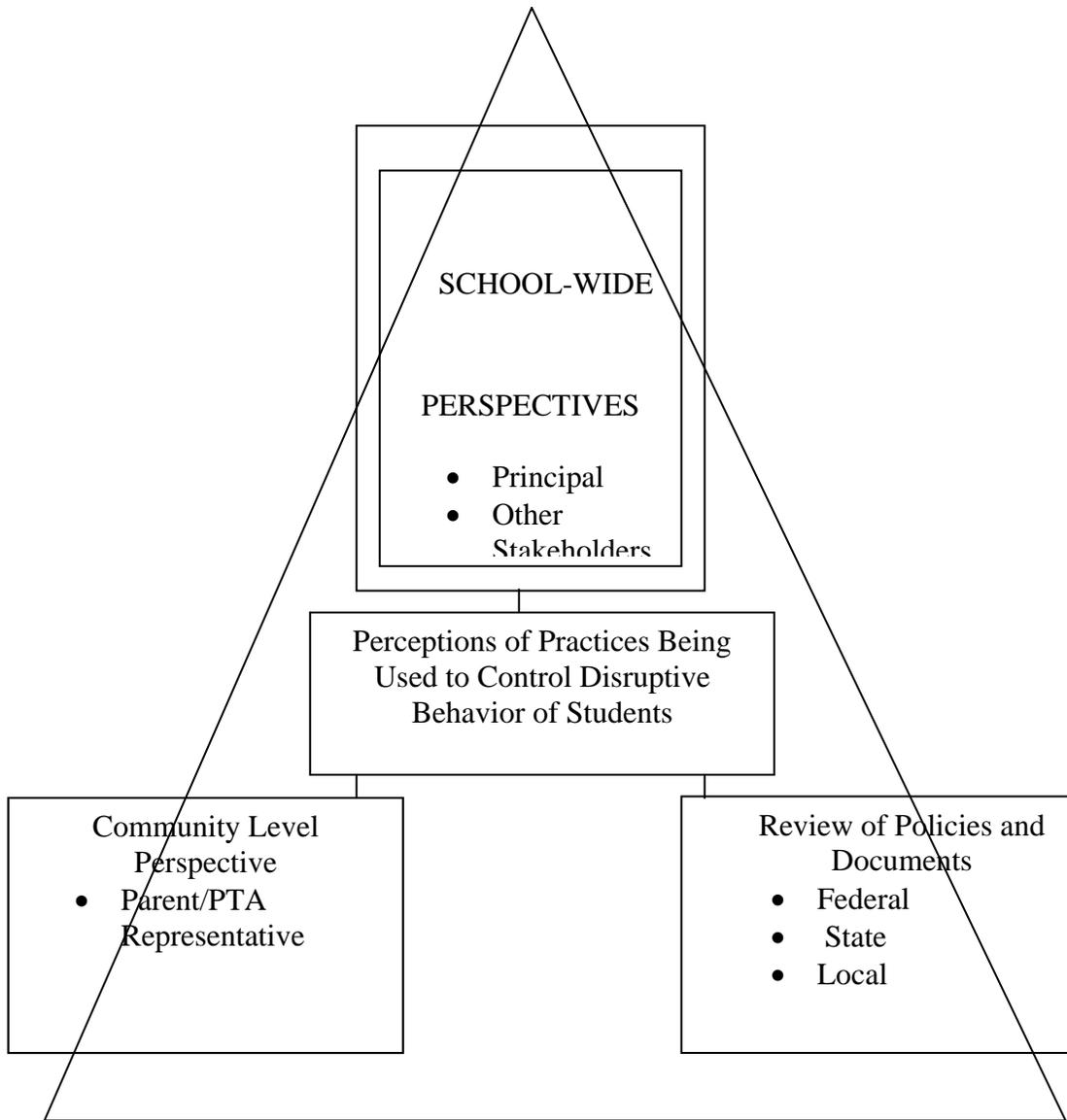
Finally, interviews were separately conducted with a security specialist and a PTA representative from each site. These persons were characterized as essential stakeholders in providing knowledge about the practices being used to control disruptive behavior of students.

#### *Assurance of Confidentiality*

Assurance of confidentiality was given to all subjects. Confidentiality of subjects was maintained by limiting the access of data and by never attaching names and identifiers of subjects to the data. The amount of personal information received was kept to a minimum and identifiers were changed or aggregated. All data were collected on school grounds or from the school district's central office, but only with permission provided by authorized individuals. Participants signed a consent form and responses were maintained.

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

The strategies for gathering data for this case study employed qualitative research methodology through the use of Bronfenbrenner's (1979) theory of educational environments inquiring within classrooms, schools, across a district and community, and the state. Interviews of principals and other key personnel were conducted along with a review of policies and procedures in order to triangulate the data. According to methods recommended by Jick (1979), Figure 1 illustrates the data collection plan for this study.



*Figure 1.* Triangulation—Data from multiple sources used to check for accuracy and determine validity (Adapted from Jick, 1979).

Interviews, a review of selected policy documents, and field observations became the primary sources of data collection. In addition to the research literature, personal experiences of the researcher, a school administrator, a home school coordinator, an educational diagnostician, a PTA member, a witness and victim of school violence, and a parent helped facilitate and guide the interview protocols.

Interviews that lasted approximately one hour were conducted with the teachers, security officers, principals, and PTA representatives. The interviews were taped with permission from the participants, and transcribed for later analysis. After the participants were identified, the school principal convened a brief meeting to explain the study. Following this meeting, informal telephone calls were by the researcher to introduce herself, explain the purpose and importance of the study, and schedule mutually agreed times to conduct the interviews with the teachers. The next contact was face-to-face meetings where participants heard more about the study and were given an informed consent form to sign prior to the individual interviews. A copy of this form is included in Appendix B. The informed consent form describes what has been done to reassure anonymity and the entitlement of the participant to terminate participation in the study at any time.

### *Instrumentation*

Interview protocols were designed to address these perspectives:

1. An administrator's perspective of the practices being used to control disruptive behavior of students;
2. A teacher's perspective of the practices being used to control disruptive behavior of students;
3. A parent's perspective of the practices being used to control disruptive behavior of students;
4. Perspectives from the security officers as to the practices being used to control disruptive behavior of students; and
5. Perspectives regarding disruptive behavior from local, state, and federal policies.

In pre-testing the interview protocols, a field test was conducted at a pilot school with a sample of participants similar to the population of the two schools in the study. The main purpose of the field test was to determine the clarity and accuracy of the interview protocol. Any items found to be unclear by the participants were revised.

### *Interview Protocols*

Teachers' responses, discussions, and interactions with the researcher led to more probing questions that were not included in the original interview guide. The interview items and the more probing questions, however, were based on the research questions. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

### *Principal and other Stakeholders' Semi-structured Interview*

Another guide was developed and used to interview the principals at each of the two schools. Data were gathered from notes and tape transcriptions. The questions in the interview guide were developed to respond to the overall research questions that guide this study. The semi-structured interview was pilot-tested with a principal of a school not included in the study group. The sequence of interviews began with the building principals for two purposes. Because administrators are the first to be contacted within a district or a building, and because they are generally first to agree to be interviewed, they lend a certain official credence to the process. Additionally, as administrators became familiar with the line of inquiry, their comfort level increased to the degree that they readily encouraged teachers to participate.

Principals at each school were asked to convene a brief meeting with the selected teachers to explain the purpose of the study and stress anonymity. The group interview was completed which produced a 100% return rate. Teachers were identified as teacher 1, 2, and 3 in the notes and taped transcriptions in order to preserve their anonymity. These interviews provided a rich description of their individual perspectives on school discipline and what their school was doing to make it safe and effective for learning. The group interview process produced a great deal of interaction among the participants.

Principal interviews and other participant interviews followed the teachers' format. These interviews were taped and transcribed. All interviews were scheduled pursuant to the availability of each respondent and at the discretion of the principals.

The use of the group process, interviewing, and later the review of school records allowed the researcher to triangulate the data (see Figure 1) and gain "multiple viewpoints for greater accuracy" (Jick, 1979, p. 602). The wealth of contextual detail from the group interviews helped establish the validity of this study.

Data were collected through the process of an interview guide approach and dialogic, in-depth interviews. Dialogic interviews are “true conversations in which researcher and participant together develop a more complex understanding of the topic (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 125). The in-depth interview used in qualitative research is described as a conversation, an interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, and is designed to obtain valid and reliable information (Marshall & Rossman, 1989). Seidman (1998, p. 33), states, “Because in-depth interviewing uses a method that is essentially open-ended, preparation, planning, and structure are crucial.” In-depth interviewing is further described by Taylor and Bogdan (1984) as a face-to-face encounter between the researcher and the subject. The purpose of this encounter is to obtain and understand the respondents’ perspectives on their lives, experiences and situations.

The interviews took place at a time and place that was convenient for each of the participants. The interviews were taped to smooth the progress of transcription and to allow the researcher to concentrate and listen carefully to their responses. The recording of the interviews also provided a complete record of the responses to the questions that were asked during each interview. The length of time for each interview was one hour.

Interviews were summarized and forwarded to participants for their review. These summaries provided an opportunity for participants to note any significant changes that may have occurred since the time of the interviews and to perform a validity check on the data summarized.

#### *Document Review*

A review of documents was employed to produce evidence of written or formal policies as they relate to school discipline. Specifically, any policy statements or interpretations, staff development plans and training activities, and guidelines for practice were reviewed.

#### *Classroom Observations*

The purpose of the observations was to identify ways in which individual teacher practices are aligned with district and building policies, and to view how teachers handled disruptive students. More specifically, it was used to understand the processes and structures in place. Teachers observed had an opportunity to provide feedback on the summarized data. These observations provided information about selected research questions. In the absence of several

full workday observations, the information derived from classroom observations was viewed conservatively.

### *Pilot.*

A pilot of the proposed study was conducted. Merriam Webster's online dictionary defines pilot as "something that provides a person with guiding information" (<http://www.m-w.com/cgi-bin/dictionary?book=Dictionary&va=guide>). The pilot served many purposes: (a) discover unanticipated problems with the interviewing process; (b) determine the appropriateness of the research structure; (c) ascertain any problems with gaining access, establishing contact, and or conducting the interview; (d) determine the length of the interview; and (e) uncover and revise any aspect of the study deemed appropriate. During the pilot, the proposed interview protocols will be used. The interviews were timed and recorded for transcription.

### *Data Analysis Procedures*

In analyzing the data, the researcher took notes and listened to the tapes many times before generating preliminary coding categories. Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggested "reading, reading . . . in order to become very familiar with it before forming categories" (p.114).

### *Analysis of Data*

Woolcott (1994) reported that there are three ways to "do something" with data. The first two involve describing the data as they are recorded and expanding it with an analysis that identifies key relationships. The third way is to endeavor to interpret it and reach some type of understanding about the data. According to Rossman & Rallis (1998, p. 11), "The ultimate goal of qualitative research is to transform data into information that can be used." They further elaborate that these uses can be understood from 4 perspectives: instrumental, enlightenment, symbolic, and emancipatory. Phrased differently, these perspectives function as a way to more fully understand how the results of a particular study may be used. While a researcher can't predict or restrict the uses that participants make, it is hoped that the primary use will be emancipatory. Rossman & Rallis (1998) define emancipatory as "offering ways to take action to transform structures and practices for the better."

The analysis of the data was accomplished by using both individual case analysis and multi-case cross-case analysis. Each interview was studied carefully to identify factors

influencing the disciplinary practices at the school. The analysis of the interviews included: 1) a description of the context in which the principals work; 2) a summary of their personal and professional backgrounds; 3) a summary of the skills and characteristics they identify as part of their disciplinary skills; 4) a summary of their personality and personal characteristics; and 5) a summary of the influences on their acquisition, development, and refinement of their disciplinary skills.

The multi-case, cross-case analysis looks for common factors across the interviews. This cross-case analysis facilitated a deeper understanding of what was studied and allowed for greater generalization of the results. While the purpose of the study was to determine the patterns of practice being used in urban middle schools to provide safe learning environments, a cross-case analysis added to the potential of transferring the relevance or applicability of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Wolcott, 1994). A cross-case analysis was also be used to identify common areas where further research is warranted.

#### *Data Management*

The amassing of a substantial quantity of data is a recognizable and accepted component of qualitative research. Organizing and making the most of the data also is essential and critical to the accuracy of the results.

*Field notes and transcripts.* “A detailed and careful transcript that re-creates the verbal and non-verbal material of the interview can be of great benefit to a researcher...” (Seidman, (1998). Hence, each interview was taped and later transcribed. Transcriptions were copied and kept in different locations to guard against potential loss. The original transcription was filed for future reference while the copies were used for editing and organizing the notes. Field notes were taken with each interview and transcribed after each interview. A journal of the researcher’s feelings, questions, and experiences were also kept in an attempt to help plan future meetings, create follow-up questions, and assist with any concerns that arose.

*Reliability.* “Because what is being studied in education is assumed to be in flux, multifaceted, and highly contextual, because information gathered is a function of who gives it and how skilled the researcher is at getting it, and because the emergent design of a qualitative case study precludes a *priori* controls, achieving reliability in the traditional sense is not only fanciful but impossible (Merriam, 1998, p.206). Therefore, according to Merriam (1998), it is virtually impossible to replicate qualitative study because it may not produce the same results.

This revelation, however, should not bring into disrepute the results of the study because numerous analyses of the unchanged data will reveal similar results unless new evidence is presented.

*Credibility.* Siegle (2000) described prolonged engagement, persistent observations, triangulation, and peer debriefing as ways of determining if a study has credibility. Interviewing and meeting with the study participants will fulfill the prerequisite for prolonged engagement. Probing for various interpretations and applying the constant comparative method of data analysis will support the need for persistent observations. The multiple methods of using interviews, field notes, and document analysis will cross check findings. Employing the services of peers and colleagues will accomplish the obligation of peer debriefing.

Transcript data were organized into units of data that spoke to either unexpected issues, or one of the research questions. Special attention was given to data that reflected similarities and/or differences among the participants.

## The Qualitative Narrative

### *Presenting the Results*

The initial results were derived from the first set of field notes, the first transcription of an interview, and any initial notes or memos. Early and incessant writing assisted to stimulate the researcher's feelings about the topic--what is being done to make schools safe for learning - and will make available essential opportunities for professional feedback from peers.

The challenges faced in creating safe, effective, learning environments are critical to educators across the nation. Research in this area contributes both to theory and practice when it is communicated beyond the actual study. The main audience for the study undoubtedly will be other educators, particularly those in urban middle schools and those involved or interested in developing, implementing, and monitoring effective disciplinary practices. The final report will be very similar to the entire process of conducting the study. It will indicate the nature of the problem investigated; provide explanations and descriptions of how the population was determined, the manner in which the investigation was conducted, and the results of the investigation (Merriam, 1998).

The presentation of the results employed the methods presented in this chapter. Direct quotes, narrative description, and figures and tables were used to depict the categories that were

revealed. The conclusions were described in a methodical manner according to the categories, themes and patterns that emerged during the data analysis. A summary of the findings presented, followed by a presentation of each separate finding supported by quotes from the interviews or references to the documentary evidence, provided the format used in reporting the results of the study (Merriam, 1998).

### Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that follows presented a roadmap of the study mission. As revealed in Figure 2, a comparative case study was used to illustrate and evaluate the study. From the interview process, stakeholders in the school explained the discipline practices used to control disruptive behavior of students. Results were scrutinized within and, subsequently, across the school settings. Continuous comparisons were made as data is retrieved from documents and interviews. Data were categorized under each research question according to their identification. Additionally, Table 2 represents a matrix of the research questions and the sources of data for each.

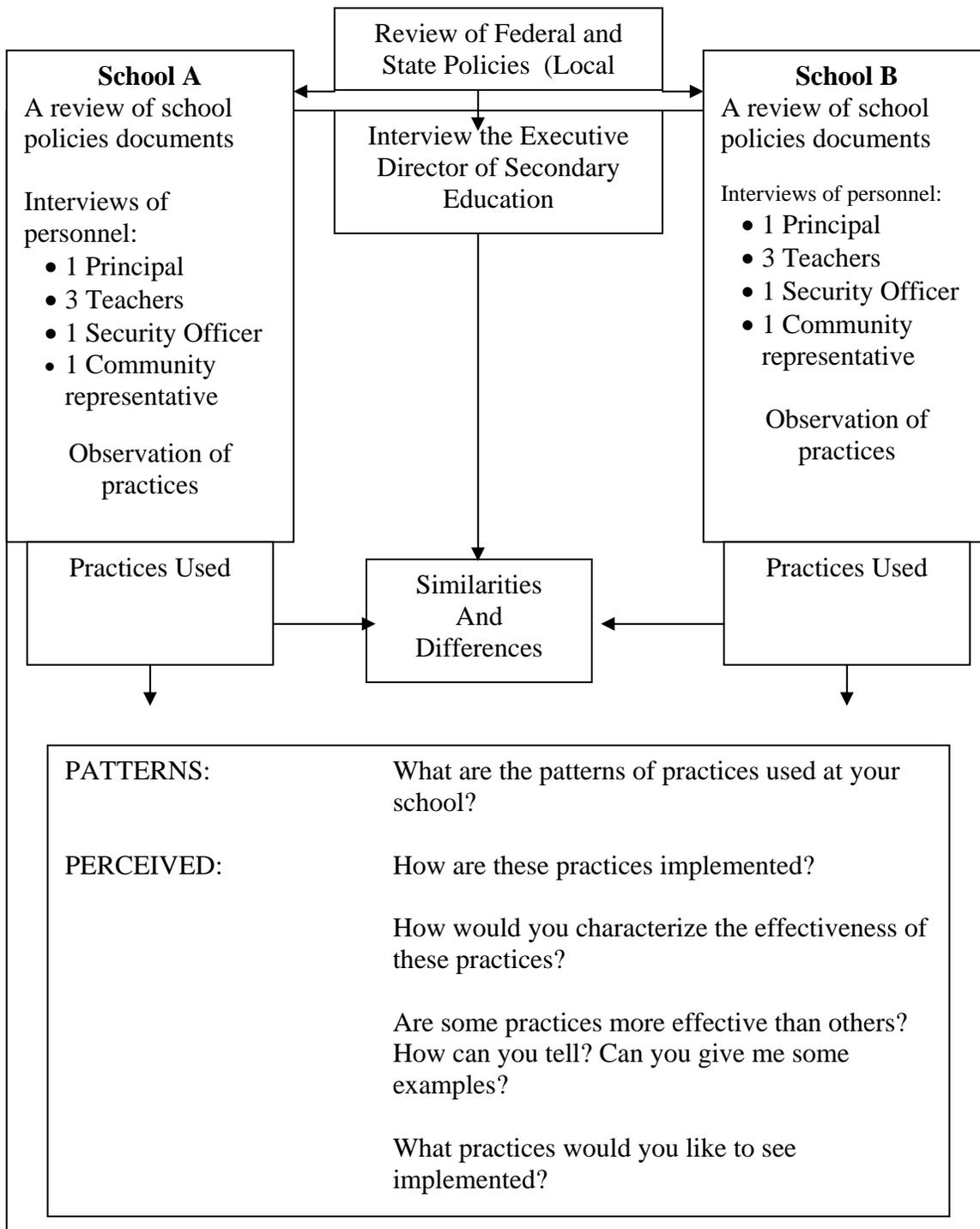


Figure 2. A conceptual framework of the comparative study.

Table 2

*Matrix of Research Questions and Selected Probing Questions*

<b>SOURCES OF DATA</b>							
<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Observation</b>	<b>Document Review</b>	<b>Interviews by Informant Group</b>				
			<b>Teacher Participants</b>	<b>Principal Participants</b>	<b>Executive Director</b>	<b>Security Officers</b>	<b>PTA/Community Representatives</b>
What discipline practices are in place at your school?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
How are the described practices implemented?			X	X	X	X	X
How do the stakeholders assess the effectiveness of these practices?			X	X	X	X	X
What types of disciplinary practices do you use?	X		X	X		X	
How effective are these practices?			X	X		X	
What do you think are the most common problems in the school?		X	X	X	X	X	X
What are the most common consequences for offenses?		X	X	X	X	X	X

(table continued)

Table 2 (continued)

SOURCES OF DATA							
Research Questions	Observation	Document Review	Interviews by Informant Group				
			Teacher Participants	Principal Participants	Executive Director	Security Officers	PTA/Community Representatives
Do you feel these consequences are adequate?			X	X	X	X	X
Do you agree with the consequences given?			X	X	X	X	X
Do you fee a “zero tolerance” is or would be effective?		X	X	X	X	X	X
What types of programs are available in your school that deals with helping the disruptive student?	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Do you feel that the programs in place at your school are effective?		X	X	X	X	X	X
Do you feel leadership has anything to do with the behavior of students in your school?			X	X	X	X	X
Do you feel that teachers play a key role in controlling disruptive behavior in schools?			X	X	X	X	X

## Concluding Remarks

The reader is cautioned against assuming that the present findings can be broadly generalized. This study used the techniques of qualitative research to produce a set of assertions about disciplinary practices used in two middle schools to control disruptive behavior.

Data for this study were based on a single interview per respondent, short direct observations in classrooms, and document review. Although technically adequate for triangulation of data, some aspects of these methods have prevented a more in-depth inquiry. A fundamental limitation has been the lack of repeat interview sessions. Due, in part to time constraints, the level of trust that might have allowed greater disclosure regarding the actualization of support and the politics that accompany policymaking may not have been fully realized.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS OF THE STUDY

What patterns of practice are being used in two urban middle schools to control disruptive behaviors of students? Administrators, staff, teachers and parents were interviewed from two urban middle schools during the 2004-2005 academic year. In addition, records pertaining to the level and types of disciplinary practices in use were reviewed. Once the data were collected, qualitative analysis was completed iteratively to identify patterns in the study related to the core research question. These findings help to ascertain what disciplinary practices were used by two selected urban middle schools to control disruptive behavior of their students.

The following sections of this chapter identify descriptive demographics for interview participants. In addition, pertinent characteristics from participant schools are outlined. Subsequent to the descriptive demographic section, data analyses were organized according to the primary research questions regarding the patterns of practice being used to control disruptive behaviors of students. These data were structured according to the secondary research questions for ease of review and understanding. The chapter concludes with a summary of the key highlights of the data analysis.

#### *Participant Demographics*

The research questions were answered primarily by educators from two urban middle schools in a southeastern state. In these schools, the participants were selected randomly from a list provided by the principal of each school. From the potential pool, the study solicited volunteers for participation. The total sample of 13 participants consisted of two principals, six teachers, two security officers, two parents, and one central office administrator.

The two middle schools were selected as they were fairly similar in terms of their socio-economic and ethnicity breakdown. In addition, the schools selected also are likely to face similar disciplinary infractions and were likely to have similar responses by virtue of their geographic locations.

One principal was male, the other female. The participants were all African-American. They were 69% female and 31% male and were predominantly educators (69%), with a majority of those occupying the role of a teacher. The remaining participants (31%) represented both the community and school perspectives equally.

The age of participants ranged from 25 - 58 years and the majority were female. The mean age of participants was 41 years while 53% percent of the participants lived in the urban district. The other participants lived in surrounding localities. Additional information about the participants is presented in Table 3.

### *School Demographics*

Understanding the background and composition of the community that composes the schools reflected in this research is essential. Reflected in Table 4 are the demographics for the represented schools. The descriptive demographics include: grade levels, enrollment, community type, student ethnicity, free and reduced-priced lunch, class size, percentage of highly qualified staff, average number of disciplinary referrals per week, PTA membership, principals' tenure, top problems in the school, types of misconduct, primary methods of handling discipline, and primary preventive disciplinary practices. This information provides valuable understanding regarding the general background of the students enrolled.

Both schools were considered urban middle schools, consisting of grades 6-8. The enrollment at school A is 589 as compared to school B with 441. School A has 290 males and 299 females. School B has 212 males compared to 229 females. Both schools are predominantly comprised of African Americans with 95% in School A and 82% in School B. Other ethnicities include Caucasians, Hispanics, and 2% from other ethnic backgrounds. In addition, these schools are classified as Title I schools with 94% of the students receiving free or reduced meals in School A as compared to 91% in school B. Class sizes are within the range of 25:1 in school A, compared to 23:1 in school B. Eighty-six percent of the teachers in school A are considered "highly qualified" in contrast to 92% in school B.

Mutually, each school reports a high number of discipline referrals each week, ranging from 30-50. Collectively, PTA's membership is low. Only 17% of the parents from school A have joined the PTA as compared to 32% in school B.

The top discipline problems in both schools include defiance, disrespect, disruptive behavior, abusive language, intimidation, fighting, and assault. Both schools indicate very little alcohol or drug use, possession of weapons, or serious violent behaviors. Both schools also report limited parental involvement, limited volunteers, and limited partnerships with businesses in the community. The primary methods of handling disciplinary problems in both schools included conferences with the parents and students, in-school and out-of-school suspensions, and

referrals to alternative programs. Other methods include: referrals to a counselor or other agency, designing behavioral contracts, behavioral intervention plans, or functional behavioral assessments, assigning after school or lunch detentions, changing classes, assigning students to partial day instruction programs, assigning students to a different schools, placing students on home instruction programs, or expulsions.

Clear rules and expectations, frequent visibility of principal and security personnel, counseling and character education programs, parental involvement, and a structured environment were the primary preventive disciplinary practices employed in school A. School B's primary practices include school-wide meetings, high expectations, incentives for positive behavior, and parental involvement. Other preventive practices for the schools consisted of: instructional strategies, warnings, predetermined signals, planned ignoring, positive encouragement, proximity seating, peer assistance, individualized attention, and many others.

Table 3

*Participant Demographics*

		<b>School A</b>	<b>School B</b>
Gender	Principal	Male	Female
	Teacher A	Female	Male
	Teacher B	Female	Female
	Teacher C	Male	Male
	Security Officer	Male	Female
	PTA Representative	Female	Female
	Executive Director	(Male)	
Degree	Principal	M.Ed	M.Ed
	Teacher A	M.S.	B.S
	Teacher B	B.S	M.Ed
	Teacher C	B.A	M.Ed
	Security Officer	High School	B.A.
	PTA Representative	High School	M.S.
	Executive Director	(Ed.D)	
Age	Principal	52	58
	Teacher A	40	30
	Teacher B	35	41
	Teacher C	57	34
	Security Officer	29	51
	PTA Representative	34	29
	Executive Director	(52)	
Years of Experience	Principal	22	29
	Teacher A	16	9
	Teacher B	11	19
	Teacher C	29	11
	Security Officer	8	28
	PTA Representative	3	2
	Executive Director	(30)	
Years of Experience in Current Position	Principal	3	1
	Teacher A	9	9
	Teacher B	11	15
	Teacher C	15	9
	Security Officer	3	4
	PTA Representative	3	2
	Executive Director	(3)	

Table 4

*School Characteristics*

<b>Characteristic</b>	<b>School A</b>	<b>School B</b>
Grade Level	6-7-8	6-7-8
Enrollment	589	441
Gender: Male/Female	290/299	212/229
Community Type	Urban	Urban
Student Ethnicity	95% African American 3% Caucasian 2% Other	82% African American 10% Hispanic 5% Caucasian, 2% Other
Students receiving free or reduced lunch	94%	91%
Class size range	23-29	21-25
Teacher/student ratio	25:1	23:1
Percentage of highly qualified staff	86%	92%
Average number of disciplinary referrals per week	40-50	30-40
Members of the PTA	101	136
Years principal has been the leader of this school	3	1
Years principal has been in education	14	29
Top problems in the school	Inappropriate student behavior Lack of parental involvement Lack of commitment from teachers Lack of consistency in management	Inappropriate student behavior Unmotivated students Lack of resources Some staff are resistant to change
Primary types of misconduct	Defiance Disrespectfulness Disruptive behavior Abusive language Intimidation/Bullying Assault	Disruptive Behavior Disrespectfulness Defiance Fighting
Primary methods of handling disciplinary problems	Conferences with parent & student In-school suspension Out of school suspension Referral to alternative program	Conferences with parent & student In-school suspension Out of school suspension Referral to alternative program
Primary preventive disciplinary practices	Clear rules Visibility of principal and security Counseling and Character Education Parental involvement Structured environment	School-wide meetings High expectations Provide incentives for positive behavior Parental involvement

## *Research Questions*

Interview data collected from teachers, principals, security officers, parents and the Executive Director for Secondary Education, centered around the research questions, along with a review of relevant records provided the multiple process-triangulation necessary to obtain validity and give a complete descriptive profile of these two schools.

Qualitative analysis was completed iteratively to identify data patterns that reflected what patterns of practice were being used in these two urban middle schools to control disruptive behaviors of students.

The exact words of the participants' responses to questions have been presented in several instances, and helped to maintain authenticity while illustrating the viewpoints of the participants. These data were broken-down into 5 research questions. The first focus of the analysis concerned how middle school principals, teachers, and other stakeholders described their practices, strategies and habit at their schools.

The two interviewed principals described the environments at their schools as well as factors that were contributing to the environment. Discipline was described with numerous pejorative terms:

1. Discipline is a major problem;
2. Things were a mess;
3. There are weaknesses in parental involvement;
4. Ownership of the problem was missing;
5. Troublemakers were removed;
6. Incidences occur too frequently;
7. Students don't appear to value education; and
8. Parents demonstrate lack of respect.

In addition, principals discussed their respective programs that were focused specifically on discipline:

1. A character education program has been implemented – not sure how effective it is;
2. Peer mediation program has been abolished;
3. Students are recognized for good behavior;
4. Disciplinary referrals are the number one problem;
5. Suspensions are a major consequence; and

6. Team building has been installed.

The third area of comments from the principals focused on descriptive terms of the disciplinary issues they face everyday:

1. Our school is “plagued with disruptive behavior”;
2. Violence is non-existent- we are blessed;
3. Play-fighting;
4. Students are immature;
5. Lack discipline;
6. Numerous referrals to office;
7. Disruptive behavior;
8. Disrespect;
9. Defiance;
10. Fighting; and
11. No “major” problems with alcohol, drugs, weapons.

Both principals indicated that discipline needed to be looked at situationally. The “standards have one general consequence for fighting – you have to look at each situation carefully.” There is zero tolerance for drugs and weapons and everything else seems to be handled case-by-case. One principal indicated that they “didn’t have a school wide discipline plan, but are moving in that direction.” The need for achievement also was apparent in the interviews- without sustained academic improvement their jobs were described as “being on the line.” While strong and effective leadership were viewed as important factor, the principals also felt overwhelmed by disciplinary issues:

1. “Discipline consumes a good part of my day. It is often overwhelming;”
2. “We need to develop some framework for promoting a positive learning environment for students,” and
3. Interviews with the teachers at both schools reflected a wide array of discourse related to disciplinary conditions and practices. They described the environment at their schools:
  1. High expectations;
  2. Individual basis;
  3. Limited parental involvement;

4. Good classroom management;
5. Teachers lack management skills;
6. Some teachers are set in their ways;
7. Some teachers don't care, won't do anything to help make things better;
8. All schools have problems with discipline
9. Fair;
10. Non-supportive parents;
11. Children are exposed to too much violence;
12. Students are unmotivated;
13. Leadership is essential;
14. Newer teachers lack control;
15. Some teachers are afraid of children;
16. Kids are more diverse everywhere;
17. Administration is inconsistent; and
18. Many students misbehave with no consequences.

The respondent teachers discussed programs that focused on discipline in their schools:

1. Behavioral charts and contracts;
2. School wide incentives;
3. Positive encouragement;
4. Speakers;
5. Character education programs;
6. In-school suspension/Out of school suspension programs;
7. Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways program;
8. Programs are not working;
9. Ineffective programs;
10. Referrals are forwarded to the office;
11. Constant communication with parents;
12. Leadership is of paramount importance;
13. It (the school wide discipline plan) is okay;
14. Mission to do something- better than nothing;
15. Does more good than harm;

16. Offers more than just punishment;
17. Peer mediations, mediators;
18. Some teachers just put kids out into the hallway;
19. Practices are ineffective;
20. Obviously it isn't working- behavior doesn't change;
21. Need consistency;
22. Better than before; and
23. Parents are important.

Disciplinary issues faced on a daily basis were mentioned throughout the interviews:

1. Schools will look like jails if something isn't done;
2. Zero-tolerance- one size does not fit all;
3. Can't teach with disruptive behavior in class;
4. Negative students are low achievers;
5. Blame parents;
6. Children want to be successful;
7. Disruptive talking;
8. Rudeness to teachers;
9. Defiance;
10. Leadership is important;
11. Working to a degree, some improvement needed;
12. Committee based; and
13. Pushing, shoving, teasing, dissing, defiance, rudeness, language, skipping classes, disruptive behavior, talking, rapping, drumming.

The teachers consistently mentioned strong leadership as important elements of an effective disciplinary program. They also discussed that they did not feel that what was in place was working, or working well enough. They felt that while there were some programs that were "doing more good than harm" more should be done. Zero tolerance programs were again mentioned as a program that should be carefully applied on a case by case basis- every situation is not the same.

One security officer from each school was interviewed during my research. They each felt that it was the mission of the schools system to “establish an environment conducive to learning.”

Some of their comments reflected the feeling that the standards of conduct were followed “pretty well”, although there did appear to be some violence in the schools. Unlike the teachers, they felt that the current policies were being followed. Their descriptions of the programs included the following:

1. Children just need love;
2. Standards of conduct followed pretty well;
3. Principal complains if you put children out too much;
4. What we have works in most cases;
5. Respect students – mutual respect;
6. Principal is primarily responsible;
7. Effective;
8. Need good management;
9. Parents are failing, principals are scared;
10. Standards of conduct are important;
11. Contacting parents;
12. Having student conferences;
13. Warnings;
14. Ok practices- something more needs to be done;
15. Need more alternatives; and
16. Cutting class, defiance, disruptive behavior, fighting, bullying.

Leadership from the principal was seen as an important element in their disciplinary environment. Zero tolerance was mentioned as being circumstantial: “Zero tolerance is needed for serious offenses.” Their comments seemed to reflect similar themes to the parents and the executive director for secondary schools.

One parent from each school was interviewed. The data from the interviews reflect similar themes. They indicated that there are disciplinary practices in place, along with policies and guidelines. There are “certain rules children must follow.” Other comments regarding the disciplinary environment included:

1. Society is to blame;
2. Certain rules children must follow;
3. Gotten a lot of bad kids out of school, so something must be working;
4. Counseling;
5. School gives incentives;
6. Suspensions are used frequently;
7. Lack of fairness employed by some teachers; and
8. People are often insensitive to others.

Some of the disciplinary issues mentioned included: talking back, running in halls, using bad language, fighting, yelling, and playing. Consequences of misbehavior included student conferences, and subsequent parent meetings and conferences. In accordance with the policy, suspension was also mentioned as part of the overall disciplinary plan.

The parents supported the earlier statements that strong leadership at the school was important. There was some indication that removing the badly behaving children was solving problems.

The Executive Director of Secondary Education indicated that since there were carefully outlined Standards of Student Conduct in place, everyone should be able to follow the standards. The comments of the security officer were somewhat along these lines. The Executive Director felt that achievement was important and that establishing order was of considerable relevance. "There is a culture of disrespect at the school." Also mentioned was the overcrowding in the schools. During my interview the executive director indicated that collaboration between the school community members was an essential component of an effective disciplinary program.

Throughout the interviews of all the school personal, struggling disciplinary environments were discussed. In addition, strong leadership and collaboration were viewed as essential common characteristics of school programs. The next question in my research concerns how the practices and policies in the schools are implemented and administered. The interview data from these school personnel along with the school policies were reviewed to research the answer to this question. As with the initial question, responses to the research question are categorized by their respective role at the school.

The interviews responses from the principals were very similar. Their discussion of disciplinary practice implementation at their schools was categorized into two distinct areas. The

first area was a discussion of actual practices at the school. The second area was considered a characterization of practices - things that influenced their programs.

Character education, RIPP, counseling, mentoring, in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension and removal to a different school were practices representative of the span of programs available to the principals. One principal indicated that “suspension was a major consequence.” The two principals discussed needs assessment processes and task forces to look at things from a community basis. There was an underlying need to work with parents to break down barriers and establish trust. Throughout the interviews with all of the participants, there was concern about the parent attitudes and involvement in their children’s education, and particularly their role in the application of disciplinary practices. In addition to the “consequential programs” there was also mention of several positive or proactive programs. These included recognizing good behavior through an assembly program as well as a student of the week recognition awards. The following is a representation of some of the language used by the principals to describe some of the available programs. Further details of the interviews can be found Appendix A.

1. A task force to come up with solutions may be helpful;
2. Trouble makers should be referred to alternative schools;
3. Some students eventually drop out of school;
4. Community partnerships are needed;
5. Intense training and professional development workshops are needed;
6. The school is moving toward a more positive approach;
7. Students need refinement;
8. Meetings should be held frequently;
9. Students receive in-school suspension for minor infractions;
10. Students receive out-of-school suspensions for major infractions;
11. Character education programs are needed;
12. Students should recognized in assembly programs for good behavior;
13. Student of week programs are effective;
14. Abolished peer mediation programs;
15. Conflict resolution programs are needed;
16. Referrals are frequently sent to the office;

17. There is a zero tolerance for drugs and weapons;
18. The Standards of conduct should be enforced;
19. Conferences are needed often with parents/guardians;
20. Community service programs are recommended;
21. Behavioral contracts should be put in place;
22. Some students should be referred to an alternative program;
23. Counseling is needed; and
24. Mentoring programs would be helpful.

Many of the practices were characterized as challenging by different influences at school. These influences included what the principals referred to as putting out fires. They also indicated that it was important to get the teachers involved, and encourage teacher leadership in the disciplinary practices.

1. Putting out fires;
2. Parental involvement important;
3. Encourage teacher leadership;
4. Work with parents to break down barriers, establish trust;
5. Removed trouble makers to alternative schools;
6. Suspension major consequence;
7. Moving toward positive approach;
8. Students need refinement;
9. Regular kids can attend special schools with small class size and uniforms special needs kids cannot;
10. Case by case basis;
11. Common sense; and
12. Situational.

In addition to the principals, three teachers from each school were interviewed regarding the practices at the schools. The perspectives from the teachers were very different from that of the principals. This is reflected by some of their comments:

1. Don't have a plan;
2. Everything is individualized; and
3. No universal basis

The teachers discussed that at each school there were high expectations for behavior in compliance with the student codes of conducts. However, these guidelines were not considered to be a school wide plan by the teachers interviewed. Although they did not discuss their practices in terms of school wide practices, they did characterize them in a similar fashion to the Programs that were available included posting of school rules, encouragement, conferences, ISS and OSS, school rules posted and police and security personnel present. Positive plans also included incentive awards programs, working with parents, counseling and alternative schooling practices

In addition, there was some discussion of the role that other teachers' practices played in the implementation of school programs. "Some other teachers do not have high expectations, they are negative and do not provide correction in a professional and sensitive manner." Further descriptive language used to characterize such discipline plans included:

1. Instructional methods to engage students;
2. Uses of an incentive / award program;
3. Work with parents;
4. In school suspension;
5. Out of school suspension;
6. Use of violence prevention specialists;
7. Identify problems before they occur;
8. Redirect students in positive ways;
9. Limit the number of referrals to the office;
10. No school wide plan;
11. Constant battle;
12. Communication with parents;
13. Early intervention;
14. "proximity seating";
15. Signaling students;
16. Lunch and after school detention;
17. Counseling;
18. Talk to students and parents;
19. It is something;

20. Inconsistent;
21. Parents' fuss if you suspend;
22. School wide thing is better than nothing;
23. Conferences;
24. Alternative programs;
25. Posting rules;
26. Clear expectations;
27. ISS/ OSS is like a revolving door;
28. Change seats;
29. After school/ lunch detention;
30. Extra assignments;
31. Referrals to office (few);
32. Better than before;
33. Preferential seating;
34. Visible security personnel;
35. Positive with students;
36. Mediation;
37. Good teaching;
38. Peer mediation
39. Tie behavior to grades;
40. Think across district;
41. Committees;
42. Need old school style discipline;
43. Behavioral charts;
44. Behavioral contracts;
45. Parental involvement;
46. School wide incentive;
47. Be positive;
48. Give encouragement;
49. Class meetings;
50. Speakers' prevention and/or motivational programs;

51. Remain calm;
52. Try to be objective;
53. Notify office as a last resort;
54. Detention;
55. Warnings; and
56. Referrals to office.

One parent from each school was interviewed regarding their perceptions of disciplinary practices. Their perceptions more closely mirrored that of the principal. The data from the interviews of the principals reflected that zero tolerance was important for the effectiveness of their plans. In addition, suspension, both in school suspension and out of school suspension was used quite extensively. The parents also discussed counseling of students as a disciplinary measure pursuant to suspension and expulsion. Comments from the parents indicated that they thought the school had gone so far as to beg kids to be good and offer incentives for good behavior. These incentives were considered to be important in lieu of suspensions and conferences. Zero tolerance was considered quite important, although there was no consideration of situational guidelines as reflected in other interviews. The following list reflects key themes from the parental interviews:

1. Think so (that there is a school wide plan in place);
2. Rules to be followed;
3. Counseling and conferences;
4. Begging students to be good;
5. Incentives to students;
6. Suspend quite a bit (ISS and OSS);
7. Zero tolerance important;
8. Programs to reward students; and
9. Meetings with students and parents.

The security officers at each school were interviewed to ascertain their views on the practices in place at the schools. These practices included a heavy reliance on the Standards of Student Conduct. The officers indicated that these standards pretty much should guide behavior and discipline at the schools. They indicated that the standards were followed pretty well, although “parents complained if you put children out of school too much.” In addition the

security officers discussed the zero tolerance program. They thought it was important, but that it should be implemented with some consideration on a case by case basis. “Zero tolerance equals zero judgment so it is not so good - but it is good for repeat offenders, serious offenses.”

The ultimate resort is to put the offenders out of school, and they would like to see effective alternatives before that point.

The following data reflect common themes in the interview discussions from the security officers:

1. Talk to students;
2. Develop good relationships and trust;
3. Yes, we have an effective plan;
4. Reviewing standards of conduct;
5. Contacting parents;
6. Having conference with students;
7. Changing classes;
8. Warnings;
9. Patience;
10. Ultimately putting them out of school; and
11. Zero tolerance needed for serious offenses.

Finally, the Executive Director of Secondary Programs was interviewed regarding the implementation of disciplinary practices. The responses from the Executive Director in some ways mirrored the security officers. The Executive Director felt that the standards of conduct were reasonable and “everyone should follow them.” In addition, funding was a consideration for successful program implementation. Without continued and adequate funding for programs like the peer mentoring program, numerous programs will be started and ended before their effectiveness can really be seen. Language discussing the disciplinary programs can be reflected here:

1. When used consistently;
2. Alternative programs such the Capital City Program;
3. Communicating with parents;
4. ISS;
5. Half day programs’

6. Home schooling program;
7. Night school programs;
8. Behavioral contracts;
9. Positive Behavioral Supports;
10. After school detention programs; and
11. Community service programs

For all of the data reflected in the interview, the policies of the schools supported what the participants indicated. There were policies implemented to govern the positive reinforcement practices as well as to enforce the punitive responses for repeat offenses. Subsequent to understanding what practices are employed is a further understanding of whether the participant of the interview process believed the practices are effective. This evidence is presented as follows in support of sub research question three- Do you feel these practices are effective?

The disciplinary programs at the two schools were examined in terms of the effectiveness of their practices. The views of the stakeholders in the two schools were represented by the people I interviewed during my research. The principals at the two schools expressed similar views as to the programmatic effectiveness. Comments included:

1. Not sure how effective the character education program is;
2. Still struggling to find the right process to use; and
3. Moving toward a more positive approach, but not there yet.

The principals discussed that while the program had changed over the last few years, there was still a punishment mindset. In addition, they expressed the view that disruptive and sometimes violent behavior occurs far too frequently. Data collected from the principals reflect that in their assessment, some of the practices are improving and changing, but that they do not feel they are fully effective. As evidence of their concern they cite frequent disruptive behavior, immaturity and lack of discipline among many of their students. There is some optimism that they are moving in the right direction.

The teachers at each school were also interviewed regarding their perspectives on the effectiveness of the school disciplinary programs as well as how to measure the effectiveness. The majority of the data from the teachers focuses on their perspectives regarding the school programs. Many of the teachers felt that, overall, an effective plan had not be installed to control

disruptive students. Some reflected that they were not sure that there was even a plan. One teacher commented “zebras don’t change their stripes.”

1. No - not effective;
2. No one universal plan;
3. Everything individual;
4. Students don’t learn from their mistakes;
5. Not that I am aware of (is there an effective plan in place);
6. We need one;
7. Schools will begin looking like jails if something isn’t done;
8. ISS/ OSS is a revolving door for some students;
9. Behavior doesn’t change;
10. Not totally effective;
11. What we are doing isn’t working;
12. Not really effective – something is going on everyday here;
13. Have to do something to maintain control;
14. Classroom management affects effectiveness;
15. “I don’t know of any school that has a school wide plan in place”; and
16. All the schools are having problems with discipline.

In addition, several responses from the teachers indicated that they believed there were some effective programs:

1. Some (disciplines, strategies, habits) are effective;
2. At times strategies are effective, but not significantly so;
3. Its okay;
4. Its something;
5. Consistency is an issue;
6. Better than nothing;
7. Needs to be fine tuned;
8. Some are effective, I guess;
9. Need more alternatives for the population we serve;
10. It’s a little better than before;
11. Most children want to be successful;

12. Do more good than harm;
13. Offers something more than just punishment;
14. Some can be improved- such as the peer mediation program;
15. Sometimes we start programs and then end them before we can expound upon them;
16. We are making greater strides in this area than are many other schools;
17. It is working to a degree;
18. Some improvements still needed;
19. Yes, overall;
20. If everybody followed through on expectations; and
21. We are on a mission to make some improvements.

These data reflected the teachers' efforts to try to see which pieces of the disciplinary programs were working. Their consideration of the question provided a critical analysis of what others viewed as a school wide program. They looked for the positive and the negative of the programs and reflected about their daily existence within the walls of their respective schools.

The parents interviewed regarding the program effectiveness indicated that they thought what was in place was working. They felt that the rules had been laid out, and that those that could not follow them needed to be removed to another school situation. The following is a brief review of the data from these parents:

1. I think that there is an effective plan in certain places;
2. There are certain rules children must follow;
3. What they have is working;
4. Yes, I really do think the discipline practices are effective;
5. I think they're ok;
6. Bad children need to go someplace else;
7. Some kids need something else, but most benefit; and
8. The really difficult kids need to be placed in another school.

The security officer/ safety officers at the schools were interviewed as well. Their comments reflected a similar structure to that of the parents. They felt that there were standards of conduct that had been laid out, but that zero tolerance was only good for serious offenses. The data collected from these stakeholders indicated that they felt there was some strength to the

disciplinary programs, without being unrealistic about the program effectiveness. The following data reflects the primary themes in their reflection:

1. Yes, we do have an effective plan;
2. We follow the standards of conduct;
3. What we have works in most cases;
4. It works for me;
5. The principal suspends when necessary;
6. They're ok;
7. Something more needs to be done ;
8. More alternative programs are needed; and
9. Zero tolerance is only good for serious offenses.

The Executive Director of Secondary Education indicated that the Standards of Student Conduct had been mandated by the school board. This was an indication to them that there was an effective program in place. The Director also indicated that the effectiveness of the standards was affected by consistency or lack of consistency. In addition, there was some consideration that a common sense approach to zero-tolerance policies would make them more effective.

The data collected from the interviews regarding the effectiveness of the school disciplinary programs reflect a mixed review. Individuals are concerned that the current program is not working at the levels anticipated, but there are aspects of the program that have helped. As one teacher indicated- "it is better than doing nothing." From these reflections regarding effectiveness of the programs as well as the questioning of whether there is even a program available, an examination of the school program policies now follows.

Table 5

*Stakeholders Perception of the Overall Practices, Strategies and Habits Used in Their Schools*

<b>STAKEHOLDER</b>	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Very Effective</b>	<b>Moderately Effective</b>	<b>Not Effective</b>
Principal	School A		X	
	School B		X	
Security Officer	School A		X	
	School B		X	
Teachers	School A		X	
	School B			X
PTA Representative	School A		X	
	School B		X	
Executive Director	School A		X	
	School B		X	

Both principals indicated that there were disciplinary practices in place. These policies are reflected below in Tables 6 and 7 in a comparison format to illustrate where there were similarities and differences.

Table 6

*Consistent Use of Best Practices Utilized To Control Disruptive Behaviors of Students in Schools*

	School A	School B
Create a school-wide approach to discipline	--	X
Maintaining a positive learning environment	--	--
Provide on-going staff development with an emphasis on changing educators' practice	--	--
Sustained and intensive addressing of major problems	--	--
Employ methods that emphasize practice feedback, reflection, coaching, and support	--	--
Ongoing evaluation of strategies, habits	--	--
Constructing individual behavioral plans for students exhibiting inappropriate behavior	--	--
Collaborates with parents to develop a plan of action	--	--
Maintain high expectations	X	X
Develop and explain rules with input from the students, then post	--	--
Provide incentives school-wide	X	X
Develop behavioral charts, contracts for all students who need one	X	X
Never give class consequences	--	--
Never use tricks or bribes as a strategy to improve discipline	--	--
Maintain a positive attitude with students	X	X
Reward on a broader scale for appropriate behavior	X	X
Set clear expectations and avoid punishment	--	--
Always treat students with respect and talk to them in a manner that they understand		
ISS and OSS should be used as a last resort	X	X
Counseling	X	X
Use other resources as much as possible	X	X
Alternative Education may be necessary for some students	X	X
Use of RIPP(Responding in Peaceful and Positive Ways)	X	X
Institute a character education program	X	X
Institute a peer mediation program	X	X
Institute a violence prevention/conflict resolution program	X	X
Expulsion as a last resort for violent acts	X	X
Efficient use of time is recommended	--	--
Preferential seating		
Increase visibility of principal and security officers to deter inappropriate behavior	X	X
Fair, firm and consistent rules must be in place	X	X
Engage school and community-wide commitment	--	--

Table 7

*Practices and Habits Adapted from Best Practices Used To Control Disruptive Behaviors of Students in Schools*

	<b>School A</b>	<b>School B</b>
Attempt to maintain a positive learning environment	X	X
Provide staff development on discipline and classroom management	X	X
Make an effort to address major problems	X	X
Employ methods that emphasize practice feedback, reflection, coaching, and support	X	--
Collaborate with parents	X	X
Have high expectations	X	X
Develop and post rules	X	X
Provide incentives to students	X	X
Develop behavioral charts and behavioral intervention plans for students	X	X
Give class consequences	--	X
Use tricks or bribes as a strategy to improve discipline	X	X
Staff consistently treats students with respect	--	--
ISS and OSS used often	X	X
Counseling available	X	X
Use other resources as much as possible	X	X
Alternative Education for some students	X	X
Character education program available		X
Institute a peer mediation program	X	
Institute a violence prevention program	X	X
Expulsion recommended for serious offenses	X	X
Teachers consistently make efficient use of time	--	--
Preferential seating is used	X	X
Principal and security officers are visible	X	X
Fair, firm and consistent rules are in place	--	--
School and community-wide commitment is evident	X	--

There were little differences between the strategies, practices, and habits used at each school. School B, however, has attempted to implement a school-wide program where personnel are working together to create a plan emphasizing positive interventions rather than punitive actions. Additionally, School B appears to utilize the counselors more extensively to develop innovative strategies such as school-wide assemblies and programs for the students who obtain or remain on Level 1 on their respective Level System. These strategies are consistent with the research and support a positive learning environment.

Stakeholders from both School A and B believe that a school-wide discipline plan would be appropriate and is needed. They feel that if they are able to reduce the negativity and disruptive behaviors that are evident in each school, the level of academic achievement will be raised. Principal B stated, “For sure, the most convincing reason to endorse a school-wide

program is that it enhances the capability of schools to create safe and conducive learning environments for the students.” Illustrated in Table 7 is the consistent use of “best practices” used by both schools to control disruptive behavior. As noted, strong similarities exist between the two schools, and School B, as previously discussed, appears to be moving in the direction of a school-wide approach to discipline.

The final sub-research question addressed by the interviews concerned how leadership influenced the implementation of disciplinary efforts. Throughout the analysis of data from the interviews, key points were revealed. Leadership was viewed as critical, and the teachers and other stakeholders viewed the principal as the key driver in implementing disciplinary programs. In addition, teachers and other stakeholders felt that principals should aggressively identify methods that will improve discipline. Principals were expected to empower others to help make decisions pertaining to discipline, solve problems, and be leaders. They should also work to get stakeholders to take personal ownership of discipline in the schools. Additional strategies included being collaborative to resolve disciplinary issues; and working with central administration to resolve some of the major disciplinary problems within the school district.

All respondents agreed that the principal should focus their leadership on creating a climate conducive for learning and employ more programs aimed at improving student behavior. Leadership, at both buildings, is perceived to play an important role in the implementation of disciplinary strategies used. Many aspects of leadership came into play in the effort to achieve order and a favorable climate such as the ability to garner resources, provide vision and oversight, and negotiate for cooperation from central administration. The more powerful leader often evidenced a combination of likeability and capability. Illustrated in Table 8 is the degree that leadership is perceived to influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts at each school.

Table 8

*How Leadership Influences the Implementation of Disciplinary Efforts*

<b>STAKEHOLDER</b>	<b>Very Much</b>	<b>To Some Extent</b>	<b>Very Little</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
Principal				
School A	X			
School B	X			
Security Officer				
School A	X			
School B	X			
Teachers				
School A	X			
School B	X			
PTA Representative				
School A	X			
School B	X			
Executive Director of Secondary Education	X			

## Summary

The analysis of these data revealed four common themes related to understanding of school discipline. These themes included: strong administrative leadership, the teacher, the learning environment, and classroom management as it relates to student achievement.

### *Strong Administrative Leadership*

Leadership skills of the administrators at both schools were reflected in the data analyses. Instruction, discipline and management were all components of the leadership role. These skills played an important role in the implementation of disciplinary practices. When policy was not written or was not specific, a policy void was created. The ability of an administrator to influence practice without formal policy can reveal much about that leader. Many aspects of leadership were perceived to effect the effort to achieve management of disruptive students, such as the ability to garner resources, provide vision and oversight, and negotiate for cooperation among stakeholders. Both principals were viewed as powerful leaders that evidenced a combination of “likeability” and “capability.”

As discipline issues increased and parental involvement decreased, the amount of control the principal had also decreased. The data from the principals reflected that the perceived complexity of their jobs increased when teachers were viewed as ineffective; staff development opportunities decreased; or parents showed little involvement. In addition, situations of increased complexity were associated with students who had behavioral/emotional problems, students involved with the courts, and students with Individual Education Plans.

Teachers, the security officer, and the Executive Director of Secondary Education reported that their principals were influential on the implementation of disciplinary practices being used in middle schools. One teacher explained:

If you are going to have a successful school, you need to have a principal who is dynamite, who is a leader, and who buys into researched based practices. Now, if you have that, it's going to work. If you don't, then you are going to have a zoo in your school. The principal must be strong and have strong teachers. Some of these teachers at this school are as bad as the kids. They couldn't control a flea. The principal has to be the one who sets the tone for the building and is consistent in following through.

Although the principal may have many other operational functions, the leadership role in establishing an effective instructional program is foremost. An effective instructional program, however, is non-existent in a building where discipline problems are out-of-control. The complexities faced by the principals were suggested that the breadth of their tasks influenced what could be accomplished from an instructional and a disciplinary perspective.

### *The Effective Teacher/Classroom Manager*

The perceived role of the teacher as an instructor and not managers was a recurrent theme supported by the collected data. The data analysis further revealed however, that management and instruction are viewed as intrinsically co-dependent. In order for the educational environment to be effective, both components must be present and working together. Classroom management was perceived as particularly important for struggling learners, many of whom are easily distracted. Ensuring equal learning opportunities for these students demands good classroom management skills. The data analysis indicates that those interviewees believe that the effective teacher provides such opportunities.

Interviews with many of the participants indicated the shared belief that effective teachers are highly skilled and use a variety of instructional methods and techniques to achieve good classroom management. Several teachers integrated students' suggestions and opinions in the development of their classroom rules. The data analysis reflected recurring themes supporting the belief that classroom rules can promote student's good behavior if they are positive statements that encourage problem-solving. It is more effective if students are taught the relationship between misbehavior and consequences before disruptive behavior occurs.

Respondents indicated that certain teaching techniques can discourage behavior problems. For example, class participation should be managed consistently, and students should be expected to participate, to provide reasons for their responses, and to demonstrate understanding of the concepts. All of the individuals interviewed agreed that the more students are involved, the more likely they will be better behaved.

Teachers and security officers in this study were less influenced by formal policy and tended to be more concerned with informal policy that facilitated their efforts to improve student behavior. Teachers tended to view policy as inadequate. They perceived that additional support will make a difference with students who require constant intervention due to their disruptive behaviors.

The data analyses seemed to support a strong classroom management strategy that help students internalize responsible behavior so that it will be integrated into the individual's daily life. The teachers interviewed believe they can help students feel involved and provide greater opportunities for self-discipline by encouraging them to plan and work together.

### *A Positive Learning Environment*

Respondents unanimously perceived that the classroom and/or school environment is an important factor in determining student achievement; therefore, fostering an efficient and productive learning environment is essential for all students. All interviewees shared the expectation that nearly all students can learn if they are provided the right environment and resources. Learning should take place in a safe, orderly environment, and students are expected to behave according to established, fairly executed rules of conduct. To that end, the physical environment of the classroom is an important factor in preventing behavior problems and encouraging learning. To minimize distractions, the classroom should be neat and orderly and have a comfortable temperature, ventilation, and sound level. All classroom materials such as dictionaries, posters and supplies should be kept properly stored. Seating arrangements should allow for clear lines of sight so that teachers can easily monitor students in all parts of the room, and so that students can see presentation areas with minimal movement of chairs or desks. If feasible, students should face away from possible sources of distraction such as windows and hallways.

Classroom routines should be implemented with clear expectations for student behavior as the primary purpose. If students are familiar with the processes necessary to get a particular job done, they are more likely to complete it in an orderly manner. A teacher should develop plans for these activities that work for his physical space and management style. If a routine is not effective, he can involve his students in redesigning the routine.

### *Link between Classroom Management and Achievement*

Stakeholders from each school strongly emphasized that there is a strong connection between classroom management and achievement. According to those interviewed, classroom management seeks to encourage and establish student self-control through a process of promoting positive student achievement and behavior. Thus, achievement, teacher effectiveness, and teacher and student behavior are unswervingly linked with the idea of school and classroom

management. Teachers from both schools however, perceived that many teachers in their school report to school each day poorly prepared, and lacking good management. This lack of management plays an integral role in the low achievement of the many of the students. This lack of achievement is evident by the lack of full accreditation by either school. Teachers and other stakeholders agree that merely implementing a system of rules and consequences is not enough. Students need to learn in an environment that is well managed, stimulating and interesting, and physically and emotionally safe.

Further, questioning from both schools revealed the perception that the teacher's role in increasing student motivation for learning and in selecting appropriate instruction plays an important role in deterring undesirable student behavior. In order to encourage a positive learning environment, the teachers suggested strategies including:

1. Having high expectations for all students;
2. Challenging learners to high achievement;
3. Providing instruction that uses an array of approaches;
4. Involving learners in curriculum planning and class activities; and
5. Teaching social skills.

The four themes of strong leadership, effective teacher as classroom manager, positive learning environment and the relationship between perceived student success and classroom were substantiated by the data analyses. These themes are the foundation of effective disciplinary methods as related to the overall research questions. The findings from these analyses will be further discussed along with conclusions and next steps related to this research in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE RESEARCH

#### Introduction

This study examined the disciplinary practices used by two urban middle schools to control the disruptive behavior of students. The final chapter provides a summation of the investigation and includes five sections: The conclusions are drawn from the results and there is a discussion of findings that relate to the research questions, implications for practice, recommendations for future research, and lessons learned from the research.

#### Conclusions

The intent of this research was to examine and analyze the disciplinary practices used in two urban middle schools to control disruptive behavior of students. Through a descriptive and qualitative analysis, the participants' responses and specified individual demographic information were examined in relationship to the questions posed to individuals interviewed in the study. Addressing disruptive behavior from an instructional perspective is of paramount importance. Research from Cotton (2001) clearly indicate that classroom management and instruction are not separate, but are aspects of the teacher's role that affect and reinforce each other, promote student self-management, keep discipline positive, and use strategies to prevent, rather than react to student misbehavior.

A school's mission is to ensure that students achieve their fullest academic potential in a safe and affirming atmosphere so they can participate, contribute, and live within the global community. In the wake of the information attained from the interviews conducted during this study, this mission, at times, seems impossible. It is imperative for educators, parents, and other stakeholders to understand what causes young people to misbehave in school. In doing so, we can be part of the solution. We want our effort to be unobstructed in helping all learners reach their potential. We must create the nurturing and supporting environment required for successful education of all students.

Data for this study were based on a single interview per respondent, short direct observations in classrooms, and document review. Although technically adequate for

triangulation of data, some aspects of these methods have prevented a more in-depth inquiry. One limitation has been the lack of repeat interview sessions.

Factors that were cited as a possible cause of disruptive behavior in these two urban schools include:

1. Non-supportive parents;
2. Poor social skills;
3. Changing society;
4. Low motivation from students;
5. Participation or awareness of gang-related activities;
6. Experiencing or witness to violence in the community;
7. Lack of administrative fairness in dealing with discipline and achievement; and
8. Insensitivity to individual talents and interests.

So the question becomes, “What can be done to reduce these acts of disruption and their effects on our children?” Interviewees indicated the need to create safe schools with a culture that nurtures students in their cognitive, moral and social development. They described the characteristics of an ideal school as follows:

1. Positive, safe school climate;
2. High expectations for all students;
3. Inclusionary values and practices throughout the school;
4. Strong parental involvement and support;
5. High levels of student participation and support from community agencies; and
6. Equity in opportunities for academic skill acquisition and social development.

The main goals of the study were to examine the disciplinary practices currently employed by two urban middle schools to control disruptive behavior of students. Additionally, a decision was made to determine whether the schools used methods deemed effective by recent research. The reader is cautioned against assuming that the present findings are generalizable. This study used the techniques of qualitative research to produce a set of assertions based entirely on two middle schools in an urban school district.

To describe and analyze the disciplinary practices being used in urban middle schools to control disruptive behaviors of students, the research questions were as follows:

1. How do these two middle school principals, teachers and other stakeholders describe the practices, strategies, and habits used to maintain discipline in their schools?
2. How are the described practices, strategies, and habits in these schools implemented?
3. How do the stakeholders in these two schools assess the effectiveness of these practices, strategies, and habits?
4. How are the practices, strategies, and habits similar or different between two middle schools within the same school district?
5. How do leadership styles exhibited by each of the two school principals influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts?

The data collected to report the disciplinary practices being used in two urban middle schools to control disruptive behaviors of students were organized according to the five main questions listed below.

#### Summary of Findings

*Research Question No. 1: How do these two middle school principals, teachers and other stakeholders describe the practices, strategies, and habits used to maintain discipline in their schools?*

The findings revealed that the two middle school principals, teachers and other stakeholders indicated that many practices, strategies, and habits used in each school were actual directives from the principal. Similarities were found to exist between the practices used and various programs described in the research literature. Additionally, similarities were found to exist between various practices, strategies and habits and the general views of effective instruction.

Examples based on current research included the following:

1. Maintenance of high expectations;
2. Maintenance of a positive learning environment;
3. Development and publication of rules; and
4. Implementation of a violence prevention and character education program.

Practices, strategies, and habits with these components commonly are observable effective teaching environments. Omissions of these components, on the other hand, may lead one to question whether a positive learning environment has occurred, or if effective practices exist.

In contrast, the findings indicate that several discrepancies exist as well. These discrepancies are shown in Tables 9 and 10, and reflect the disciplinary practices used collectively at each school as compared to best practices and current research.

Additionally, findings of the perceptions of each stakeholder regarding the effectiveness of the practices, strategies and habits used in each school are depicted in Table 10. Interestingly, some stakeholders perceived that some strategies are not effective and other disciplinary measures should be explored.

Table 9

*Stakeholders Perception of the Overall Practices, Strategies and Habits Used in Their School*

<b>STAKEHOLDER</b>	<b>Schools</b>	<b>Very Effective</b>	<b>Moderately Effective</b>	<b>Not Effective</b>
Principal	School A		X	
	School B		X	
Security Officer	School A			X
	School B			X
Teachers	School A		X	
	School B			X
PTA Representative	School A		X	
	School B		X	
Executive Director	School A		X	
	School B		X	

Table 10

*Disciplinary Practices: Best Practices*

<b>Selected Practices and Habits Used in the Schools</b>	<b>Researched Best Practices</b>
No school-wide program available	Create a school-wide approach to discipline
Some teachers have chaotic learning environments	Maintaining a positive learning environment
On-going staff development is geared toward mastery of subject or content area	Provide on-going staff development with an emphasis on changing educators' practice
Effort is made to address problems as they arise	Sustained and intensive addressing of major problems
Methods used are random and individually initiated in most cases	Employ methods that emphasize practice feedback, reflection, coaching, and support
No evidence of ongoing evaluation of strategies used	Ongoing evaluation of strategies, habits
Behavioral plans are developed for special education students only	Constructing individual behavioral plans for students exhibiting inappropriate behavior
Collaborates with parents to discuss specific incidences and consequence	Collaborates with parents to develop a plan of action
Have high expectations	Maintain high expectations
Develop and post rules	Develop and explain rules with input from the students, then post
Provide incentives for students	Provide incentives school-wide
Develop behavioral charts, contracts for special ed students only	Develop behavioral charts, contracts for all students who need one
Give class consequences	Never give class consequences
Trick or bribe the students into behaving	Never use tricks or bribes as a strategy to improve discipline
Threaten students	Maintain a positive attitude with students
Reward students for appropriate behavior	Reward on a broader scale for appropriate behavior
Punish students by taking away privileges	Set clear expectations and avoid punishment
Yell at students; Talking to them on "their level"	Always treat students with respect and talk to them in a manner that they understand
Suspension (In-school and Out of School)	ISS and OSS should be used as a last resort
Counseling	Counseling
Use of other resources	Use other resources as much as possible
Assign to alternative class/program	Alternative Education may be necessary for some students

(table continued)

Table 10 (continued)

Selected Practices and Habits Used in the Schools	Researched Best Practices
Character education program	Institute a character education program
Peer mediation program	Institute a peer mediation program
Violence prevention program/RIPP	Institute a violence prevention program
Expulsion	Expulsion as a last resort for violent acts
Efficient use of time noted for some teachers	Efficient use of time is recommended
Preferential seating	Preferential seating
Principals and security officers are somewhat mobile in the building	Increase visibility of principal and security officers to deter inappropriate behavior
Rules and consequences vary. Consistency is not evident on a regular basis	Fair, firm and consistent rules must be in place
No evidence of consistent school and community-wide commitment	Engage school and community-wide commitment

*Research Question No. 2: How are the described practices, strategies and habits used in these schools implemented?*

Clearly, one of the essential jobs for a teacher is to effectively manage the classroom. The findings from question two indicate that most disciplinary practices, strategies, and habits appear to extract low implementation demands from teachers, parents, security officers and other stakeholders. Other disciplinary measures such as developing a school-wide approach to handling discipline, providing on-going staff development, developing a comprehensive plan of action, and developing behavioral charts or contracts for challenging students are perceived to be more difficult to implement. Further, the disciplinary strategies used in School A appear to be less effective than those used in School B.

Several features of schools including its organization, social culture, student welfare and individual development programs should be integral components of the school's discipline plan. These features affect the students' growth, maturation, and assumption of adult responsibilities. Listed below are several general tenets of "good management" that address the above:

1. Each teacher has a set of class rules appropriate for the age and development level of the students;
2. Students are made aware of the rules, rewards and consequences;
3. Rules are discussed and agreed to by the principal;
4. Parents are informed of the rules, rewards and the consequences of the plan;

5. Teachers use a reward system to acknowledge the positive behavior of students;
6. Whole school acknowledgement of behavior patterns is included in student assemblies;
7. Class and school rules apply to all school-related activities both in and off school grounds. Students who demonstrate that they are not able to comply with reasonable requests disregards the safety of others, will be excluded from specific activities, e.g. an excursion trip, athletic event and student assembly;
8. Student Council, and Parent Teachers Association meetings can be used for input into student welfare issues;
9. Staff meetings have a safety and welfare segment where relevant issues can be discussed and decided;
10. Students will be required to repair, or replace, or provide service activities in the case of vandalism or willful damage; and
11. Individual behavior modification plans are established when needed pursuant to negotiation among representatives of the school, home, student and other relevant personnel.

Evaluation will be conducted annually to determine whether outcomes are being achieved and modifications made when needed.

How schools handle discipline is critical to the learning environment. “If your school climate is bad, kids can’t focus on achievement,” says Principal B. “When boundaries are present, students respond better in class. They’re not worried about what’s going to happen when they leave the classroom. When boundaries are not enforced clearly, you get aberrant behavior, especially from kids with higher risk factors.” Some educators argue suspensions do more harm than good. “With traditional school discipline, it’s one, two, three, you’re out. Well, what do you do with all the kids who are out? We’ve got to be more creative and proactive, and teach them the skills to be members of the community,” says PTA representative from School A.

Conversely, the pressure schools face to raise achievement is exposing long-standing inadequacies of teacher training programs concerning management of discipline, notes Principal A. “Many teachers are now facing extraordinary classroom stress, such as over age students who have been retained multiple times. The lack of teacher competence to do the kind of things we expect them to do is just getting more visible.”

The counselor at School B added that schools “are stuck between a rock and a hard place. They have to raise test scores as well as deal with kids with behavior problems. It’s getting harder and harder to work in schools. I understand why there’s such a shortage of teachers.”

Principal B, whose school recorded a high student mobility rate, attributes it partially to an influx of students who have had discipline problems at prior schools. These students are trying to avoid expulsion and “often come with two folders of discipline [incidents], but they have been to four schools. Discipline is a touchy issue.”

“Over-age retained students are a part of the problem the system doesn’t want to face”, Teacher 3B states. “When you have students who are in the wrong chronological placement, they feel intimidated academically. [Misbehaving] becomes a way of getting some sense of power,”

Recently, School B briefly enrolled a 15-year-old 6th-grader who had been retained in 4th-grade for three years. “The principal appealed to the local school board and got him out,” she says. “He doesn’t go to school at all now. I’ve heard he sells drugs.” The findings for each stakeholders’ perceptions of the effectiveness of their school’s discipline practices implemented appear in Table 11.

Table 11

*Perception of Effectiveness of Practices Implemented*

STAKEHOLDER	Schools	Very Effectively	Moderately Effective	Not Effective
Principal	A		X	
	B		X	
Security Officer	A		X	
	B			X
Teacher 1A	A		X	X
Teacher 2A			X	
Teacher 3A				X
Teacher 1B	B			X
Teacher 2B				X
Teacher 3B			X	
PTA Representative	A		X	
	B		X	
Executive Director of Secondary Education			X	

*Research Question No. 3: How do the stakeholders in these two schools assess the effectiveness of these practices, strategies, and habits?*

Respondents were asked to indicate how effective they perceived the practices, strategies, and habits were related to general discipline and behavior problems found in their schools. The results are listed in Table 13. Although no one practice, strategy, and habit is 100% effective for every student, the respondents all agreed that everyone should be involved with the disciplinary process. Further, the respondents also agreed that improvements are urgently needed to minimize negative, disruptive behavior in the schools in order to maximize the efficient use of instructional time.

Responses from each interview indicated that improvements were needed in order to maintain a safe and orderly educational environment. All of the interviewees indicated that they supported establishing and enforcing “zero tolerance” policies, but there was high expectation among many that some level of common sense is required rather than a blind application of the policy. Respondents were receptive and agreed to virtually all of the practices being used, subject to certain cases. Teachers, parents, security officers, and principals are not hesitant to remove persistent disruptive students, but they are just as insistent that alternative educational programs be made available to students suspended or expelled.

Table 12

*Resolutions to Student Discipline*

	Teachers School A	Parent School A	Security School A	Principal School A	Teachers School B	Parent School B	Security School B	Principal School B
KEY		(V) Very Effective		(S) Somewhat effective		(N) Not effective		
Establish & enforce zero tolerance policies so that students know they will be suspended for certain violations	V	S	V	S	V	V	V	S
Hold parents more accountable	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Strictly enforce the rules	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V
Create more alternative schools	V	V	S	S	V	V	V	V
More staff development needed	V	S	S	V	V	V	V	S
Assign police to the schools	N	V	N	S	V	S	S	V
Create a school wide program	V	V	V	V	V	V	V	V

*Research Question No. 4: How are the practices, strategies, and habits similar or different between two middle schools within the same school district?*

The findings indicate that there few differences existed between the strategies, practices, and habits used by the two schools. School B, in contrast to School A, is attempting to implement a school-wide program where personnel work together to create a plan that emphasizes positive interventions rather than sole reliance on punitive actions. Additionally, School B appears to utilize the counselors more than School A and has developed strategies such

as school-wide assemblies and programs for the students who have remained on Level 1 on their Level System. This strategy follows research that is based on the provision of a positive learning environment for all students.

Stakeholders from both schools A and B believe that development of a school-wide discipline plan is appropriate and needed. They perceive that if they are able to reduce incidents of disruptive behavior, the level of academic achievement will be raised. “For sure”, stated Principal B, “The most convincing reason to endorse a school-wide discipline program is that it enhances the capability of schools to create safe and conducive learning environments for the students.” Illustrated in Table are the “best practices” employed at each school to control disruptive behavior. As noted, strong similarities are perceived to exist between the two schools and School B, as previously discussed, appears to be moving in the direction of a unified school-wide student discipline approach.

Table 13

*Consistent Use of Best Practices Utilized To Control Disruptive Behaviors of Students in Schools*

	School A	School B
Create a school-wide approach to discipline	--	X
Maintaining a positive learning environment	--	--
Provide on-going staff development with an emphasis on changing educators' practice	--	--
Sustained and intensive addressing of major problems	--	--
Employ methods that emphasize practice feedback, reflection, coaching, and support	--	--
Ongoing evaluation of strategies, habits	--	--
Constructing individual behavioral plans for students exhibiting inappropriate behavior	--	--
Collaborates with parents to develop a plan of action	--	--
Maintain high expectations	X	X
Develop and explain rules with input from the students, then post	--	--
Provide incentives school-wide	X	X
Develop behavioral charts, contracts for all students who need one	X	X
Never give class consequences	--	--
Never use tricks or bribes as a strategy to improve discipline	--	--
Maintain a positive attitude with students	X	X
Reward on a broader scale for appropriate behavior	X	X
Set clear expectations and avoid punishment	--	--
Always treat students with respect and talk to them in a manner that they understand		
ISS and OSS should be used as a last resort	X	X
Counseling	X	X
Use other resources as much as possible	X	X
Alternative Education may be necessary for some students	X	X
Institute a character education program	X	X
Institute a peer mediation program	X	X
Institute a violence prevention/conflict resolution program	X	X
Expulsion as a last resort for violent acts	X	X
Efficient use of time is recommended	--	--
Preferential seating		
Increase visibility of principal and security officers to deter inappropriate behavior	X	X
Fair, firm and consistent rules must be in place	X	X
Engage school and community-wide commitment	--	--

*Research Question No. 5: How do leadership styles exhibited by each of the two school principals influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts?*

The findings are as follows:

1. Leadership is viewed as critical;
2. Teachers and other stakeholders view their principal as the key driver in implementing disciplinary efforts and ensuring that school is a safe and conducive place for instruction;
3. Teachers and other stakeholders feel that principals should aggressively seek programs that could improve discipline in the schools;
4. Principals are expected to empower others to help make decisions pertaining to discipline, problem solving, and leadership;
5. Principals should urge stakeholders to take personal ownership for discipline in the schools;
6. Principals should use collaborative strategies to resolve disciplinary issues; and
7. Principals should coordinate strategies with central administrators to resolve some of the major district-wide disciplinary problems.

All respondents agreed that the principal should focus their leadership on creating a climate conducive for learning and employ more programs aimed at improving student behavior. Leadership, at both buildings, plays an important role in the implementation of disciplinary strategies used. Many aspects of leadership are employed to achieve order and a conducive climate such including resource acquisition, provision of vision and oversight, and cooperation with central administration. The effective leader often evidenced a combination of likeability and capability. Illustrated in Table 14 are the degrees perceived that leadership influence the implementation of effective discipline programs at each of the two schools.

Table 14

*How Leadership Influences the Implementation of Disciplinary Efforts*

<b>STAKEHOLDER</b>	<b>Very Much</b>	<b>To Some Extent</b>	<b>Very Little</b>	<b>Not at all</b>
Principal				
School A	X			
School B	X			
Security Officer				
School A	X			
School B	X			
Teachers				
School A	X			
School B	X			
PTA Representative				
School A	X			
School B	X			
Executive Director of Secondary Education	X			

Limitations

There were three limitations associated with this study. They are as follows:

1. This study was limited to two middle schools in one urban school district;
2. The analysis of the results focused on the use of collaborative involvement in the school operating plan and did not examine in depth the impact of other factors, which may influence the handling of disruptive youth in middle schools; and
3. Because the subjects of this study were from schools that were part of one school district and were not randomly selected, the results must be cautiously generalized to other localities.

## Implications for Practice

Principals understand the policies and politics associated with the discipline of students more so than teachers, security officers, and parents. In fact, awareness was lowest among the teachers. Implications for practice are listed below:

1. Staff development is desperately needed, as is increased parental involvement;
2. Additional organizational support is required in building the capacity of principals and teachers to handle disciplinary matters more effectively;
3. Teachers, parents, security officers, and other stakeholders should consider a range of information when determining what consequences a student should face, as well as impact that consequence will have on the child, the family, the school, and the community;
4. Schools should be mindful of the potential for additional problems when out of school suspension or zero tolerance is the primary consequences for inappropriate behavior. Suspensions and other punitive measures are clearly ineffective. Principals should be cautioned against overuse of such measures, especially if the intent is to improve the overall school climate;
5. It could be beneficial if the Office of Staff Development would work with the Office of Research and Evaluation to plan training seminars on which disciplinary practices are most effective in schools. Teachers and other stakeholders reported great difficulty with the process of trying to determine what works and does not work in working with disruptive youth. Teacher preparation and staff development programs should incorporate more extensive universal design concepts, with particular attention to the disruptive population. Learning is a multifaceted process and instructional methods should incorporate all facets in order to reach all students;
6. A coordinator of discipline or a dean of students to monitor behavior in the school would increase the awareness among stakeholders of actions being taken. It would be advisable to permit this individual to have the capacity to build relationships, initiate positive activities, work closely with parents, and develop positive programs;
7. The district's policies and procedures on how to effectively handle disruptive students should be reexamined;

8. A needs assessment to determine levels of awareness existing among stakeholders and to determine priority issues should be completed;
9. The capacity of the staff to handle disruptive behavior should be examined. Actions to be considered could include: emphasizing daily use of consistency with rules and creating a warm and conducive environment for learning; expanding bullying and other preventive programs; establishing a database to identify “at risk” students and to monitor the number of students identified as “troublemakers”;
10. The organizational structure of the school should be reviewed to help eliminate possible disruptors to the process. Individual schools may wish to utilize one or two of their teacher staff development days at the beginning of the year to have the entire staff observe one of the more effective schools engaged in implementing strategies to reduce disruptive behavior. A teacher and principal panel for a question and answer period might also be helpful. If teachers have a better understanding of strategies to use with disruptive youth, outcomes will be more positive in their classrooms;
11. It could be beneficial for additional investigations to focus on the learning style profiles of students exhibiting disruptive behaviors in the urban school setting. This would allow for larger populations to be studied and would provide further explanation of individual and group characteristics; and
12. More parent and community involvement is needed to ensure that disruptive behavior is minimized in schools. The PTA could become more involved with this process by allocating funds for continued staff development in this area. The lack of time spent in parent communication should be a red flag to all educators in schools where problems exist. It is a cause for a study in itself and the Central office needs to clearly define and assign accountability in all schools as it relates to handling disruptive students in schools.

### Research Implications

The following eight implications are offered with respect to the data in this study:

1. The population and sample for this study was small and constrained. The sample consisted of only two middle schools located in a southeast state. Therefore, future studies should be replicated using a larger population and sample from multiple campuses over a wider geographic region;

2. Since this is one of the first descriptive studies on the disciplinary practices being used in urban schools to control disruptive behavior, it should be replicated in different school districts utilizing different methods of survey instruments. The role of the building principal in identifying strategies that would make the school less disruptive for learning should be studied. One of the most critical components of successful schools is the building principal;
3. Additionally, a comparison of models of safety programs in schools to determine why one program may work in one school and not in another would be useful. This is important because each model has a different goal, affecting different types of situations or students and the types of decisions made. Conduct a comprehensive study of a primary stakeholder group, such as the PTA, to determine what role they do play and what role they can play. Parents and teachers are two of the largest stakeholder groups directly affecting a child's education;
4. The questionnaire protocol of this study should be replicated with an instrument having higher reliability of the scales. Perhaps the survey could be revised to include more questions and in greater depth;
5. The roles and responsibilities of central office departments in determining what needs to be done in schools to make them less disruptive and more conducive to learning should be studied. Most decision-making is top-down, and an inclusive model would necessitate the knowledge and participation of other groups and stakeholders. Explore to what degree schools are actually involved with finding strategies to lessen disruptive behavior. What ongoing pressures help maintain or mitigate this process?
6. A study of how other school districts handle the accountability issue of making schools more conducive for learning may be insightful. How do they select models to use? Who is involved in the process? What indicators do they use in determining which schools should improve?
7. Duplication of the study at the elementary and high school levels to determine if similar findings exist under similar conditions, adding a quantitative dimension may make the study more generalizable, although with any qualitative study the focus is on the richness of the data and understanding rather than the broad applicability; and

8. The ability to develop a uniform discipline policy for all districts may be limited and, indeed, may not even be desirable. However, a study should be undertaken to identify schools that may be using more effective practices to handle disruptive students.

### Lessons Learned From the Research

Following are four lessons learned from this research, which may be applicable to future research projects:

1. Qualitative research is a difficult, exhaustive process. The organization of the data becomes crucial;
2. Transcribing data is a wearisome and monotonous process. Maintain copious notes and steer clear of the enticement to simplify the information;
3. Qualitative research is a complicated process. Love your topic!; and
4. The phrasing of questions is significant. Go with the flow of the interview and use some of the responses to guide other questions. Modify your data to include both the questions you intended and the responses you were given.

These are the conclusions, limitations, implications for practice and recommendations for future research that pertain to the discoveries made throughout the exploration of this study. It is the researcher's desire that this study will add to greater knowledge and understanding of the significance of effective disciplinary practices being used in middle schools. Disruptive behavior is a major factor in schools across America. Utilization of appropriate and effective disciplinary practices is essential in meeting the educational needs of youth.

Finally, I increased my own knowledge and understanding of the subject and hope that more stakeholders will expand their role, moving from their isolated position in the school to include the roles of collaborative planner, researcher, staff developer, and communicator. Research lessons were given to be of assistance to other researchers in their pursuit of "discovery." Further, I hope the conclusions and recommendations stimulate a desire to further explore the topic of disciplinary practices used to control negative behavior of students in schools.

Across the country, school personnel are working to better understand the exact conditions under which to implement various disciplinary practices in schools. Educators and others are looking for ways to transform a process of proven success into quality practices that can be realistically and effectively applied in classroom situations. Increasingly principals,

teachers, and other stakeholders are developing intervention plans that are both effective and efficient in producing positive behavior changes for students. At the same time, school personnel are exploring ways to promote long-term classroom and building-level changes that increase the range of academic and behavioral supports for students. In some cases, this means changing both the structure and the culture of schools.

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## APPENDIX A

### INFORMATION COLLECTED FROM INTERVIEWS

#### School A: Principal A

The interview with Principal A, whom I shall refer to as Hickory, took place in the early afternoon, after lunch. We met in Hickory's small, cluttered office at the school. This was a school day for students and classes were in session.

Our meeting had been scheduled and although very busy, Hickory offered me more than the hour session I had requested. Hickory and I have been professional colleagues for several years, so the interview, though guided by some specific questions, was somewhat relaxed and informal. Hickory sat behind his desk and I in a chair on the other side of the desk facing him. He agreed to allow me to tape the interview and appeared comfortable with the process. The interview lasted two hours, with a 15-minute break occurring during dismissal.

Hickory has been a middle school principal for three years. Prior to this he was a high school administrator, a counselor, and a coach. He stated that he embraced the idea of accepting a position at the middle school and had this as his overall philosophy:

Middle school is an exciting, challenging place. For sure, the focus must be on student achievement. To accomplish this, all stakeholders must be actively involved. Discipline consumes a good part of my day. It is often overwhelming. Overwhelming primarily because there are limited resources available for the student who is constantly disruptive, and everything you try fails. I try to give everyone a voice in coming up with strategies, planning and implementing school improvement efforts. It's an awesome task, but I feel we are making gains here.

When asked to describe a typical day, Hickory responded:

An ideal day would be spending the majority of my time in the classroom assisting teachers with instructional related issues and interacting positively with students. I would like to spend my time on three major areas: personnel, program development, and planning. Instead, my day is generally consumed with disruptive student behavior, district level requests, and in most cases, putting out fires. On my most difficult days, however, I still love my job. I love students and love seeing them achieve. I enjoy helping teachers teach and believe in the old saying, "Teacher touch lives forever, or "If you can read this, thank a teacher." I do believe that this is a profession where the rewards may not be realized for years. School is a marvelous institution, but at the rate we are going in our society, I can't imagine what it will be like in a few years.

Parental involvement is viewed as an essential element in working with disruptive students.

Hickory described the parental involvement in School A:

We are constantly looking for ways to become an extension of the family, thereby providing continuity between the two settings. Currently, parental involvement is minimal. Parents come to school to argue more than show support. Many who come, do so as a result of a suspension or other disciplinary action. We strive to help parents increase their knowledge of child development and support them in their parenting skills. This is done via PTA meetings, counseling sessions, or individual meetings. We are working diligently with the president of our PTA to break down barriers and establish trust by reaching out to families through home visits, having meetings in less formal and intimidating settings, and using written communication that all parents can understand. Communication appears to be a key factor for us and we try to regularly communicate with parents in a variety of ways. Parental involvement has improved three-fold in the last couple of years. Three years ago, there was no active PTA at all here, and parents never came to school. Now, we have a working PTA, and we work hard to accommodate parents' work schedules and time constraints when creating parent-involvement opportunities. Are we where we should be? Absolutely not. Are we making strides in parental involvement? For sure!

Hickory was asked to discuss the discipline in the school and if leadership had any impact on the discipline:

Strong and effective leadership emerges on practically every list of characteristics of successful schools. I view my role as essential. I must be a trend-setter, a role model, a good communicator, a sustainer in school reform, a sympathizer, a mediator, and on and on. And, I have to have a vision of how I'd like the school to be. I wasn't sure where we needed to go or how to get there. Things were a mess when I got here. Not to say the previous administrator wasn't good, but the students we serve are as challenging as they get.

A needs assessment helped us determine that the major problem we have with students is with defiance and disrespectfulness. We also have weaknesses in parental involvement, and in having a strong, school-wide behavior management system. I knew this needed to change, and change quickly. My school had a reputation for being "bad" and I knew I needed something that would change that perception. I knew I needed staff to buy into this change, and I knew this would be a long and tedious process.

When I arrived at this school three years ago, the chair of one of the departments was the resident scoffer. Arms folded, nose up in the air, eyes glazed, lips sealed, legs crossed, he tolerated staff meetings and everything else about the school. On good days, he graded papers. I knew I had to change this behavior, gain his respect, and get him on my side. I began to ask his opinion and demonstrated that I valued it. I asked him to serve in a major leadership role in school strategic

planning, insisted that he make the final decision between two candidates for a job in his department, and begged him to chair a long-term study group.

By the middle of the second year, he was beginning to look like a reformed teacher. He was acting more like a leader and began using some of the technology in the building. He encouraged the members of his department to get parents more involved and to participate more aggressively in staff development opportunities. He began taking school more seriously and appeared to have more respect for me as the instructional leader. When appointed on a task force for improving discipline in the school, he accepted graciously and took to heart a desire to improve conditions at the school. Our school is considered the most challenging school in the district. This teacher began taking this negative view personally. He and others have joined me in venturing in the right direction to make a positive change in the behavior and discipline of our students. I believe this particular teacher, and many others, changed because they found a place of worth among their peers, they took on a sense of ownership within the school, and because they discovered that the administration wanted to hear--and act on--their opinion. He and others blossomed when they realized they were valued, trusted, urged, and encouraged.

By the end of the second year, I began to notice a slight change in discipline. Many “troublemakers” had been removed and sent to alternative schools. Some students “dropped out” and several were now in juvenile detention centers. Suspension was the major consequence for offenses and parental involvement was still weak. We were still not accredited, and I began to feel job security might become a factor soon. I knew I needed to boost up things so I called on central administrators to help with this process. Now, we are involved with a series of team building exercises and various staff development activities. Though greatly improved, we are still struggling to find the right process to use with our students to promote greater student success and an improved school climate. We have business partners, and teachers are beginning to realize they hold one of the keys to our success or failure.

For me, initiating this kind of intense training seemed like the right vehicle to use to achieve our goals. The staff was unsure at first, but I kept pushing and begging and pleading, and encouraging, and finally a cadre of staff said, “OK.” After many sessions, long days, in and out of town workshops, and several committee meetings, they came back both inspired and frustrated: inspired by the possibilities and frustrated by the time needed to “put it all together.” The staff as a whole decided to go for it and to come to consensus on a proposal that would turn our school upside-down if implemented. In trying to craft the vision, the staff and I struggled with terms, philosophies, language, and more. A subcommittee has been formed to gather our thoughts and put them into some appropriate language everyone can understand. The goal of the subcommittee is to come up with a proposal that will become the vision for the whole school. That vision, we

hope, will burn at our school and eventually become a reality. I participate on the subcommittee and as a member of the staff.

I guess I would describe my leadership style as “constantly changing.” I try to be supportive and caring, yet, I know the buck stops with me. I like to think of myself as a visionary leader and a change agent. The truth is I’m not really sure. I have been told that some of my teachers are afraid or intimidated by me. That surprises me and somewhat disappoints me. I do believe in setting limits, having a vision, inspiring others to see the vision, and then hoping and praying and putting things into motion to make the vision a reality. You can’t lead people where you won’t go, so I try to be a good role model and “walk the walk.” My goal is to lead this school to full accreditation. I need folk to join me on the bus or find another bus to ride. The future of our children is important to me and I want to be a part of a school making a noticeable difference in their lives. I want them to be prepared for the workforce and prepared for life. I want teachers to have a passion like my passion—a passion for excellence, a passion for high expectations, a passion to be #1. I seize every opportunity to make things better for this school. I can’t do it alone. There is no “I” in school leadership, but the principal is responsible for leading the way and encouraging others to follow.

Hickory further elaborated on the practices, strategies, and habits used to control disruptive behavior in the school:

We are moving toward a more positive approach to discipline, but we are not there yet. Teachers have a mind-set that a student must be punished for misbehaving. Many of our students present many challenges as stated previously. The most common are: disruptive behavior, defiance, disrespect, abusive language, cutting classes, and profanity. There is also a lot of horse playing, play wrestling, teasing, name-calling, and negative bus behavior. We don’t have too many problems with substance abuse, smoking, bullying, cheating, possession of weapons, and those type of offenses. Our students appear to need a lot of refinement. They lack manners and old time respect. They often hear negativity at home and seem to respond only to negativity at school. We are trying to change our climate from one of a punitive nature, to one more positive. Currently, we conduct a lot of meetings-- meetings with parents, meetings with students, meeting with teachers and others. For a minor infraction, or often a first offense, students receive an in-school suspension. For major or repeat offenders, an out of school suspension may be issued.

We have a character education program in place, though I’m not sure how effective it is. We also recognize students each nine weeks for good behavior and have a “Student of the Week” program in place. Our peer mediator program was abolished last year, but we do have a person who works with our sixth graders on conflict resolution.

The district also has an alternative program in place for 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders who are in regular education. They wear uniforms, the class size is small, and they have many

additional resources. Unfortunately, nothing is available to students who have special needs. Some of these students present the most challenges for us.

When principals of both schools were asked about possible barriers to success in their schools, their answers were remarkably similar (Appendix B). Both principals identified handling disciplinary referrals as the number one problem. Other factors included the enormous amount of time required for completing administrative paperwork, limited funding and other resources, poor parental involvement, dealing with mandates from the state and other governing bodies, unscheduled parent and community meetings, weaknesses of staff, and variations in the ability and dedication of staff.

## APPENDIX B

### RESPONDENTS FROM SCHOOL A

Teacher 1A, a 6<sup>th</sup> grade history teacher, has taught in School A for 9 years. She serves as the department chair and reportedly has excellent classroom management. Teacher A is extremely organized, works with the PTA board, and was selected Teacher of the Year two years ago.

Teacher 2A is a 7<sup>th</sup> grade special education teacher who has eleven years of experience. She is a member of the School Planning and Management Team and boasts 4 years of perfect attendance. She indicates that she has good classroom management and feels proud that she has not submitted any referrals to the office this school year.

Teacher 3A is an 8<sup>th</sup> grade science teacher. He is a veteran teacher with 29 years of teaching experience, 15 years in School A. He describes himself as a good disciplinarian and a teacher from the “old school.” He reports that he is a “no nonsense” person and feels the children like him because he is fair, shows love, and is a coach.

The security officer was assigned to School A three years ago. This is the officer’s third school in eight years, and feels he has a good handle on discipline. He describes himself as calm, concerned, and caring. He believes in establishing an environment conducive to learning and feels the principal and parents should lead the way for a school to become effective. He reports that he has seen a lot of violence in the schools and feels most of the children “just need love”.

The PTA representative has 5 children ranging in age from 5 – 21. She has been an active parent in this school for 3 years. She feels the society is to blame for much of the disruptive behavior and violence that we hear about and that many parents aren’t doing their job correctly in rearing their children. She likes School A and feels the principals are doing the best they can.

The Executive Director of Secondary Education has been in the district for three years and comes with a wealth of valuable experience. Having been a principal for almost 20 years, the director feels he has a good understanding of the culture of this school district. He feels that parental involvement is a key element in school improvement, and that principals play an important role in getting parents involved.

A summary of the respondents’ responses from School A and the Executive Director is described in Appendices C-N.

APPENDIX C

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM TEACHER 1A IN SCHOOL A.

Does this school have an effective school-wide discipline plan?	No, I don't think so. We don't have a plan per se. Everything is done on an individual basis. We have school rules, but no one universal plan
Do you believe there is a connection between school conduct and achievement?	Oh yes! If there is no discipline, there is no learning taking place. Positive classroom behavior is essential in order for the teacher to be able to teach. You can't teach if children are misbehaving.
Why do you think schools have so many problems?	Poor or no parental involvement; lack of motivation from students; violence in the community; gang-like groups springing up; poor social skills; no respect for authority figures or themselves; lack of good role models; we live in a different world now.
What discipline practices, strategies, or habits are used in your school?	High expectations, posting of school rules, ISS, OSS
Do you feel they are effective?	Somewhat. Students just don't seem to learn from their mistakes and the students who get in trouble generally continue with the negativity all year.
How do you assess the effectiveness of these practices?	By the number of repeat offenders.
What types of disciplinary practices do you use?	Greet my students as they enter the room, show them and tell them that I love them dearly; praise them when they are doing well; offer encouragement when they are not; I'm mobile in the classroom and I stay in contact with parents.
What are the most common problems in the school?	Disrespect and defiance
What consequences are given for these infractions?	Teacher conferences, principal conferences, parental conferences, ISS, OSS
What is your opinion of "zero tolerance?"	I'm in favor of it.
How does leadership influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts?	Leadership is essential.
Describe parental involvement and the impact it has on disciplinary efforts.	Parental involvement is limited. Parents want us to "fix" their children and try to take up for them even if they are wrong. Many of them curse and behave inappropriately often times, and rarely come to school—except when there is a problem.

Do you feel most teachers in your school have good classroom management?	No, I don't. Many teachers lack consistency. Many are negative and do not have high expectations for the students. Some do not provide correction in a professional, sensitive manner and students react negatively.
What do you think should be done to improve discipline and/or management in the schools?	Expand the positive learning opportunities; maintain high expectations and believe that "all children can learn", strengthen the school and community resources; allow principals more flexibility to discipline; provide more professional development opportunities for teachers so they can better manage; have available alternatives for those students who cannot be maintained in the regular school
Describe an "ideal school."	An ideal school would have about 15-20 students per class—all wearing uniforms. There would be at least 5 computers per class and students would be motivated to learn. Parents would be actively involved and people would respect teachers as they did years ago. Children would have values and show respect for one another and there would be no SOL's.

## APPENDIX D

### SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM TEACHER 2A IN SCHOOL A

Does this school have an effective school-wide discipline plan?	Not that I'm aware of. We need one. I'm afraid schools will begin looking like jails if something isn't done. We already have a police officer at our school and two security officers. What we are doing isn't working. Something needs to be in place.
Do you believe there is a connection between school conduct and achievement?	Absolutely. A lot of learning can occur in a well-disciplined class. When the class is chaotic, no learning is going on and the students suffer.
Why do you think schools have so many problems?	Non-supportive parents; poor social skills; witness to so much violence; lack of administrative fairness in dealing with discipline; insensitivity to individual talents and interests; alienation of students caused by non-accepting peers and or teachers; lack of respect for others; poor self concept.
What discipline practices, strategies, or habits are used in your school?	Parental conferences, use of instructional methods that engage students in learning; use of an incentive/awards program; working with parents; participation in STARS program, use of ISS or OSS or violence prevention specialist.
Do you feel they are effective?	Not really. Something is going on everyday here. Many students are unmotivated to learn and seem to gravitate toward disruptive behavior.
How do you assess the effectiveness of these practices?	I'm not sure how to assess the effectiveness. I know we have to do something to maintain control, but conferences don't seem to work at all.
What types of disciplinary practices do you use?	I try to identify problems before they occur. I also have a few gestures and prompts I give to redirect students when they become disruptive. I also call parents as often as I can and try to limit the number of referrals I send to the office.
What are the most common problems in the school?	Disrespect and lack of general social skills; inappropriate conversations; fighting
What consequences are given for these infractions?	Conferences followed by suspensions.
What is your opinion of "zero tolerance?"	One size doesn't fit all. I believe there should be limits to what is acceptable, but everyone has a different opinion of what is right and wrong.
How does leadership influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts?	It's essential! Principals should be given a lot more authority to handle discipline issues and reduce interference from parents or central administration.

Describe parental involvement and the impact it has on disciplinary efforts.	Some parents are involved, but it's generally the parents of children who are successful. We need to find ways of engaging more of the parents to take an active role in working with schools on disciplinary issues.
Do you feel most teachers in your school have good classroom management?	Yes, most of them do I think. Some of the teachers who are ineffective are those who are "set in their ways."
What do you should be done to improve discipline and/or management in the schools?	Create comprehensive collaborative systems; get parents involved; maintain a positive learning environment; add more security and a policeman; build alternative schools for disruptive youth; have smaller classes; provide more resources; provide counseling—at school and in-home; provide more after school activities; provide staff development on working with special needs students.
What is your perception of an "ideal" school?	My idea of an ideal school would be where students are motivated to learn, teachers are motivated to ensure students learn, and parents are motivated to make sure their children learn. There would be no fighting, no metal detectors, no police, no misbehaving. Children who don't comply would be sent to another school. Buildings would be conducive for learning and school would be a fun place to come everyday.

APPENDIX E

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM TEACHER 3A IN SCHOOL A

Does this school have an effective school-wide discipline plan?	No, we don't. I don't know of any of the schools that have a school-wide plan in place. All the schools are having problems with discipline and inappropriate behavior and it's a constant battle to get students to behave in school.
Do you believe there is a connection between school conduct and achievement?	Yes, I do. If we spent half as much energy teaching as we do on behavior, every student would pass the state tests. It's a challenge dealing with behavior problems and getting students motivated to learn. There is so much violence and chaos in their lives that learning becomes secondary.
Why do you think schools have so many problems?	More gangs in the schools; lack of parental involvement; students see negative, violent behavior constantly; a changing society; students are unmotivated to learn or behave; drugs and violence everywhere
What discipline practices, strategies, or habits are used in your school?	Constant communication with parents, early intervention when possible, proximity seating, signals to students, lunch and after school detention, counseling
Do you feel they are effective?	At times, but not significantly
How do you assess the effectiveness of these practices?	By the frequency of the misconduct after strategies have been put in place
What types of disciplinary practices do you use?	Talking to the student, getting advice from my peers, talking to parents, moving the student to another place in the class.
What are the most common problems in the school?	Disrespect and disruptive behavior daily
What consequences are given for these infractions?	Usually a parental conference or an in-school suspension. This is done after several warnings
What is your opinion of "zero tolerance?"	We should establish and enforce zero-tolerance policies so that students know they will automatically be suspended for serious violations
How does leadership influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts?	Leadership is of paramount importance to the orderliness of the school. The principal sets the tone and is the key person to get order in the school
Describe parental involvement and the impact it has on disciplinary efforts.	Parents blame schools for the disciplinary problems and we blame the parents. I do believe we need to find ways of holding parents more accountable for their children's misbehavior.

Do you feel most teachers in your school have good classroom management?	Many do. Some of the newer teachers lack control. Some appear afraid of the children. Kids are just getting more difficult to handle everywhere!
What do you should be done to improve discipline and/or management in the schools?	Get families more involved; provide more staff development; have high expectations for students; value and address diversity; find an appropriate school-wide management program; provide more consequences for inappropriate behavior; provide incentives for good behavior; reduce class size; try to maintain a positive school climate; initiate inclusionary practices; get students involved; provide more resources
What is your perception of an “ideal’ school?	First of all, school would begin at 9:00 a.m. instead of 8:00 a.m. Next, all children would behave in school and ISS and OSS would be words we never use. Children would have manners and be respectful and there would be no fighting or disruptive behavior. There would be plenty of supplies and kids would enjoy learning and looking forward to going to college.

APPENDIX F

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM PARENT IN SCHOOL A

Does this school have an effective school-wide discipline plan?	I think so. I know they have certain rules the children must follow and there are certain things that can happen if children break those rules. I think what they have is working. They have gotten a lot of bad kids out of the school so something is working.
Do you believe there is a connection between school conduct and achievement?	You'd better believe it. Teachers can't teach with a lot of foolishness going on. If the children are well behaved, teachers can teach and everybody will learn.
Why do you think schools have so many problems?	TV plays a negative role in the life of kids today. And, too many parents act like children themselves. Parents have very little control and since you can't discipline your child any longer, kids are taking over
What discipline practices, strategies, or habits are used in your school?	A whole lot of counseling and begging kids to be good. Schools give a lot of incentives to kids trying to bribe them into behaving. It doesn't always work. They also suspend quite a bit, mostly in school, but some out of school as well
Do you feel they are effective?	Yes, I really do. Some kids need something else, but most kids benefit I think
How do you assess the effectiveness of these practices?	I think they are very effective. I do feel the really difficult kids need to be placed in another school
What are the most common problems in the school?	Disruptive behavior, cursing, cutting classes and fighting.
What consequences do you feel should be given for these infractions?	Parental conferences and suspension
What is your opinion of "zero tolerance?"	I agree with it. I want my child to be in a safe school. I don't want them around drugs, gangs, violence, or a lot of kids disrupting the learning process
How does leadership influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts?	The principal influences everything that happens in the school. If you have a good principal, you will have a good school
Do you think the principal of this school is effective?	A lot of improvements have been made under this principal's leadership. I like the principal, but we have a ways to go before I could say we are the number one school
What do you should be done to improve discipline and/or management in the schools?	Have more programs for parents; make parental conferences mandatory; get more security officers, have some kind of program in place to help children behave better

What is your perception of an “ideal” school?	One that is clean, where the teachers show respect for the students and the students respect the teachers. One that is safe and everybody passes the SOL’s.
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APPENDIX G

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM SECURITY OFFICER A IN SCHOOL A

Does this school have an effective school-wide discipline plan?	Yeh, we do. We have the Standards of Student Conduct that we follow pretty well. The principals try to enforce the rules, but parents complain if you put the children out too much. What we have though, works in most cases.
Do you believe there is a connection between discipline and achievement?	Yes, there is a direct connection. Every time you suspend a kid, that kid is further behind. Most of the kids that act up in school do so because they are behind in their schoolwork and they misbehave to keep from trying to do the work.
What discipline practices, strategies, or habits do you use?	I talk to the students and try to understand where they are coming from. I try to develop a good relationship with them and develop trust. I respect them and they respect me.
How do you assess the effectiveness of these practices?	It works for me. The principal suspends if necessary, but we try to give the kids chances.
What are the most common problems in the school?	Play fighting, disrespect, defiance, running in the halls, cutting classes, very little parental involvement, inconsistency with enforcing the rules
What is your opinion of “zero tolerance?”	The problem is that zero tolerance is also zero judgment. Not every kid who breaks a rule is a troublemaker. Not every rule that is broken should be treated in the same way. I’m in favor of it for repeat offenders and for serious offenses.
How does leadership influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts?	It is the primary responsibility of the principal to take the lead in efforts to enhance collaboration that will lead to real, tangible results. Good leadership is important if you want a good learning environment. The principal sets the tone of the building. My job is a lot easier when I’m working with a good principal and good teachers.
Describe parental involvement and the impact it has on disciplinary efforts.	It’s not what it should be. Most of us believe that inadequate parenting is the primary cause of behavior problems in school. They need to get involved if changes are going to occur. They generally don’t come to school unless there is a problem or they think the school has been unfair. Sometimes, a kid is suspended and when they return to school, they have new clothes. It’s like some parents reward their children when they’ve been bad.
How can you tell if a teacher has good	They maintain a positive learning environment. They stand at their doors, they

management?	keep the students involved in learning, they communicate regularly with parents, they treat the students with respect, and they establish rules the first day of school. You can spot a good teacher a mile away.
What do you think should be done to improve discipline and/or management in the schools?	Parents need to be more involved; teachers and other staff need to be better trained in handling urban youth; everyone needs to have high expectations for the school; rules need to be enforced—kids get too many breaks and too many warnings; we need more business partners; and the central administration needs to put more programs in place designed to remove the students who are constantly disruptive to another alternative environment. It would also help if we had security personnel for each grade level and more power given to the officers to work with the troubled youth. Our power is limited.
What is your perception of an “ideal” school?	An ideal school would be like when I was in school. You look forward to going to school and behaved, or else the teacher would get you in school and your parents would whip you when you got home. All of us learned to read and write and most went to school and became “somebody.” We didn’t dare disrespect our teachers and curse and fight and all that. We would be dead!

## APPENDIX H

### SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF SECONDARY EDUCATION

Does the district have an effective school-wide discipline plan?	Yes, I believe so. The school board adopted the Standards of Student Conduct, and if everyone followed the standards, we would have a better handle on discipline.
Do you believe there is a connection between discipline and achievement?	Certainly, there is a direct correlation between the two. The more discipline problems we can eliminate, the more time teachers would have for instruction. In this era of accountability, teachers must provide instruction during the full block of time. Reducing negative interactions from students is essential to that process. The more we suspend students, the less they learn. If we expect students to achieve, there must be order in the school environment.
Why do you think schools have so many problems?	We live in an overall culture of disrespect. We also have overcrowded classrooms, difficult parents, and a few ineffective teachers.
What are the typical types of behavior problems seen in middle school?	Disrespect (talking back to the teacher, rude behavior), cursing, rough play, defiance, cutting classes, theft, threats (often with no follow-through), cheating, using cell phones in class, fighting,
What can the school board do to assist with disruptive behavior in middle school?	Review the policies in place and make additions, changes, etc., provide specific guidelines to administrators and teachers, provide funding and administrative support to schools, provide staff development continuously, develop agreements with local agencies, police, etc. and collaborate frequently on suggestions, monitor and evaluate the existing programs, and search for new interventions, keep students actively engaged in meaningful instruction, add more cameras in the schools, add additional security personnel where needed, learn more about gangs, implement mandatory bullying programs, work with parents on a partner level, promote a positive learning environment, review and revise the crisis management plan, and link suspensions with some type of rehabilitation.
Do you feel they are effective?	Yes, to an extent, and when used consistently.

What are some alternatives to suspension and expulsion?	Reporting misbehavior to the parents, placement in alternative programs, school-wide behavior management programs, loss of privileges, in-school suspension, half day attendance, home schooling, night school, behavioral contracts, additional assignments, after school detentions, mandatory service to the school or the community.
What types of preventive programs are in place or should be in place?	Comprehensive programs aimed at improving the school climate such as anti bullying programs or the RIPP programs should be considered. The district should also examine specific prevention programs such as classroom management, effective teaching, school security, truancy prevention, individual education plans, crisis intervention, counseling, and the referral procedures.
What is your opinion of “zero tolerance?”	I’m in favor of it for serious offenses. We must, however, use common sense. Every situation is different and should be analyzed on a individual basis.
How does leadership influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts?	A principal has personal choice and control over how he/she chooses to handle discipline. Central administration offers support, but principals must have a frame of reference to move forward with implementation of a quality disciplinary approach.
Describe parental involvement and the impact it has on disciplinary efforts.	The principal must involve the parents. Parents must be viewed as members of teams for planning, curriculum development, and problem solving.
What can be done to enhance teacher effectiveness in the classroom?	Provide continuous staff development. Insist that teachers observe their peers and be involved in unremitting dialog about management and discipline.
What do you think should be done to improve discipline and/or management in the schools?	Principals need to help all stakeholders understand the need for developing a culture of continuous improvement. The principal must be the change agent. We also need policies and programs to deal more effectively with persistent troublemakers. More responsibility should be given to parents and teachers and administrators should consistently enforce the rules that are in place
What is your perception of an “ideal’ school?	As it relates to discipline, an ideal school would be one where school personnel collaboratively work together to meet the needs of the students. The school would be reflective of a strong commitment to proactive academic and behavioral interventions where all students are motivated to learn and succeed.

## APPENDIX I

### INTERVIEW WITH SCHOOL B PRINCIPAL

The interview with Principal B, whom I shall refer to as Cherry, took place after school on a Friday afternoon. The week had been a difficult one and we decided to conduct the interview at a nearby coffee shop. The interview lasted one hour and fifteen minutes.

This is Cherry's first year as a middle school principal though her educational experience spans 29 years. She has served an assistant principal on the middle and high school level for 14 years, and began her career in education as a band teacher. Cherry and I have known each other for many years, and she spoke candidly with me about her overall philosophy of school as it relates to discipline:

It seems quite obvious to me that as educators, we are expected to deal with all the issues, challenges, and baggage children bring from their homes into the school environment. Unfortunately, children don't leave home each morning with an excitement about doing their best in school. Some students leave a very healthy, happy home where adults truly recognize the importance of a good education and raising self-directed children. Others leave an empty house filled with empty promises, empty refrigerators, absent parents, and the lack of knowledge about putting their best foot forward in school. On a daily basis, we are confronted with the fact that we serve as parents for many of the students, and that school is a vital place in the life of a child. Everyday, I remind my staff that we can make or break a child's day, and ultimately impact their future. The power that we have is ongoing. We can make it positive, or we can make it negative. What I try to instill on a regular basis is that we must continually work together to recognize that we truly do touch the future. Consequently, we must create a safe, secure, and encouraging environment where everyone feels appreciated, listened to, and respected.

When asked about the role of leadership in this school, Cherry replied:

My role is the crucial element in determining the moral and climate of the school. I strive to focus on providing a climate where teachers are encouraged to take risks and act as coaches—guiding students through journeys of success. It's an awesome task, but I'm trying to find ways to breathe some life into my vision. I try to communicate my hopes and dreams so that others clearly understand and accept them as their own.

Cherry described her hopes and dreams:

My dream for this school is that it can become the "premier" school of the district. I want to create a school culture and instructional program that is conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Cherry was further asked to describe the discipline in the school, the primary problems, and the practices, strategies, and habits used to control the disruptive behavior in the school:

Incidences of disruptive behavior occur too frequently in our school. We are plagued with disruptive, abusive, and inappropriate behavior on a daily basis. Compared to what I see on the news, or in the newspaper as it relates to violent behavior, we are blessed. Violent type behaviors, drugs, alcohol, etc., are almost non-existent. We have been quite lucky in that we have not had any shootings, stabbings, drug overdoses, or anything like that. Fighting is also minimal. The children engage in quite a bit of “play-fighting” which is considered dangerous, disruptive, and inappropriate. This form of play often leads to a “real” fight if not stopped in time.

Many of our students are very immature and lack discipline. They can be rude, non-compliant, and defiant. Many do not appear to value education and therefore, lack respect for authority figures. Unfortunately, many of our parents demonstrate the same lack of respect for others and can be equally as rude and non-compliant.

We receive numerous referrals each day and our days are filled with student and parental conferences. Discipline is a major problem for us and as I understand it, for all of our schools. Controlling the behavior of students is a battle and often times, we feel we are losing the war.

The previous principal told me that a survey was done last year with the teachers on discipline. The survey revealed the primary disciplinary problems to be general inappropriate, disruptive behavior, disrespect, defiance, and fighting. The survey also indicated that students were not sensitive to others, had no respect for authority, lied frequently, used abusive language, and cut classes too frequently. On a positive note, the survey indicated that there were no major problems with alcohol, drugs, weapons, inappropriate dress, and inappropriate use of the internet, communication devices, or things like that.

We have a zero tolerance for serious things like drugs and weapons. Everything else is treated on a case-by-case basis. You have to use common sense when dealing with kids. One teacher may say two children were fighting and another teacher say that one student assaulted the other. According to the standards, you would treat each in this scenario differently. I like to get as many witnesses as I can in a situation like this and look at each case separately.

For example, if a student curses another and calls him names, and bullies him daily, and the other kid finally hits the student after being hit himself several times, with neither receiving injuries, I will generally consequence those students differently than a situation where two students are arguing, agree to meet after school after they get off the bus to fight, and then proceed to fight each other with both sustaining injuries. The standards have one general consequence for fighting. I believe you have to look at each situation and make some common sense decisions.

The Standards of Conduct indicate that we are to have a conference, give in-school or out of school suspension for most offenses. We expand on that a bit by some times requiring community service, asking for a Child Study meeting, writing a behavioral contract, changing a student's schedule, encouraging the parent to seek counseling for the child, or refer the child to an alternative program. Sometimes, the guidance counselor will speak to the child, we'll find a mentor, or something like that, but generally, and the consequence for an infraction is a punitive one.

Next year, we will have representatives from the Behavioral Authorities in our building working with small groups of children. I am optimistic that this will be a move in the right direction. We don't have a school wide discipline plan in place, but we are moving in that direction. We have new personnel in place with strong backgrounds in special education who are helping us with behavioral intervention plans and school wide plans that are more positive. With my job on the line as it relates to getting the school to pass SOL's, it is very important that we develop some framework for promoting a positive learning environment for our students.

Parental involvement is viewed as essential in creating a positive school. Cherry described the level of parental involvement in School B.

Family involvement is extremely limited at our school. Attempts are made daily to enhance the home school connection, but we have been unsuccessful in getting the majority of parents involved. We know that a strong connection will bring about positive changes in the school environment. We also know that teachers feel respected by families who are involved. If we can continue to work on getting parents more involved, we feel we will achieve academically and this will lead to enhanced student success and a more positive school climate. To that end, we have tried to develop a plan to promote improved parent-educator partnerships, devise a questionnaire to assess parent perspectives and participation, and participate in professional development and training in parental involvement.

Describing a typical day, Cherry affirmed:

My day begins at 7:00 a.m. with a cup of coffee in one hand and the telephone in the other. I begin my day by listening to the absences and figuring out how I'm going to cover classes. By 7:30, I am usually seeing my first parent for the day. I frequently schedule meetings early for those parents who say they can't come in during normal working hours. By 8:00 a.m., most teachers are in and I am meeting with one person after another—usually short conversations confirming something or asking about something. At 8:15 a.m., I start the school day with a minute of silence followed by the morning announcements. I conclude the announcements with a thought for the day, which is taken from a character education program.

Generally, by the time I conclude the announcements, there is a line of parents waiting to see me. In between parental conferences, my secretary brings me the morning mail and

often there are reports due - like yesterday. By 10:00 a.m., I generally have students in the office waiting to see me for disciplinary reasons. Teachers put students out at the drop of a hat and some write referrals for little things that they should be able to handle.

The superintendent wants us to be visible in the school and make daily trips to each classroom. I try, but it's hard because of the discipline and the demands of parents. Parents will make appointments with doctors, lawyers, everyone but school officials. They feel that they can come to school at any time, without notice, and be seen within a short period of time. Trying to accommodate them, I make myself available.

The regular school day ends at 2:40 p.m. and the after school program ends at 4:30 p.m. From 2:40 p.m.– 4:30 p.m., I am usually in a meeting, or talking with teachers. Unfortunately, parental conferences and student discipline consume most of my day and I get very little done that I plan to do each day. I leave the office around 6:00 each evening and complete my paperwork at home.

Principals from both schools discussed barriers they perceive hinder them from handling disciplinary issues more effectively. Some of the common barriers are shown in the Table 15.

Table 15

*Principals' Perceptions of Barriers to Effective Discipline*

<b>Barrier</b>	<b>School A</b>	<b>Not a Barrier</b>	<b>Moderate Barrier</b>	<b>Serious Barrier</b>	<b>School B</b>	<b>Not a Barrier</b>	<b>Moderate Barrier</b>	<b>Serious Barrier</b>
Problem Students				X				X
Poor parental involvement				X				X
Administrative Paperwork			X					X
Unscheduled meetings				X				X
Funding & Resources			X					X
Regulations/mandates from state/district governing bodies			X				X	
Inability to provide adequate staff development			X				X	
Parents apathetic or irresponsible about their children				X				X
Poor communication among administrative levels			X				X	
Teacher turnover		X					X	
Lack of competent staff		X					X	
Lack of assistance from central administration			X				X	
Lack of a school-wide disciplinary program				X				X
Staff resistant to change		X					X	

### *Respondents from School B*

Teacher 1B is an art teacher who was transferred to School B due to downsizing from another school. Teacher 1B has seven years of experience in middle school. He is viewed by the principal as a likeable person, but lacks the dedication required of a good teacher. Teacher 1B writes approximately 2-3 referrals per week, is frequently absent from school, and is an avid supporter of the Teachers Association. Teacher 1B was asked to participate in this study because another teacher, previously requested to participate in the study, had an emergency on the day of interview and asked this teacher to interview in her place.

Teacher 2B is a seasoned teacher with 30 years in the district and 15 years at this school. She is the department chair for science and is hopeful of becoming an assistant principal next school year. She has been voted Teacher of the Year twice during her fifteen years at this school. Her students have always been successful on SOL tests, and she serves as a mentor to new teachers each year. Her students love her and parents request her each year.

Teacher 3B is an English teacher and has taught eleven years. This is Teacher 3B's second school and he has been at School B for nine years. Teacher 3B is a member of the PTA, is this year's Teacher of the Year, and serves as the 7<sup>th</sup> grade department chair. Additionally, Teacher 3B is a member of the School Planning and Management Team and has excellent classroom management. Teacher 3B works with many after school activities, demands excellence and boasts pass rates on SOL tests.

The security officer at School B retired from the police department four years ago. This is a second career for the officer and one she accepts with pride. She served as a substitute security officer for two years, working in 5 of the middle schools in the district, and two of the high schools. Security Officer B affirms that disruptive behavior is a major concern in all of the schools and that School B is no better or worse than any of the others.

The PTA representative has served in this capacity for two years. She is the mother of three children and lives across the street from the school.

A summary of the respondents' responses from School B is described in Appendices K-O.

APPENDIX J

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM TEACHER 1B IN SCHOOL B.

<p>Does this school have an effective school-wide discipline plan?</p>	<p>It's okay. It's something. I think if the administrators would be consistent in their approach to inappropriate behavior, the students would behave better. So many of the students misbehave, get no consequence, and come right back the next day and do the same thing. The parents fuss if you suspend them, but we can't teach if they remain in class. The school-wide thing is better than nothing, but it needs to be fine-tuned and everyone needs to be consistent with what we say we are going to do.</p>
<p>Do you believe there is a connection between school conduct and achievement?</p>	<p>Definitely. A negative student is generally a low achiever. Those kids students who tend to behave, tend to excel. All of the extremely disruptive students should be evaluated and placed in alternative settings. It is unfair to the other students who want to learn to have to wait for the teacher to get control of the class before instruction can occur.</p>
<p>Why do you think schools have so many problems?</p>	<p>I think it's because too many parents are allowing their children to raise themselves; we have placed so many limits on what parents can and cannot do that many are afraid to discipline their children. There is not enough staff development to help teachers know how to deal with the disruptive child. Sometimes, I run across a staff development session somewhere, but there generally isn't enough money to pay for me to attend. Schools need more money for things like that. Teachers shouldn't have to pay for things that will help them be better teachers.</p>
<p>What discipline practices, strategies, or habits are used in your school?</p>	<p>Conferences, in-school suspension, out of school suspension, alternative programs, counseling, posting rules, having clear expectations—the same stuff other schools use. Some teachers just put kids out everyday. They don't write referrals, they don't call parents, they just put kids out. Those kids then roam the halls and disrupt other classes.</p>
<p>Do you feel they are effective?</p>	<p>Some of them are. We need more alternative programs. We only really have two that I'm aware of and more are needed for the population we serve.</p>
<p>How do you assess the effectiveness of these practices?</p>	<p>Not effective at all, really. In-school and out of school is like a revolving door. The same students are assigned each week. Obviously, it isn't working because</p>

	the students' behavior doesn't change from week to week, and year to year. Some of our students had behavior problems in elementary school, at middle school, and then in high school. Most zebras don't change their stripes!
What types of disciplinary practices do you use?	I talk to the students, try to call parents, change their seats, give them after school or lunch detention, or give them an extra assignment. Sometimes, I have to write a referral to the office because the offense is serious and a record of their behavior needs to be on file.
What are the most common problems in the school?	Disrespect, cursing, defiance, and playing.
What consequences are given for these infractions?	Usually, in school detention or a parental conference.
What is your opinion of "zero tolerance?"	I think it should be mandated. I don't think schools will remain safe if we don't get some of the "bad seeds" out.
How does leadership influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts?	It influences it a lot. Administrators play a big role in determining what happens to a student if they misbehave. Some administrators are strict, and some are lenient. Our principal tries to be fair. She has changed a lot of things this year, and in time, I think things will get better. You have to have support from the teachers and parents if you want to make a difference and make things better.
Describe parental involvement and the impact it has on disciplinary efforts.	Parental involvement is very important. Without it, you aren't going to get very far. Many of our parents are children themselves. They don't know how to parent or how to discipline. Students hear inappropriate language at home and think it's okay to use the same language at school. When parents step up to the plate to discipline their children more, things will get better in school. I wish parents had to go to a class before they could have children!
Do you feel most teachers in your school have good classroom management?	I think most do. The few who do not have control, create problems for all of us. When a teacher has poor management, the students take over that class and try to bring that same negative behavior to the cafeteria, the gym, and the other classrooms, everywhere. You can spot an ineffective teacher or a poor classroom manager by looking at how the children come to lunch. A good manager will have a nice straight line and children behaving. The ineffective teacher's class will be loud, disruptive, and not in any kind of line.
What do you should be done to improve discipline and/or management in the schools?	I think all teachers should have regular staff development on how to deal with these students. Proven strategies should be given to us and the principal should

	make sure everyone follows them. We also need a consistent plan in place. It shouldn't change each day depending on the student. Everyone should be reading on the same page.
What is your perception of an "ideal" school?	An ideal school would be one where the school board appreciates the work of the teachers, where parents are involved with school activities, where the principals are supportive of ideas the teachers have, and where the students behave in a manner that promotes high achievement.

APPENDIX K

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM TEACHER 2B IN SCHOOL B

Does this school have an effective school-wide discipline plan?	I'm not sure if it is totally effective, but it's better than what we use to have. We have a Level system and the children want to be successful. We offer school dances, prizes, special luncheons, etc. for good behavior. Is it effective? Hmm, it does more good than harm and offers something more than just punishment.
Do you believe there is a connection between school conduct and achievement?	I certainly do—without a doubt! Poor school conduct is generally characteristic of a poor achiever. There are exceptions, but as a general rule, if there is evidence of good management, achievement can occur.
Why do you think schools have so many problems?	Classes are over-crowded, there are numerous problems in the home, and we live in a society where disrespect is the norm; children are generally unmotivated and are more interested in rap or nonsense on the TV; they see a lot of violence in their neighborhoods and don't have good role models. Many students have poor self concepts and are starving for attention.
What discipline practices, strategies, or habits are used in your school?	Preferential seating, visibility of security personnel and administrators, parental contact; being positive with the students; good teaching; never letting your guard down, trying to create a safe environment, and using mediation approaches.
Do you feel they are effective?	Yes, I do. I think some can be improved. For example, our mediation specialist is now working as an alternative teacher. We need that person to work with the peer mediators. We also need to improve the conflict resolution program we have. Some times, we start programs and end them before we can expand them.
How do you assess the effectiveness of these practices?	I think they are effective. Like I said, we can improve in some areas.
What types of disciplinary practices do you use?	I contact parents. I tie their behavior to grades. I talk to students privately about their behavior and try to avoid embarrassing them in front of their peers. I refrain from arguing with the student because you can never win when you do that. Sometimes, I just ignore the behavior and not feed into it. Other times, I withdraw privileges or assign an after school or lunch detention.
What are the most common problems in the school?	Disruptive talking, rudeness to teachers, defiance, verbal abuse, refusal to complete assignments, pushing, shoving, or grabbing.

What consequences are given for these infractions?	Usually a conference, a warning, a detention, or an in school or out of school suspension.
What is your opinion of “zero tolerance?”	I’m in favor of it for drugs and weapons. We’ve got to have some boundaries and I’m afraid of those two.
How does leadership influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts?	Leadership is imperative. Without good leadership, any organization will fail. Leaders must be strong and decisive, and a change agent, and a motivator. I think our principal does a good job with this and should improve even more with more experience understanding the culture of this school.
Describe parental involvement and the impact it has on disciplinary efforts.	Parental involvement is great for me, but I work hard at it. It’s like pulling teeth sometimes, but parents really want what’s best for their children. They mean well, though sometimes it’s hard to really believe that. Some parents are here when we call them and are very supportive. Others, you can’t get here no matter what you do. The children who generally misbehave appear to come from dysfunctional homes where disruptive behavior and inappropriate behavior seems to be characteristic of other members in the family. I’ve had brothers and sisters who all behave the same way.
Do you feel most teachers in your school have good classroom management?	I would say maybe half or more have good management. We have several new teachers who are having a hard time. Many students look at them like they are students and give very little respect. I’m working with a few teachers now and it really boils down to keeping them busy, staying in contact with parents, and maintaining high expectations.
What do you think should be done to improve discipline and/or management in the schools?	I think we need more counseling for the students, and more training for the staff. I also think more effort should be placed on resolving some of the mental health issues evident in so many homes, and holding parents more accountable.
What is your perception of an “ideal’ school?	Where everyone feels safe and everybody is motivated to do their best.

APPENDIX L

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM TEACHER 3B IN SCHOOL B

Does this school have an effective school-wide discipline plan?	I think so. In talking with colleagues across the district, we are making greater strides in this area than many other schools. We have a committee of people who are working on strategies to improve the discipline in the school. What we have is working to a degree, but some improvements are still needed.
Do you believe there is a connection between school conduct and achievement?	Without a doubt! You can't separate the two. I want my children in school every day. That's the only way we can pass SOL's. IF children misbehave, I can't teach. If they are suspended, they can't learn. If they don't learn, they fail the test. If they fail the test, they don't graduate. If they fail the test, I am perceived as an ineffective teacher. That is not an option I can live with!
Why do you think schools have so many problems?	We need "old school" back. Today's teachers are "soft", afraid of the kids, poor disciplinarians; there are gangs in this area, though people don't want to admit it; children have no social skills—they lack manners and don't know how to be courteous. /Some children appear to be craving attention and seeking it negatively. Others are misplaced and appear to need special services or special problems. Too many children are falling between the cracks and receiving the wrong type of curriculum.
What discipline practices, strategies, or habits are used in your school?	Use of behavioral charts and contracts, parental involvement; school-wide incentives, remaining positive with the students, giving lots of encouragement, assigning in school and out of school suspension, holding class meetings, inviting speakers in, participating in bullying or prevention type programs.
Do you feel they are effective?	Yes, overall I do. This would work if everybody did it and bought into what we are trying to do. We have some teachers who don't care and won't do anything to help make things better.
How do you assess the effectiveness of these practices?	I think they are very effective. One thing is for sure. If you do what you've always done, you'll get what you've always gotten. We are on a mission to do something—even if it doesn't work. It sure beats doing nothing.
What types of disciplinary practices do you use?	I try to remain calm and not over react. I am aware of my volume and tone and respect the students' perspective and their space. I try to be objective and not judgmental and I try to have sympathy or empathy for the situation. Only as a last

	resort, will I notify the office and ask for help. I can usually diffuse the situation before it gets out of hand.
What are the most common problems in the school?	“dissing” peers, pushing, shoving, teasing, defiance, rudeness, language, skipping classes, disruptive behavior like talking, rapping, beating on the desk, etc.
What consequences are given for these infractions?	Detention, calls home, warnings, referrals to the office
What is your opinion of “zero tolerance?”	I think we need it for incidences of violent acts, guns and knives, or any kind of drugs.
How does leadership influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts?	It is very important and a key factor to the success of the school. The principal can’t do it alone, however. It must be a school wide effort.
Describe parental involvement and the impact it has on disciplinary efforts.	Yes indeed. Parents are the most important element. Without their support, we will not achieve. Parents need to share in the responsibility of educating their students. They need to get a better handle on what is appropriate and what is acceptable in school and in the community. Our society can’t build juvenile facilities fast enough. That shows you the direction many of our youth are headed.
Do you feel most teachers in your school have good classroom management?	Most do I think. Those who don’t have control lack some of the skills effective teachers have.
What do you should be done to improve discipline and/or management in the schools?	Parents need to be more involved. Community agencies need to join schools in an effort to provide better services for youth, and the court system and school board need to join forces to come up with a way of handling some of the more disruptive, explosive students.
What is your perception of an “ideal’ school?	One where everyone respects each other and where all children are learning and being successful.

APPENDIX M

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM PARENT IN SCHOOL B

Does this school have an effective school-wide discipline plan?	Yes, they do.
Do you believe there is a connection between school conduct and achievement?	Yes, there is a connection. Bad students, low achievement. Students who are out on the streets everyday from being suspended are not learning anything.
What is your perception of an “ideal” school?	One where there is mutual respect and all the children are learning in a safe environment.
Why do you think schools have so many problems?	Some of the teachers act as friends to the children instead of their teacher; Also, a lack of fairness with some teachers; Kids are just bad in many cases due to poor parenting; Many people are just insensitive to each other—they just don’t understand some of the children; poor parental control; the world is just different now. Our society is “off the chain.”
What discipline practices, strategies, or habits are used in your school?	Conferences, programs to reward students, meetings held with the students, parental meetings, suspensions.
Do you feel they are effective?	I think they are OK. The really bad children need to go someplace else
What are the most common problems in the school?	Talking back to the teacher, talking in class, running in the halls, using bad language, fighting, yelling and playing on the bus
What consequences do you feel should be given for these infractions?	Talk to the parents and suspend them if they don’t improve
What is your opinion of “zero tolerance?”	I like it. Schools shouldn’t have to put up with this foolishness. Parents want their children to learn and you can’t make sure that happens if other children are acting up everyday
How does leadership influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts?	It’s very important.
Do you think the principal of this school is effective?	Yes, I think she is doing a good job. My kids and the kids I know like her.
What do you should be done to improve discipline and/or management in the schools?	Explain the rules better, get more security and police in the building, talk to the children more, get them some mentors, and give more incentives for those children who behave appropriately, challenge the students more, and get them more hyped up for college.

APPENDIX N

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM SECURITY OFFICER B IN SCHOOL B

Does this school have an effective school-wide discipline plan?	Yes, we have an effective plan.
Do you believe there is a connection between school conduct and achievement?	Yes, there is a connection. If you have good management, then children will succeed in school.
What is your perception of an “ideal” school?	One where I can sit down sometimes! One where everyone feels safe and where everyone is getting along, and there isn’t so much pressure on everybody about SOLs.
Why do you think schools have so many problems?	Parents are failing to do their job, principals are scared to discipline, and teachers lack the skills they need to work with the students. Some times administrators are unfair in how they deal with students; not enough staff development on how to deal with the children; Children see so much violence in the community.
What discipline practices, strategies, or habits do you use?	Reviewing the Standards of Conduct often, contacting parents, having conferences with the student, changing their classes, having conferences, giving lots of warnings, being patient, ultimately, “putting them out of school”
How do you assess the effectiveness of these practices?	They’re OK. Something more needs to be done. More alternative programs are needed for the student who is really too disruptive to remain in school, but who are not fighting, bringing drugs, weapons, etc.
What are the most common problems in the school?	Cutting classes, defiance, disruptive behavior, fighting, bullying
What is your opinion of “zero tolerance?”	It’s needed for serious offenses. It’s not good for any and everything else. There would be no children left in school
How does leadership influence the implementation of disciplinary efforts?	Leadership is key! If you have a weak principal, the school will be “off the chain”
Describe parental involvement and the impact it has on disciplinary efforts.	Not so good here. Parents come for concerts but not for conferences as requested or just to check on their child or talk to the teacher; parents have lost control of their children
Do you feel most teachers in your school have good classroom management?	Some of them do. We have our 10% who are clueless
How can you tell if a teacher has good management?	When students are engaged in learning, when teachers have a routine, and when teachers work on building a relationship with the parent
What do you think should be done to improve discipline and/or management in the schools?	Involve community agencies (court, housing authority, etc.), have more consistency in following the rules, provide more alternative programs

## APPENDIX O

### DISCIPLINARY POLICY FOR SCHOOL A

Both schools followed the policies and procedures developed by the school district. Each school developed their own student handbook containing the discipline policy. The policies and procedures at both schools are designed to increase the following: fairness and clarity of rules, consistency, school safety, and parental involvement.

#### *Discipline Policy: School A*

The purpose of the disciplinary rules at School A is to establish a safe learning environment through the development of mutual respect for the students, the staff, and the school. One of the goals of School A is to ensure a quality education in a structured program in which positive reinforcement is coupled with the consistency of consequences. The underlying premise is that school should be in order to maintain a safe environment for children. Therefore, all students are expected to follow the fundamental eight rules listed below. These rules apply to any school activity. In addition, these rules are posted throughout the school.

1. Everyone will show respect for the school, its people, its property, and its purpose so that the learning environment is not jeopardized. Students will remove head coverings upon entering the building.
2. Students will follow directions the first time when given by an adult.
3. No cursing or obscene gestures are permitted.
4. Students will behave quietly in the hallways, walking to the right, and moving directly to their assigned areas. Signed passes are required.
5. Students will not run, fight, push, or "play fight."

6. Students will arrive to class on time, will come prepared, (i.e.: with pencil, book covered, homework completed, etc.), will be willing to participate, and cheating will not be tolerated.
7. No one will chew gum or eat candy anywhere in the school. Consumption of food or beverages will be in designated areas only; or elsewhere with special administrative permission.
8. Telephones, pagers, and electronic equipment are not allowed in the building.

Additionally, School A has several goals with respect to the discipline policy. They are:

1. To encourage positive behavior inside and outside the classroom.
2. To provide staff, parents and students with consistent school-wide approach to discipline issues.
3. To increase students on-task time.
4. To encourage students to make sensible personal choices about their behavior, choice of friends and activities.
5. To ensure the safety of individual students, groups of students and adults, both within the school grounds and during any school activity outside the school grounds.
6. To include parent support as an important strategy in the school discipline plan.
7. To make the classroom and community a happier and safer place for students, staff and other adults.

The expected outcomes of these goals are as follows:

Each child will:

- demonstrate improved behaviour through positive rewards and acceptance of consequences resulting from poor personal choices

- spend more on-task time in class lessons
- benefit from the teacher having more time to devote to teaching as less time will be needed in disciplining students
- have the support of a home-school-district network in learning acceptable behavior

### Suspension

When infractions of school rules, regulations, or procedures are considered serious and/or severe, suspension from School A will result. Some reasons for suspension are insubordination, fighting, destruction of school property, truancy, and tobacco/alcohol/drug violations.

Once a student has committed four in-school suspension offenses, the student will be assigned to out-of-school suspension for further infractions. In addition, a parent conference will be required.

Note: Any weapons violation is a cause for expulsion from school and police action. (Toy and/or facsimile weapons are considered as weapons under this policy). Appeal of school discipline may be made to the district's hearing officer.

### Tardiness to Class

A student arriving to class must have a pass from the teacher that detained him/her. Failure to have a pass when late can result in a detention being issued. Students who are repeatedly tardy will be reported to the Assistant Principal.

## APPENDIX P

### DISCIPLINE POLICY FOR SCHOOL B

It is the belief of the administration and staff at School B that good discipline is essential for effective learning. Every student will receive a positive, nurturing interaction with faculty, staff, and administrators. Each student has a right to be free from the distractions caused by inappropriate behavior of others. They further believe that a role of the school is to teach responsible behavior. The discipline plan at School B is one strategy to achieve this goal. Students are expected to attend all classes on time and cooperate in an orderly school and classroom atmosphere. All students who are out of class should have an agenda book.

School B uses the Level System, which is a progressive discipline program. It promotes consistent expectations for all students and is enforced by all staff. Students with good behavior who have not received any infraction notices (for breaking school/class rules) for a fourteen-day period are placed on Level 1. Special Level activities are planned throughout the school year.

Level 1 activities might include:

- extra library time
- free time
- special assemblies
- treats
- drawings for prizes
- special privileges

## Infractions

Infraction slips will be issued for breaking class or school rules or for improper behavior on the school bus. These slips will result in the assignment of consequences and either 1, 3 or 5 demerits, depending on the severity. These demerits determine your Honor Level status.

## Levels

Four Levels are used at School B. Your Level is determined by how well you manage your own behavior and by the number of infraction points (or demerits) you receive during a given period of time.

Level 1	0 infraction points
Level 2	1-10 infraction points
Level 3	11-20 infraction points
Level 4	21 or more infraction points

School B's records indicate that by using this system, more than 80% of their students are on Honor Level 1 or 2 most of the time.

Consequences for Infractions (What happens when you break the rules) are shown below.

<b>Infraction</b>	<b>Consequence</b>
1st infraction (during a 14 day period)	15 minute lunch detention
2nd infraction	30 minute lunch detention
3rd infraction	1 hour after school detention
4th infraction	2 hour after school detention
5th infraction	Saturday School
6th infraction	Office referral-Administrative Discretion

Students who fail to serve consequences will be automatically moved to the next level of consequence and will receive 5 additional demerits.

### School and Classroom Standards

- Students are expected to attend regularly and on time.
- Students are expected to obey reasonable requests from all school staff including bus drivers, secretaries, custodians, cooks, and school assistants.
- Students are expected to dress in a manner which does not disrupt the educational process. The display of obscene, sexual, drug, or alcohol related messages and gang related apparel are prohibited.
- Students are expected to avoid inappropriate physical contact, foul language, and dangerous behavior.
- Students will enjoy a climate free from harassment or any other form of verbal or physical intimidation.

## APPENDIX Q

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT STUDY

#### Memorandum

To: Executive Director of Secondary Education  
Cc: Director, Department of Research  
From: R. Dionne Ward, Doctoral Candidate  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University  
Date: October 13, 2004  
Subject: Permission to conduct a research project

As you are aware, I am a doctoral student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. All of my course work is completed and I am at the next step, securing a location to conduct my study.

The purpose of the study is to investigate what patterns of practice are being used in urban middle schools to control disruptive behavior of students. Approaching the topic by discussing the possible causes of disruption only serves to further explain the complexity and the magnitude of the problem, where an approach that examines what is currently being implemented would serve to guide policies and practices within new and existing schools.

This research project has been approved, as required, by the Institutional Review Board for Research involving Human Subjects at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. It has also been approved by the Department of Educational Leadership Studies.

I am enclosing the abstract of my study. The information contained in the abstract will provide you with a statement of the current problem, the purpose of the study, a literature review, as well as the proposed methodology. I am requesting to interview principals, teachers, security specialists, and parents (PTA representative) on the middle school level. There will be no involvement of students.

Because this study is being conducted from the point of view of what practices are being implemented in various middle schools, the population for the study is most important. I am requesting your assistance in identifying two schools, preferably with similar characteristics, i.e., size, disciplinary issues, similarity of SOL scores, number of students on free or reduced lunch, etc.

At this time I anticipate interviewing 2 principals (one from each school), 6 teachers (one from each grade level at each school), 2 security officers (one from each school), and 2 parents

(one from each school). As I continue the study, if there is a need to increase the number of participants, I will contact you for permission.

Thank you for considering my request to conduct the study in our school district. I believe the results of the study will be beneficial to the district as well as to others in the state. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions or for further clarification.

Attachment

APPENDIX R  
CONSENT FORMS

*Teacher*

My name is Dionne Ward and I am a doctoral student at Virginia Tech University. My position in the district is that of Principal. I am conducting a study about the disciplinary practices being used in urban schools to control disruptive behavior. Results of this study will be shared with you and will be part of my dissertation. You are being invited to participate in this study because you have been in this school for three or more years and are familiar with many of the strategies and techniques used in disciplinary practices. If you should have any questions about this study or the process, please feel to contact me.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and in no way will your participation or lack-there-of influence your current position at this time or at any time in the future. If you decide to be a member of the study and then at a later date want to withdraw, that is certainly your option and, again, in no way will you be penalized. You have the right to withdraw from this process at any time.

Participants in this study will not have their names or schools mentioned in the study. A pseudonym will be used in the presentation of the findings. If a direct quote is to be used, then permission will be asked of the participant. Again though, a pseudonym will be used for the quote.

Results of the study will be published in a dissertation to fulfill the doctoral requirements of Virginia Tech. Additionally, it is hoped that information gleaned from this study will be used as a component in implementing future school-wide and/or district-wide disciplinary practices.

By signing this consent form, you indicate that you understand that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions. You also understand that your name and work location will not be mentioned; rather a pseudonym will be used. If you are quoted directly, your permission will be obtained. Your participation in no way impacts your current or future position in the school district.

Thank you for your participation!

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Administrator consent form*

My name is Dionne Ward and I am a doctoral student at Virginia Tech University. My position in the school district is that of Principal. I am conducting a study about the disciplinary practices being used in middle schools to control disruptive behavior. Results of this study will be shared with you and will be part of my dissertation. You are being invited to participate in this study because you have been identified as a leader who is familiar with many strategies and techniques essential in providing an environment that is safe for learning. Your knowledge of various disciplinary practices will prove valuable in this study. If you should have any questions about this study or the process, please feel to contact me.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and in no way will your participation or lack-there-of influence your current position at this time or at any time in the future. If you decide to be a member of the study and then at a later date want to withdraw, that is certainly your option and, again, in no way will you be penalized. You have the right to withdraw from this process at any time.

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Thank you for your participation!

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*PTA representative consent form*

My name is Dionne Ward and I am a doctoral student at Virginia Tech University. My position in the school district is that of Principal. I am conducting a study about the disciplinary practices being used in urban schools to control disruptive behavior. Results of this study will be shared with you and will be part of my dissertation. You are being invited to participate in this study because you have a vested interest in the school and are familiar with many of the strategies and techniques used in disciplinary practices. If you should have any questions about this study or the process, please feel to contact me.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and in no way will your participation or lack-there-of influence your current position at this time or at any time in the future. If you decide to be a member of the study and then at a later date want to withdraw, that is certainly your option and, again, in no way will you be penalized. You have the right to withdraw from this process at any time.

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By signing this consent form, you indicate that you understand that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions. You also understand that your name and work location will not be mentioned; rather a pseudonym will be used. If you are quoted directly, your permission will be obtained.

Thank you for your participation!

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

*Security Specialist consent form*

My name is Dionne Ward and I am a doctoral student at Virginia Tech University. My position in the school district is that of Principal. I am conducting a study about the disciplinary practices being used in urban schools to control disruptive behavior. Results of this study will be shared with you and will be part of my dissertation. You are being invited to participate in this study because you have been in this school for three or more years and are familiar with many of the strategies and techniques used in disciplinary practices. If you should have any questions about this study or the process, please feel to contact me.

Your participation in this study is strictly voluntary and in no way will your participation or lack-there-of influence your current position at this time or at any time in the future. If you decide to be a member of the study and then at a later date want to withdraw, that is certainly your option and, again, in no way will you be penalized. You have the right to withdraw from this process at any time.

Participants in this study will not have their names or schools mentioned in the study. A pseudonym will be used in the presentation of the findings. If a direct quote is to be used, then permission will be asked of the participant. Again though, a pseudonym will be used for the quote.

Results of the study will be published in a dissertation to fulfill the doctoral requirements of Virginia Tech. Additionally, it is hoped that information gleaned from this study will be used as a component in implementing future school-wide and/or district-wide disciplinary practices.

By signing this consent form, you indicate that you understand that you have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions. You also understand that your name and work location will not be mentioned; rather a pseudonym will be used. If you are quoted directly, your permission will be obtained. Your participation in no way impacts your current or future position in the school district.

Thank you for your participation!

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX S  
INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Teacher Code # \_\_\_\_\_

Location Code # \_\_\_\_\_

1. Is student discipline and behavior a top problem, somewhere in the middle, near the bottom, or not a problem at all?
2. What discipline practices are in place at your school?
3. How are these practices implemented?
4. How do the stakeholders assess the effectiveness of these practices?
5. What types of disciplinary practices do you use?
6. How effective are these practices?
7. What do you think are the most common problems in the school?
8. What are the most common consequences for offenses?
9. Do you feel the consequences are adequate?
10. Do you agree with the consequences given?
11. Do you support establishing and enforcing “zero tolerance” policies?
12. Do you believe inadequate parenting is a primary cause of student behavior problems?
13. What types of programs are available in your school that deal with helping the disruptive student?
14. Do you feel that the programs in place at your school are effective?
15. Do you feel the leadership has anything to do with the behavior of students in your school?
16. Do you feel that teachers, parents, security offices and other stakeholders play a key role in controlling disruptive behavior in schools?

Prompts to be used during the interview:

1. Demographic and Professional Background:
2. Gender
3. Years of experience in education/Years of experience in current position
4. Ethnicity
5. Degrees

6. Grade/Content
7. How many years have you been at this particular school?
8. About how much time each week do you spend on discipline?
9. What types of discipline problems are there?
10. Do you feel safe in your school? Why or why not?
11. Do you think the children feel safe?
12. Do you think the parents think it is a safe school?
13. Do you feel the school environment is changing? How?
14. Is there any one person or group of persons responsible for identifying strategies, tools, and model programs that could be used to enhance the safety and success of all children in your school?
15. Does your school have a safety plan?
16. Do you feel it is effective?
17. What kinds of things do you feel should be in a safety plan?
18. Do you feel teachers and other school personnel are properly trained to handle safety issues in schools? If not, what do you feel should be done?
19. Do you feel school personnel should have the responsibility to protect every student's right to learn? How can this be achieved?
20. How would you describe the administrator's style with discipline?
21. Did you feel supported by the administrator as it relates to disciplinary matters? Please share some examples of incidents or situations that would paint a picture for you and me about the administrator's support.
22. What role does the security specialist, vanquish officer, counselor, and/or peer mediator play in making the school safe for learning?
23. Are there any programs in place to help make your school safe for learning? If so, what are they and are they effective?
24. If you could be the principal for a month, what changes would you make in this school to make it less disruptive?

## Security Specialist Interview Protocol

Security Code # \_\_\_\_\_

Location Code # \_\_\_\_\_

1. Is student discipline and behavior a top problem, somewhere in the middle, near the bottom, or not a problem at all?
2. What discipline practices are in place at your school?
  1. How are these practices implemented?
  2. How do the stakeholders assess the effectiveness of these practices?
  3. What types of disciplinary practices do you use?
  4. How effective are these practices?
5. What do you think are the most common problems in the school?
6. What are the most common consequences for offenses?
7. Do you feel the consequences are adequate?
8. Do you agree with the consequences given?
9. Do you support establishing and enforcing “zero tolerance” policies?
10. Do you believe inadequate parenting is a primary cause of student behavior problems?
11. What types of programs are available in your school that deal with helping the disruptive student?
12. Do you feel that the programs in place at your school are effective?
13. Do you feel the leadership has anything to do with the behavior of students in your school?
14. Do you feel that teachers, parents, security offices and other stakeholders play a key role in controlling disruptive behavior in schools?

Prompts to be used during the interview:

1. How many years have you been a security officer/safe school specialist?
2. About how much time each week do you spend on discipline?
3. What types of discipline problems are there?
4. Do you feel safe in your school? Why or why not?
5. Do you think the children feel safe?
6. Do you think the parents think it is a safe school?

7. Do you feel the school environment is changing? How?
8. Is there any one person or group of persons responsible for identifying strategies, tools, and model programs that could be used to enhance the safety and success of all children in your school?
9. Does your school have a safety plan?
10. Do you feel it is effective?
11. Do you feel the teachers and other school personnel are properly trained to handle safety issues in schools? If not, what do you feel should be done?
12. Do you feel school personnel should have the responsibility to protect every student's right to learn? How can this be achieved?
13. How would you describe the administrator's style with discipline?
14. Are there any programs in place to help make your school safe for learning? If so, what are they and are they effective?
15. If you could be the principal for a month, what changes would you make in the school system to make it less disruptive?

## Administrator Interview Protocol

Administrator Code # \_\_\_\_\_

Location Code # \_\_\_\_\_

1. Is student discipline and behavior a top problem, somewhere in the middle, near the bottom, or not a problem at all?
2. What discipline practices are in place at your school?
3. How are these practices implemented?
4. How do the stakeholders assess the effectiveness of these practices?
5. What types of disciplinary practices do you use?
6. How effective are these practices?
7. What barriers prevent you from handling disciplinary issues more effectively?
8. What do you think are the most common problems in the school?
9. What are the most common consequences for offenses?
10. Do you feel the consequences are adequate?
11. Do you agree with the consequences given?
12. Do you support establishing and enforcing “zero tolerance” policies?
13. What types of programs are available in your school that deal with helping the disruptive student?
14. Do you feel that the programs in place at your school are effective?
15. Do you feel the leadership has anything to do with the behavior of students in your school?
16. Do you feel that teachers, parents, security offices and other stakeholders play a key role in controlling disruptive behavior in schools?
17. How are the practices similar or different among various middle schools within the same school district?
18. How do you assess the effectiveness of these practices?
19. Are some practices more effective than others? How can you tell? Can you give me some examples?
20. What is your role in providing a safe learning environment?
21. Describe what you feel should be done in your school to provide a safe learning environment.

22. Do you believe inadequate parenting is a primary cause of student behavior problems?

Prompts to be used during the interview:

1. Gender
2. Age
15. Ethnicity
16. Degrees
17. How many years have you been an administrator?
18. About how much time each week do you spend on discipline?
19. What types of discipline problems are there?
20. Do you feel the school environment is changing? How?
21. Is there any one person or group of persons responsible for identifying strategies, tools, and model programs that could be used to enhance the safety and success of all children in your school?
22. Do you feel the teachers and other school personnel are properly trained to handle safety issues in schools? If not, what do you feel should be done?
23. Do you feel school personnel should have the responsibility to protect every student's right to learn? How can this be achieved?
24. How would you describe your style of discipline?
25. Do you feel supported by the teachers as it relates to disciplinary matters? Please share some examples of incidents or situations that would paint a picture for you and me about the teacher's support.
26. Do you feel supported by the parents as it relates to disciplinary matters?
27. If you could be the superintendent for a month, what changes would you make in the school system to make it less disruptive?

## Executive Director's Interview Protocol

Administrator Code # \_\_\_\_\_

Location Code # \_\_\_\_\_

1. Is student discipline and behavior a top problem, somewhere in the middle, near the bottom, or not a problem at all in the district?
2. What discipline practices are in place at your schools?
3. How are these practices implemented?
4. Do you feel the practices used are effective?
5. Do you believe inadequate parenting is a primary cause of student behavior problems?
6. Do you support establishing and enforcing "zero tolerance" policies?
7. Are any of the schools using a school-wide disciplinary approach?
8. How do the stakeholders assess the effectiveness of practices used in our schools?
9. What do you think are the most common problems in the school?
10. What are the most common consequences for offenses?
11. Do you feel the consequences are adequate?
12. Do you agree with the consequences given?
13. What types of programs are available in the district to address the challenges of the disruptive student?
14. Do you feel these programs are effective?
15. Do you feel the leadership has anything to do with the behavior of students?
16. Do you feel teachers, parents, security offices and other stakeholders play a key role in controlling disruptive behavior in schools?
17. How are the practices similar or different among various middle schools in the district?
18. How do you assess the effectiveness of these practices?
19. Are some practices more effective than others? How can you tell? Can you give some examples?
20. What is your role in providing a safe learning environment?
21. Describe what you feel should be done in your school to provide a safe learning environment.

## PTA Representative Interview Protocol

PTA Representative Code # \_\_\_\_\_

Location Code # \_\_\_\_\_

Prompts to be used during the interview:

1. How many years have you been active in this school?
2. About how much time each week do you spend at the school?
3. Is student discipline and behavior a top problem, somewhere in the middle, near the bottom, or not a problem at all?
4. What types of discipline problems do you observe?
5. Do you feel the school environment is changing? How?
6. Do you feel the teachers and other school personnel are properly trained to handle safety issues in schools? If not, what do you feel should be done?
7. Do you feel school personnel should have the responsibility to protect every student's right to learn? How can this be achieved?
8. What do you are the most common problems in the school?
9. Do you feel problems are handled appropriately?
10. Do you agree with the consequences of violations?
11. Would you support establishing and enforcing "zero tolerance" policies?
12. Do you feel the school is doing enough to deal with disruptive behavior?
13. Do you believe inadequate parenting is a primary cause of student behavior problems?
14. If you could be the principal for one month, what changes would you make in the school system to make it less disruptive?

APPENDIX T

INDIVIDUAL CONTACT/INFORMATIONAL SHEET

Contact type: \_\_\_\_\_ Location: \_\_\_\_\_  
Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of contact: \_\_\_\_\_  
Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Main issues or themes that appeared in this contact:

Summary of information for each target question:

Question	Information
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Other interesting or important information from this contact:

New questions to consider in next contact:

Concerns:

## APPENDIX U

### PERMISSION TO USE COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL

<http://www.psy.pdx.edu/PsiCafe/Overheads/ClassSys-ChildTarget.htm>

Dear Sir:

My name is Dionne Ward and I am a doctoral student at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, which is located in Blacksburg, Virginia. All of my course work has been completed and I am currently in the process of writing the first three chapters of my dissertation.

The purpose of my study is to examine the disciplinary practices being used in urban middle schools to control disruptive behavior of students. In conducting my research for the literature review, I came across “The Classroom System.” Information you shared about the child as target is of interest to me and supports some of the statements I make in my paper.

I am writing this letter to ask your permission to include in my paper a reproduction of The Classroom System. This is the illustration that describes society’s beliefs and society’s values. The illustration I wish to include in my dissertation will be a copy of what you have adapted from Bronfenbrenner’s Ecological Systems Theory. The distribution of my dissertation will be a copy for my committee chair, myself, and the required copy for the university. In addition, the dissertation, upon completion of defense, will be located in the library at Virginia Tech in the on-line dissertation database.

Thank you for your consideration of my request. I look forward to hearing from you and may be reached via the telephone, email, or regular mail.

Sincerely,

Dionne Ward

APPENDIX V

COMPARISON OF RESEARCHED BASED SCHOOL WIDE PROGRAMS

<u>Name of Program</u>	<u>Program Overview</u>	<u>Brief Summary of Program Content</u>	<u>Program Outcomes</u>
Effective Behavioral Support  <b>Targets all grade levels</b>	This approach provides a process and structure for enhancing the adoption and sustained use of research validated school wide discipline practices. It is individualized. It focuses on the positive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Includes functional behavioral assessments</li> <li>* Addresses rates of problem behavior, ineffective and inefficient disciplinary practices, lack of staff support to address problem behavior, negative school climate, and high use of crises/reactive behavior management practices</li> <li>*Emphasizes the following strategies:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- school-wide practices</li> <li>- social skills instruction</li> <li>- self-management strategies</li> <li>- behavioral interventions and classroom management</li> <li>- functional behavioral assessment based behavioral support planning</li> <li>- active supervision for non-classroom settings</li> <li>- Teacher Assistance Team Planning/ Problem Solving</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Increased attendance</li> <li>*Increased academic performance</li> <li>*Decrease in inappropriate behavior</li> <li>*Increased parental involvement</li> <li>*Improved school climate</li> </ul>
<b>Project PATHE</b>  <b>Targets middle &amp; high school students</b>	A comprehensive program that reduces school disorder and increases students' bonding to the school.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* School wide academic weaknesses and discipline problems are diagnosed and strengthened through innovative teaching techniques.</li> <li>*Development of clear, fair rules</li> <li>* Added extra-curricular activities, peer counseling, an school pride campaigns</li> <li>* Job seeking skills and career exploration programs</li> </ul>	<p>Evaluations conducted after one year for high schools and two years for middle schools demonstrate significant improvement for PATHE schools, compared to control schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Decrease in drug involvement, suspensions, and school punishment</li> <li>*School alienation decreased in all treatment schools</li> </ul>

		<p>* At-risk students receive additional monitoring , tutoring, and counseling aimed at improving their self-concept, academic success, and bonds to social order</p>	<p>*Attachment to school increased in the treatment middle schools, while decreasing in the comparison school;          *School climate and discipline management improved in all the treatment schools.          *Higher rates of graduation for at-risk high school seniors;          *Higher scores on standardized tests of achievement          *Increased school attendance</p>
<p><i>STEP (School Transitional Environmental Program)</i></p> <p><b>Targets middle &amp; high school students</b></p>	<p>Program benefits those students at greatest risk for behavioral problems. It aims to reduce the complexity of school environments, increase peer and teacher support, and decreases students' vulnerability to academic and emotional difficulties</p>	<p>*Success is achieved through redefining the role of homeroom teachers and restructuring schools' physical settings. Together, these changes increase students' beliefs that school is stable, well organized, and cohesive.</p> <p>* Teachers act as administrators and counselors, helping students choose classes, counseling them regarding school and personal problems, etc. This increased attention reduces student anonymity, increases student accountability, and enhances students; abilities to learn school rules and expectations.</p>	<p>* Decreases in absenteeism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stability of self-concept</li> <li>• More positive feelings of the school environment perceiving the school as more understandable</li> <li>• Lower dropout rate 21% vs. 43%</li> <li>• Higher grades and fewer absences in 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grades</li> <li>• Fewer increases in substance abuse</li> <li>• Fewer decreases in academic performance and self-concept</li> </ul>
<p><b>Resolving Conflict Creatively Program</b></p> <p><b>Targets Grades K - 12</b></p>	<p>School based prevention program designed to promote constructive conflict resolution &amp; positive inter-group relations. It reduces risks for aggression and violence.</p>	<p>*Built around a set of core skills: communicating clearly and listening carefully, expressing feelings and dealing with anger, resolving conflicts, fostering cooperation, appreciating diversity, and countering bias.</p> <p>*These skills are learned through a curriculum taught by teachers receiving both initial training and ongoing follow-up</p>	<p>*Students received increased ratings from teachers on their positive social behaviors and emotional control</p> <p>*Students showed greater improvement on standardized tests</p> <p>*Slows the rate of increase of social-cognitive processes and behaviors that lead to violence</p>

## APPENDIX W

### A COMPILATION OF RESEARCH ON DISCIPLINE PRACTICES

Researcher/Author	Summary of Research Findings
Brophy, J. (1983)	Reviews research and discusses findings concerning classroom management strategies found to be effective in reducing misbehavior and promoting time on task. Discusses both preventive and intervention strategies
Brophy, J. (1986)	Summarizes research on classroom management methods and review research on interventions for dealing with misbehavior
Cobb & Richards (1983)	Investigates the effects on classroom disorder produced by a series of whole class counseling sessions and small group sessions focused on a target group of students with behavior problems. Ninety fourth and fifth grade students and their teachers participated.
Cotton, K. (2001)	Synthesizes the findings from 57 research articles concerned with the relationship between different measures of education time (allocated time, time on task, academic learning time) and student achievement.
Cotton & Savard (1992)	Reviews 26 studies and summaries on the effects of classroom and school wide practices undertaken to reduce discipline problems and increase student motivation
Doyle, W. (1989)	Reviews research on effective classroom management techniques and strategies for dealing with serious or chronic misconduct. Identifies clear and consistently applied rules and close monitoring of classroom activities as critical classroom management functions.
Duke, D. (1989)	Reviews research on the school organizational factors related to well-disciplined school environments and discusses the kinds of leadership functions needed to establish environments conducive to good school discipline.
Emmer, E. (1982)	Offers findings from an observational study of 41 elementary classrooms to determine relationships between teachers' classroom management behaviors and (1) student task engagement and (2) the incidence of classroom disruptions.
Emmer, E. & Aussiker, A. (1989)	Reviews research on the effects of Teacher Effectiveness Training, Reality Therapy, Assertive Discipline, and Adlerian approaches on school and classroom discipline. Identified positive effects on teacher perceptions and some effects on teacher behavior, but few effects on student behavior or attitudes.
Evertson, C. (1989)	Reports the results of an experiment to determine the effects of a training program on the classroom management skills of 29 elementary teachers in Arkansas.
Gettinger, M. (1988)	Reviews research on effects of proactive classroom management techniques focusing on prevention rather than remediation

Researcher/Author	Summary of Research
Gottfredson, D. (1989)	Cites research findings on the correlates of school disorder, reports the results of an organizational improvement study in two urban junior high schools, and presents results of three projects intended to reduce the disruptions and delinquent behavior perpetrated by at risk youth.
Gottfredson, D. (1989)	Reports the results of a project intended to improve school discipline and reduce the dropout rate in four low-income middle and high schools.
Gottfredson, D. Karweit, N. & Gottfredson, G. (1989)	Describes the results of an organization development approach to reducing disorder in six urban middle schools. High-implementation schools evidenced significant improvements, while low-implementation and control schools did not.
Gottfredson, G. & Goffredson, D. (1985)	Uses survey data from the National Institute of Education's Safe School Study to determine school factors, which are related to the victimization of school personnel and students in junior and senior high school settings.
Harvard Education Letter (1987)	Offers a series of commentaries and research-based guidelines for establishing and maintaining more orderly school environments.
Hyman, I. & Lally, D. (1982)	Reviews research on the efficacy of various approaches to improve school climate and discipline (Adlerian, behavior modification, human relations training, reality therapy, etc.) and examines studies to identify commonalities across the different approaches.
Kounin, J. (1970)	Presents the results of studies from the kindergarten to university levels, focusing particularly on findings from an observations study of 80 elementary classrooms to identify strategies and processes used in effectively and ineffectively managed classes.
Mandlebaum, L., Russell, S., et al. (1983)	Reports the results of a study of the effects of the Assertive Discipline program on the out-of-seat and inappropriate talking behaviors of a class of third graders. Results indicated that the program was effective in reducing the incidence of these behaviors.
McCormack, S. (1987)	Reviews eleven research studies on the effects of the Assertive Discipline program on teachers and students. Identified positive relationships between the program and (1) off-task behavior, (2) incidence of referrals, (3) students self-concept.
Ornstein, A. & Levine, D. (1981)	Reviews research on theories and practices associated with effective teaching. Includes a section on the kinds of classroom management practices shown to be associated with orderly, on-task classroom environments.
Short, P. (1988)	Summarizes findings from research on school wide practices, which lead to safe and orderly school environments. School wide involvement in establishing good discipline, positive school climate, and principal leadership are the three themes identified.
Wayson, W. & Lasley (1984)	Presents findings from a study conducted by the PDK Commission on Discipline. Identifies 5 characteristics found in well-disciplined students: belongingness, shared goals, symbols of identity and excellence, leadership to sustain values, and clear rules.

## VITA

### R. DIONNE WARD

R. Dionne Ward was born and reared in Asheville, North Carolina. She has distinguished herself as a lifelong learner, a respected educator, and a devoted scholar. She earned her Baccalaureate and Master's degrees from Virginia Commonwealth University. Her doctoral degree, in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies, is from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

In both professional and personal capacities, Dr. Ward has had a far-reaching and profound effect on many lives and careers. This has been evident during her thirty-two years with public and private education. Her accomplishments include creating exciting lessons, team and collaborative teaching, conducting staff developments, monitoring instruction, helping teachers learn how to use data to improve instruction, building leadership capacity in schools, helping others understand the complexities associated with special education, and being utilized as a resource to teachers for integrating technology into instruction. Her passion for educating youth from urban environments will leave in its wake a legacy of compassionate pedagogy, lifelong achievement, and a philosophy that all children can be successful given the proper tools and climate for learning.

Dionne has been active in many associations and served on many committees. She has presented on the local and national level and has 32 years of experience in education.

Dr. Ward is married to Herbert Ward and has three children, Kamaria (age 29), Crystal (age 25), and Tiffany (age 21). She is also the proud grandmother of Shavae' Divyne (age 7).