STUDENT MISCONDUCT AND ISOLATION FROM THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT: A STUDY OF STUDENT, TEACHER, AND ADMINISTRATOR PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL DISCIPLINE AT AN URBAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

A Dissertation

Presented to

The Faculty of the Charter College of Education

California State University, Los Angeles

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

in

Educational Leadership

By

Armando Rubio

December 2014

ProQuest LLC.
789 East Eisenhower Parkway
P.O. Box 1346
Ann Arbor, MI 48106 - 1346

The dissertation of Armando Rubio is approved.

Vince Carbino

Albert Jones

Lois Weinberg, Committee Chair

Anne Hafner, Division Chair

California State University, Los Angeles

December 2014

ABSTRACT

The study focused on school discipline and climate while exploring differences in perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators about school discipline in an urban middle school. This study addresses three research questions that guided the study of the current disciplinary practices. The data shows that participants experienced and observed the application of multiple disciplinary practices that resulted in the issuance of student removal from the instructional environment. The use of prevention, intervention, and responses to misbehavior are all analyzed. Recommendations for improvement include the implementation of restorative justice and social skills curriculum. The themes that emerged from this study included: Consequences, Interventions, Funding, Staff-Student Interaction and Conduct, and Inconsistency.

Keywords: Student Misbehavior; School Discipline; Urban Schools

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to first thank my daughter, Thelma Rubio, who has been my inspiration, my motivation, and my impetus throughout this entire dissertation journey. I hope that this work may have inspired you to pursue your dreams and give you the strength to persevere through the challenges along the way.

Special thanks to my dissertation committee members: Dr. Albert Jones, Dr. Anne Hafner and Dr. Vince Carbino for the ongoing assistance, guidance, and support throughout this process. Thank you to my dissertation chair, Dr. Lois Weinberg. A very special thanks to Dr. Shalene Wright for that "lift" to get me over the last obstacle in this entire process; at one point it seemed impossible. Dr. Sharon Ulanoff, your assistance and guidance was much appreciated, thank you. I appreciate everyone who has helped me in this journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Was it equitable for a 10-year-old girl from Thornton, Colorado to be suspended for being one of a group of girls who repeatedly asked a boy on a playground if he liked them? The boy made a complaint to a teacher, so the school administrators responded by citing the district's Zero Tolerance Sexual Harassment Policy and suspending her. A 15-year-old student uttered a curse word to a friend as the school police walked by him. The officers issued the student a citation for disorderly conduct. In San Diego, a 12-year-old scuffled with classmates when they taunted him for being fat. As a consequence, the student was expelled for violating the zero tolerance policy for fighting. Were these disciplinary responses appropriate for behavioral improvement that can assist in student achievement? The consequences applied were questionable approaches to behavior modification and are examples of the overuse of out-of-school placement and punitive practices.

School staff members work to maintain students in school and try to prevent them from entering the school to prison pipeline. Schools need to create safe, caring, and learning environments where students can strive to achieve academic success. Discipline practices in schools affect the social quality of each educational environment, and the ability of children to achieve the academic and social gains essential for success in a 21st century society (Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May, & Tobin, 2011). Public schools must be places where children can learn not only important academic content, but also learn lessons about being citizens (Browne-Dianis, 2011).

Statement of the Problem

Discipline concerns have consistently been ranked in the top 10 of the most serious problems facing public schools (Butterfield, Muse, & Anderson, 1996). Due to the ongoing disciplinary outcomes in schools, students are increasingly being suspended from school. School discipline consists of punishing students and directing them to obey. Defiance and disobedience are among the top reasons students are being suspended from school. Since these responses to student misbehavior have an effect on overall student academic achievement, schools must strive to establish a positive behavioral environment. An effective discipline approach has to do with teaching students to make good choices and to take responsibility for their actions.

Due to the high volume of suspensions, students are missing valuable instructional time, disengaging from school, heading towards academic failure, and continuously breaking school rules without any positive learning involved in the consequences. At times, school personnel suspend students without cause for reasons that are not compliant with district policies. Students are given suspensions repeatedly without an action that produces a change in behavior. Poor discipline in any environment inhibits the learning of offending students who are continually removed from classrooms, as well as non-offenders whose learning is interrupted when teachers are forced to take steps necessary to bring disruptive students under control (Butterfield et al., 1996). Effective disciplinary systems should improve academic outcomes by increasing the amount and quality of time teachers can spend teaching, rather than responding to behavioral disruptions (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Discipline strategies must always

teach the correct behavioral response in order to combat the ongoing challenges related to suspensions.

Schools are required to have a proactive discipline plan that abides by the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002). Inclusive intervention approaches must be accountable to federal legislation, as schools are required to use research-based and effective interventions. Depending on the severity of the misconduct, some actions may require immediate removal of the student from the educational setting, while others can be resolved with intervention strategies known to work, such as referrals to support staff, conflict resolution, and restorative justice.

Significance of the Problem

The classroom teacher initially handles disciplinary problems that occur within the classroom. Teachers are the initial disciplinarians who administer student behavior when school discipline is a concern. Teachers are trained to respond to the misbehavior accordingly. Prior to sending students out of the classroom or issuing an office discipline referral, teachers are required to intervene immediately when students engage in problem behavior. This is meant to establish an effort that will produce a change in behavior with the implementation of positive and appropriate methods. The teacher sets the guidelines for the classroom's educational environment and is inevitably the person to decide the consequences of their students' performance and behavior (Casteel, 1997). Classroom teachers are integral to the discipline referral process and in the best position to develop effective redirection strategies that prevent behavioral problems from occurring (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Behavioral problems such as students lacking materials (e.g. books, school supplies), being out of one's seat, eating in class, talking out of turn, tardiness,

sleeping in class, name calling, passing notes, arguing in class, or making noises, are examples of issues that each teacher is responsible for handling. Responding by writing names on the board, moving their seats, calling their parents, suspending them, along with other responses are common punitive responses that do not improve students' behavior.

Implementing a progressive discipline approach will allow teachers to be trained to intervene appropriately utilizing verbal warnings, to create time outs for students, to conference with the student (parent), call for detention, or establish a behavioral contract. Training can cover positive-behavioral interventions and supports, conflict resolution, mediation, restorative practices, discipline, and adolescent development. Administrators must look at discipline data to see what additional classroom-management training their teachers may need and rethink common methods of disciplining students. Outstanding teachers provide students the structure needed to succeed.

Classroom management is instrumental in establishing a positive school environment. Training teachers in effective classroom management may increase the consistency of discipline, potentially reduce unnecessary exclusions, and prevent the erosion of the deterrent effect of suspension. Classroom disruptions are expected to occur, but the use of multiple disciplinary approaches without consistency is not conducive to appropriate student behaviors (Irvin et al., 2006). Rather there is a need for a uniform treatment that is applied consistently in all disciplinary situations. School-wide Positive Behavior Supports (SWPBS) is a whole-school approach to the prevention of problem behavior that focuses on defining, teaching, and rewarding behavioral expectations; establishing a consistent continuum of consequences for problem behavior;

implementing a multi-tiered system of behavior supports; and the active use of data for decision making (Irvin et al., 2006).

Some theorists suggest that schools follow a progressive behavioral approach to student learning to intervene with student misbehaviors (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006; Irvin et al., 2006; Lashley & Tate, 2009; Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). When a behavioral approach results in no change in behavior, the student is referred to outside school personnel for further intervention approaches. The disposition of each student's case may differ and be dependent upon many factors. Suspensions are put into service to correct the student misconduct, but there are limitations placed on schools when suspending students. One approach that can be administered before a suspension can be a parent/student conference, with the administrator or his/her designee along with the person who referred the student. During such a conference the student should be informed of the reason for disciplinary action and evidence against him/her, and be given an opportunity to present his/her version and evidence in defense (due process). Based on the outcomes of such a conference, written notification of suspension can be provided to a parent.

Ineffective school discipline is generally understood as punishing students and making them obey. The practice is arbitrary, subjective, and broadly interpreted in multiple ways. There are other alternatives to these punitive and ineffective practices because sending a child home does nothing to teach the student from right or wrong. Effective school discipline has more to do with teaching students to make good choices and take responsibility for their actions. This educative discipline approach entails to proactively teach the social, emotional, and behavioral lessons that must be learned to

become a productive citizen, worker, and individual (Lashley & Tate, 2009). Schools are now shifting away from exclusionary discipline practices and rethinking the methods used as to not disproportionately affect minority groups. The current methods of discipline, offered in these examples, provide a reason to implement a progressive discipline approach in schools. The implementation will take time in order to teach new strategies for solving complex problems and for student reflection.

Comprehensive and preventive approaches for maintaining school safety and discipline need to replace punitive and exclusionary procedures (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006). It is important to recognize inappropriate behavior not only as a discipline issue but also as an opportunity for teaching and learning. There needs to be more positive alternatives that build in proactivity. The emphasis is on cooperation, engagement, and motivation, and on students learning to be part of a dynamic system, rather than on compliance, control, and coercion (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010).

A school-wide positive behavior support program provides a system of support that include proactive strategies for defining teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create a positive school climate. Creating opportunities for continual student engagement in learning establishes a climate that values academic responsibility. Many school districts have enacted harsh disciplinary consequences such as suspensions, expulsions, alternative schools, and referrals to law enforcement for a broad array of student actions (Brownstein, 2010). Punitive practices do not maintain a pleasant, safe or engaged school community as exemplified by the failure of zero tolerance policies in the United States (Michail, 2011). Kinsler (2011) states that most of the student outcomes that resulted in suspension are for noncompliance or disrespect, and the fewest were for

behaviors that threaten safety. Disciplinary exclusion should be reserved for students who present a clear threat to safety to other members of the learning environment. Exclusionary discipline policies are based on the assumption that the removal of disruptive students will result in a safer climate for others (Brownstein, 2010). It becomes clear that this discipline philosophy creates an uncaring learning environment where students struggle. Discipline practices in schools affect the social quality of each educational environment, and the ability of children to achieve the academic and social gains essential for success in a 21st century society (Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May, & Tobin, 2011). If children are the concern, we must abandon harsh, inflexible approaches to discipline that fail to improve student behavior, change the way students feel about school, and challenge the sense of fairness that young people develop during their formative years (Browne-Dianis, 2011).

Students are subject to very different consequences and outcomes for various behaviors. Disciplinary actions are determined by student behavior, teacher tolerance, school and classroom characteristics, and local and state policy (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). Over the last few decades, many problems have surfaced related to teaching in United States schools, partially because of larger class sizes and increased student diversity (Casteel, 1997). School responses to students' challenging behavior within the learning environment is varied but often involves excluding the student from their learning in some way (Michail, 2011).

This study describes a context in which students, teachers, and school administrators identify and describe disciplinary practices used in relation to student misbehavior. Some schools are responding to student misbehavior negatively by

isolating students out of the educational system. These inappropriate practices in response to student misbehavior guide students into the pipeline to criminal activity as they are exposed to non-instructional activity. Many school districts are now searching for alternatives to exclusionary practices and are developing practices and programs to use discipline to teach, maintain safety, and strengthen students' connectedness to school (Browne-Dianis, 2011). Schools must strive to establish a positive behavioral environment that will improve overall student behavior, boost academic achievement, and increase student attendance by maintaining students in school. The No Child Left Behind (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002) intervention approaches require schools to use effective research-based strategies to promote positive classroom behaviors. Classroom teachers are integral to the discipline referral process and are in the best positions to develop effective redirection strategies that prevent behavioral problems from occurring (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). This study surveyed and interviewed school participants (students, teachers, and administrators) from an urban middle school setting, in order to derive their perceptions with regards to disciplinary practices used within the school environment.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to explore differences in perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators about school discipline in an urban middle school. The impetus for this research stems from my experience as a middle school counselor who experienced and observed the application of multiple disciplinary practices and the issuance of out-of-school suspensions of students for subjective categories of discipline. The middle school level was chosen because throughout the U.S. rates of suspension are

higher in middle schools than in elementary or high schools (Christie, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2004).

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

- What behavioral interventions for student misconduct are used most often in a middle school?
- How do students, teachers and administrators at the school perceive the progressive discipline approach?
- What are the matches and gaps among student, teacher, and administrative attitudes among discipline approaches?

Definition of Terms

Table 1 describes the terms that will be used throughout this study.

Table 1

Definitions

Term	Definition
Alternative School	A place misbehaving students used for reducing the amount of time students spend out of class. The setting is beneficial for at-risk students because it takes them away from the setting in which they were not successful while also providing a new setting and opportunities for success (Gut & McLaughlin, 2012).
Dropout	A student destined to not complete or receive a high school diploma.
Exclusionary Practices	These practices (i.e., being "sent out" or out-of-classroom placement) place students out of the learning environment due to students talking during instructional time, cursing aloud, refusal to comply with directions, hitting each other, and other forms of misbehaviors within the classroom setting. Basically students are chronically placed out of learning environment for being disruptive or misbehaving. Schools that are unfamiliar with alternative methods react to problem behaviors through punishment in the form of office discipline referrals (ODRs), zero tolerance policies, and school suspensions (Caldarella, Shatzer, Gray, Young, & Young, 2011).
Expulsion	The permanent withdrawal of the privilege of attending a school unless the governing board reinstates the privilege (Ahearn, 1994). Research shows that reactive approaches such as zero tolerance policies, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion have limited effects and tend to hurt students by labeling them; creating idle time, which can create an atmosphere conducive to at-risk or illegal behavior, causing students to fall further behind academically (Zaslaw, 2010).

Table 1 continued

Term	Definition
Progressive Discipline (Approach)	An escalating series of disciplinary measures that first time offenders encounter and are not treated like serial troublemakers. It evolves around the schools clear disciplinary expectations, rules and policies. It is geared to recognize inappropriate behavior not only as a discipline issue but also as an opportunity for teaching and learning. Identifying alternative responses to inappropriate behavior.
Progressive Discipline Guidelines (PDG)	The Progressive Discipline Guidelines discussed herein refer to the school-based plan for responding to student misbehaviors. PDGs were developed by individual school sites (or districts) to guide educators in the appropriate or recommended response/consequence for student misbehaviors. The PDG divides behaviors into levels of severity and indicates which school personnel are responsible for such behaviors. For the purposes of this study, Mania Middle School created their PDG based on the school-wide discipline plan.
Out-of-School Suspension	The removal of a student from ongoing instruction for adjustment purposes. The student spends a set time away from the school and is segregated from other students. According to (Mendez & Knoff, 2003) suspension frequently is perceived as one of the more extreme responses available to administrators within the continuum of various disciplinary options. Students should only be suspended if other means or corrections have failed. On the contrary, suspension provides temporary relief to frustrated teachers and administrators (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009).
Positive Behavior Support	Support implemented to establish and teach behavioral expectations for students. The goals are to maximize the amount of time students are academically engaged in the classroom, create a safe and positive school climate, and hold students accountable to alternatives to suspension.
Restorative Justice	Consists of conflicting parties who come together with reformative practices that provide them with the opportunity to express themselves. The approach clears misconceptions and it is an alternative to suspension rather than punishing the student.
School-wide Discipline Plan or School Wide Positive Behavior Support Plan	A whole-school approach to prevention of problem behavior that focuses on defining, teaching, and rewarding behavioral expectations; establishing a consistent continuum of consequences for problem behavior; implementing a multi-tiered system of behavior supports; and the active use of data for decision making (Irvin et al., 2006). For the purposes of this study the School Wide Positive Behavior Support Plan refers to a district created plan which is used at Mania Middle School as the primary school-wide discipline plan (note that some schools and districts may have separate plans).
School Climate	The part of a school that consists of a safe and supportive, nurturing environment, where students are more likely to stay and develop the skills needed (Brownstein, 2010). A place where the emphasis is on cooperation, engagement, and motivation, and on students learning to be part of a dynamic system, rather than on compliance, control, and coercion (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). The focus is on teaching and learning and their effects on student engagement and behavior. It provides school-wide systems of support that include proactive strategies for defining teaching and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create a positive school.
Suspension	The temporary withdrawal of the privilege of attending a school for a specified period of time (Ahearn, 1994).
Truancy	The action of remaining away from the school or learning without a valid reason.

Table 1 continued

Term	Definition
Willful Defiance	When students resist abiding with any figure of authority (e.g., administrator, counselor or teacher). Insubordinate student practical approach. The term is too subjective and vague and has led to disproportionate suspensions based on race or ethnicity. Willful defiance is a very subjective term as it can exemplified as a variety of behavior issues, ranging from students failing to turn in homework, not paying attention, or refusing to follow directions.
Zero Tolerance	Tough disciplinary standards approach that public schools adopted. Advocates of the policy believe that removing the most troublesome students from school would lead to an overall improvement in the quality of the learning climate for those students that remain. With this policy children are robbed from the opportunities to learn and are more likely to end up in the criminal justice system (Browne-Dianis, 2011). The loss of instructional time guides students to encounter academic deficiencies, which transcend to further disciplinary problems. Research has shown that reactive approaches such as zero tolerance policies, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion- have limited effects and tend to hurt students by labeling them; creating idle time, which can create an atmosphere conducive to at-risk or illegal behavior, causing students to fall further behind academically (Zaslaw, 2010).

Conclusion

School exclusion has been the accepted directive for a range of behaviors that are considered to put the school community at risk, such as violence, aggression, and increasing disruption (Michail, 2011). Schools have not only enforced harsh, draconian discipline policies but also have increasingly treated student misbehavior as criminal (Browne-Dianis, 2011). School suspension is used with increasing frequency, in a disproportionate manner relative to minorities, and for infractions that should be handled with less intensive disciplinary strategies (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Out-of-school suspensions are a defined period of time where the student is prohibited from attending school and usually asked not to enter the school grounds (Michail, 2011). This frequent practice of suspension puts students at greater risk for academic failure. Students are being robbed of the opportunities to learn and are more likely to end up in the criminal justice system (Browne-Dianis, 2011). As an alternative to suspensions for misbehavior,

school districts can look into research on evidence-based interventions and implement systematic improvement in approaches to overall school discipline.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Effective responses to student misbehavior should be implemented in any educational setting. On the contrary, research shows that suspension was perceived as one of the more extreme responses available to administrators within the continuum of various disciplinary options (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Punishment may stop unwanted behavior in the short term, which contributes to the illusion that it works, but the lesson learned to the problem behavior and so will not lead to learning or behavior change (Kohn & Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2001). School exclusion is also the accepted directive for a range of behaviors that are considered to put the school community at risk, such as violence, aggression, and increasing disruption (Michail, 2011).

Schools that are unfamiliar with alternative methods react to problem behaviors though punishment in the form of office discipline referrals (ODRs), zero tolerance policies, and school suspensions (Caldarella, Shatzer, Gray, Young, & Young, 2011). For example, Brownstein (2010) explained how students who are repeatedly suspended, or who are expelled, are likely to fall behind their peers academically, paving the way to their eventual dropout. Students who are suspended and expelled are also at greater risk of dropping out (Brownstein, 2010). School suspensions or the placement away from the learning environment are not conducive to student learning and are practices that are being misapplied and that have an effect on overall student achievement. Stetson and Collins (2010) stated that by reducing the number of suspensions, the percentage of students being suspended, and the disproportionate suspension of certain student

subgroups while maintaining safe and focused teaching and learning environments will engage students in rigorous and challenging curricula. Educational settings need to strive to establish a positive behavioral environment that enhanced overall student attendance and performance.

Disciplinary Policies and Practices

Brownstein (2010) stated that over the past decade many school districts had enacted harsh disciplinary consequences such as; suspensions, expulsions, alternative schools, and referrals to law enforcement for a broad array of student actions. Kinsler (2011) stated that most student outcomes that resulted in suspension were for noncompliance with school or classroom rules or for disrespect, and the fewest were for behaviors that threatened safety. Exclusionary discipline policies were based on the assumption that the removal of disruptive students would result in a safer climate for others and should have been reserved for students who presented a clear threat to safety to other members of the learning environment (Brownstein, 2010).

School exclusion is the accepted directive for a range of behaviors that are considered to put the school community at risk such as violence, aggression, and increasingly disruptive behavior (Michail, 2011). Comprehensive and preventive approaches for maintaining school safety and discipline need to replace punitive and exclusionary procedures currently in place (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006). The objective is to improve overall student behavior, boost academic achievement, and increase student attendance. Schools need to identify alternative responses to inappropriate behavior for student achievement. The emphasis should be on cooperation, engagement, and motivation, and on students learning to be part of a dynamic system,

rather than on compliance, control, and coercion (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). Researchers have shown that school-based prevention efforts can positively enhance school performance and achievement (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010). Caldarella, Shatzer, Gray, Young, & Young (2011) suggest that when School Wide Positive Behavior Support is implemented in schools, discipline problems were typically reduced. This alternative to out-of school suspensions is intended to provide a school-wide system of support that included proactive strategies for defining teaching and supporting appropriate student behaviors.

Zero Tolerance Policies

The term "zero tolerance" refers to policies, established by the United States Customs Agency, in an effort to punish all drug offenses severely, no matter how minor, and grew out of state and federal drug enforcement policies in the 1980's as a result to the escalating drug problems of the preceding decade (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). The zero tolerance approach to noncompliance and misbehavior exclusively focused schools on the constant policing of student behavior which resulted in punitive punishments such as suspension, expulsion, and alternative education (Bear, 2010). Zero tolerance first received national attention as the title of a program developed in 1986, by U.S. Attorney Peter Nunez, to impound seagoing vessels carrying any amount of drugs (Skiba & Rausch, 2006a). In education, zero tolerance policies mandated predetermined consequences for those students who violated specific school or district rules related to such things as drug, weapons, and violence (National Center for Education, 2012). The following examples highlight some of the actions that have resulted from zero tolerance policies (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

- An 11-year-old boy at a middle school in Highlands Ranch, Colorado took a lollipop from a jar on the teacher's desk and was charged with theft. The boy was convicted of a misdemeanor and put on probation.
- A sixth grader in Columbia, South Carolina brought a steak knife to school in her lunch box to cut chicken and asked the teacher if she could use it. The outcome was that the police were called; the girl was taken into custody, suspended, and threatened with expulsion even though she never took the knife out.
- A 12-year-old boy in San Diego, California scuffled with classmates when they taunted him for being fat. In the end he was expelled for violation of the zero tolerance policy for fighting.

Within the public school system, under zero tolerance policies, when students violate school rules or break the law, the immediate response is to suspend or expel. The immediate removal of students, through out-of-school suspension (OSS) or expulsion, is justifiable and necessary for students who pose a danger to others (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009). Suspension means the temporary withdrawal of the privilege of attending a school for a specified period of time (Ahearn, 1994). Suspension provides temporary relief to frustrated teachers and administrators and may result in more parental involvement (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009). It is an ineffective practice as students see out-of-school suspension as a vacation (Zaslaw, 2010). Out-of-school suspension exacerbates behavior problems among students because students prefer suspension to attending school and/or because suspension is rarely accompanied by additional interventions focused on developing pro-social responses (Vincent & Tobin, 2011).

In the climate of fear generated by real and perceived threats to the safety of schools, many school districts adopted a get tough deterrent philosophy of zero tolerance as an intuitive method for addressing perceived threats to school safety (Skiba & Rausch, 2006b). Setting tough disciplinary standards can be a mistake. According to Astor, Guerra, & Van Acker (2010), a disciplinary system, like zero tolerance, that is punitive, treats all students equally, and externalizes behavioral control has not been successful in creating safe, orderly school environments in which all students learn how to be successful in social and educational environments. The assumption of zero tolerance is that individuals who engage in violence will decrease this behavior in response to the deterrent of strong sanctions and that creating safer schools by removing disruptive students will lead to a more supportive school climate that will, in turn, reduce individual aggression (Astor, Guerra, & Van Acker, 2010). Zero tolerance and other disciplinary practices in schools often bear a striking similarity to the strategies used to punish adults in society (Noguera, 2003a). It should be noted that Noguera (2003a) made reference to *punish*, not teach, reform, nor support.

In many school districts, the discipline policy mandates an expulsion of one calendar year for possession of a weapon and referral of students who violate the law to the criminal or juvenile justice system (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). The fear of drugs and violence spreading in our nation's schools provided the initial motivation for adopting zero tolerance disciplinary policies in schools and motivated a round of tough disciplinary measures (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). This one-size-fits-all policy is often applied not only to possession of weapons, drugs, and alcohol, but also to possession of

medications legitimately possessed by students, school supplies, and common objects such as nail clippers and scissors (Brownstein, 2010).

Krezmien, Leone, and Achilles (2006) explained that zero tolerance continues to dominate public school disciplinary policies along with an absence of credible documentation to support its effectiveness for improving school safety or reducing problem behaviors. The policy mandates predetermine consequences for rule infractions, regardless of the circumstances that were initially aimed at making schools safe (Brownstein, 2010). The term zero tolerance describes a range of policies that seek to impose severe sanctions – in schools, typically suspension and expulsion for minor offenses in hopes of preventing more serious ones (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimerson, 2010). There are almost no studies that evaluate the effectiveness of zero tolerance strategies (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

A school environment that is inconsistent and ineffective with disciplinary practices makes it possible and likely more probable, for students to interact negatively. Martinez (2009) provided an understanding of how the zero tolerance policy has been conceptualized in the field of education with the intention of using the policy to emphasize a violence free educational environment and to impose a severe expulsion consequence for those who violate and endanger the school setting. Current educational practices have increasingly blurred the distinction between school and jail (Heitzeg, 2009). Martinez (2009) stated that the intent of the zero tolerance policy was to get rid of violence within schools, by suspending those students causing disruptions, rather than creating an atmosphere of learning, engagement, and opportunity. Christie, Nelson, and Jolivette (2004) suggested that a history of suspension from school may accelerate

youths' progress along a pathway to delinquency. In some cases, the implementation of such consequences by schools with zero tolerance policies might result in an increased risk of violence for the individual student and for the society at large (Allen, Weissberg, & Hawkins, 1989). The previous claim is supported by Nelson (2008) and Devine (1996) as they explained that zero tolerance policies are often viewed as unjust and disproportionately affecting poor and minority students which results in more violence as these students rebel against the system. Fenning and Rose (2007) further supported the idea that zero tolerance policies impact minority students at a much higher rate and for much lesser offences than their middle class, White peers. This results in higher rates of school suspension and expulsion for minority students and raises concerns about institutional racism embedded in the policy itself (Fenning & Rose).

The application of the policy by school administrators was the initiation of an unfair and ineffective idea that was aimed at particular groups of students. Zero tolerance mandates have come under attack for both statutory vagueness and failure to allow local school administrators discretion in determining application of these policies (Heitzeg, 2009). Therefore violent acts of behaviors performed by students are non-tolerable within the school setting. The immediate action taken is a suspension with the recommendation for expulsion to all students in violation of a safe school environment.

Evidence shows that zero tolerance policies as implemented have failed to achieve the goals of an effective system of school discipline (Skiba, 2014), rather, increased levels of out-of-school suspension and expulsion are related to less adequate school climates, lower levels of achievement at the school level, a higher probability of future student misbehavior, and eventually lower levels of school completion (Skiba &

Rausch, 2006a). Zero tolerance disciplinary policies continue to dominate public schools despite an almost complete lack of documentation to support their effectiveness (Krezmien et.al, 2006).

The conclusion is that zero tolerance does not equate to the indiscriminate use of suspension and expulsion but rather it is often used as the first course of action before other, more effective and student-centered interventions designed to directly address problem behaviors (Lashley & Tate, 2009). Various disciplinary infractions require different administrative responses to determine the severity of the punishment in relationship to the seriousness of the offense (Essex, 2001). There can be no doubt that many incidents that result in disciplinary infractions at the secondary level are due to poor judgment on the part of the adolescent involved (American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force, 2008). Policies should allow administrators to make decisions about punishment on the basis of all facts; the unique needs of the students involved; and the overall well-being of the school with respect to safety, order, and decorum (Essex, 2001). While it is well documented that the zero tolerance approach has not provided the initially intended results, Bear (2010) cautioned educators about changing from this policy to another:

> Although certainly more positive, programs that simply replace such punitive techniques with the systematic school-wide use of tangible rewards for good behavior, regardless of grade level or individual needs and without emphasizing other strategies that promote self-discipline, fail to teach students the skills that will promote appropriate and independently guided behavior (p. 1).

Alternatives to zero tolerance includes strategies to teach, model, and reinforce appropriate behaviors; collaboration with parents and others to intervene to change inappropriate behaviors; and supports for students to address the root causes of behavior (Browne-Dianis, 2011).

Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) of 1994

The Gun-Free Schools Act (GFSA) was passed in 1994 as part of the Improving America's Schools Act (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimmerson, 2010). GFSA mandates the expulsion of students who bring a weapon to school (Essex, 2001). The Gun-Free School's Act (GFSA) of 1994 mandates that all schools that receive federal funding must have policies to expel, for a calendar year, any student who brings a weapon to school or to a designated school zone, and report that student to local law enforcement, thereby blurring any distinction between disciplinary infractions at school and the law (Heitzeg, 2009). As a federal matter, the GFSA was designed to target the possession of weapons, but because the law directed states to pass their own legislation, many states enacted bills that required expulsion not only for bringing a weapon to school but also for such offenses as making threats, assaulting teachers, and selling drugs (Borum, Cornell, Modzeleski, & Jimmerson, 2010). The original intent of the GFSA was to require punishments for serious violations involving weapons, but have frequently been applied to minor or non-violent violations of rules such as tardiness and disorderly conduct (Heitzeg, 2009). Students with disabilities who bring a weapon to school could be placed in an interim alternative educational setting for not more than 45 days (Ahearn and National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1994).

School Suspensions

There are multiple interventions schools can utilize besides disciplining students by suspending them. Suspension is one of the most common disciplinary consequences used in schools for student problem behaviors (Christie, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2004). Out-of-school suspensions are a defined period of time where the student is prohibited from attending school and usually asked not to enter the school grounds (Michail, 2011). The student may spend this set time away from school, with or without supervision, as their family circumstances allow. A suspension may also be in-school as the student is segregated from other students but remains at school. Some students see out-of-school suspension as a vacation (Zaslaw, 2010). Students prefer suspension to attending school because suspension is rarely accompanied by additional interventions focused on developing pro-social responses as they realize that nothing will be done at home, so they will continue to try to get suspended (Zaslaw, 2010).

Suspension is delivered to punish an already-committed, inappropriate act or behavior; it rarely has a logical, functional, or instructive connection to the offense or infraction; and it usually occurs in the absences of additional interventions that focus on teaching and reinforcing students' more pro-social or appropriate responses to difficult situations (Mendez, & Knoff, 2003). Suspension frequently is perceived as one of the more extreme responses available to administrators within the continuum of various disciplinary options (Mendez, & Knoff, 2003). In a minor offense, not covered by the Zero Tolerance policy, schools have to explore all other alternatives and use suspension as a last resort.

Greene (2011) suggested that a strong discipline code that teaches students proper behavior, allows teachers to teach and students to learn is needed rather than sending students home without any form of instructional learning attached. The loss of classroom time for a student causes academic challenges, which in turn leads to further disciplinary problems. Unsolved problems are highly predictable; solving problems before they occur is preferable and more predictable (Greene).

School districts are eliminating the use of out-of-school suspensions for tardiness, truancy, or subjective conduct such as disrespect of authority (Browne-Dianis, 2011). Schools need to develop a school-wide behavioral intervention plan to provide a structured way to mitigate inappropriate student behaviors. This approach will allow for intervening and developing strategies to help students remain in the classroom and the school. Certain low-level incidents-such as dress code violations, unexcused absences, having a cell phone or iPod at school, tardiness, or causing minor property damage- can no longer result in an out-of-school suspension (Browne-Dianis). Schools need to participate in ongoing development programs that will allow them to train on disproportionate suspension in the areas of behavior management, data analysis, decision making process and procedures, cultural sensitivity, proper investigative procedures, processes for students with disabilities, and classroom management techniques.

Profiling

Fenning and Rose (2007) discussed how bias plays a significant role in discipline, as too many students of any color are being suspended under the zero tolerance policies in place in most schools. Heitzeg (2009) stated that students of color, especially Black students, are much more likely than their White counterparts to be suspended or expelled

from school for disciplinary reasons. Rates of suspension and expulsion for Hispanic students are somewhat higher than expected but Black students bear the brunt of these policies (Heitzeg, 2009). The implementation of policies that adhere to harsh punishments for student misconduct has caused students to be denied an education. Zero tolerance policies contribute to the already high dropout rate for students of color (Heitzeg, 2009). School suspension is used with increasing frequency, in a disproportionate manner relative to minorities, and for infractions that should be handled with less intensive disciplinary strategies (Fenning & Rose, 2007; Mendez & Knoff, 2003).

The school to prison pipeline is launched as it is facilitated by trends in education that most negatively impact students of color (Heitzeg, 2009; Nelson, 2008; Fenning & Rose, 2007). Policies that deal with disciplinary consequences have no measurable impact on school safety but are associated with a number of negative effects that are racially disproportionate, that increase suspensions and expulsions, elevate dropout rates, and coincide with multiple legal issues related to due process (Heitzeg, 2009; Nelson, 2008). Punitive measures are taken more often than provision of supportive services (Jones, Fisher, Greene, Hertz, & Pritzl, 2007). Educational inequity is demonstrated as minority students across America face harsher discipline.

Interventions for Specific Populations

Solutions to the zero tolerance dilemmas may seek to shift the focus from swift and certain punishment to using research-supported strategies to improve the sense of school community and belongingness (American Psychological Association Zero, 2008). When students are engaged, they attend regularly, participate in class, and avoid

disruptions to the class and to their own learning (Kennedy, 2011). Zero tolerance policies increase the use of profiling, a method of prospectively identifying students who may be at risk of committing violence or disruption by comparing their profiles to those of others who have engaged in such behavior in the past (American Psychological Association Zero, 2008). With the practical approach to student profiling, students become disengaged as they become the targets to academic failure.

Special Education Legislation

The disciplinary provisions included in Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) specify a number of conditions under which students with disabilities may not be removed from school (McCarthy & Soodak, 2007). The IDEA (2004) is a federal law that requires school districts to provide a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities. In the event of serious misbehavior and/or if there is consideration for suspension, the school must decide whether the misbehavior is related to the disability, review behavior intervention strategies that are in place, conduct a functional behavior assessment, write a behavioral intervention plan, and create a new Individualized Education Program (IEP) (Lashley & Tate, 2009). If the misbehavior and the disability are not connected, the school can impose whatever sanction it would impose on the student if he or she did not have a disability (Lashley & Tate, 2009). According to IDEA, a student may be placed in an Interim Alternative Educational Setting (IAES), such as a special school, for up to 45 days while the manifestation determination is completed and decisions about the child's future placement are made (McCarthy & Soodak, 2007).

Under the provision that permits modification of the expulsion requirement on a case-by-case basis, the requirements of IDEA and Section 504 can be met (Lashley & Tate, 2009). For example, IDEA and Section 504 require a determination by a group of persons knowledgeable about the student on whether the bringing of the weapon to school was a manifestation of the student's disability (Lashley & Tate, 2009). McCarthy and Soodak (2007) stated that it is unlawful to make a change in placement for more than 10 school days for a student with disabilities without obtaining parental consent, except in situations involving weapons, illegal drugs, or the infliction of serious bodily injury to another person.

In the court case of *Honig v. Doe* (1988), the decision provided that the stay-put requirement in the IDEA prohibits schools from unilaterally excluding children with disabilities for disruptions arising from their behavior (Ahearn & National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1994). The school district must notify the child's parents of their procedural rights and conduct an IEP team meeting to determine whether the child's misconduct is caused by their disability (Delaware State Dept. of Education, 2000). This is a particular concern regarding students with disabilities, who often exhibit problem behaviors that require sustained and intensive interventions (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006). A parent must be given the opportunity to participate in any decision-making meeting regarding the child's special education program (Delaware State Dept. of Education, 2000). This procedure is a mandated practice is to deter what Essex (2001) refered to as "one size fits all punishments." In the study by Krezmien et al., (2006), findings indicated that youth identified as having disabilities experienced higher rates of suspension than youth not identified as having disabilities. The Individuals with

Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA) of 2004 emphasized the use of positive behavioral interventions and supports and expanded the authority of school officials in disciplining students with disabilities (Ryan, Katsiyannis, Peterson, & Chmelar, 2007).

Lacking the necessary and legally required supports and services to address the behaviors that are a manifestation of some disabilities, many schools are desperately turning to school exclusion as their response (Brownstein, 2010). Krezmien et al. (2006) recommended that special educators at the school, administrative, and state levels should become active in the development of disciplinary policies that promote school safety and limit the influence of inflexible zero tolerance practices on students in special education whose problem behaviors may be due to their disability.

There is no data to support or refute perceptions that students with disabilities are a significant contributing factor to the discipline problem in schools (Ahearn & National Association of State Directors of Special Education, 1994). IDEA 2004 recognizes that a disability may cause the student to engage in inappropriate behaviors, and if the behavior is a manifestation of the student's disability, a school is not permitted to change a student's placement without the consent of the parent or going through the normal IEP process (Ryan, Katsiyannis, Peterson, & Chmelar, 2007). In accordance with IDEA 2004, school personnel may suspend a child with a disability who violates a code of student conduct from his or. her current placement for not more than 10 school days (Ryan et al, 2007). If a student is suspended for more than 10 days of being removed from the classroom, such a removal constitutes a proposed change in placement and triggers a parent notice required for special education action by the school. Students identified with an emotional disability (ED) are at high risk to be referred to the office,

suspended, or expelled (Rausch & Skiba, 2006; Sample, 2009). The high suspension rates of students with ED are problematic because these students require intensive behavioral interventions implemented consistently over time (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006; Sample, 2009). Krezmien et al., (2006), stated that students with other health impairment (OHI) and learning disabilities (LD) often find academic tasks aversive and may respond to difficult academic tasks with disruptive behaviors that result in disciplinary referrals and exclusions.

Juvenile Justice System Interventions

Many schools and districts are turning to the juvenile system to handle school related misconduct and not just for violent behavior (Brownstein, 2010). Teachers and administrators are required to call law enforcement for disciplinary matters for which they used to call home, instead of helping to resolve conflict; they must watch school resource officers handle discipline by arresting students (Brownstein, 2010). Current policies have increased the risk of students being suspended, expelled, and/or arrested at school (Heitzeg, 2009). In part, the school to prison pipeline is a consequence of schools which criminalize minor disciplinary infractions via zero tolerance policies, have a police presence at school, and rely on suspensions and expulsions for minor infractions (Heitzeg, 2009). These types of disciplinary actions are continuously being used within school settings without the implementation of appropriate positive learning interventions. Evidence suggests that a history of suspension from school may accelerate youths' progress along a pathway to delinquency, rates of its use to continue to rise (Christie, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2004).

Punishment vs. Discipline

Punishment for misbehaviors in schools tends to be punitive in nature, removes students from the learning environment, and lacks the structure to teach students appropriate replacement behaviors (Bear, 2010). Some examples of punitive practices include verbal reprimands, revoking privileges (i.e., recess, participation in extracurricular activities, etc.), referral out of class, suspension, expulsion, and removal to an alternative education program (Bear, 2010). Discipline, on the other hand, should have an emphasis on responding to misbehaviors in such a way that the student understands what they did wrong, why it is wrong, and how to correct their actions in the future. Some examples of discipline that may teach replacement behaviors include explicitly teaching appropriate behaviors, positive reinforcement, modeling, social skills instruction, conflict resolution, and anger management training.

Punishment is a counterproductive form of intervention. Punitive practices do not maintain a pleasant, safe, or engaged school community as exemplified by the failure of zero tolerance policies in the United States (Michail, 2011). For infractions such as fighting, defiance, or cutting class, removal from the classroom, removal from the school through suspension, or even expulsion serve as the standard forms of punishment employed by schools throughout the United States (Noguera, 2003a). Exclusionary discipline policies are based on the assumption that the removal of disruptive students will result in safer climate for others (Brownstein, 2010). Although this is not the trend we are seeing, disciplinary removal could be judged an effective educational or behavioral intervention if it led to improvements in either individual rates of disruptive or violent behavior or overall school safety or school climate (Skiba & Rausch, 2006b).

Despite lack of data that supports the effectiveness of these practices, many schools rely on some form of exclusion or ostracism to control the behavior of students (Noguera, 2003b). Depending on the outcomes of the manifestation determination as to whether or not the misbehaviors or offense are related to the individual's disability or not, children with disabilities may be suspended, or placed in other alternative interim settings or other settings to the same extent these options would be used for children without disabilities (IDEA, 2004). Keep in mind that a school district may remove a child with a disability from his or her current educational placement for ten school days, total, in a school year without providing educational services (IDEA, 2004). A student that must be removed for any longer period of time must be provided educational services in an alternative, interim setting (IDEA, 2004).

Although the IDEA (2004) specifies the procedures related to the misbehavior and discipline of students identified as having a disability, there are limitations to punishment that need to be considered by educators as they make school based decisions about misbehavior for all students. Bear (2010) explains the limitations of punishment as used in schools:

> Effective educators clearly recognize the limitations of punishment: (a) It teaches students what not to do and fails to teach desired or replacement behavior; (b) its effects often are short term; (c) it teaches students to aggress toward or punish others; (d) it fails to address the multiple factors that typically contribute to a student's behavior; (e) it is likely to produce undesirable side effects (e.g., anger, retaliation, dislike toward the teacher or school, social withdrawal); (f) it creates a negative classroom and

> school climate; and (g) it can be reinforcing (i.e., negative reinforcement), such as in time-out and suspension, by allowing students to avoid or escape from situations they find aversive (e.g., academic work, peer rejection, a harsh and uncaring teacher). (p. 3)

Interventions that enhance behavioral growth are needed to assist in student improvement. The emphasis should be on cooperation, engagement, motivation, and on students learning to be part of a dynamic system, rather than on compliance, control, and coercion (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). The alternative to zero tolerance includes strategies to teach, model, and reinforce appropriate behaviors; collaboration with parents and others to intervene to change inappropriate behaviors; and supports for students to address the root causes of behavior (Browne-Dianis, 2011). Emphasis should be placed on student communication, developing the skills of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making skills. Research has shown that reactive approaches such as zero tolerance policies, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion have limited effects and tend to hurt students by labeling them; creating idle time, which can create an atmosphere conducive to at-risk or illegal behavior, causing students to fall further behind academically (Zaslaw, 2010). Therefore, teaching the principles of safety, responsibility, respect, and caring about others will assist in transforming into a productive and positive school climate.

Increasing Sanctions

In schools and districts where zero tolerance mindset prevails, the practice of disciplinary action is increasingly used for less serious infractions, which further erodes its usefulness, because the extreme step of removing a student from school is used when

the student's misbehavior is relatively mild (Lashley & Tate, 2009). Skiba and Peterson (1999) indicated in their study that broad interpretations of zero tolerance have resulted in near epidemic levels of suspensions and expulsions for seemingly trivial events. Out-of-school suspensions and expulsion interrupt students' educational progress and removes students from school at a time when they may most need stability and guidance in their lives (Lashley & Tate, 2009). Reyes (2006) stated that the philosophy and practice of zero tolerance school discipline has failed as an educational intervention to ensure student safety, improve school climates, advance student learning, or provide equitable results.

Loss of classroom time worsens a student's academic challenges, which in turn leads to further disciplinary problems. The suspension outlook leads to academic failure, negative school attitudes, retentions, and dropouts (Mendez & Knoff, 2003). Many school districts are now searching for alternatives to exclusionary practices and are developing practices and programs to use discipline to teach, maintain safety, and strengthen students' connectedness to school (Browne-Dianis, 2011). Recognizing that zero tolerance policies have failed, schools are beginning to turn to restorative justice to reduce suspension and expulsions. Restorative justice consists of conflicting parties who come together with reformative practices that provide them with the opportunity to express themselves. The approach clears misconceptions, is an alternative to suspension, and promotes increased accountability, communication, and situational learning while restoring balance or justice to a community or situation. All of these ideas are designed to keep young people in school and try to prevent them from going into the school to prison pipeline.

Academic Outcomes

A loss of instructional time is the result when students are removed or suspended from the educational environment. Students who are repeatedly suspended, or who are expelled, are likely to fall behind their peers academically, paving the way to their eventual dropout (Brownstein, 2010). Zero tolerance policies contribute to the already high dropout rate for students of color (Heitzeg, 2009). Due to out-of-school suspensions, students are exposed to negative factors that impede the return to the educational setting. Educative discipline entails proactively teaching the social, emotional, and behavioral lessons that must be learned to become a productive citizen, worker, and individual (Lashley & Tate, 2009). Once students realize that the rewards of education, namely the acquisition of knowledge and skills, admission to college, and access to good paying jobs, are not available to them, they have little incentive to comply with school rules (Noguera, 2003b). For some students, being removed from the classroom is exactly their intention when engaging in some rule-breaking behaviors (Olley, Cohn, & Cowan, 2010).

Ahearn (1994) suggested that there is no data to support or refute the common perception that students with disabilities are a significant contributing factor to the discipline problem in schools. In many progressive discipline models, types of behaviors are separated into stages. Stage I behaviors are minor offenses such as tardiness, lack of materials, use of profanity, incomplete assignments/homework, etc. Stage II behaviors are moderate offenses (i.e., fighting, truancy, defacing school property) or chronic problems with stage I offenses which were not previously corrected. Stage III behaviors are serious offenses such as possession of a weapon, drug use/sales, causing great bodily

injury to another person, etc. With regards to a school's progressive discipline plan, the teachers' responsibilities are to manage stage I behavioral problems (i.e., talking back, not having materials, chewing gum, unfinished assignments), regardless of student disability status, that are within accordance to the outlined teacher procedures. If the students' misconduct continues, the application of stage II interventions will generally fall under the responsibility of the counselor, who will implement additional approaches intended to shape adaptive behavior. Thereafter, stage III interventions are conducted by the school dean or administrator who implements much more serious consequences depending on the severity of the behavior.

It is important to keep in mind that suspended students may become less bonded to school; less invested in school rules and course work, and subsequently, less motivated to achieve academic success (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). Alternatives to suspension should be employed first, especially since, according to the American Psychological Association (1993) schools with higher rates of school suspension and expulsion appear to have less satisfactory ratings of school climate and less satisfactory school governance structures which contributes to an environment that consumes time dealing with disciplinary matters (Brownstein, 2010, American Psychological Association, 1993).

School Based Discipline Programs

More than 9,000 schools across the country are trying to curb the push out problem by implementing Positive Behavior Intervention and Support (PBIS), an evidence-based, data driven approach proven to reduce disciplinary incidents, increase a school's sense of safety, improve attendance rates, and support improved academic

outcomes (Brownstein, 2010). PBIS tries to increase students' positive experience of schooling and to move away from a reliance on punitive reactions to misbehavior (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010). The purpose of positive discipline is to keep students and staff safe and to maintain a school environment that facilitates student learning and positive emotional/behavioral development (Olley, Cohn, & Cowan, 2010). Working together, teachers, administrators, and parents can create safe and orderly classrooms where class time is spent on instruction, not wasted on ineffective discipline (Brownstein, 2010).

Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) seeks to teach students appropriate behaviors that promote academic and social engagement by intentionally altering environmental contexts, including the behaviors of teachers and administrators, that may contribute to student misbehavior (Skiba & Rausch, 2006a). Effective interventions emphasize positive pro-social behaviors rather than merely punishing inappropriate behaviors (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). PBIS systems produce significant decreases in time spent on discipline by classroom teachers, students, and administrative staff, freeing up time to focus on instruction and a more productive educational environment (Skiba & Rausch, 2006b). Many programs whose purpose is to prevent violence or inappropriate behavior are also programs that might prevent disaffection, dropping out of school, drug and alcohol abuse, and poor academic performance (Peterson & Skiba, 2001). Lashley and Tate (2009) stated that a school that is educative, equitable, and empowering proves to students every day that they want and need to be there to learn and grow in ways that are meaningful to their present and their future. Without this approach, school personnel may simply be dumping problem students out on

the streets, only to find them later causing increased violence and disruption in the community (Skiba & Peterson, 1999).

The typical measures of school climate are surveys of students, parents, staff, and sometimes community members regarding what they think about the school (Peterson & Skiba, 2001). School climate might be defined as the feelings that students and staff have about the school environment over a period of time (Peterson, & Skiba, 2001). In a study of principals by Skiba, Rausch, and Ritter (2004), all of the principals highlighted the importance of a welcoming climate and teaching students appropriate social skills. Based on the responses, the study found various commonalities amongst them, where the description of an exemplary school climate consists of strongly proactive, supporting practices and programs that reduce the likelihood of aggression or violence, and making discipline a shared responsibility of students, parents, teachers and administrators, (Skiba, Rausch, & Ritter, 2004). A disciplinary practice that is educative, equitable, and empowering requires that educators accept their responsibility for the education of all students and that they create a school-learning environment that is supportive of students and responsive to their needs (Lashley & Tate, 2009). On the contrary, there are practices that produce negative feelings such as concern, fear, frustration, and loneliness that would negatively affect learning and behavior (Peterson & Skiba, 2001).

It is intuitive that better behavior leads to better academic success (Olley et al., 2010). In exchange for an education, students are expected to obey the rules and norms that are operative within schools and to comply with the authority of the adults in charge (Noguera, 2003a). Schools need to know what circumstances within the child, in the classroom context, in the teacher's demeanor, in school climate and culture, and at home

and in the community affect the student and prompt the behavior (Lashley & Tate, 2009). In the study performed by Skiba, et al. (2004), principals worked closely with their teachers to define what the most appropriate referrals to the office, and which were better handled at the classroom level. This practice is an example of a collaborative progressive discipline approach that is conducive to learning and responding appropriately to student misconduct. Ordinary schools typically justify using removal through suspension or expulsion by arguing that such practices are necessary to maintain an orderly learning environment for others (Noguera, 2003a). The expectation of school personnel is to provide an environment that respects diversity and addresses, to the extent possible, the social problems that find their way into the schools (Lashley & Tate, 2009).

Students must learn to make discriminations about the appropriateness of behaviors inside and outside of school, and they must come to terms with the fact that the models of behavior that they see in the media, at home, and in the community may not be those that will help them succeed in school and later in life (Lashley & Tate, 2009). Olley et al. (2010) suggested that the principles for positive discipline are: teaching and reinforcing positive behaviors and self-discipline; examining why the child is doing what he is doing; imposing meaningful consequences that are appropriate to the behavior and educational goals; and maintaining access to instruction. Students need to come to understand that at school they learn the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for a successful life (Lashley & Tate, 2009). As we refrain from positive interventions, we increase the likelihood that the correctional system will become the primary agency responsible for troubled youths (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). To reform zero tolerance practices it is imperative that addressing student behavior or school violence must be

accompanied by an evaluation designed to determine whether that procedure has indeed contributed to improved school safety or student behavior (American Psychological Association Zero, 2008).

With the implementation and ongoing reinforcement within the social curriculum, students develop the responsibility for their actions. Based on their inappropriate behaviors, the goal is to return students to the instructional setting with the skills necessary to function successfully (Henley et.al, 2000). The student must be instructed to reflect upon and question the behavior performed in order to not repeat the misbehavior. Without this learning taking place, behavior is likely to repeat itself. Helpful interventions include the use of mentors or tutors, social skills training, special education placements, systematic functional assessments, and behavior management interventions (Tobin & And, 1996).

Office Discipline Referral

Students are referred out of the classroom for various reasons: defiance, disrupting classroom activities, talking, being out of seat, profanity, arguing, eating in class, and a whole range of other behavioral issues displayed within the instructional setting. Skiba, Peterson, and Williams (1997) discovered that behaviors that led to office referral were primarily not those that threaten safety, but those that indicate noncompliance or disrespect. Middle school students who are sent to the principal's office with minor discipline problems in Grade 6 most likely will return to the office in Grades seven and eight with major discipline problems, unless meaningful behavioral services are provided at the sixth grade level (Tobin & And, 1996). For infractions such as fighting, defiance, cutting class; removal from the classroom or removal from the

school through suspension or even expulsion served as the standard forms of punishment employed by schools throughout the United States (Noguera, 2003a).

Frequent discipline referrals and suspensions do not appear to result in improved student behavior (Shirley & Cornell, 2012). Office referrals serve as an early screening for intervention programs (Stanley, Canham, & Cureton, 2006). Schools that are unfamiliar with alternative methods react to problem behaviors through punishment in the form of office discipline referrals (ODRs), zero tolerance policies, and school suspensions (Caldarella, Shatzer, Gray, Young, & Young, 2011).

As Skiba, Peterson, and Williams (1997) stated, based on student referrals, it is imperative to indicate the information within each referral such as date and time, the actions taken thereafter by all those interacting with the student's behavior, the administrative action, and whether practices included contacting parents. This practice allows the progressive approach to student learning. Throughout the practice it is imperative to document and record the student's misconducts along with the consequences applied in order to improve and monitor the behavior. The number of times a student has been referred and the action taken become part of the anecdotal record maintained for each student. The documentation covers a reasonable period so that the student has been provided sufficient time to improve.

School Wide Behavior Intervention and Support Programs

A School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support Program (SWPBIS) consist of various practices that reinforce classroom rules, and positively praise and encourage students on an ongoing basis. The SWPBIS implementation process is systematic data collection on occurrence of problem behaviors that result in office

referrals and the discipline decisions associated with those referrals (Skiba, Horner, Chung, Rausch, May, & Tobin, 2011). SWPBIS consists of positively reinforcing students on an ongoing basis, particularly recognizing and addressing desired, appropriate behaviors. The structure involves the level of commitment from all school personnel. SWPBIS is a whole-school approach to prevention of problem behavior that focuses on defining, teaching, and rewarding behavioral expectations; establishing a consistent continuum of consequences for problem behavior; implementing a multitiered system of behavior supports; and the active use of data for decision making (Irvin et al., 2006). It has been implemented by 7,000 schools across the United States at all grade levels, and has shown to be effective in low socioeconomic status areas with high levels of poverty and 'at-risk' students (Michail, 2011). It can be implemented at all grade levels and with all students.

SWPBIS schools also provide regularly scheduled instruction in desired social behaviors to enable students to acquire the necessary skills for the desired behavior change, and they offer effective motivational systems to encourage students to behave appropriately (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). It can be tailored to any age and can be social or tangible. It is an approach that is presented following a specific behavior that usually increases the probability that the behavior will happen again. When a student breaks a rule or misbehaves, the consequences should be defined clearly and concisely to avoid misinterpretation.

School-wide programs seldom include direct intervention for the antagonist, who needs to be taught how to engage in prosocial behaviors (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010). Evidence suggests that SWPBIS can prevent many of the

problems that arise in school setting (Osher, Bear, Sprague, & Doyle, 2010). Osher, et al. (2010) avowed that the emphasis is on cooperation, engagement, motivation, and on students learning to be part of a dynamic system, rather than on compliance, control, and coercion. The goal is to establish a positive school and classroom climate in which expectations for students are predictable, directly taught, consistently acknowledged, and actively monitored (Osher, et al., 2010). With a school-wide behavioral support policy student performance is very likely to improve. The primary aim of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support (SWPBIS) is to decrease problem behavior in schools and classrooms and to develop integrated systems of support for students and adults at the school-wide, classroom, and individual student (including family) levels (Osher et al., 2010).

SWPBIS is a data based approach to positive teaching and supporting expected behaviors at multiple levels in a school (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006). School discipline addresses school-wide, classroom, and individual student needs through broad prevention, targeted intervention, and development of self-discipline (Osher et al., 2010). Children will always require socialization, instruction, and correction that shape fundamentally egocentric behavior into interpersonal skills that make them capable of interacting successfully with others in school and beyond (Evertson & Weinstein, 2006).

Safe Learning Environments

Politicians frequently embrace the notion that students cannot learn when their schools are unsafe (Astor, Guerra, &Van Acker, 2010). In regards to safe learning environments, Olley, Cohn, & Cowan, (2010) stated that such a policy may seem overwhelming in the face of the immediate needs of disruptive students; however, getting buy-in from key stakeholders and decision makers can start with some simple, basic steps

at the start of the school year. Effective programs have two key prerequisites, awareness and adult involvement (Peterson & Skiba, 2001). Increased parent involvement has shown to lead to greater teacher satisfaction, improved parent understanding and parent-child communication, and more successful and effective school programs (Peterson & Skiba, 2001). Parent involvement is positively associated with student success, higher attendance rates, and lower suspension rates (Peterson & Skiba, 2001). Parent involvement programs actively engage parents through a variety of activities that enable them to participate more fully in their children's education both at home and at school (Peterson & Skiba, 2001). Providing opportunities for volunteering can increase parental and community involvement (Peterson, & Skiba, 2001).

Summary and Conclusion

What were once disciplinary issues for school administrators are now called crimes, and students are either arrested directly at school or their infractions are reported to the police (Heitzeg, 2010). These types of disciplinary actions are too frequently being used within school settings without the implementation of appropriate positive learning interventions. Removal from the school setting does not, however, promote prosocial behaviors or allow students access to the behavioral or academic supports that may decrease future problem behaviors (Krezmien et al., 2006). The practices of zero tolerance policies contribute to the already high drop-out rate for students of color (Heitzeg, 2010). Low socioeconomic, minority, and special education students appear to be at greater risk for receiving a variety of harsh disciplinary practices, including suspension, expulsion, and corporal punishment (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997). These disciplinary practices negatively impact student academic achievement and success

as it hinders instructional learning time for all students. Minority students are overrepresented in school disciplinary suspensions (Krezmien et al., 2006). Heitzeg (2010) stated that school districts and school administrators could revise their particular policies to reduce suspensions and expulsions and offer meaningful alternatives for disruptive students. Due to the fact that not all approaches work equally well for all students, an equitable practice works to create fairness, continuity, and tolerance for learning (Lashley & Tate, 2009). One of the best ways to learn how this can be done is to study those schools and programs that have proven successful in accomplishing this goal (Noguera, 2003a).

Federal educational legislation has increasingly mandated that schools use only evidence-based educational interventions (Skiba & Rausch, 2006). Noguera (2003a) refers to indefinite use of suspension by administrators who apply the consequence for children with persistent behavior problems. The practice allows the school to remove difficult children to be schooled at home while collecting funds from the state for their average daily attendance (Noguera, 2003a). One of the more troubling characteristics of the zero tolerance approach to discipline is that a disproportionate number of those at risk for a range of school punishments are poor and Black (Sample, 2009; Nelson, 2008; Fenning & Rose, 2007; Skiba & Peterson, 1999). The high reliance on exclusion has a disproportionate impact on Blacks, Hispanics, and American Indians. Schools must consider removing the one size fits all consequences and apply zero tolerance only for severe and serious cases of behavior. Improving the collaboration amongst school stakeholders is necessary to evaluate discipline prevention strategies to adhere to students who are defiant, maladjusted, and difficult to deal with. The main argument that

advocates of zero tolerance state is that the policy is used for students who display the most severe behaviors on campus that threaten the safety of the school staff and students (Martinez, 2009). Although that is the purpose to the policy, the practice by educators is different as groups of students are the victims to a policy that is misapplied. The limited research studies with regards to this policy indicate that minimal evidence exists about student behaviors improving and schools becoming safer. Martinez (2009) stated that the consequences enforced by this policy cause no change to the students' behavior upon the completion of the consequences.

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

The research mentioned in the literature review elucidates the current practices that are used to place students out of the educational learning environment. These ineffective and at times punitive practices are counterproductive to overall student success. Numerous times minor behavioral infractions can be dealt with other than punitively. The previous literature review mentioned a research-based approach to overall student misconduct that enhances and promotes an entire positive school climate. School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention and Support programs (SWPBIS) reduce disciplinary problems when appropriately implemented and all school stakeholders are committed and held accountable.

This mixed methods study collected data simultaneously using different approaches: student, teacher, and administrator interviews, student, teacher, and administrator school surveys, and school publications. Using different forms of data allows a researcher to simultaneously generalize results from a sample to a population and to gain deeper understanding of the phenomenon of interest (Hanson, Creswell, Clark, Petska, & Creswell, 2005). Qualitative researchers typically gather multiple forms of data, such as interviews and documents, rather than rely on a single data source (Creswell, 2006).

In this mixed methods study, a similar approach to Rodriguez and Conchas' (2009) study, the primary sources of data included interviews, surveys, and document analysis. As stated previously, staff and students' voices were used to illuminate the impact of the practices applied by school staff responsible for responding to general

student misconduct. After the data were collected and coded, the school disciplinary practices and trends demonstrated how the practices have influenced the experiences and perspectives of the students. As Creswell (2003) stated each category of data collected represents a unit of information composed of events, happenings, and instances. Data were collected through staff and student surveys and interviews with selected school personnel. In addition, the school's progressive discipline guidelines were also accumulated.

Mixed methods models are utilized to answer complex research questions that cannot be addressed through the use of quantitative or qualitative methods alone (McMillan, 2008). In this study survey responses, interview data, and district and school protocols related to disciplinary practices were utilized. The purpose of this research study was to gather multiple perspectives and insights from staff and students in regard to the implementation of the current disciplinary practices related to student misconduct that result in student placement away from the educational environment. The study collected information derived from staff and student participants that coexist in the middle school environment. This information entailed whether or not students are given fair consequences that are conducive to learning. In an attempt to reduce the suspension rate, staff continuously makes an effort to abide by the school's progressive discipline approach to student learning, which is derived from the district's discipline module. Table 2 displays the study's three research questions along with the relevant instruments that were used to answer the questions.

Table 2

Matrix of Study Questions and Instruments

Research Question	School Data	SCAI scales	Staff Interview	Student Interview	Document Analysis
What behavioral interventions for student misconduct are used most often in a middle school?	X		X		
How do students, teachers and administrators at the school perceive the progressive discipline approach?			X	X	X
What are the matches and gaps among student, teacher and administrative attitudes among discipline approaches?		X	X	X	

Setting

One middle school was chosen as the site for this study. 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 (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). Middle school students are vulnerable to experimenting with inappropriate behaviors. Such actions cannot be condoned to the point that they develop into emergency situations, crises, or interrupt the instructional program and students' academic achievement. To maintain a highly successful instructional program, a management system that has a discipline policy that is fair, firm, and consistent is necessary. Tobin and And (1996) stated that middle school students who are sent to the principal's office with minor discipline problems in grade six most likely will return to

the office in grades seven and eight with major discipline problems, unless meaningful behavioral services are provided at the sixth grade level.

Mania Middle School (MMS) has a suspension rate where the majority of the reasons for suspensions were due to injury to others, such as fighting, disruptive or defiant behaviors within the classroom setting, and harassment or threats to other students, such as bullying. The school plans to maintain a highly successful management system towards student behavior in order to continue to decrease the school's suspension rate.

MMS has a total enrollment of 964 students according to the 2012-2013 school fall survey. Table 3 shows the demographics for the school from 2007-2013; 72.8% of the student population are Hispanic, 26.5% are Black, 04% Pacific Islander, .2% Asian and 01% American Indian. Table 4 shows the school's Academic Performance Index (API) over time from 2007-08 to 2012-13. The API is seen to be increasing over time. Table 5 shows that the urban middle school setting has a larger suspension rate for the Black student population, which only constitutes 26.5% of the school population.

Table 3

Research Site Demographics 2007-2013

Year	AI/ Alaska		Asian		Filipino		Pac Isl		Black		Hispanic		White		Total
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	
2012-13	0	0.0	2	0.2	0	0.0	4	0.4	255	26.5	702	72.8	0	0.0	964
2011-12	1	0.1	4	0.4	1	0.1	2	0.2	289	27.5	735	70.0	18	1.7	1050
2010-11	2	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.1	2	0.2	304	26.5	837	73.0	0	0.0	1146
2009-10	6	0.5	1	0.1	0	0.0	1	0.1	351	28.6	867	70.7	0	0.0	1226
2008-09	5	0.4	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	408	29.8	953	69.7	1	0.1	1367
2007-08	3	0.2	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	500	34.3	953	65.4	2	0.1	1458

Source: Data gathered from the district's school profile.

Table 4

School Academic Performance Index (API) 2009-2013

School Year	Number of Students	Growth	Base	Year Growth Target	Year Growth
2012-2013	853	656	634	8	22
2011-2012	926	633	627	9	9
2010-2011	1036	627	633	8	-6
2009-2010	1094	633	590	11	43
2008-2009	1186	592	588	11	4

Source: California Department of Education (http://api.cde.ca.gov)

Table 5

Number of Suspensions by Ethnicity

Year	AI/ AK	Asian	Filipino	Pac. Isl	Black	Hispanic	White	Un-known	Total	Avg Days	Susp Rate
2012-13	0	0	0	0	21	6	0	1	28	1.61	2.4
2011-12	0	0	0	1	49	36	0	0	86	1.41	7.0
2010-11	0	0	0	1	178	136	0	0	315	1.35	23.0
2009-10	1	0	0	0	205	139	0	0	345	1.58	23.7
2008-09	0	0	0	0	244	159	0	0	403	1.55	**

Source: Data gathered from the district's school profiles

Sample

Participants for this study included staff personnel (teachers, administrators, and counselors) and students, in order to provide a first-hand account of how the school climate is perceived by those who reside at this urban middle school setting. The selected participants were individuals who have experienced or were familiar with the phenomenon of the disciplinary practices in school that was explored and were able to articulate their lived experiences (Creswell, 2006). It was important to get the actual voices and thoughts of staff and students, and others, in order to truly understand the issues being studied and to gain multiple perspectives (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007). Qualitative researchers strive for understanding, that deep structure of knowledge that

comes from visiting personally with participants, spending extensive time in the field, and probing to obtain detailed meanings (Creswell, 2006).

In this investigation, purposeful sampling was used as the site and participants were selected because they would provide an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study (Creswell, 2006).

In order to be selected as an adult participant in this study the individuals had to be employed by MMS as a certificated employee such as a teacher, counselor, out-of-classroom coordinator, administrator, etc. In order to be selected as a student-participant in this study, the individual had to be currently attending MMS as a student and have had at least one full year, in attendance, prior to the start of data collection.

Staff

Seventeen teachers from grades six, seven, and eight completed the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI), which is described in the data collection procedures section. Eight of these teachers agreed to have their classes take the survey. Within this subgroup of participants, four agreed to participate in follow-up interviews. The four interview participants, all who have been given pseudonyms, are described below:

- Ms. Fox: an eighth grade, Black teacher in the subject area of science with eight years of teaching experience, all at MMS.
- Ms. Cameron: a seventh grade, Black teacher in the subject area of science with five years of teaching experience, all at MMS.
- Mr. Santana: an eighth grade, Hispanic teacher in the subject area of math with six years of teaching experience, all at MMS.

- Mr. Steamboat: a sixth-eighth grade, Black special education resource teacher with eight years of teaching experience, all at MMS.

In addition, two administrators at the school completed the SCAI. One of these administrators agreed to be interviewed for this study.

- Ms. McMahon: a Black administrator at the school in charge of discipline agreed to participate in the study. She had one year of experience as an administrator, six years of experience as an out-of-classroom teacher in the position of dean of discipline, and five years of experience as a classroom teacher in the subject area of language arts.

Students

Students also participated in both the quantitative and qualitative portions of the study. A total of 47 seventh and eighth grade students completed the School Climate Assessment Instrument, which is described in the section on data collection procedures. Upon completing the survey, the participants were asked about their interest in participating in an interview.

A total of six students in grades seven and eight were selected as participants (three males and three females) in the qualitative portion of this study. All student participants attended the school for more than one full academic year at the time of the study and none had been retained during their middle school years. For the interviews in this study, the six student participants were:

- Mark: a male, Black, eighth grader who had attended MMS since the beginning of his sixth grade year.

- Booker: a male, Black, seventh grader who had attended MMS since the beginning of his sixth grade year.
- Alberto: a male, Hispanic, seventh grader who had attended MMS since the beginning of his sixth grade year.
- Natalie: a female, White, eighth grader who had attended MMS since the beginning of her sixth grade year.
- Diana: a female, Hispanic, eighth grader who had attended MMS since the beginning of her sixth grade year.
- Rosa: a female, Hispanic, seventh grader who had attended MMS since the beginning of her sixth grade year.

Table six summarizes the adult and student participants in the study.

Table 6

Study Participants

Participants	Survey	Interviews
Administrators	2	1
Teachers	17	4
Students	47	6

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection began in March 2013 and consisted of one survey, student, teacher, and administrator interviews, and an examination of school documents and other district data. First, the survey was administered to students whose teachers had agreed to participate in the study. Next, interviews were conducted with school staff and those students with permission to participate further in the study. Finally, documents and school data were examined to triangulate the results from the survey and interview data.

Survey (Quantitative)

The survey used in this study was the Assessment Instrument and School-based Evaluation/Leadership Team Assessment Protocol developed by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate at California State University Los Angeles (Alliance for the Study of School Climate, 2008), specifically the eight dimensions of the School Climate Assessment Instrument: SCAI-Physical Appearance, Faculty Relations, Student Interactions, Leadership/Decisions, Discipline Environment, Learning Assessment, Attitude and Culture, and Community Relations). The purpose for utilizing the SCAI was to gain an overall understanding of how students and staff rate each of the dimensions that relate to the school climate (see Appendix A). The survey data provided an indication of the areas of strength and weaknesses within the school site and served as a reference with which to analyze the school practices and approaches to school discipline. Eight teachers volunteered to have their classes complete the survey; only seventh and eighth grade classes were surveyed.

The Progressive Discipline Guidelines (Qualitative)

One school document, the Progressive Discipline Guidelines (PDG), was collected for data triangulation purposes. In 2007 the New School Order district implemented a school-wide positive behavior plan to develop and promote a school culture that promotes student learning. The school-wide positive behavior plan also identified student, teacher, and parent responsibilities for developing such a culture.

As part of the school-wide positive behavior plan, the district adopted the use of the PDG. The PDG document (see Appendix I) allows staff to respond to student behavioral problems based on a three-stage behavior response system: Stage I includes

minor inappropriate behaviors that fall under the other's responsibility; Stage II consists of persistent and/or moderately challenging behaviors that are the counselor's responsibility (and may have previously been addressed by the teacher(s) as well); and Stage III addresses more extreme behaviors that fall under the administrator's or school dean's responsibility.

The intent of PDG document is to inform the stakeholders, including students, of the types of behaviors that result in referrals, consequences for such behaviors, and which adults are responsible for responding to each type of behavior. The PDG's purpose is to maximize the amount of time students are academically engaged in the classroom, provide clarity and transparency in the progression of disciplinary actions for misbehavior, and hold students accountable for positive behaviors while also implementing a series of alternatives to suspension when misbehaviors occur. The PDG is provided, annually, to all students, parents/guardians and school employees in multiple ways: (1) as a handout, (2) printed in the student handbook, (3) posted in school offices and classrooms, and (4) posted to the school website.

Interviews (Qualitative)

In order to obtain an in-depth understanding to the practices and approaches to student discipline within the school, qualitative data were needed to obtain a deeper understanding to the experiences and perspectives from the participants. Qualitative data provide a deeper understanding of school disciplinary practices by empowering individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationships that often exist between a researcher and the participants in a study (Creswell, 2006).

Participant interviews allow gaining the different perspectives from staff and students. Creswell (2003) stated that interviews used in qualitative research involve unstructured and generally open-ended questions that are few in number and intended to elicit views and opinions from the participants. Glogowska, Young, and Lockyer (2011), asserted that qualitative interviews appear to be far more suitable for capturing students' in-depth perceptions and experiences. Interviews are a good tool to use when one wishes to know how another person feels about events that have happened or are happening (Anderson et al., 2007).

The interview questions were developed from the SCAI Dimension 5 since it relates directly to disciplinary practices. Important interpretations with regards to the application of interventions and consequences for student misbehaviors were based from the perceptions of all participants. Participants' experiences and interpretations enriched the understanding about the school environment. Interviews allowed the researcher to gather general information and locate any hot spots or areas of sensitivity (Anderson et al., 2007).

Interviews were conducted with five staff members (administrators, teachers, and support personnel) and six students in the seventh and eighth grades who have been part of the learning environment at Mania Middle School for at least one full academic year. Five staff participants were selected to be interviewed; four were teachers (a seventh/eighth grade science teacher, an eighth grade science teacher, an algebra teacher and an all grade level resource teacher). The fifth staff participant was an administrator in charge of discipline.

Staff interviews. Upon collecting each completed school climate survey, staff participants were recruited for interviews. The purpose for the staff interviews was to identify disciplinary practices used to deal with those students who are placed out of the classroom and suspended. These perceptions about the consequences applied within the classroom and the school helped to identify programs being targeted to assist with the pro-social behaviors that produce a learning change of behavior.

All staff participants were interviewed once for this study during non-instructional and work time for an approximate time of 20-25 minutes each. The interviews were conducted before or after school in an area away from the workplace, to avoid the burden of an employee losing productivity on job related responsibilities. At the beginning of the interview staff members were asked to complete a demographic survey to help the researcher better understand the participants (see Appendix B). Staff participants were then asked to identify the school's proactive behavior interventions, how they perceive the level of success with each intervention, and their understanding of student perceptions regarding the programs being implemented, to examine what behavioral interventions or consequences are consistently applied to respond to student behavior without isolating them from the class/school environment detrimental to academic achievement (see Appendix C for staff interview protocols). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in full; field notes were also gathered during interviews.

Student interviews. Obtaining student perspectives was a key element in conducting this study. Since students may become alienated from the instructional environment when discipline is primarily punitive, their viewpoint on this issue enriches the data collected. Upon collecting each completed school climate survey along with the

consent forms, staff and student participants were recruited for interviews from those who indicated on the survey that they agreed to participate. Six seventh and eighth grade student participants (three males and three females) were selected and each was interviewed once for this study. All student participants had been students at the school for more than one full academic semester and had not been retained during their middle school enrollment. Each individual face-to-face interview lasted approximately 20 minutes. All student participants were interviewed during advisory time in a classroom setting free from distractions. This non-instructional period is allocated to all students daily for approximately 30 minutes for the purpose of making-up assignments or tests.

At the beginning of the first interview, students were asked to complete a demographic survey to give the researcher a better understanding of the interview participants. The first interview then began by asking the student to describe the school in relation to disciplinary issues in order to obtain their interpretations of the school environment. Interviews also included open-ended questions about how they perceived school disciplinary consequences and interventions (see Appendices E and F for interview protocols). All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in full; field notes were also gathered during interviews.

Data Analysis Procedures

Each data source was analyzed immediately after it was collected to inform the next data collection activity. The following sections describe the specific analysis activities for each activity, followed by the overall analysis across all data sets.

Surveys

The survey asked participants to rate their experience of their school on each of the items for the eight Sub-factors of the school climate. Items were structured to reflect practices at the high, middle, and low levels on a mean score between 1.0 (low) to 5.0 (high). Each item was given a score based on the overall mean. Means were calculated for each group for each dimension. An overall mean for each separate group was also calculated. The mean score was calculated by dividing the total number of points for each item by the number of participants. Each item was aggregated for each separate group of participants. This provided implications for potential remediation and improvement related to the practice. Each of the eight Sub-scales was scored as a unit, which provided a sense of what areas are sources of strength and weaknesses.

The Progressive Discipline Guidelines

The school's Progressive Discipline Guidelines (PDG) was coded directly as it serves as a tool all school staff members are required to abide by when addressing student disciplinary problems. This document contains the lists of responsibilities at each stage or level of behavioral problems. Based on the categorizing groups within each theme that were derived from the interviews, the types of behaviors and procedures suggested in the PDG were coded using the themes from the interviews. In order to analyze the data within the PDG, I used open coding, as defined by Creswell (2006), to identify major categories of information. Open coding resulted in the following categories: behavior problems, responsibility, suggested procedures/punishments, stages/progression, and removal from classroom. These categories align with data derived from other sources and are discussed further in chapter five.

Interviews

Part of the qualitative inquiry is to engage in the complex, time-consuming process of data analysis through the ambitious task of sorting through large amounts of data and reducing them to a few themes or categories (Creswell, 2006). The staff interviews were semi-structured and guided by an interview protocol of 23 base questions (see Appendix C). Additional questions were posed during the interviews, as appropriate, to inquire in more depth.

The interview data were coded for themes and emerging discursive patterns using grounded theory coding (Creswell, 2006). The transcriptions statements from the interviews were sorted to describe repetitive responses or themes. Open coding was used in the data analysis process. The interview audio files and transcripts were reviewed and coded in multiple cycles before moving into axial coding and categorizing the data. Student interviews were reviewed at least three times while adult interviews were reviewed more than three times, depending on the density of information in each interview.

The categories that were formed from the initial open and axial coding were: common actions taken, detention, out-of-classroom, law enforcement involvement, guidance assemblies, mental health needs, programs, staff personnel, types of misbehaviors, reasons for suspensions, special education, instructional time, motivation, response to student misbehaviors, and effective vs. ineffective practices. These findings guided the researcher in hypothesizing current disciplinary trends at MMS as well as in making predictions and recommendations for the school's future. Please see chapter five for this discussion.

The five major themes that emerged from the data are the following: Consequences, Interventions, Funding, Staff-Student Interaction and Conduct, and Inconsistency. Each theme was created by categorizing the 14 groups that were created from the initial individual codes from the open and axial coding phases of this study (see Figure 1 for an example of the coding process). There were eight dimensions from the SCAI survey (ASSC, 2014) but one mainly supports the construction of these themes. More detailed information regarding dimensions can be found in the quantitative findings section of this chapter.

Progressive Discipline Detention Out of classroom Common Actions Taken Law Enforcement Involvement	**Intervention Programs** Guidance assemblies Home School Connection Mental health needs
Teacher Student Interaction Types of Misbehaviors Reasons for Suspension District effects Special education Instructional time	**Student Expectations** Motivation Consequences

Figure 1. Example of coding

Mixed Methods Analysis

Researchers have pointed out that current knowledge of out-of-school suspension is limited by the lack of research evaluating student and school characteristics together (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009). This study investigated the contribution of student, teacher, and administrator perceptions of school disciplinary practices in an urban middle school setting because students who are repeatedly suspended are likely to fall behind their peers academically, paving the way to their eventual dropout (Brownstein, 2010). The ability to collect three types of data simultaneously, during a single data collection phase makes this a mixed methods model (Creswell, 2003).

Data were collected through surveys and interviews with selected school personnel and students (Christie, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2004). The survey provided information about the school's implementation efforts on eight different dimensions. It represented the educational setting's systematic efforts to monitor their implementation status as relates to school climate and culture. With interviews and document analysis, combined, the data from both collection techniques were analyzed in different ways. This triangulation of data enabled me to maximize time and to see the same scene from different lenses and points of view (Anderson et al., 2007). To fully understand the school climate, the proximity and accessibility of the researcher to the school allowed him to gain a deeper knowledge based on his understanding of the school environment and culture.

Upon coding the interview transcriptions and deriving categories and themes, the items from the SCAI Dimension 5 provided supplemental support. In addition, items within the PDG were coded to discover similar phrases or categories in relation to the interview information and survey items as it provided information about the school's disciplinary implementation efforts.

Once I had the codes from the interview data, I examined the survey results to determine the extent to which the interview data confirmed or conflicted with those results. It was determined that the interview data and the survey data mutually supported one another. Then, the analysis of the PDG data were considered and compared to further triangulate the total data set and establish validity among the total data set for this study (which consisted of interviews, surveys and document analysis), as needed in a mixed methods study.

Trustworthiness and Credibility

In order to establish credibility the triangulation of data of sources is necessary (Creswell, 2006). When interviews and document retrieval techniques are utilized by a researcher, combining the techniques in different ways, called triangulation of data, allows the researcher to maximize time and to see the same scene from different ways (Anderson et al., 2007). Validation strategies often use multiple strategies, which include confirming of triangulating data from several sources, having the study reviewed and corrected by the participants, and having other researchers review the procedures (Creswell, 2006). This type of study offers the ability to provide more thorough understanding of a research problem because of the opportunity to examine multiple forms of data that are more comprehensive than data that might be collected via either quantitative or qualitative methods alone (McMillan, 2008). Substantive validation means understanding one's own understanding of the topic, understandings derived from other sources, and the documentation of this process in the written study (Creswell, 2006).

Triangulation was used due to the different sources of data, different methods of data gathering, and the different collaborators that provided varying angles on the research questions (Anderson et al., 2007). After conducting the school survey, the Alliance for the Study of School Climate recommends aggregating each item for each separate participant. Each item will be given a score corresponding to its mean so that marks in level 3 are scored a 5, between level 3 and 2 are scored at a 4, scores in the middle of level 2 receive a 3, and so the mean score will be obtained by dividing the total

number of points for each item by the number of participants). Item mean scores will range between 5.0 (high) to 1.0 (low).

Summary

The research reported in this study employs both qualitative and quantitative methods in relation to school disciplinary practices. To answer the questions in this study, data were collected from interviews, surveys, and a school document. Interviews were conducted with five staff members (four teachers and one administrator) and six students from Mania Middle School. Surveys were completed by 19 staff members and 47 students from the same site. To identify the types of disciplinary practices utilized within an urban middle school site, an analysis on all three instruments were compared.

The data for this study is presented in five different tables. Table 2 shows the matrix of study questions and instruments, basically the valid response to the questions of this study. Table 3 shows the research site demographics of the urban middle school from 2007-2013. Table 4 shows the School Academic Performance Index (API) 2009-2013 for the middle school site. Table 5 shows the number of suspensions by ethnicity for the urban middle school site. Then finally Table 6 shows the Study Participants for this study. Interviews were coded to develop themes and groups that will correlate with survey and Progressive Discipline Guidelines items.

CHAPTER 4

Findings

The purpose of this study was to investigate the contribution of student and staff perceptions of school disciplinary practices at an urban middle school setting. Research has shown that schools are responding to student misbehavior negatively by isolating students from the educational system by means of out-of-classroom practices that are not beneficial to student learning. These practices in response to misbehavior have been shown to be ineffective and can detach students from the educational environment and expose them to antisocial activities (Brownstein, 2010). Research-based responses to student misbehavior should be implemented within the educational setting at all times (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006). According to No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) schools need to implement and are required by federal legislation to use research-based intervention approaches and effective strategies. Studies have shown that students are increasingly being placed out of school for frivolous reasons (Brownstein, 2010). This outcome of course has an effect on overall student achievement. Schools must strive to establish and maintain a positive behavioral environment that will improve overall student behavior, boost academic achievement, and increase student attendance by maintaining students in school.

In this study student and staff participants from an urban middle school setting were surveyed and interviewed in order to obtain different perceptions with regards to the school's disciplinary practices. The data for this study were collected through the use of staff and student surveys, interviews, field notes, and document analyses. A total of 65 participants (staff and students) completed the SCAI survey and 11 in-person interviews

were conducted to obtain their perceptions with regards to disciplinary responses to student misconduct that lead to out of the classroom and school placement at Mania Middle School (MMS).

In this chapter the researcher describes the findings that were derived from all data collected for this study. The data will first be reported independently by method so as to provide transparency in the data collection and reporting and allow for in-depth description of each set of results. This chapter will begin by presenting the findings from the SCAI surveys (ASSC, 2014) administered to staff and students. Next the findings from the document examined for this study will be presented. Finally, the themes that emerged from analysis of the qualitative data will be presented. These themes will be discussed holistically, drawing in data from the surveys, document, and website in order to create a comprehensive understanding of the perceptions stakeholders have of practices related to misbehavior at MMS.

Quantitative Survey Results

As recommended by the Alliance for the Study of School Climate at California State University Los Angeles (Alliance for the Study of School Climate [ASSC], 2014), the survey items were totaled separately in each of the eight dimensions. Each item was given a score corresponding to its mean. The mean score was obtained by dividing the total number of points for each item by the number of participants. The items mean scores range between 5.0 (high) to 1.0 (low). Then an average was computed for each of the eight dimensions by participant groups and overall whole school averages as well. Each item is identified by a number, which stands for the given dimension followed by a letter that signifies the exact item question. For example, the item identified as 5D

determines the rate for Sub-factor for School Climate Dimension 5: Discipline Environment. Each of the items were scored and averaged to determine one of the three levels of the survey as high, middle or low. Also, each of the eight Sub-scales is also scored as a unit.

Nineteen staff members (17 teachers and two administrators) and 47 students completed the SCAI (ASSC, 2014) for this study. As described in chapter three, the SCAI has eight dimensions for staff and six dimensions for students. Each dimension has a series of statements to which respondents answer on a five-point scale from one (low) to three (middle) to five (high). Mean scores were tabulated for each statement and composite mean scores were tabulated for each dimension; an overall (all dimensions) mean for school climate was also calculated. Appendix A shows the eight dimensions.

According to the participants (staff and students) survey results, the entire school climate score for the urban middle school site has an overall composite mean school climate score of 3.09 on all eight Sub-scales. The eight Sub-scales were scored as a whole and individually for both groups of participants in order to obtain an overall mean for each separate group. Each individual item was assessed to determine ways to improve the school climate. The overall staff score resulted in 3.05 while student scores resulted in 3.25. By averaging mean staff and student scores, the school climate composite score is 3.09. Based on the theoretical construct of the three levels of the ASSC School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI), this urban middle school demonstrates level two characteristics, which entail: a system that is semi-intentional, an overall attitude that has good intentions translated into practices that work; support for

experiences that have mixed effects on students, a place where the goal is order and engagement; and a site that promotes mixed psychological effects among students.

Tables 7 and 8 represent the overall ranking of Sub-scales for staff and students, from highest to lowest, as determined by the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI) data.

Table 7

Staff Rankings and Mean Score for Each Sub-scale, Highest to Lowest (n=19)

Rank	Sub-scale	Mean
1st	Sub-scale 6: Learning/Assessment	3.3
2nd	Sub-scale 2: Faculty Relations	3.3
3rd	Sub-scale 1: Physical Appearance	3.2
4th	Sub-scale 5: Discipline Environment	3.2
5th	Sub-scale 4: Leadership/Decisions	3.1
6th	Sub-scale 8: Community Relations	2.9
7th	Sub-scale 3: Student Interactions	2.7
8th	Sub-scale 7: Attitude and Culture	2.7

Table 8

Students' Ranking and Mean Scores for Each Sub-Scale, Highest to Lowest (n=47)

Rank	Dimension	Mean
1st	Sub-scale 6: Learning/Assessment	3.6
2nd	Sub-scale 8: Community Relations	3.4
3rd	Sub-scale 5: Discipline Environment	3.3
4th	Sub-scale 7: Attitude and Culture	3.2
5th	Sub-scale 1: Physical Appearance	3.1
6th	Sub-scale 3: Student Interactions	2.9

The staff data show that five dimensions have a mean higher or equal to the overall staff score and the whole school climate score. The overall staff score is lower than the overall student score. The student data demonstrate that five Sub-scales that have a mean higher or equal to the overall staff score and the whole school climate score. The student overall mean score is higher than the overall mean staff score. The following sections will describe the individual dimensions of the SCAI. They are described in the order they are listed in the instrument, rather than as they were ranked in the survey responses.

Physical Appearance

The first sub-scale, physical appearance, is described as the relationship between a school's physical environment and its climate (ASSC, 2014). This dimension includes the degree to which intentional efforts have been made related to the consideration of the perceptions of outsiders about the physical appearance of the school and expectations and treatment of custodial staff. The overall mean for staff responses to all eight items related to physical appearance is 3.20. This average is higher than the overall staff scores (3.05) and the mean composite of staff and students whole school climate (3.09). This Sub-scale ranks the third highest for staff. Six of the items scored were above or equal to the Sub-scale mean (3.2), whole school score (3.09) and overall staff score (3.05). Item 1A "welcoming to outsiders, the school projects its identity to visitors" had the highest average (4.1). Item 1D had the lowest average (2.6) as it identifies that "litter is cleaned at the end of day."

Students' overall average for all eight items related to physical appearance was 2.9. This average is lower than the overall student scores (3.11) and the whole school

climate mean (3.09). This Sub-scale ranks fifth in the six dimensions measured by students. Four of the items scored were above or equal to the dimension mean (2.9), whole school score (3.09) and overall staff score (3.05). Item 1B (purposeful use of school colors/symbol) was one that had the highest average (3.4). Item 1C (staff and students take ownership of physical appearance) had the lowest average (2.5) as it identifies that "staff regularly comments on school appearance, but students do not feel any sense of personal ownership." Table 8 summarizes the staff and student scores for physical appearance.

Commonalities and differences. From the information gathered, both groups of participants scored and perceived items 1A (welcoming to outsiders), 1B (use of school colors/symbols), and 1G (respect for custodians) highly. Both groups ranked item 1A highly indicating that the school does a good job of projecting its identity to visitors. From the eight items in Dimension 1, both groups of participants rated item 1D (no litter) low, indicating that litter is observable but is cleaned at the end of the day.

Table 8

Staff and Student Mean Scores for Physical Appearance

Sub-scale	Staff Mean (n=19)	Student Mean (n=47)
1A. Welcoming to outsiders	4.1	3.42
1B. Use of school colors/symbols	3.6	3.46
1C. Ownership of physical appearance	3.2	2.5
1D. No litter	2.6	2.6
1E. Student work displayed	3.2	2.9
1F. Things work/get repaired	3.2	3.1
1G. Respect for custodians	3.4	3.3

1H. Amount of graffiti	2.8	2.7
Overall Mean	3.2	2.9

Staff scores reveal that item 1C (ownership of physical appearance) is perceived as highly important to staff, but students do not feel the same sense of personal ownership; students' scores on item 1C indicate they perceive it is the janitor's job to perform such duties. Staff scores for item 1C were higher than the whole school climate mean while students' score was lower.

Faculty Relations

The Sub-scale entitled faculty relations looks at how the faculty members relate to one another and the impact of those relationships on school climate, including collaboration, respect, capacity to interact, and a sense of collective purpose (ASSC, 2014). This dimension includes 11 separate items; the staff overall mean for all 11 items related to faculty relations is 3.3. This average is higher than the overall staff scores (3.05) and the whole school climate composite mean score (3.09). This dimension ranks the highest from all eight staff dimensions. Seven of the items scored were above or equal to the dimension mean (3.3). All items scored were equal or higher than the overall staff score (3.05) and whole school climate score (3.09). Item 2A (faculty commonly collaborate) had the highest average (3.8) among the 11 statements. Items 2C (faculty use planning time constructively) and 2E (faculty feel a sense of dissatisfaction) had the lowest averages (3.1). Students were not surveyed about faculty relations because it only relates to staff. Table 9 summarizes the scores on all items of related to faculty relations.

Table 9

Staff Mean Scores on Faculty Relations (n=19)

Sub-scale	Staff Means
2A. Faculty commonly collaborate	3.8
2B. Faculty approach problems collectively	3.3
2C. Faculty use planning time constructively	3.1
2D. Faculty typically constructive of each other	3.2
2E. Faculty feel a sense of dissatisfaction	3.1
2F. Faculty exhibit high level of respect	3.6
2G. Faculty meetings are attended by most all	3.6
2H. All-school events are well attended by staff	3.3
2I. Leadership roles expressed with appreciation	3.5
2J. Teacher leadership is well coordinated	3.2
2K. Faculty have time to commune, non-isolated	3.6
Overall Mean	3.3

Student Interactions

Students and staff were both surveyed on student interactions; this Sub-scale explores the relationships among student expectations and peer interactions, and how they affect school climate (ASSC, 2014). This dimension includes the degree to which students' interactions are governed by intentional versus accidental qualities. There are ten items in this Sub-scale; the overall staff mean for the all ten items related to student interactions is 2.7. This average is lower than the overall staff scores (3.05) and the whole school climate composite mean score (3.09). This dimension received one of the two lowest overall mean scores from staff, but six of the items scored were above or

equal to the dimension mean (2.7). Two items were equal to or higher than the overall staffs score (3.05). One item was more than the whole school climate score (3.09). Item 3D (attending school events) had the highest average (3.5). Items 3G (leaders easy to find) and 3H (athletes as quality members) had the lowest averages (2.5). On the item of student leadership, staff members indicated "leaders come from a small clique of students" and "it is assumed that some athletes are just "jerks" and that jocks are not "real students."

Students' overall average for all ten items related to student interactions is 2.8, which is similar to the mean score for staff. This average is lower than the overall student scores (3.11) and the whole school climate (3.09). This dimension ranked fifth, which is the second lowest from all six dimensions measured by students. Six of the items scored were above or equal to the dimension mean (2.8). Two items were more than or equal to the overall student score (3.11). Three items were higher or equal than the whole school climate score (3.09). Item 3J (engage in "authentic learning") had the highest average (3.8), stating that "most students expect to engage in 'authentic learning' activities and to be taught with methods that make them responsible for their own learning." Items 3F (safe from violence) and 3G (leaders easy to find) had the lowest average (2.3), indicating that "most students don't expect much severe violence but accept minor acts of harassment almost daily" and "leaders come from a small clique of students." Table 10 summarizes the staff and student scores for student interactions.

Table 10

Staff and Student Mean Scores for Student Interactions

Sub-scale Description	Staff Means (n=19)	Student Means (n=47)
3A. Sense of community	3.0	2.8
3B. Value members of the community	2.8	2.9
3C. Zero tolerance of "put-downs"	2.6	2.4
3D. Attending schools events	3.5	3.3
3E. Serving the school	2.8	2.4
3F. Safe from violence	2.7	2.3
3G. Leaders easy to find	2.5	2.3
3H. Athletes as quality members	2.5	2.9
3I. Students given ownership	2.8	3.0
3J. Engage in "authentic learning"	2.6	3.8
Overall Mean	2.7	2.8

Commonalities and differences. From the information gathered, both groups of participants scored and perceived item 3D (attending school events) highly, indicating that many students attend school events. From the ten items related to student interactions, both group of participants rated item 3G (leaders easy to find) low, which states leaders come from a small clique of students.

The major difference in perspectives between students and staff was revealed in item 3J (engage in "authentic learning") as for this item staff scores were lower than the whole school climate mean score but for students it was higher. Staff scores reveal that item 3J is perceived to have most students adjust their expectations to each teacher and

focus mainly on what it takes to get "the grade," while students' scores reveal that most students expect to engage in "authentic learning" activities and to be taught with methods that make them responsible for their learning.

Leadership and Decision-Making

Only staff members responded to questions for the dimension on leadership and decision-making, which examines decision-making mechanisms, how administrators and others demonstrate authority, and how these factors influence school climate (ASSC, 2014). This dimension consists of 11 items; the overall mean for staff responses for all 11 items is 3.1. This average is higher than the overall staff scores (3.05) and the whole school climate (3.09). This dimension ranks the fifth from the highest in all eight staff dimensions. Seven of the items scored were above or equal to the dimension mean (3.1). Eight items were equal to or higher than the overall staff score (3.05). Seven items were more than the whole school climate score (3.09). Item 4K (leadership is in tune with school experiences) had the highest average (3.5), indicating that "leadership makes pro forma statements about wanting good school climate." Item 4D (majority of staff members feel valued) had the lowest average score (2.4), which indicated "selected staff members feel occasionally recognized." Students were not surveyed about leadership and decision-making because this dimension does not pertain to them. Table 11 summarizes the mean staff responses to the items related to leadership and decision-making.

Table 11

Staff Mean Scores for Leadership and Decision-Making (n=19)

Sub-scale Description	Staff Means
4A. Shared sense of vision and mission	2.9
4B. Vision is collective of the school community	3.0
4C. Decisions are conspicuously grounded	3.2
4D. Majority of staff members feel valued	2.4
4E. Sense of "shared values" is cultivated	3.2
4F. Staff understands priority needs	3.1
4G. Staff have a high level of trust for leadership	2.9
4H. Teacher leadership is systematic and integral	3.3
4I. Leadership demonstrated at high level	3.2
4J. Leadership is in tune to students and community	3.4
4K. Leadership is in tune with school experiences	3.5
Overall Mean	3.1

Discipline and Management Environment

Staff and students completed the ten items related to discipline and management environment, which explores the relationship between the management and discipline approaches that a school uses and how they affect school climate (ASSC, 2014). The staff overall mean for all ten items in discipline and management environment is 3.2. This average is higher than the overall staff scores (3.05) and the whole school climate (3.09). This dimension is the fourth highest from all eight staff dimensions. Six of the items scored were above or equal to the dimension mean (3.2). Eight items were equal to

or higher than the overall staff score (3.05) and the whole school climate score (3.09). Item 5H (teachers focus on problematic behavior, not student) had the highest average (4.1). Items 5E (student-generated ideas) and 5J (sense of community in classes) had the lowest averages (2.6), indicating an "occasional use of student-generated ideas" and that "teachers successfully create a functioning society in their classes."

Students' overall average of all ten items related to discipline and management environment is 3.2. This average is higher than the overall student scores (3.11) and the whole school climate (3.09). This dimension ranks third from the highest in all six dimensions measured by students. Seven of the items scored were above or equal to the dimension mean (3.2). Eight items were more than or equal to the overall student score (3.11) and the whole school climate score (3.09). Items 5B (clear expectations/ consistency in discipline) and 5D (positive classroom climate) had the highest mean scores (3.5), indicating that "in many classes there are clear expectations and most teachers are fair and unbiased," "most teachers maintain a positive climate, but some days they just feel the need to complain about the class and/or get fed up with the 'bad kids,'" and that "management strategies promote acceptable levels of classroom control over time, but are mostly teacher-centered." Table 12 summarizes the mean staff and student scores for the items related to discipline and management environment.

Table 13

Staff and Student Mean Scores for Discipline and Management Environment

Sub-scales	Staff Means (n=19)	Student Means (n=47)
5A. School-wide discipline policy	3.6	3.1
5B. Clear expectations/consistency in discipline	3.1	3.5
5C. Teachers use effective discipline strategies	3.3	3.3
5D. Positive classroom climate	3.2	3.5
5E. Student-generated ideas	2.6	2.9
5F. Teaching and discipline as basic student needs	3.4	3.2
5G. Supportive/respectful student-teacher interactions	3.3	3.4
5H. Teachers focus on problematic behavior, not student	4.1	3.2
5I. Promote student self-direction	3.1	3.4
5J. Sense of community in classes	2.6	2.9
Overall Mean	3.2	3.2

Commonalities and differences. From the information gathered, both groups of participants scored and perceived items 5C (teachers use effective discipline strategies) and 5G (teachers use effective discipline strategies) highly. The average scores on both items were higher than the whole school climate score. Both groups' averages for items 5C and 5G were very similar within rank as item 5C infers that "most teachers use some form of positive or assertive discipline but accept the notion that punishment and shaming are necessary with some students" and item 5G, "teacher-student interactions could be typically described as fair but teacher dominated." From the ten items in Sub-

scale 5, both group of participants rated items 5E (student-generated ideas) and 5J (sense of community in classes) as two of the lowest rated items, based on the perceptions "teachers make the rules and students should follow them and that teachers create a competitive environment in their classes."

The major difference in perspectives between students and staff was revealed in item 5A (school-wide discipline policy) as the item staff scores were higher than the whole school climate score but for students the score was lower. Staff scores indicate "the school-wide discipline policy is used by some staff," while students' scores indicate that "the school-wide discipline policy exists in writing only." Staff scores for item 5A were higher than the whole school mean, while students' score was lower.

Learning, Instruction, and Assessment

Staff and students completed items related to the dimension of learning, instruction, and assessment, which examines the relationships between instructional strategies and assessment methods and how they relate to the school climate (ASSC, 2014). There are twelve items related to learning, instruction, and assessment; the overall staff mean score was 3.3. This average is higher than the overall staff scores (3.05) and the whole school climate (3.09). This Sub-scale is the second highest from all eight staff Sub-scales. Seven of the items scored were above or equal to the dimension mean (3.3) but all items were equal to or higher than the overall staffs score (3.05) and the whole school climate score (3.09). Item 6H had the highest average (3.7) that states that "students are seen as the primary users of assessment information, and assessment is used for the purpose of informing the learning process and is never used to punish or shame." Items 6B (promotes students' internal locus of control), 6E (instruction is dynamic,

involving, learning-centered, and challenging), 6J (students feel they learn in depth), and 6L (school-wide rewards focus on effort/contribution) had the lowest averages (3.1), indicating that "instruction/assessment is most often focused on relevant learning, yet mostly rewards the high-achievers"; "instruction is mostly based on relevant ideas but often seems to be busy-work"; "students are engaged in quality content, but the focus is mostly on content coverage"; and "school-wide rewards honor a variety of top performance-based achievements."

Students overall average of all twelve items related to learning, instruction, and assessment is 3.4. This average is higher than the overall student scores (3.11) and the whole school climate (3.09). This Sub-scale ranks the highest in all six dimensions measured by students. Ten of the items scored were above or equal to the dimension mean (3.4) but all items were equal to or higher than the overall students score (3.11) and the whole school climate score (3.09). Items 6A (clear and attainable learning targets for assessment), 6C (student-controlled behavior rewarded/assessed), and 6I (classroom dialogue shows higher-order thinking) had the highest averages (3.7), indicating that "most high-achieving students can find a way to meet the teacher's learning targets"; "student-controlled behavior is verbally rewarded," and "classroom dialogue is active and engaging but mostly related to obtaining right answers." Items 6F (students work cooperatively) and 6K (student intelligence and ability are not fixed) had the lowest averages (3.3), indicating "some teachers buy into the idea of cooperative learning" and "teachers promote the view that effort has a lot to do with how much students are able to accomplish." The major emphasis is placed on "working to produce good products." Table 14 summarizes the mean scores related to learning, instruction, and assessment.

Table 14

Staff and Student Mean Scores Learning, Instruction, and Assessment

Sub-scales	Staff Means (n=19)	Student Means (n=47)
6A. Clear and attainable learning targets for assessment	3.4	3.6
6B. Promotes students' internal locus of control	3.1	3.4
6C. Student-controlled behavior rewarded/assessed	3.4	3.6
6D. Teachers make sense of and respond to learning styles	3.3	3.6
6E. Instruction is dynamic, involving, learning-centered, and challenging	3.1	3.5
6F. Students work cooperatively	3.4	3.2
6G. Students given systemic opportunities to reflect on learning	3.4	3.4
6H. Assessment used to inform instruction	3.7	3.5
6I. Classroom dialogue shows higher-order thinking	3.2	3.7
6J. Students feel they learn in depth	3.1	3.6
6K. Student intelligence and ability are not fixed	3.5	3.3
6L. School-wide rewards focus on effort/contribution	3.1	3.4
Overall Mean	3.3	3.4

Commonalities and differences. From the information gathered, both groups of participants scored and perceived item 6A highly. Both participant groups rated this item as the highest. On item 6A (clear and attainable learning targets for assessment) both groups of participants claimed that learning targets for assessments are clear and attainable for learners. From the twelve items related to learning, instruction, and assessment, both group of participants rated item 6L (school-wide rewards focus on

effort/contribution) as one of the lowest, indicating that school-wide rewards only honor a variety of top performance-based achievements.

The major difference in perspectives between students and staff was revealed in item 6K (student intelligence and ability are not fixed), which was the item with scores that staff ranked as one of the two highest but was one of the two lowest ranked items scored by students. Scores from both groups are higher than the whole school climate score and teach of the overall dimension scores reveal that teachers and students have the view that effort has a lot to do with how much students are able to accomplish. The major emphasis is placed on working to produce good products, rather than fixed skills that lead to achievement.

Attitude and Culture

Staff and students completed the items related to the attitude and culture, which looks at the pervasive attitudes and cultures that operate within the school and how they affect school climate (ASSC, 2014). There are ten items for this dimension; the overall staff mean score for all ten items related to attitude and culture is 2.7. This average is lower than the overall staff scores (3.05) and the whole school climate (3.09). This dimension ranks the lowest from all eight staff dimensions. Seven of the items scored were above or equal to the dimension mean (2.7). Four items were equal to or higher than the overall staffs score (3.05). Two items were more than the whole school climate score (3.09). Item 7G (teachers share high expectations for students) had the highest average (3.3), indicating "most teachers have high expectations for students who show promise." Item 7B (students correct peers who use destructive/abusive language) had the

lowest average (2.1), indicating "students accept verbal abuse as a normal part of their day."

Students overall average of all ten items related to attitude and culture was 3.14. This average is about equal to the overall student scores (3.11) and higher than the whole school climate (3.09). This dimension ranks fourth from all six dimensions measured by students. Eight of the items scored were above or equal to the dimension mean (3.14), the overall student score (3.11) and the whole school climate score (3.09). Item 7G (teachers share high expectations for students) had the highest average (3.6); item 7D (students speak about school in proud/positive terms) had the lowest average (2.8), indicating "students speak of the school in neutral or mixed terms." Table 15 summarizes the mean scores related to the dimension of attitude and culture.

Commonalities and differences. From the information gathered, item 7G (teachers share high expectations for students) was ranked the highest by both groups of participants. On item 7G both groups of participants recognized that most teachers have high expectations for students who show promise. From the ten items in this dimension, both groups of participants rated item 7D (students speak about school in proud/positive terms) low as it reveals that students speak of the school in neutral or mixed terms.

The major difference in perspectives amongst students and staff was revealed in item 7B (students correct peers who use destructive/abusive language) as the score for this item was ranked the lowest by the staff but ranked second highest by the students. According to student participant scores, Item 7B indicates that students seek adult assistance to stop blatant verbal abuse, rather than work to stop it themselves.

Table 15

Staff and Student Mean Scores Related to Attitude and Culture

Sub-scales	Staff Means (n=19)	Student Means (n=47)
7A. Students feel part of the community	3.0	3.1
7B. Students correct peers who use destructive/abusive language	2.1	3.2
7C. Students feel they are working towards collective goals	2.7	3.2
7D. Students speak about school in proud/positive terms	2.5	2.8
7E. Students feel listened to/represented and have a voice	2.5	3.1
7F. Students feel sense of belonging to something larger	2.8	3.1
7G. Teachers share high expectations for students	3.3	3.6
7H. Students feel debt of gratitude upon graduation	2.8	3.2
7I. Students feel welcome and comfortable	3.2	2.9
7J. School maintains traditions, pride, and sense of community	3.0	3.2
Overall Mean	2.7	3.14

Community Relations

Staff and students completed the items related to the final Sub-scale community relations. There are seven items in this dimension, which explores the link between the way that the school is perceived externally and the school's climate (ASSC, 2014). The overall staff mean for the all seven items related to community relations is 2.9. This average is lower than the overall staff scores (3.05) and the whole school climate (3.09). This dimension ranks the second lowest from all eight staff dimensions. Five of the items scored were above or equal to the dimension mean (2.9). Four items were equal to or higher than the overall staffs score (3.05). Two items were more than the whole school

climate score (3.09). Item 8A (school perceived as welcoming to parents) had the highest average (3.6); item 8E (parents/coaches work for best interest of student-athletes) had the lowest average (2.1).

Students' overall average for all eight items related to community relations was 3.2. This average is higher than the overall student scores (3.11) and higher than the whole school climate (3.09). This dimension ranks second highest from all six dimensions measured by students. Five of the items scored were above or equal to the dimension mean (3.2). All items were more than or equal to the overall student score (3.11) and the whole school climate score (3.09). Item 8A (school perceived as welcoming to parents) and item 8C (community members invited to speak in classes) had the lowest average (3.0). Table 16 summarizes the mean scores related to community relations.

Commonalities and differences. From the information gathered, items 8A (school perceived as welcoming to parents) and 8B (regular communication with community) were the highest ranked by both groups of participants. On item 8A both groups of participants recognized that the school is perceived as welcoming to certain parents. However, Item 8B indicates that the school sends out pro forma communication that may be plentiful but is not created with the consumers' needs in mind. From the seven items in Dimension 8, there were no common items that were rated low by both groups of participants.

The major difference in perspectives between student and staff responses was revealed in item 8E (parents/coaches work for best interest of student-athletes) as the item score was ranked the third highest by students but ranked the lowest by staff. The

majority of the item scores for both groups are higher than the school climate composite score. Only three Sub-scale item averages for staff are below whole school climate score.

Table 16

Staff and Student Means Related to Community Relations

Sub-scale Description	Staff Means (n=19)	Student Means (n=47)
8A. School perceived as welcoming to parents	3.6	3.5
8B. Regular communication with community	3.4	3.4
8C. Community members invited to speak in classes	3.0	3.0
8D. Service learning promotes positive community relations	3.0	3.2
8E. Parents/coaches work for best interest of student-athletes	2.1	3.3
8F. Volunteer efforts are coordinated, plentiful, and appreciated	2.6	3.2
8G. Events and performances are well attended	2.9	3.3
Overall Mean	2.9	3.2

Summary of Survey Findings

The survey results presented were derived from the staff and student participants' responses of the ASSC SCAI. The scores allowed for a highly valid and reliable indicator of the quality of school climate across eight dimensions (ASSC, 2014). The eight Sub-scales were scored as a whole and individually for both groups of participants in order to obtain an overall mean for each separate group. An overall composite mean school climate score was derived. Along with an overall all staff and student score.

According to the SCAI survey results, both group of participants scored sub-Scale 6, Learning, Instruction and Assessment, as a top rank dimension. The averages for this

dimension for both staff and students are greater than the whole school climate and group means. Dimension 3, Student Interactions, was within the lowest ranking for both groups of participants. Dimension 5, Discipline and Management Environment, averages were equal and above the whole school climate score. Dimension 7 (Attitude and Culture) and Dimension 8 (Community Relations) staff participant results means were below whole school climate score while student participant scores were above. On the contrary, Dimension 1 (Physical Appearance) staff dimension average indicated to be greater than the whole school climate score and the student score was below.

The Progressive Discipline Guidelines

As previously mentioned, the Progressive Discipline Guidelines (PDG) document (see Appendix I) guides staff on how to respond to student behavioral problems based on a three-stage behavior response system. Stage I are minor inappropriate behaviors that fall under the teacher's responsibility, stage II consists of persistent and/or moderately challenging behaviors that are the counselor's responsibility (and may have previously been addressed by the teacher(s) as well), and stage III are more extreme behaviors which fall under the administrator's or dean's responsibility. The intent of this document is to inform the stakeholders, including students, of the types of behaviors that result in referrals, consequences for such behaviors, and which adults are responsible for responding to each type of behavior. The following sections address the ways the PDG is used at the school.

Who Created this Document and Who is it For?

The composers to the school's progressive discipline guidelines consisted of a team of school staff members including administrators, deans, and teachers who based

the PDG on the school-wide discipline plan that was created and provided by the school district. The selected team members had a shared notion of the need to reform the disciplinary practices within the school environment to improve overall student conduct. The PDG was provided, annually, to all students, parents/guardians and school employees. It was provided in multiple ways: (1) as a handout, (2) printed in the student handbook, (3) posted in school offices and classrooms, and (4) posted to the school website.

What Does the PDG Say?

The PDG tells all stakeholders of MMS who is responsible for addressing different types of student misbehavior and what consequences have been deemed appropriate. There are nineteen Stage I behaviors listed. These are considered the most minor level misbehaviors and include things such as talking in class, eating food without permission, incomplete assignments, etc. These behaviors are expected to be handled by the teacher(s) using one or more of the nine suggested procedures, progressively applied as needed. Stage II consists of all the offenses from Stage I that were not resolved by the teacher and that are to be handled by the school counselor. Counselors are expected to continue with possibly eight additional consequences before referring the student to the next level.

There are 13 acts of misbehavior that are subject to immediate disciplinary action by the school dean. Stage III lists those acts of misbehavior to which the school dean is responsible for responding with four possible consequences intended to re-shape the behavior.

Why was the PDG Needed?

Prior to the creation of MMS's progressive discipline guidelines, students were often frequently and harshly disciplined for subjective infractions, without consistency across the campus. Students who engaged in similar misbehaviors were not always held to the same consequences or responses from school staff. Systems of consistent, clear, and practical approaches to student discipline were needed to reduce the number of out-of-classroom placements and suspensions. The PDG suggests a series of responses that stakeholders at each level are responsible for implementing prior to referring a student to the next level/stage on the disciplinary system.

What Message Does This Document Send Its Audience(s)?

The PDG sends the message that punitive, negative, disciplinary actions take precedent over student access to instruction and ability to attend class. The practices of removing the most troublesome students from the learning environment are intended to improve the quality of instruction for those students that remain. The majority of the misbehaviors for which the PDG is utilized are defiance, insubordination and disobedience. This document focuses on rules and consequences instead of prevention and intervention strategies that enable a change in the behavior of the students. For example, in the Progressive Discipline Guidelines, a teacher is responsible for behavioral issues within stage I. Teachers are directed, by the PDG, to respond to behaviors such as profanity, talking out, defiance, or disruptions with consequences like verbal warnings, time-outs, detention, parent conferences or behavioral contract, as appropriate. The teacher responses are all dependent on the severity and frequency of the misbehavior. The disciplinary actions recommended in stage I of the PDG do not necessarily promote

students' learning of skills or replacement behaviors necessary to avoid further misbehaviors.

The PDG defines stage II behaviors as, "All repeated offenses of Stage I not resolved by the classroom teacher after parent contact has been made and the progressive discipline checklist has been completed" and dictates that counselors are responsible for addressing these behaviors using a separate set of progressing consequences such as parent contact coupled with campus clean up, daily monitoring reports, behavior contracts, etc. These consequences could possibly lead to students' learning of skills needed to avoid further misbehaviors however, this is dependent upon the individual counselor to develop and enforce in a meaningful way since the PDG doesn't specify how to proceed with these issues in a standardized or research-based manner.

According to the PDG, stage III behaviors are the responsibility of an administrator because of the severe nature of the acts. Stage III behaviors include violent acts, possession of weapons or drugs, sexual harassment, bullying, etc. Each of the stage III behaviors are expected to result in parent contact and a severe consequence, such as suspension, citation by police officers, pre-opportunity transfer conference, etc. A pre-opportunity transfer conference happens when the administrator is considering removing the student from school attendance and assigning them to a different school as a result of severe or repetitive misbehaviors.

Themes Derived from the Data

This section reports on the themes that emerged from analysis of the interview data, which are also supported from findings from the staff and student surveys as well as the PDG. The themes that surfaced from the data collected across the urban middle

school site demonstrate how participants' perspectives coincide at certain times but differ at others. A total of five themes emerged from the analysis of the staff and student interviews about the approaches to school discipline at the urban middle school site (see table 16). The major themes that emerged across all participants at Mania Middle School are the following: Consequences, Interventions, Funding, Staff-Student Interaction and Conduct, and Inconsistency. The themes formed allow hypothesizing current disciplinary trends and school outlook.

Table 17

Themes

Theme	Description of the Theme	Categories Included
Consequences	Series of responses the school makes to act upon student misconduct exerted during instructional or non-instructional times.	Common Actions Taken Detention Out of classroom Law Enforcement Involvement
Interventions	Alternatives to out-of-school suspensions geared towards assisting students to rethink their behavior through strategies and flexible approaches that will improve overall achievement/success.	Guidance assemblies Mental health needs
Funding	The discontinuation of services provided, whether it is support staff or intervention groups that no longer exist within the school climate, due to the lack of funds. The nonexistence of such providers has resulted in negative student interaction outcomes.	Programs Staff Personnel

Table 17 continued

Theme	Description of the Theme	Categories Included
Staff-Student Interaction and Conduct	Establishing relationships that diminish subjective reasons for disciplinary action and promote a sense of overall fairness and positive behaviors; while decreasing negative behaviors (i.e., being defiant, insubordinate or disobedient).	Types of Misbehaviors Reasons for Suspension Special education Instructional time Motivation
Inconsistency	The lack of consistent implementation of responses to behavioral misconduct, fidelity of implementation of the PDG or other structured behavior plan and over-reliance on punishments that cause removal from the instructional environment.	Inconsistent Removal from Classroom Suggested Procedures/Punishments Removal from Classroom

Theme One: Consequences

Consequences are a series of responses the school makes to student misconduct during instructional or non-instructional times. Students often engage in misbehaviors and discover how far they can push the limits based on the school responses; however, the majority of times the disciplinary measures do not support the students in learning the skills necessary to avoid further negative behaviors. The disciplinary practices used at times exclude students from the learning environment. Sending students out of the learning environment completely for disciplinary reasons does not teach students right from wrong and further limits student learning opportunities. Many staff members and students believe that suspension should be utilized as a last resort intervention when school based interventions have failed. The dean of discipline (administrator designee) at MMS, Ms. McMahon, explains her view of consequences;

> I think that the consequences need to be issued at school. I think that there does need to be more severe consequences so that students will know and have an understanding because if they aren't, or if the behavior isn't corrected here, they will have more serious issues as adults because they don't think that there are any consequences for anything that they do, that everything is okay.

Basically, the reasoning behind these corrective approaches is intended to implement early life learning experiences for students rather than to do so at a later age in life. The use of these disciplinary approaches at this stage in their lives connects with dimension 5 (Discipline Environment) of the School Climate Assessment Instrument (SCAI), item 5C (teachers use effective discipline strategies). Staff and student responses to this item fell in the middle of the five point scale (student mean =3.5; staff mean= 3.3), indicating that "most teachers use some form of positive or assertive discipline but accept the notion that punishment and shaming are necessary with some students" (ASSC, 2014).

Participants indicated that consequences should consist of appropriate responses to misconduct that provide the student with an opportunity to learn the skills necessary to avoid recurrence of misconduct and re-engage. Mr. Santana, an eighth grade math teacher, states that the consequences he frequently uses are:

> Verbal warnings, seat change, timeout in another class, teacher and student conference, campus beautification, parent conference, detention after school, referral to the counselor, referral to the dean, to the principal,

assistant principal, peer mediation, class suspension, parent contact by phone, by mail, or e-mail.

At MMS, the PDG guides the teacher to respond to student misbehavior with, verbal warning, paper pick-up, time out to another classroom, teacher and student conference, detention with the teacher, or parent contact. Mr. Santana indicated that he was not satisfied with these responses as they have produced no behavior changes. He feels that students recognize the limitations to the repetitive consequences being applied.

Mr. Santana feels that students misbehave because they do not perceive the existence of consequences.

> Current at this school, some of the problems that we are starting to have is, like, students do not see any consequences happening, so they are going, they are startqing to learn new things to get entertained. Now they are shutting the lights off in the hallways. When substitutes come in, I hear horror stories, that, you know, they just throw things around. That's about that.

Ms. Fox, an eighth grade science teacher at MMS, stated her perspective about the responses to student misbehavior in a similar way as Mr. Santana, "We do lunch detention, after-school detention, calling parents, in-house suspension. Teacher send students to another class, I think those are frequently used because that's pretty much all they can do."

SCAI Sub-scale 5, Discipline Environment, item 5H (teachers focus on problematic behavior, not student) relates to this perception as it states, "when disciplining students, teachers are typically assertive yet often reactive, and give an

overall inconsistent message." Staff rated this Sub-scale higher (4.1) than students (3.3). Also, staff and students rated item 5G (supportive/respectful student-teacher interactions) in the middle of the five point scale (staff mean=3.3; student mean=3.3), indicating that "teacher-student interactions are mostly teacher-dominated and reactive" (ASSC, 2014).

Ms. Cameron, a seventh grade life science and health teacher, discussed the consequences that are used frequently, "I know there are certain consequences, like detention, suspension, maybe in-house suspension, but also we can refer students to counseling. I know we have a school psychologist, and we have a wellness coordinator that can also deal with misbehaviors." Ms. Cameron thinks about alternatives other than punitive practices, such as interventions that can assist the student as is described in item 5F on the SCAI (teaching and discipline as basic student needs), rather than using classroom management primarily for control. Ms. Jones' demonstrated sensitivity towards meeting the needs of her students rather the focusing on the problematic behavior (as indicated in item 5H).

Mr. Steamboat, the RSP teacher at MMS says that the consequences frequently used are, "The behavioral consequences I highly use include verbal warning, seat change, teacher and student conference, parent conference, referral to the counselor, referral to the dean, behavior contract, referral to intervention programs, and definitely parent contact." Mr. Steamboat's basically responds with what is scripted on the PDG. Item 5A of the SCAI states that "school –wide discipline policy is used by some staff."

Students are being disciplined inappropriately within the learning zone in which the response only alleviates the problem temporarily. According to student interviews, school staff habitually resorts to yelling and directing students to leave the classroom.

Responses to Item 5D of the SCAI (positive classroom climate) indicates that staff and student respondents feel "most teachers maintain a positive climate, but some days they just feel the need to complain about the class and/or get fed up with the 'bad kids.'" (Student mean = 3.5 Staff mean = 3.2). As a result of the lack of consistency, there are times when students are sent home for their misbehavior or are cited for subjective out of compliance issues. For example, when Booker, a student, was asked how a staff member responds when a student misbehaves he stated, "Sometimes they yell, and sometimes they kick us out." Although students expressed during the interviews that on various occasions' teachers use their authority by yelling and directing students to leave the classroom, survey results indicated that "students seek adult assistance to stop blatant verbal abuse."

Students begin to think of these current school responses as a normal way of dealing with misbehaviors. Responses to Item 5C (teachers use effective discipline strategies) indicate "most teachers accept the notion that the only thing the students in the school understand is punishment and/or personal challenges" (Students = 3.5: Staff = 3.3). When student participants were asked about what they would recommend for teachers to do when students misbehave, one student responded "expel them, change them to a different school or tell the parent of the student to send them to boot camp." Harsh responses are perceived as restorative, the quick remedy to remove the student without any learning involved. The mean scores for item 5F (teaching and discipline as basic student needs) indicated that "most view all student misconduct as disobedience and/or the student's fault" (Student mean = 3.4: Staff mean = 3.4). These types of actions have become an ongoing trend that is not only habitual, but has become the norm for the

learning environment. Students are conditioned to think they are to blame and consequences will be applied but notice the effect it has on their learning other than isolation.

The students at MMS seem to have been acculturated into an ineffective pattern of responses to their misbehavior that are applied to their wrongful choices and actions with no purpose related to learning. Booker, a seventh grade student says the following about the actions by teachers.

> Sometimes they yell and they make me sit in the corner. Or they just send me to the office. Or sometimes the teachers don't take it. They just kick me out the class. Sometimes, they send me home, or they call the officer and ask him to give me a ticket.

Booker's statement contradicts item 5B (clear expectations/consistency in discipline) by indicating that "students have to determine what each teacher expects and behavioral interventions are defined by a high level of subjectivity," rather than knowing that consequences will be consistently applied.

Noemi, an eighth grade student at MMS, expresses her perspective on the consequences applied to students' misbehavior at the school.

> Students get a warning, detention or suspension. In detention, they waste fifteen minutes of your lunch. You also get a call home. A teacher and student conference also happens where they would try to tell students what bad stuff they done.

Noemi basically pinpoints the progressive school approach to discipline by having a conference with the teacher. Once again, item 5H relates to this idea as teachers deliver

an inconsistent message. Natalie, an eighth grade student, adds, "Students get sent out of class, or given detention, or they have to do a parent conference. They most likely probably call your mom for a parent conference and put you in detention."

Both students and staff relate to the common practices applied as a result of misbehavior. These are common practices that are intended to fix the misbehavior. Mark, an eighth grade student, says that students are given the following consequences:

> Verbal warning, time out to another class, teacher conference sometimes, a paper pickup, and detention during lunchtime are given. They get sent to the dean office. That's like almost all of them. It also depends if you been in trouble many a times you might just get suspended. Or first time, you might get a warning.

Alberto, a seventh grade student, also relates to the punitive consequences delivered at the school.

> When students misbehave they send you to Ms. McMahon (school dean). She gives you lunch detention for a whole two weeks. If you keep doing bad, they give you a ticket, suspend you, expel you or tell the officer to arrest you.

Removing privileges that students find of value such as their lunchtime, is what is taken away to serve as a lesson learned and prevent reoccurrence. Rosa, a seventh grade student, agreed about the punitive consequences delivered at the school. She stated that "students are given warnings, get sent out of class or simply are suspended."

Based on all the different interviews with staff and student participants, it is noticeable that detention and out of the classroom practices are common actions that are

perceived to take place frequently. On occasions when staff are in conflict with students and are in a struggle with a student, the involvement of law enforcement can be used to regain control of the situation. The means for item 5D (positive classroom climate) were 3.2 for staff and 3.5 for students, as the item states "…some days they just feel the need to complain about the class and/or get fed up with the bad kids."

Common actions taken. This sub-theme reflects how both staff and student participants perceived the disciplinary approaches utilized to handle and correct student misbehavior. According to the students, school staff engages in yelling and directing students to leave the classroom. The actions that are commonly used include being sent home or being told they will be issued a citation by the law enforcement for noncompliance to school rules. Ms. Fox expresses her approach to student misbehavior.

> I tend to deal with students one on one regarding their behavior problems. We sit and we talk. I pull them in the hallway. I try to check up on 'em. I try to talk to them as an adult because they will be adults soon. I don't feel like sending them to the office is really effective that … not only because nothing really happens but also because that makes me powerless. It's like I have to have somebody else help me discipline my students, and they pick up on that, and some kinds wanna go to the office. So because of that type of stuff, I'll probably write one referral a year, if that, because I do not see anything truly happening when you send a child to the office, so I'll try to deal with disciplining them all in classroom.

There is no doubt that severe misbehaviors that need automatic referral to police authority exist. However, it appears that the majority of misbehaviors referred to law

enforcement on campus are for minor, school-related offences that, per the Progressive Discipline Plan (PDG), should be handled by other measures. Students perceive law enforcement as a form of disciplinary assistance for the school, since police become involved as a result of common misbehaviors and as a tool to impose consequences.

Staff members felt differently about the use of law enforcement as one means of implementing discipline and discussed attempts to implement a variety of interventions, such as counseling, prior to initiating any other actions, such as calling the police. Ms. Cameron described her disciplinary methods.

> OK. So, for my classroom, the disciplinary consequences, I do verbal warning. I'll do seat changes, timeout to another class, paper pickup, parent conference, referral to counselor, behavior contract. I haven't had to use anything past verbal warning, timeout to class, and parent notification yet, as of this year.

Disciplinary exclusion seems to be an immediate response to student misbehavior within the school site. Although there are progressive discipline guidelines, it seems that students are still being taken out of the school environment. Behavioral problems at MMS are minor and indeed do not present a threat to the learning environment. Based on various data that were collected from teachers and support staff, multiple interventions are put in place prior to sending the students out of class. When a student disrupts class, staff follows up with a counseling moment as a form of an initial disciplinary approach. A counseling moment can be described as a verbal warning and a student-teacher conference to correct the unwanted behavior.

However, students were more likely to describe being sent out of class. Booker was asked about the type of consequences teachers and staff use when he misbehaves. He stated, "Because I talk a lot, they make me sit in the corner. Or they just send me to the office. Or sometimes the teachers don't take it. They just kick me out the class." This is an example of how students are excluded and placed out of the classroom for minor misconduct rather than an intervention that would help the student learn to behave in a more appropriate way. This is one example of a temporary relief for teachers to have disruptive students out of the classroom. Contrary to this view are the responses to item 5F of the SCAI, which indicate averages for both staff and student were at or above Sub-scale averages. The results revealed that "most (staff) have sensitivity to student needs, but the primary goal of classroom management is control."

Detention. There are three levels of responsibility within the PDG. Stage I behavior problems are the teacher's responsibility to respond to accordingly. One of the most common responses for misbehavior is assigning students to detention. Detention is served during lunch time since that is what students highly value, their free and play time. Participant responses to item 5F (teaching and discipline as basic student needs) indicate that "most [staff] view all student misconduct as disobedience and/or the student's fault" (Student mean = 3.4; Staff mean= 3.4).

Natalie, an eighth grade student, stated, "students get sent out of class, or detention, or they have to do a parent conference." When referring to the action taken by administrators, Natalie stated, "well, probably call your mom and put you in detention". At the school site, respondents stated the high use of detention as a consequence. Detention serves as the immediate response to student misbehavior that is commonly

used by staff members and stated in the school's progressive discipline plan. When students were asked about what takes place while serving school detention, Noemi, an eighth grade student replied, "they waste fifteen minutes of your lunch."

Out of the classroom. Student participants were asked about the actions that take place when students misbehave in the classroom. Mark, a 14-year-old student, responded "they give them a warning. Then if the warnings are up, then you get sent to the dean". Mark was asked to identify the most common consequence for misbehavior from a list of consequences applied by school personnel. He stated, "sent to the dean, referral to the dean's office, it depends if you been in trouble many a times you might just get suspended. Or first time, you might get a warning." On the survey responses to item 7F (students feel sense of belonging to something larger) were more closely aligned with "most students feel alone, alienated and/or part of a hostile environment" (Staff mean = 2.8; Student mean = 3.1). Mark's comments illustrate the practice of removal or isolation from the learning environment after minimal warnings.

However, according to Mark, verbal warnings are repeatedly given before being sent out the school. He interpreted the progression of responses to misbehavior as being within stage I of the PDG, which includes responses such verbal warnings, student/teacher conference, and other items that fall within teacher responsibilities, but further indicated that they seem to immediately increase to stage III responses, such as suspension and citation by policy officer (see Appendix I). Based on Mark's statements, the school responses are often contrary to the PDG. First they do not progress through the stages because students are repeatedly sent-out of the classroom. Item 6D data (teachers make sense of and respond to learning styles) seems to be contradictory to the

interview data where ratings indicate that teachers sometimes expect students to abide with the teacher's level of intervention. (Staff mean= 3.3; Student mean = 3.6). Although Mark's interpretation relates to item 5H, when disciplining students, "teachers are typically personal and often antagonistic."

Law enforcement involvement. Situations may arise when the presence of law enforcement is necessary to maintain school order and safety, but nonetheless this act of necessity should be utilized as a last resort and beyond school staff control. From the students' perspective, these consequences for misbehaviors such as a physical fighting are reported to law enforcement and include the possibility of receiving a citation. Police citations require the student to appear before the judge, accompanied by a parent or legal guardian at a local court. Booker, a seventh grade student, was asked about the actions that take place when two students fight. Booker responded "sometimes we go to jail, and we get a ticket. Or we just get sent home". Alberto added, describing the school dean's response to such misbehavior, "she gives you lunch detention for a whole two weeks, or gives you a ticket". Survey responses on item 3F (safe from violence) indicate that while these responses may seem extreme, staff and students feel there is an issue with violence at the school (Staff mean=2.7; Student mean=2.3), indicating that students feel even less safe than staff.

Theme Two: Interventions

Interventions are alternatives to out-of-school suspensions geared towards assisting students to rethink their behavior through strategies and flexible approaches that will improve overall achievement/success. Ms. McMahon suggested that the progressive discipline guidelines are not uniform and that it is evident that all programs and

interventions can be made more effective with consistency and continual reviews of the plan. When asked about the effectiveness of the current intervention programs, she responded, "At this particular time, I would say they're medium [effective], they're effective, and partly because, some protocols are not being followed by the staff in which we need to, revisit the school-wide positive, discipline policy so that they will be more familiar with it, but I will just say medium effective." The succession of practices in the PDG presents clear barriers that are encountered in the implementation and, therefore, the effectiveness of the plan. The PDG is currently inconsistent across all areas as staff members apply responses differently and do not abide by the progression of the steps of the guidelines. As Ms. McMahon commented, "we need to make sure that our teachers follow our school-wide progressive discipline policy correctly, like it's supposed to be followed, and we need to be more consistent". As it is indicated in item 5A ([evidence of] school-wide discipline policy) in the SCAI, the "school-wide discipline policy exists in writing only," especially since responses "when [they are] disciplining students, teachers are typically assertive yet often reactive and give overall inconsistent messages (item 5H-- teachers focus on problematic behavior, not student—Student mean =3.2; Staff mean = 4.1).

Another factor that comes up is the school-wide uniform plan that is part of the PDG, but is implemented inconsistently by staff members. This inconsistence results in unclear messages being sent to students who end up violating the plan due to issues with enforcement. This can be seen in the responses to item 5B (clear expectations/consistency in discipline), which indicates that "students have to determine what each teacher expects and behavioral interventions are defined by a high level of

subjectivity" (Student mean = 3.6; Staff mean= 3.1). This is also noticeable in item 4A (shared sense of vision and mission) because staff responses indicate that the "school has a set of policies, a written mission, but no cohesive vision." School staff members fail to follow through on actions as also indicated in item 4C (decisions are conspicuously grounded) as "policies and mission exist but are not meaningful toward staff action."

Guidance assemblies. The school does try to communicate the PDG and the school-wide discipline plan to the students. Guidance assemblies serve to promote whole school behavioral awareness by informing students about school policies and expectations for student conduct. The school administrators along with all support staff share the roles and duties they each perform for the purpose of maintaining school safety with students. The school dean delivers her interpretation to the guidance assemblies held at MMS. There is also a Parent-Student Handbook, which is distributed to all students at the beginning of the year during the guidance assembly. The handbook consists of documents that describe the school policies and procedures, the progressive discipline guidelines, the suspension policy, discipline policy, and code of conduct. The books have spaces for students to write in and they get to keep it for themselves and to share with their parents. The assemblies and the Parent-Student Handbook are two ways that school-wide discipline plan is communicated to students.

Guidance assemblies are scheduled according to grade level with the intention of students being informed and made aware about overall expectations, such as the following policies: uniform, attendance, tardy, sexual harassment, and discipline. The majority of the staff members are present to share their roles and duties to assist students to behave appropriately. Staff members reinforce student expectations by putting into

practice in the classroom the necessary accommodations that are part of the school's progressive discipline plan.

Change in behavior is key and expected, but it does not always happen. Mr. Steamboat was asked about whether or not the students understand the purpose of the guidance assemblies. He stated:

> Oftentimes, the students don't pay attention. Is it easy for them to understand? I think if they are exposed to it in a step-by-step manner and maybe more frequently, or rather periodically, it would be easier for them to understand.

Student participants were also asked about the purpose of the guidance assemblies and Alberto, an eighth grade student, said, "this lady said that if you keep doing bad, we're going to have to give you a ticket. Mrs. McMahon told me that it was either a ticket, if you tag or do anything bad. She can give you a ticket, suspend you, expel you or tell Officer Boss to arrest you." Intimidation and the use of punitive practices seem to be used frequently to prevent further misbehavior. The disciplinary consequences are mostly expressed by students. Responses to item 5C (positive classroom climate) indicate that "most teachers use some form of positive or assertive discipline but accept the notion that punishment and shaming are necessary with some students" (Staff mean=3.2; Student mean=3.6). Staff and student perspectives on item 5F (teaching and discipline as basic student needs) indicate that "most have some sensitivity to student needs, but the primary goal of classroom management is control (Staff and Student means=3.4). Teachers are in control and expect students to behave and learn accordingly. Responses to item 7F (students feel sense of belonging to something larger) also

indicated that "many students feel alone, alienated and/or part of a hostile environment" (Staff mean=2.8; Student mean=3.3). The lack of consistency school-wide has had an effect on individual students.

Mental health needs. Mental health issues surfaced as a topic during interviews. Ms. Fox was asked about behavior problems at the school site that relate to mental health needs and responded as follows:

> The underlying issues of it, our children deal with stresses that they shouldn't have to deal with at their young age, and some adults can't handle stress, so our kids act out, and we, as teachers and adults, need to be a little more understanding that it's not us and it's them. They're going through something, but at the same time, there has to be a level of respect. They can't run over you either. Tell them, 'I know you're having a bad day, but that does not excuse your behavior'

She further suggested that without having "a little more understanding" about these students, a teacher can be unaware of the difficulties that impede a student from behaving appropriately or as expected. Ms. Fox's discussion aligns with item 5F (teachers focus on problematic behavior, not student) indicating that "most [teachers] have sensitivity to student needs but the primary goal of classroom management is control" (Staff mean=4.1; Student Mean=3.3. Staff responses agree with that statement more than student responses agree.

> The PDG were discussed during the interviews. One staff member stated …as far as progressive discipline is concerned, I think it does work effectively, but I think there's some other students who have behaviors

that are outside of the realm of progressive discipline , and we need to come up with ways to address them.

Due to the limited support, staff members in this study described feeling as if they are forced to cope with these behaviors and do their jobs as best as possible at the same time. The dean of discipline added:

> It doesn't seem like we're getting a lot of district support. They're just pushing, uh, kids staying in school, staying in class, but not addressing what their issues are. And again, some of those issues are serious, stemming from home as far as mental health.

Due to the lack of support and the repetitive student misbehaviors, punishments are used to alleviate further instructional disruptions. The administrator in charge of discipline complained about the lack of support.

> Also, what is raised is that why does it take so much to get services for students when they are clearly in need of mental health intervention? Especially for our students who have IEPs, it's almost darn near impossible to get them the service that they need. You have to go through this hoop. You have to go through that hoop.

When services for student mental health problems are nearby, the conditions can be simple to remediate. It is more difficult when services are not on-site or in the local community. The school can be a challenging and stressful place for students as it can affect them emotionally or socially, hindering effective academic performance. Students' insecurity and incompetency within the school environment can lead to a repetitive

pattern of misbehavior. With the broad range of mental health services within reach, students' needs can be fulfilled to enrich skills and produce academic achievement.

Theme Three: Funding

Funding, or lack of funding, is an issue for Mania Middle School because it directly affects what services can be offered to support students. These services include things like adding support staff or intervention groups for students, but when there is no funding the services are discontinued. Lack of funding, therefore, can result in negative student outcomes.

Programs. One thing that happens when there is limited funding is that programs are cut from the school. Ms. McMahon discussed services that used to be provided at the school and how the students were impacted when the funding dried up.

> Previously, our school was implementing Jeopardy Program, Open Arms Counseling Services, as well as the Street Soldiers Violence Prevention Program. Towards the beginning and middle of this school year, those programs were cut by either funding or by district restrictions, so we are operating on a limited basis for intervention programs at this time.

Ms. Fox complained that the majority of the programs that previously existed are no longer available due to lack of funds. She stated:

> Currently, I don't believe we really have any intervention programs at the school. We have had 'em in the past, but due to lack of funding or red tape, getting approved by the district, a lot of our intervention programs have been removed.

Mr. Steamboat agreed, stating:

> Other interventions and programs we have that I can think of include … what I said earlier, peer mediation, but again, due to budget cuts and availability of staff, I think that has been limited as well. Lack of funds has been detrimental to the discipline and the needs of all students.

Supporting the previous comments, the administrator in charge of discipline concluded with her ideas about general improvements for the middle school.

> Some ideas that I have that could improve our program is that we bring back our intervention programs that were cut, some of the outside services, because they were effective for our students.

Staff personnel. A second way that cuts to funding negatively impact schools is when they are not able to hire staff to fill positions that would support students. The lack of support staff has a toll on effective productivity of programs. Having sufficient personnel enables duties of some to be reduced so they can provide needed interventions. District cutbacks have resulted in services being discontinued or not working effectively. One teacher suggested that funding cuts create problems when staff positions with specific roles might help to improve student behavior are eliminated:

> Right now, they are getting ready to cut our wellness facilitator's position, by funding. That development program is going to be cut. But it was instrumental because we have a lot of students here who are not just misbehaving, but they have mental issues, stemming from home, and so we do need a comprehensive mental health program here, especially since our student special education population is growing.

Theme Four: Staff-Student Interaction and Conduct

This theme describes how staff and students establish relationships that diminish subjective reasons for disciplinary action and promote a sense of overall fairness and positive behaviors, at the same time decreasing negative behaviors (i.e., being defiant, insubordinate, or disobedient). In addition, in this theme participants talked about issues related to the kinds of negative student behaviors, reasons for suspension, and how that impacts instructional time and student motivation.

Interactions. Participants were asked about staff and student interactions. Ms. McMahon, the school dean, stated,

> Teacher's interaction with the students on campus, I believe, is very good. We have lots of staff personnel that come out during lunchtime, play basketball with the kids on the blacktop. They even invite us to some of their functions if they are receiving awards off-campus, and our staff does go to those, functions for the students, so we do go above and beyond. We have eating your lunch with the teacher, where the teachers bring their lunch down to the cafeteria and sit down with the students and eat.

The comment connects with the staff mean score of 3.3 on item 2H (all-school events are well attended by staff) of the SCAI, indicating that *there are regular attendees at school events*. In this case Ms. McMahon refers to the student events such as lunchtime activities where staff members make themselves visible to students outside of the classroom.

On the other hand, Ms. Fox, an eighth grade science teacher, shared her perceptions of how the administrators interact with students, "I don't know. I just [don't]

see the administrators out on the yard during lunchtime. I don't really see them. And even this year, they haven't really been at the after-school activities either." Her remark indicates that school leaders not consistently interacting with students. The staff mean score (3.4) on item 4J (leadership is in tune to students and community) suggests that leadership has the necessary services that will assist their population.

Commenting on the lack of interaction between administrators and students, Ms. Cameron, a seventh grade science teacher stated,

> The administrators are short-staffed, so they have, um, a limited, I guess, exposure to the students, and it's usually in a negative way when they see students, as they have to discipline the students. So I would like to see the administrators have a more positive experience with the students, maybe come to the classes to visit, things like that.

When Mr. Steamboat, the resource teacher, was asked about how he perceives the teachers' interaction with students on campus, responded:

> How do I see it? I, I definitely see teachers, who are caring and who are concerned about their students' welfare. That's one of the reasons why I've taught here for so long. It's because this is an environment where the staff members truly care about the kids they serve.

Ms. McMahon, the dean, concluded the discussion about interacting with students with the following comment:

> And again, administrators do interact with the students on campus, especially … well, all of them [administration], they do make contact with the parents. They call them and make personal contact. [The school

principal] has gone out on home visits to meet with the parents when there is a student who she sees that continuously misbehaves. And so, I think that there is a good rapport with the students and the administrators.

Types of misbehaviors. As previously stated, students often experiment with misbehaviors to discover the limitations to the consequences. Students frequently are disrespectful to teachers and other staff members. Student participants were asked for examples of misbehavior seen at their school site. Students described misconduct, such as "[the use of] bad language" and "fighting" as the most common misbehaviors at their school site. When asked how students misbehave at school, one student participant answered, "They fight. They tag, and they have bad language." A second student-responded: "They cuss teachers out. They throw things at teachers. They do everything that bad students do." Another student added: "that they be like, they don't be going to class. Or they don't pay attention to the teacher or instigating and fighting." Foul language was repeatedly mentioned as a common misbehavior seen at school. As the responses to item 7B (students correct peers who use destructive/abusive language) on the SCAI revealed "students accept verbal abuse as a normal part of their day" (Staff mean=2.1; Student mean=3.3).

Student interviews confirmed this point. A student participant stated the type of behavior he demonstrates when he is in class, "talking back to the teacher, not doing my work sometimes. And I walk out the class." The act of walking out of class displays a quick way to avoid adult interaction. This type of behavior may be related to students' perceptions about how staff members relate to them; responses on item 7I (students feel welcome and comfortable) indicate "students assume adults do not have any interest in

their problems" (Staff mean=3.2; Student mean=3.0). Another student was asked to give some examples of how students misbehave at the school. She stated, "Well they talk back at the teachers, and when there's substitutes, they act up a lot." When asked about the consequences she added, "They get kicked out of the class." Responses to item 5H (teachers focus on problematic behavior, not student) show how teachers are *typically assertive yet often reactive* when responding to students who misbehave (Staff mean= 4.1; Student mean =3.3).

When asked to describe verbal misbehavior, two students talked about foul language and cursing. In addition, other students talked about smoking and fighting and also discussed walking out of class like the other students. When asked what happened when students misbehaved like this, Alberto complained about how quickly severe consequences were implemented. "That... she said ... she said that, she was gonna, she said ... she didn't even give me no warning. She just sent me home, first time," indicating that the punishment did not match the misbehavior.

Reasons for suspension. When an out-of-school suspension is utilized as a response to student misconduct, the consequence does not always provide students enough information to understand their behavior so that it doesn't happen again. Therefore, issuing an out-of-school suspension as a consequence often does not allow the student to reflect on the misbehavior that resulted in suspension. Out-of-school suspension is supposed to be the result of a series of misconduct after other interventions outlined in the PDG, such as verbal warnings, time out, and detention, have been administered and the student continues to disrupt or endanger the safety of the school

community. Ms. McMahon, the school dean, talked about how suspension can positively affect student behavior.

> …in some cases, with the student who is very, very good and still in school who just made an honest mistake, that suspension does have a change in the behavior because they do recognize that these suspensions go on their record as permanent and that it can be looked up later. So for those students, and you know who they are, the suspension does work effectively, but for the overall continue knuckleheads, no, it does not.

Ms. McMahon continued by specifically talking about how suspension does and does not work, depending on the individual student to whom the suspension is given.

> When students are suspended, I try not to suspend any longer because I know when they're at home, for the majority, when I make the phone call home, I don't know for a fact, but it's my opinion, just by listening to the reaction of the parent, that not much is going to be done. Sometime, the student comes back from a suspension with brand new clothes on and a new haircut, so it really was not effective.

This statement seems to contradict staff responses to item 5H on the SCAI (teachers focus on problematic behavior, not student) regarding placing the blame on the student, rather than the behavior (Staff mean=4.1; Student mean=3.3).

Ms. Fox stated that students do not learn to improve their behavior because of what goes on when they are suspended, "During suspension, they, I think that students just stay at home to have fun, either watching, movies, stay, play, play video games, or just walk and try to ditch or to come back into school."

Mr. Santana, a teacher, talked about why suspension might not work to change student behavior, linking student behavior to parental control.

> Change in behavior when the student returns to school, for most of the time, I don't think suspension makes a change in the behavior of the student, unless the parent is involved, and the parent is, you know, has some type of control over the student. Otherwise, the student just returns and continues with the same behavior.

More than one teacher agreed that while out-of-school suspension might work for students who are not repeat offenders, there need to be alternatives for those who are repeatedly suspended but who show no change in behavior. While some students are bored at home, others view out-of-school suspension as fun and like a vacation.

> Does a suspension cause a change in behavior upon a student's return to school? I believe the good students, it does, but the habitual bad ones, it doesn't, so you … an alternative method needs to be found.

The understanding here is that there are no consequences or effective follow through at home. One Mr. Steamboat explained it this way.

> They're sitting at home, bored, trying to get back on campus because this is where all their friends are. We come back from breaks sad, the teachers. The students come back happy because they don't wanna be at home. They're bored.

Changes in behavior vary in terms of what occurs at home as a follow up by the parents. At times being isolated from the school is rewarding for students; at other times

it actually feels like a punishment. Ms. Cameron summarized what the other staff members reported.

> Typically, if it's a minor misbehavior, suspension can cause a change in behavior because the kid doesn't wanna be suspended again. Um, but if it's a major misbehavior from a chronically bad student, I don't think suspension will be the answer because they'll be happy to be at home. They don't like school probably and that's why they're acting out, so that's that….when students are suspended from school, I don't think they do anything. Some teachers will give work. I don't think most students would do it, so I think they just hang out at home, watch TV, go on the Internet, something like that".

While staff members derived their perceptions from their overall experiences, it is important to listen to how the students described the ways and reasons they were suspended and how they spent their time while suspended. They tell similar stories; most say they were not warned and didn't deserve to be suspended. Natalie, an 8th-grade student, talked about her suspension, why she was suspended, and what she did during that time. "Oh, [I was suspended for] talking back to teachers, fighting". She stated that she was not given prior warnings about the consequences for her behavior. Once she was suspended, she stated, "I sat down and waited for the day to end." Rosa similarly said, "[I was suspended] supposedly because I kicked a boy under the table, but I really didn't do nothing….not really nothing, because I was suspended for the rest of the day. I didn't really do nothing." Many students described the behaviors that got them suspended as unimportant.

Some students seemed to understand the reasons they were suspended. Mark, an 8th-grade student shared the reasons for his suspension, "instigating, starting, fights and stuff. Fighting." He also described his day while serving an out-of-school suspension: "my momma strict, so I just stay in the house. Just stay in my room". Alberto, a 14-year-old also asserted the reason for his suspension. "They caught fireworks and a blunt on me." However, Booker, complained about what he did during his time on suspension, "I go home and be on punishment and have to ... and clean up and then think about what I did"

Based on these statements from staff and students, staff participants were correct about their assumptions of what the students did while they were suspended. That is why several staff members indicated that they were uncertain about whether there were effective outcomes from out-of-school suspension. They felt that the success or failure of suspension in preventing misconduct depended on factors that support or impede full student understanding about the cause of suspension.

Special education. Dayton (2000) states that according to IDEA 1997 and the amended provisions regarding the discipline of students with disabilities, the new mandates have attempted to clarify disciplinary procedures and provide the management with tools that administrators and teachers need, while protecting the rights of students with disabilities. The application of behavioral intervention strategies for the special education population is different than what is required for the non-special education student population. Therefore, this sub-theme was based on statements from participants about students who receive special education services.

However, there was limited discussion of specific interventions for students who receive such services. One staff member talked about the overall need for external support services that are beneficial for all students, especially the special education (SPED) population. In regards to specific disciplinary practices for the SPED population, one staff member explained:

> OK. After a student with an IEP is suspended, after the second suspension on Welligent.… the SIS and the Welligent Systems, they communicate, and after two suspensions, an IEP is automatically opened up, and the case manager needs to convene a meeting after the second IEP, after the second suspension, rather.

Because of the IEP, the procedures that are put in place when a SPED student is suspended include specific follow-through that resumes when they return.

> I am … as a case manager for students with IEPs, we are involved in the process. After two suspensions, we are required to hold an IEP to address the behavior whe-, and whether or not if the behavior support plan needs to either be included or amended.

There needs to be ongoing support to appropriately serve any of the specific groups of students within the school because student interventions must be appropriate to the student, otherwise there can be barriers to effective discipline.

> Also, what is raised is that why does it take so much to get services for students when they are clearly in need of mental health, intervention? For, especially for our students who have IEPs, it's, it's almost darn near

impossible to get them the service that they need. You have to go through this hoop. You have to go through that hoop.

The increased need for support services for the SPED population is clearly expressed by Mr. Steamboat. The lack of availability of services is detrimental to behavioral support.

So, again, our special ed. population, basically, their behavior stems from mental health issues that they're, that they have from home. As well as some of, the parents, they come and, it's my belief that they also need services. Maybe, they haven't addressed some of the issues that they're dealing with, but it needs to be addressed for, from the home front as well to improve the student behavior here at the school.

Students who receive special education or who have IEPs are more likely to have alternative punishments, rather than be suspended from school. Mr. Steamboat explained it this way, discussing the need to have a variety of alternatives along with suspension for those students in the SPED population.

For this year, I know there are certain numbers and quotas that we have to follow, especially with the modified consent decree. I know there have been various alternatives to our students with IEPs in terms of their suspensions... Now, is that effective? A case manager, case manager can actually cancel it. We need somebody, there needs to be personnel that actually monitors this. If there is a second suspension, then that case manager needs to convene the IEP. But since at this school no one is necessarily monitoring this, a case manager can easily cancel it. If the

suspension is ineffective, it is due to follow through application of services unwelcomed.

Instructional time. Within a classroom setting there can be difficulties when unexpected student disruptions happen. Although teachers are trained and attempt to follow all necessary disciplinary protocols, at times the approaches they use are not enough to de-escalate the problems. Teachers, at times, must be patient and tolerate disruptive behaviors that impede the learning of others. Ms. McMahon supports the district and school expectations but is concerned about the flaws in the PDG.

> And some of the questions that are raised during this conversation or this interview is students or the district support, that's a real concern. I know that they are stressing students staying in class, more instructional time, but how are they going to address the seriousness that misbehavior inside the classroom and on the campus causes to the instructional program when a teacher has to continually stop and then all that, all that has been done continues, you know, to try to be done to change the student's behavior and it's not working?

Ms. McMahon was one of the developers of the school's progressive discipline approach at MMS. The purpose to the progressive discipline plan was to maximize instruction and student learning by preventing students from being sent out of the classroom for unjustified reasons, with a goal of reducing the number of suspensions issued. With this plan, teachers can react to student misconducts accordingly unless there is an obvious act of endangerment to students or staff, which requires immediate administrative action.

Motivation. There are occasions where a student expects to be praised and at other times punished. Students discussed what it takes for students to be motivated to participate in class and engage in good behavior. When one student was asked what he would tell himself to get him to behave and participate if he were the teacher and had a student like himself in his class, he responded, **"**I would have him as a one on one. Have somebody come in with him and talk to him. Or I would do it, to help him do better. And I ... if he starts doing good, I would bring him stuff." The student indicated that he thinks that by doing well, a student can be extrinsically rewarded. The student was also asked if he were an administrator of the school, how he would get along with students. The student responded by stating, "I would treat students good and stuff. Bring them stuff." Extrinsic motivation is perceived to be effective according to this participant.

For example, a student participant was asked about the annual grade level guidance assemblies conducted by the school. Alberto summarized the assembly by talking about how negative consequences were described. "The dean told me that it was either a ticket, if you tag or do anything bad. She can give you a ticket, suspend you, expel you or tell the school officer to arrest you". At times, staff discusses punishments as negative reinforcement to remind students of consequences to hinder misconduct. Coercive approaches were utilized to deter further behavioral problems, according to this student participant's perspective. According to item 6C of the SCAI, the average result was high as it refers to the verbal form of praise administered by staff and students, but Booker, the student participant, thinks otherwise.

Theme Five: Inconsistency

School staff members oftentimes discern the existence of effective disciplinary practices that are the basis to improving student misbehavior. The inconsistent response system to behavior modification utilized at MMS is an overall ineffective approach. In the event of student misconduct, there is to be appropriate and consistent use of consequences. MMS relies on the repetitive disciplinary practices that exclude students from the learning environment.

According to staff members, various responses occur prior to sending students out of the classroom. The most common practical response by teacher participants is verbal warnings. In student participant Booker's experience, "They first make me sit in the corner. Or they just send me to the office. Or sometimes the teachers don't take it. They just kick me out the class." Ms. McMahon states that the progressive discipline guidelines are not uniform and it is evident that all programs and interventions can be more effective with consistency all across and reviewing the plan. McMahon answers to the question about the current intervention programs being effective. "At this particular time, I would say they're medium, they're effective, and partly because, some protocols are not being followed by the staff in which we need to, revisit the school-wide positive, discipline policy so that they will be more familiar with it, but I will just say medium effective." Progressive Discipline Guidelines (PDG) are currently inconsistent all across as staff are applying responses differently and are not responding as projected on the document. As Ms. McMahon commented, "we need to make sure that our teachers follow our school-wide progressive discipline policy correctly, like it's supposed to be followed, and we need to be more consistent." As it is indicated in the SCAI, item 5A

notes that where the "school-wide discipline policy exists in writing only" correlates with item 5H that reports "when disciplining students, teachers are typically assertive yet often reactive, and give an overall inconsistent message (Students =3.3; Staff = 4.1). The entire school has a uniform plan in place with regards progressive discipline but the practice is implemented differently amongst staff members. This results in students repeating such misbehaviors due to the lack of consistency all across the school. Item 5B states that "students have to determine what each teacher expects and behavioral interventions are defined by a high level of subjectivity" (Students = 3.6; Staff = 3.1).

Ms. Fox refers expresses her thought on how ineffective the progressive discipline plan is:

> I think the Progressive Discipline Plan does not work effectively because you have some teachers that do not follow the Progressive Discipline Plan, so it overwhelms the people in the office, which makes it so it's like administrators versus teachers.

There are various reasons for the inconsistent approach to behavior modification at MMS. Ms. Fox continues by expressing the factors that hinder a progression of assistance when students are referred to supportive staff:

> The teachers that do follow the Progressive Discipline Plan still end up not getting services needed when they followed the progressive discipline approach because they are so swamped and overwhelmed, the administrators, so, I have two new teachers in my department who, when they came here, were given the Progressive Discipline Plan. They've been done … they've been doing good jobs of keeping track of calling the

parents and, and following the program. And then when it's time to send them to the office, they're sent right back to class.

Removal from the classroom. The majority of the student participants mentioned that the staff's practical response to student misbehavior is removal from the learning environment. According to MMS' PDG, suggested procedures are given at each stage level. The suggestions consist of out of the classroom or school practices such as time out to another classroom, referral to the counselor or dean, or even suspension. First of all according to student participants, Mark stated that students commonly misbehave in the following manner: "that they be like, they don't be going to class. Or they don't pay attention to the teacher or instigating and fighting." Rosa stated, "Well they talk back at the teachers, and when there's substitutes, they act up a lot." According to these expressions, each student participant continues by pinpointing the common responses administered by staff. Mark refers to his experience, "the dean didn't even give me no warning. She just sent me home, first time." Booker states his perception, "sometimes they yell, and sometimes they kick us out. Sometimes, they send me home, or they call the officer and ask him to give me a ticket." Rosa simply expresses her perception on the disciplinary actions towards student misconduct, "students get kicked out of the class."

Staff members, on the other hand, perceive the disciplinary responses differently. Mr. Steamboat responds by stating his usual reactions to the topic of study, "so, for my classroom, the disciplinary consequences, I do verbal warning. I'll do seat changes, timeout to another class, paper pickup, parent conference, referral to counselor, behavior contract. I haven't had to use anything past verbal warning, timeout to class, and parent notification yet, as of this year." Ms. Fox states, "as teachers we, most of the time, we

just try to, help out students not just on the academics but trying to also teach them how to behave in a classroom or outside with their, classmates and with the adults." Students must understand the difference between rights from wrong. For example a Ms. McMahon stated:

> I do think that the information to the students is easily understood. My general guideline for a student is, we ask you just to come to school to be a good student, and then I ask them what does it mean to them to be a good student? And anything that they don't address, I clarify for them as well. So, for the students who are really consistently in trouble with misbehavior, we, have one more one-on-one session with them to discuss how they can improve their behavior.

Ms. McMahon continues with regards how students do not demonstrate the same type of misbehaviors; therefore the level of understanding to student expectations varies from student to student. "The consequences that are used when we discipline our students, I believe the most effective are just those that we perform that are consistent as a deterrent because again, some of this, we have a large student body population, and, not all of our students get in trouble for the same thing." This is an entirely different perspective to what students had said. Ms. McMahon continues with:

> I know that they are stressing students staying in class, more instructional time, but how are they going to address the seriousness that misbehavior inside the classroom and on the campus causes to the instructional program when a teacher has to continually stop and then all that, all that has been done continues, you know, to try to be done to change the

> student's behavior and it's not working. To improve overall student behavior, I wish the district would have programs that would, come on campus. Right now, development programs are going to be cut. But it was instrumental because we have a lot of students here who are not just, misbehaving, but they have mental issues, stemming from home, and so we do need a comprehensive mental health program here, especially since our student special education population is growing.

Suggested procedures/punishments. Mania Middle School staff developed and implemented the Progressive Discipline Guidelines (PDG). These guidelines include examples of unacceptable behaviors and the consequences for noncompliance. Teacher, counselor, and administrator responsibilities are described for the purpose of students engaging in any violations of behavior. Minor behavior referrals are supposed to be followed on a progressive form that informs the administration of the teacher's approach of intervention before referring the student to the administration. The actions described in the PDG do not prevent future misbehaviors or develop self-awareness for the students. The suggested procedures and consequences do not focus on teaching or do not consist of providing the opportunity to learn from the misbehavior. Ms. Fox expresses her approach and reasoning to disciplinary concerns by saying:

> I tend to deal with students one on one regarding their behavior problems. We sit and we talk. I pull them in the hallway. I try to check up on them. I try to talk to them as an adult because they will be adults soon. I don't feel like sending them to the office is really effective that … not only because nothing really happens but also because that makes me powerless.

It's like I have to have somebody else help me discipline my students, and they pick up on that, and some kids wanna go to the office.

Ms. McMahon on the other hand considers having more severe consequences in addition to what the PDG states. She explains:

I think that the consequences need to be issued at school. I think that there do … there does need to be more severe consequences so that students will know and have an understanding because if they aren't, or if the behavior isn't corrected here, they will have more serious issues as adults because they don't think that there are any consequences for anything that they do, that everything is okay.

In reference to the PDG, the teachers' responsibilities are to utilize various approaches prior to referring student to the next stage. As Mr. Steamboat refers to the PDG.

…so, for my classroom, the disciplinary consequences, I do verbal warning. I'll do seat changes, timeout to another class, paper pickup, parent conference, referral to counselor, behavior contract. I haven't had to use anything past verbal warning, timeout to class, and parent notification yet, as of this year.

The PDG is used to manage student discipline. According to student participants, staff respond to the undesirable student behaviors through ineffective practices suggested in the PDG that are not intended to maximize instructional time for the purpose to achieve academic success.

Removal from classroom. Time-out to another classroom, class suspension, referral to the counselor or dean, school suspension, and pre-opportunity transfer are consequences within the three stages of the PDG listed that remove students from the instructional environment. These responses are not positive indicators of an effective school climate geared to build on academic achievement. The reactions are totally unsupportive for students as removal from the learning environment is suggested to resolve disciplinary issues. Students who present an immediate threat to the safety of others are those to be considered for removal other than those for minor misconduct. The suspension of a student from school is at the discretion of the school administrative staff.

Rosa a student participant, recalled the time when she was suspended from school, "Most of the time they kick you out of the class, but because they said I kicked a boy under the table, I was suspended for the day. I didn't really do nothing." Mark also shared his experience and how he perceives the common actions taken when he was in trouble, "students get sent to the dean's office. It depends if you been in trouble many a times you might just get suspended. Or first time, you might get a warning." Natalie stated, "the dean didn't even give me no warning. She just sent me home, for the first time." The overuse of out of class/school practices are performed with the belief that removing disruptive students will become a calmer learning environment where others can achieve. The practices should be geared towards preventing future problem behaviors to improve the school climate.

Summary

Staff and students are valuable to this study as they provide firsthand experience with regard to the school's disciplinary practices. In this chapter, the results presented

were based on the responses from participants' surveys and interviews. These results deliver important insights about the practices and opinions the participants provided to enhance this study. Data coding was not only executed with interview and survey information but also with the PDG document pertinent to this study such as the school's Progressive Discipline Guidelines. Utilizing all of this form of data allowed the researcher to unravel and discover commonalities and differences by sorting the data into themes and groups.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions

The previous chapters disclose how staff and students perceive the discipline system at one urban middle school. The purpose of the study is to explore differences in perceptions of students, teachers, and administrators about school discipline at one urban middle school. The intention was to identify the types of student misconduct that lead to the isolation of students from the learning environment. Dupper, Theriot, and Craun (2009) argued that out-of-school placement, such as suspension, only provides temporary relief to frustrated teachers and administrators. This study sought to discover any associations between staff and student perspectives on the topic of student disciplinary practices.

This chapter includes an overview of the research findings, which present answers to each of the research questions posed at the beginning of the study, followed by a discussion of those findings. The chapter includes recommendations for policy and practice, limitations, and the practitioner and researcher perspectives on the study.

Overview of Research Findings

This study addresses three research questions that guided the study of the current disciplinary practices at one urban middle school with a high suspension rate and looked at how the school attempted to lower that rate. The misuse of ongoing approaches that lead to recurring out-of-classroom or school placements is revealed. Research has shown that when teachers feel that they are unable to address a student's needs in the classroom, they may refer the student for academic or disciplinary services outside of the classroom (Pas, Bradshaw, Hershfeldt, & Leaf, 2010). Serious concern has been raised about

removing these students from the classroom when they already tend to struggle in school (Dickinson & Miller, 2006). Generally the intent of those who advocate for removing repeat offenders from the class/school environment is to establish a learning environment that allows non-disruptive students to achieve. However, the loss of instructional time for those students placed out of the learning environment leads to academic inefficacy and continuous disciplinary problems. Dickinson & Miller found that a school's progressive discipline plan only plays a limited role in ability to properly discipline students.

Currently students are more likely to be kicked out of the learning environment when rules are broken. This process of eliminating students is not equitable, fair, and uniform across the school. Students are subject to experience and encounter different consequences for various behaviors. MMS needs to improve in maintaining students within the learning environment instead of pushing them out. The development of behavioral intervention plans or restorative justice solutions are key concerns going into the next productive transitional phase for MMS. This will be achieved through the adoption and implementation of a consistent school-wide positive behavior support plan.

Three research questions guided this study: 1) What behavioral interventions for student misconduct are used most often in a middle school? 2) How do students, teachers, and administrators at the school perceive the progressive discipline approach? 3) What are the matches and gaps among student, teacher, and administrative attitudes among discipline approaches? Table 17 revisits the matrix of research questions and data sources, and displays the study's three research questions along with the relevant instruments that were used to answer the questions.

Table 18

Matrix of Study Questions and Instruments

Research Question	School Data	SCAI scales	Staff Interview	Student Interview	The PDG
What behavioral interventions for student misconduct are used most often in a middle school?	X		X		
How do students, teachers and administrators at the school perceive the progressive discipline approach?			X	X	X
What are the matches and gaps among student, teacher and administrative attitudes among discipline approaches?		X	X	X	

What Behavioral Interventions are Used Most Often in an Urban Middle School Setting?

At the time of the study, the urban middle school was utilizing the immediate removal of students through out-of the classroom placement or suspension. According to the school PDG, these disciplinary practices were not intended to be used in this way. They have resulted in establishing a negative identity pattern for certain students. The objective is to use fewer punitive and ineffective approaches and begin to consistently build in proactivity and clarity to the overall school's progressive discipline approach. Those repetitive and ineffective responses that impede the learning of students by placing them out of the learning environment for frivolous causes are perceived to be used at a high rate in the urban middle school setting.

The SCAI provided information about the school's implementation efforts based on survey data from eight Sub-scales but the majority of items from one Sub-scale were found to be particularly relevant for this study (Sub-Scale 5 Discipline Environment).

Students felt that in many classrooms clear expectations exist and that teachers try to maintain a positive climate. The exception is that there are occasions when teachers complain and react to the student misbehavior. Staff results indicated that when disciplining students, teachers focus on the behavior rather than the student as a person. Staff and students felt that teachers generally create a functioning society in their classrooms.

Based on the interview data, MMS has an inconsistent approach to student discipline. Student participants' voices provided an understanding that the practice of isolating students from the instructional environment exists and is a form of counterproductive intervention. If children are the concern, we must abandon harsh, inflexible approaches to discipline that fail to improve student behavior, change the way students feel about school, and challenge the sense of fairness that young people develop during their formative years (Browne-Dianis, 2011). Interview data revealed that staff normally responds to misbehavior with initial verbal warnings followed by the immediate removal from the classroom environment. Three of the five staff participants stated that student detention is very often administered as a response to student misbehavior. According to all the student interviewees, verbal warnings are given prior to any other actions, but thereafter the referral outside the classroom follows.

It is important to note that the school utilizes the Progressive Discipline Guidelines (see Appendix I), which is supposed to guide the use of disciplinary strategies. However, based on school data and staff interviews, the following are the most frequently used disciplinary interventions at the school: detention, time out, suspension, expulsion, and calling law enforcement.

The Progressive Discipline Guidelines (PDG) is structured and has a detailed list of responsibilities and actions staff members are to utilize for behavioral interventions and consequences. Staff personnel at each level are supposed to respond according to the guidelines. According to interviewees, teachers deliver multiple verbal warnings but thereafter apply out-of-the classroom referrals for misbehavior.

Staff participants stated that disruptive or misbehaving students prevent others from learning because teachers spend a lot of instructional time repeatedly reinforcing disruptive student behaviors. According to the staff interviewees, consequences for violating school rules must be made known to students and enforced consistently. Staff participants stated that there is inconsistency in the practices applied to student misbehavior. Students are subject to inconsistent consequences and outcomes for their misbehaviors. Also, when there is reasonable doubt to have students suspended from school, the purpose is defeated when the follow through at home is nonexistent.

The information gathered from staff and all data sources suggested that disciplinary removal of students from the learning environment is a common practice at MMS. As Kinsler (2011) stated, students are referred to the office when their behavior in class exceeds an acceptable level. These exclusionary practices that place students out of the learning environment are mainly due to students talking during instructional time, cursing aloud, refusal to comply with directions, hitting each other, and other forms of misbehaviors within the classroom setting. The alternative interventions in the PDG are to reduce the amount of time misbehaving students spend out of class. Schools that are unfamiliar with alternative methods react to problem behaviors through punishment in the form of office discipline referrals (Caldarella, Shatzer, Gray, Young, & Young,

2011). This method of removing students from the instructional environment only provides temporary relief.

How Do Students, Teachers, and Administrators at the School Perceive the Progressive Discipline Approach?

The middle school's objective in implementing progressive discipline is to reduce misbehavior and provide alternatives to punitive practices such as; out-of-school suspension, citations, and ticketing. The goal is for the school to implement and maintain an instructional program that has a discipline policy that is fair, firm, and consistent. A positive behavior support (PBS) approach to discipline does not place students out of the classroom and is not oblivious to the misbehavior, but it supports and guides a change in behavior positively. Consequences issued at the school site can be more effective by stressing the importance of appropriate behavior at school rather than actions such as sending them out of the instructional environment.

The progressive discipline approach, which is derived from the school district's discipline module, is geared to teach the principles of safety, responsibility, respect, and caring about others. The PDG is meant to be progressive in that consequences are to be implemented at appropriate levels based on the severity and frequency of the misconduct. However, as all student interview participants stated, a common consequence delivered is the removal of a student from the classroom environment.

According to the school's Progressive Discipline Guidelines (PDG), interviewees felt that the consequences for violating rules within stage I parameters such as non-stop talking in class, cursing, or the refusal to comply with directions, need to be enforced consistently. The tough disciplinary practices seem to not be working, according to

participants. All participants felt that a fair and uniform process across the school would be more functional. Ms. McMahon stated, "There needs to be more severe consequences so that students will know and have an understanding because if they aren't, or if the behavior isn't corrected, they will have more serious issues as adults." If opportunities for continual student engagement in learning were created, this would establish a system that values academic responsibility.

Staff participants felt that the PDG implementation process is ineffective at MMS. The deterrent that causes these practices to be ineffective is the inconsistent application by some staff members. Without a uniform application by all, the practices do not function to their full potential. The students interviewed felt that the responses by staff personnel to student misbehavior require detention time to be served, or referrals to the school dean or police officer. Students perceived that the majority of discipline is punitive. They report that there are a lot of verbal reprimands and then they are punished by removal from class and engagement of law enforcement for their misconduct, regardless of the severity of the misbehavior.

MMS students perceive school misbehavior is responded to with punishment. With PDG, staff members at MMS respond to student misbehavior with push-out practices instead of pro-active procedures geared towards preventing future problem behavior. The school must abandon such punitive responses and replace them with meaningful alternatives. A school-wide positive behavior and support approach that is research based within the field of education is needed. An approach that is built on school-wide participation and focuses on the development and implementation of

practices that prevent problem behaviors needs to be implemented to fully work towards a functional school climate.

What are the matches and gaps between student, teacher, and administrative attitudes about discipline approaches?

Staff members indicate that current progressive disciplinary practices are being utilized but the outcomes would improve by increasing the amount and quality of time teachers can spend teaching, rather than responding to behavioral disruptions. Table 18 shows the percentage of each participant group that reported frequently used behavioral responses, based on interview data. The percentages reported need to take into account the small sample size of each participant type in this study (i.e., Administrator, N=1; Teachers, N=4; Students, N=6).

Table 19

Participants' Perceptions of Frequently Used Behavioral Responses

Intervention	Admin	Teachers	Students
Detention	100%	60%	40%
Out of Classroom Referral	100%	80%	80%
Suspension	100%	0%	80%
Verbal Warning	100%	100%	100%
Contact Law Enforcement	100%	0%	60%

How Do Student and Staff Attitudes about the Eight Dimensions of School Climate Differ?

According to ASSC (2014), it was recommended to aggregate the survey items to obtain a score that corresponds to its mean. A mean that is also calculated for each dimension and an overall mean for each participant group (ASSC, 2014). Three overall levels of performance (intentional, semi-intentional, and accidental) are demonstrated by the items characterized. The items reflect the high, middle, and low levels of practice and

experience. The mean from for each dimension is ranked in descending order to determine overall strengths and weaknesses. The dimension-level data is useful to raise awareness to those areas of concern.

In order to contextualize the discussion around the analysis of the survey data, please recall that a rank and a mean were calculated for each Sub-scale and for each dimension. The mean is intended to portray the school's current status, on a scale from 1.0 (fully dysfunctional) to 5.0 (Exceptional). These means can be used to determine the school's level of success and level of failure on each Sub-scale and/or dimension. The rank was calculated to determine the areas of strength or weakness on Sub-scales and/or dimensions, in relation to one another. In regards to the order of rankings, 1 is the highest and indicates the greatest area of strength; each sequential rank is lower in strength that the previous.

In the analysis of the SCAI survey data it was determined that no difference in rank was reported between staff and students on Sub-scale 6. Sub-scales 2 and 4 were only answered by staff participants and therefor no difference could exist in the data. The Sub-scales were ranked in order of importance based on their calculated means, for each participant group, respectively. Sub-scale 6 was ranked 1st, indicating that it is perceived as the most advanced or effectively implemented of the Sub-scales, between both students and staff, however, there was a slight difference in the means reported: Staff mean was calculated at 3.3 while the student mean was 3.4. Both of these means are higher than the whole school climate score and each participant groups whole school climate score, respectively. This indicates that the staff and students' perceptions of Learning/Assessment (Sub-scale 6) are similar to each other. It also indicates that, while

there is a slight difference in their mean scores, both groups identify Learning/Assessment as strength among the Sub-scales in the SCAI, as relates to MMS.

Sub-scale 5 (Discipline Environment) is reported as ranking differently in Table 19. However, if you take into account the fact that students did not have access to rank Sub-scale 2, which the staff ranked 2nd; then the two groups in essence ranked Sub-scale 5 in the same order of importance. This is further supported by the reported means from each group in Sub-scale 5 (Staff mean = 3.2; Student mean = 3.2). Also, both reported means are above the whole school climate score, 3.09; as previously discussed in Chapter 4. Mean scores that fall into the median range on the scale of one to five, fall into the transitional descriptive range which indicates that the school may have inconsistent or emergent practices as relates to this Sub-scale. As relates to the SCAI, students and staff reported identical numerically calculated perceptions of the Discipline Environment (Sub-scale 5). While their contextual understanding and expression of this issue may differ (see qualitative data, analysis, and discussion), the two participant groups are in agreement on the status and ranking of sub-scale 5.

There are differences in rank between staff and students on all other Sub-scales because the means calculated based on participant responses indicate differences in perception. See Table 19 for differences in rank and mean between students and staff on each Sub-scale. These differences indicate that students and staff have different interpretations about how the school is currently performing on each item. The largest discrepancy between student and staff scores is in the data for Sub-scale 7 (Attitude and Culture). The staff perceives the attitudes toward the school and the school culture more poorly than do the students. The second largest difference is in Sub-scale 8 (Community

Relations) indicating that staff and students have differing opinions on MMS's status as relates to community relations. The staff reported a mean score that was below the whole school climate score which indicates that they have a low or negative perception of the items associated with that Sub-scale. Students reported a mean score that was above the whole school climate score, yet still fell into the transitional or emergent range, indicating that they too have some concerns about community relations at MMS. Differences in the scale potentially relate to the differences in perspective and life experience among staff and students as well as what is prioritized by each group, respectively. Sub-scale 1 (Physical Appearance) has a mean difference of 0.3 and Sub-scale (Student Interactions) has a mean difference of only 0.1.

Table 20

Staff (n=19) and Student (n=47) Mean Score and Rank for Each Sub-scale

Sub-scale	Staff Mean	Staff Rank	Student Mean	Student Rank
Sub-scale 1: Physical Appearance	3.2	3rd	2.9	5th
Sub-scale 2: Faculty Relations*	3.3	2nd	N/A	N/A
Sub-scale 3: Student Interactions	2.7	7th	2.8	6th
Sub-scale 4: Leadership/Decisions*	3.1	5th	N/A	N/A
Sub-scale 5: Discipline Environment	3.2	4th	3.2	3rd
Sub-scale 6: Learning/Assessment	3.3	1st	3.4	1st
Sub-scale 7: Attitude and Culture	2.7	8th	3.1	4th
Sub-scale 8: Community Relations	2.9	6th	3.2	2nd

*Sub-scales 2 and 4 were only completed by staff

Discussion: Consistency and the Progressive Discipline Guidelines

The Progressive Discipline Guidelines call for a consistent approach to the implementation of consequences for misconduct. Consistency refers to the ongoing

practices and responses to school discipline that maximize effective management strategies to create an environment conducive to learning and to prevent misconduct. Consistency also means having a strong discipline code that teaches students proper behavior and allows teachers to teach and students to learn by implementing the rules, along with the policies and procedures. The purpose of a consistent approach is to utilize positive interventions and other means to correct behavior, rather than out of the classroom placement or suspension to resolve disciplinary issues.

Response to Student Misbehaviors

Part of the consistency approach is to respond to student misbehaviors with the appropriate use of consequences so that students reduce inappropriate behavior. Removing students from the classroom or school does not teach them to improve their behavior. All students are expected to learn and follow all school and classroom rules and to demonstrate appropriate social skills when interacting with both adult and peers. Current approaches do not teach students to be more responsible and self-disciplined and need to be reexamined.

Student Expectations

Mania Middle School is required to have a proactive discipline plan that is congruent with the district policy. Inclusive intervention approaches must be accountable to federal legislation, as schools are required to use research-based and effective interventions. Depending on the severity of the misconduct, some actions may require immediate removal of the student from the setting, while others will require other intervention approaches. The district mandates that all schools are to be committed to providing, developing, maintaining, and implementing a comprehensive student

discipline policy. The discipline policy application should not be discriminatory, arbitrary, or capricious, and it will follow the general principles of due process. School personnel must then follow and apply all necessary practices consistently in order for students to be responsible and adhere to all school rules. This also applies to the discipline of students with special needs as determined by the provisions of the IDEA. Behavioral expectations must be consistently taught and modeled. The school will respond accordingly to student disobedience for students of special needs.

Student Voices in the Discipline Process

Students may very well have ideas and insights that adults do not know, and that could be helpful in improving schools if adults are willing to listen (Noguera, 2007). When the voices of students are routinely unsolicited or ignored amid reform planning and implementation, the directions assumed by teachers and administrators can be misguided, particularly when their efforts directly clash with students' own concerns (Lee, 1999). An important goal of using student voices as a research and evaluation tool is to challenge educators about their assumptions and understandings of low-performing students (Lee, 1999). Student voices can be powerful to hear at times instead of policy makers. In this study noticeable themes were derived from listening to students.

Effective vs. Ineffective Disciplinary Approach

In recent years school districts have begun to eliminate the use of out-of-school suspensions for tardiness, truancy, or subjective conduct such as disrespect of authority (Browne-Dianis, 2011). An effective disciplinary approach is one that consists of providing time to teach new strategies for solving complex problems and time for student reflection. Browne-Dianis (2011) stated that success will necessarily involve replacing

old behaviors with new ones and recognizing that those new behaviors achieve something more worthwhile and satisfying to the student. With this approach positive alternatives will enable teachers to have the disciplinary resources within proximity in order to enforce a certain standard of conduct.

Research shows that reactive approaches such as zero tolerance policies, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion have limited effectiveness and tend to hurt students by labeling them and creating out-of-school idle time, which can create an atmosphere conducive to at-risk or illegal behavior, causing students to fall further behind academically (Zaslaw, 2010). Positive Behavior Support (PBS) is implemented to establish and teach behavioral expectations for students.

Research indicates that PBS is a process that hinders the use of punitive disciplinary practices. The goals are to maximize the amount of time students are academically engaged in the classroom, create a safe and positive school climate, and hold students accountable, using alternatives other than suspension. The focus is on teaching and learning and their effects on student engagement and behavior. For example, in the classroom setting, teachers can develop lesson plans that engage students and promote positive interactions, implement a token economy or other tangible reward system to externally motivate students, have students engage in reflective practices after misbehaviors, and provide safe, nurturing instructional settings where it is safe to take academic risks.

As a campus, schools can implement many alternatives to suspension such as: hold recognition assemblies to place greater emphasis on and reinforce positive behaviors, adopt social skills curriculums and dedicate time to implementing them, plan

student centered activities and field trips to promote school pride and create positive social environments, employ counselors trained in conflict resolution, restorative justice, and applied behavior analysis. These types of changes provide school-wide systems of support that include proactive strategies for defining teaching, and supporting appropriate student behaviors to create a positive school environment.

In addition to the use of positive behavior supports to minimize misbehaviors, progressive discipline, when implemented with fidelity, is an escalating series of disciplinary measures or responses that ensure students encounter fair and appropriate consequences for their patterns of misbehavior. Responses to student behaviors are guided by the progressive discipline plan and are designed to appropriately address misbehaviors without being overly harsh or punitive. These plans are progressive in nature, such that repeated and/or severe behaviors encounter greater disciplinary responses than single or minor offenses. It evolves around the schools' clear disciplinary expectations, rules and policies. It is geared to recognize and treat inappropriate behavior, not only as a discipline issue, but also as an opportunity for teaching and learning.

The school currently has an ineffective approach to student discipline. Out of the classroom placement or suspension should be used only when other methods of correction have failed. School stakeholders should revise their particular policies to reduce suspensions and offer meaningful alternatives for disruptive students. Students seem to be lacking motivation, as there are currently few alternatives to out of the learning environment or suspension placement. Students are not being supported with learning the skills necessary to function in the school prior to being put out. This way of

dealing with misbehavior has caused the survey Sub-scale on student interactions to receive a lower rating by both students and staff. This is the negative educational outcome that transpires from the inconsistent positive implementation approach.

Implications

In this study, respondents included teachers, administrators, and students. A total of 19 staff members and 47 students completed the school climate survey for this study. Based on the perceptions of staff and students, current disciplinary practices are not effective in minimizing misconduct. The practices used should be preventive rather than punishing. Punishments alienate students who need to remain in school. The emphasis should be on developing those skills that will develop students into lifelong learners.

Implications for Policy

The zero tolerance policy required predetermined, nonnegotiable punishments for all acts of misbehavior. As Essex (2001) stated, many school districts implemented the practices to this policy in an effort to reduce school violence. It then became clear that this discipline philosophy was creating uncaring learning environments in which students were struggling to thrive. The types of punishment under this policy did not address the problems underlying the behavior. The immediate removal of students by means of out-of-school suspension or expulsion was considered justifiable and necessary for those students who pose a danger to others (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009). Then the mandates of No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2002) forced school districts to develop strategies and interventions that should result in instruction and guidance to provide the opportunity to cause change in behavior. This of course caused a change in the classroom environment and the way teachers interact with students. Alternatives to zero

tolerance need to include strategies to teach, model, and reinforce appropriate behaviors. This should occur in collaboration with the various school stakeholders to provide the support for students to address the root causes of such behaviors.

Implications for Practice

This study investigated current disciplinary approaches and practices in a middle school setting along with its corresponding school-wide behavioral support guidelines. It was imperative to analyze the main document that is referred to by staff participants. The survey data from this study revealed the strengths and weaknesses within the school setting. Participant interviews allowed gaining further insights to the practices that occur on a daily basis. With these results a discussion with regards to current disciplinary trends and recommendations for the school was formulated.

For the school to improve during this reformation process and on an ongoing basis, it is critical to find the learning strategies to actively engage all students so they take the responsibility to improve. Teachers clearly play a pivotal role in the disciplinary chain of improvement that occurs in public schools (Dupper, Theriot, & Craun, 2009). All stakeholders within the school site must understand school district policy and practice and build awareness by becoming involved. This includes parents and community members as part of the collaborative approach to make decisions in this reform process. Disruptive students must be offered meaningful alternatives to meet behavioral needs. In order for MMS to reduce current ineffective disciplinary practices, the need to find and use other alternatives is crucial. The disciplinary removal of students is not an appropriate response as it inhibits the appropriate pro-social behavior (Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles, 2006). The reformation process for this school site will require replacing

current ineffective responses to student discipline with new alternatives in order to achieve success with opportunities more worthwhile and satisfying to students.

What Improvements are Still Needed to the PDG?

Reinforcing appropriate student behavior, providing corrective feedback to students, and re-teaching of positive behavioral skill when misconducts occur are all elements which need to be put further into practice to avoid additional significant challenges to the academic environment or students' access to instruction. According to the PDG document, prior to referring a student, or applying any disciplinary measure(s), students are given warnings and punishments that continue to deter their access to learning and may impede academic success. The PDG, in this current state, falls short on its intention to maximize the amount of time students are academically engaged in the classroom by continually allowing responses to student misconduct which reduce access to instruction in the classroom (i.e., Stage I - suggested procedures numbers 3, 8, and 9). The PDG should first require responses which support the learning of skills necessary to function in the school environment, allow students to remain in the classroom, and reduce further negative behavior. Consequences should be listed in priority order and be consistent, reasonable, fair, age appropriate, and should match the severity of the student's misbehavior. Refining and implementing a culture of discipline conducive to learning has yet to be accomplished at MMS and based on the collection of data presented herein, the PDG is not enough, in and of itself, to accomplish this. This type of cultural shift requires positive behavior supports and interventions as the primary basis for change. The PDG does not incorporate these in a manner which will support students in making positive choices and changes.

PDG is not an evidence based approach to positive behavior support and lacks fidelity of implementation. Its practice does not consist of understanding the root of the misbehavior and other student factors in order to respond in a manner that will improve the social, emotional, and academic well-being of all students. PDG consists of counterproductive interventions that are not research based and are forms of punishment. MMS needs to rethink their disciplinary practices to strive to achieve a learning environment where teachers can teach and students can learn. Exploring alternative approaches to out-of-classroom practices such as; teaching and reinforcing students' prosocial skills; having behavioral accountability systems that motivate students to demonstrate appropriate behaviors; and student, staff, and school consistency are all part to bolstering and improving the school climate. Proactive interventions will strengthen student and staff interactions.

Practitioner's Perspective

The impetus for this research stemmed from my experience as a middle school counselor who observed the issuance of multiple out-of-school suspensions of students who were not given the opportunity to learn from their behavior or the delivery of a fair trial for their disciplinary misconduct. Under the direction of a school administrator or dean, I must fulfill the request to remove the student from the classroom or the school. Such suspensions were issued repeatedly without any attempted progressive action that would produce a change in behavior.

Students are suspended at a rate that keeps them out of school. Children who are suspended and expelled are at greater risk of dropping out (Brownstein, 2010). This has an effect on overall student achievement. Students who are repeatedly suspended, or who

are expelled, are likely to fall behind their peers academically, paving the way to their eventual dropout (Brownstein, 2010). Striving to establish a positive behavioral environment that will enhance the overall student attendance and achievement is needed.

Mania Middle School stakeholders are inclined to make changes and establish a positive school climate. The school has been in the process of making efforts to reform the disciplinary practices using positive behavior supports. By doing so, in the last few years the suspension rate has been decreasing as the school district has been mandating a decrease of suspensions through the use of appropriate application of positive behavior support interventions. Data suggest that when school-wide PBS is implemented in schools, discipline problems are typically reduced (Caldarella, Shatzer, Gray, Young, & Young, 2011).

In this study noticeable commonalities and differences in the perceptions between staff and students were unraveled. For example, as discussed previously, both students and staff perceived Sub-scale 6 (Learning/Assessment) of the SCAI as the strongest area at MMS; both groups indicated that verbal warnings and reprimands are commonly used disciplinary responses; and out of the classroom referrals were overused. In contrast, some differences were that students felt that they were too often referred to law enforcement while staff did not mention this at all.

The analysis of the survey and interview data shows how the perspectives about school experiences can be used to strengthen disciplinary efforts. The most significant commonality that emerged between staff and students from MMS was the recurring theme of inconsistent approaches to student discipline mentioned by both groups. The school culture at MMS is inconsistent and ineffective with the current disciplinary

practices that make it possible for students to interact negatively. Intervention programs that were at a time supportive are now absent or inconsistently implemented at the school. The low mean scores in the Student/Staff Dimension Spectrum for Student Interactions may be a result of this lack of supportive interventions. Browne-Dianis (2011) stated that a school climate survey approach is a sensible first step to revising discipline codes.

Based on the interviews, MMS has an unreliable approach to behavior modification and consistently channels students out of the classroom and school placement. Transferring a student out with no learning involved in the process does not help a student change his behavior. It is an unrealistic expectation that a disruptive student will change a behavior after being removed. It is a counterproductive practice to an effective school discipline approach. Some students see out-of-school suspension as a vacation (Zaslaw, 2010). This also applies to students with learning disabilities as they are inappropriately placed out of the learning environment with no consideration to the nature of their disability. According to Krezmien, Leone, & Achilles (2006) the behaviors are poorly managed by schools, or the behaviors' association with the disability is not considered, when determining disciplinary consequences. Krezmien et al., (2006) recommend that special educators must be involved in the development of school disciplinary policies.

Researcher's Perspective

Over the past decade, many school districts have enacted harsh disciplinary consequences such as suspensions, expulsions, alternative schools, and referrals to law enforcement for a broad array of student actions (Brownstein, 2010). Most student

outcomes that result in suspension are for noncompliance or disrespect, and the fewest are for behaviors that threaten safety. Disciplinary exclusion should be reserved for students who present a clear threat to safety to other members of the learning environment. Rather than employing rigid disciplinary actions, schools have an opportunity to develop plans to promote positive behaviors in schools, identify problem behaviors early, and intervene using effective approaches (Bruns, Moore, Stephan, Pruitt, & Weist, 2005). Exclusionary discipline policies are based on the assumption that the removal of disruptive students will result in a safer climate for others (Brownstein, 2010).

School responses to students' challenging behavior within the learning environment is varied but often involves excluding the student from their learning in some way (Michail, 2011). The current disciplinary practices, which are punishment based, are unnecessary as they are not pivotal to reducing misconduct. Most disciplinary rules are unnecessary because the key to minimizing misconduct is prevention, not punishment. Punishments come in many forms. Some are overt and obvious, such as picking up trash, names on the board, detentions, being sent to the office, angry outbursts, having to sit alone, calls home, and losing class points. Some punishments are much more subtle: lectures, instilling guilt, public shaming, overt disappointment, being critical of student work after the students have misbehaved, lowering the expectations, and so on. Punishment may stop unwanted behavior in the short term, which contributes to the illusion that it works, but no lesson is linked to the problem behavior and so it will not lead to learning or behavior change. Students are often acculturating into a crime and punishment pattern of thinking about their choices and actions; a place where the

expectations are lowered and students are threatened with poor grades or calls home, and awards are only given to the top students in an effort to motivate the rest.

Recommendations

Students will always need socialization instruction and correction that shapes their interpersonal skills. This will allow them to interact successfully in school and beyond. Based on the data derived from this research study the research questions were addressed, along with the recommended ideas of school-wide, policy changes and improvements to the practice. The practice of removing troublemakers in order to improve the school has proven to be unsuccessful. Therefore school stakeholders must configure alternatives to the removal of students from the learning environment. Staff needs professional development aimed at improving student outcomes. A reform and a revision approach are needed with an effective manner involving all stakeholders. Representatives from each of the student groups, such as special educators, must be involved in the development of school disciplinary policies.

Currently at Mania Middle School the student behavior expectations are unclear and inconsistent. The lack of structure is partially due to the funding restrictions that impede access to adequate services and resources. In order to meet the needs of the school community and improve the behavior and discipline associated with MMS, many changes need to be made. The first step is for MMS to conduct a comprehensive self-assessment of the school's current performance in the areas of behavior and discipline. Based on the findings of their self-assessment, Mania Middle School needs to develop a research-based, school-wide positive behavior support plan (SWPBSP) and an implementation guide. In addition to education research, MMS should consider research

on urban education, community development and planning, juvenile justice, behavior theory, positive inquiry, organizational theory, and adolescent identity formation to guide the construction of the new SWPBSP. The implementation guide should serve as an easy to use reference tool that teachers, administrators, and other stakeholders can refer to quickly to increase the fidelity of implementation of this new plan. Some of the other things that the school needs to implement are listed here.

- Identify the need for prevention programs and activities (i.e., gang involvement, drop out danger, etc.) and develop partnerships to support these needs
- Identify and develop areas in need of intervention (i.e., attendance and truancy, use of illegal drugs, etc.) and develop a sustainable plan for meeting these needs
- Analyze data, monitor, and evaluate school and classroom practices in order to address areas of weakness in the school's plan and implementation
- Develop campus-based procedural steps to assist with choices and options when addressing individual student misconduct (similar to the PDG). These choices and options need to be rooted in research and ensure student learning takes place
- Ensure that administrative staff in charge of discipline participate in mandatory district training geared towards adopting and implementing alternatives to suspension
- Establish and maintain relationships with outside community partners; collaborating and partnering with after-school programs and outside agencies
- A proactive alignment of instructional supports with behavioral supports
- Develop and coordinate training for parents, behavior seminars for students, and professional development for all employees in the area of school-wide positive

behavior support that includes ongoing classroom management workshops and training to capacitate classroom staff in meeting the challenge of fully educating students including the teaching and modeling of appropriate behaviors.

- Ongoing updates by the district with regards current state and federal laws and regulations as well as Board mandates regarding student discipline, and developing student discipline policies and procedures that ensure district compliance with due process and fair hearing requirements for suspensions and expulsions
- Utilize effective classroom management strategies to create an environment conducive to learning and prevent misconduct
- Ensure appropriate data collection, monitoring, and evaluation systems to make information available to all authorized staff to effectively communicate, monitor student behavior, provide data-driven interventions, and develop solutions
- Provide for effective intervention where: a) at-risk students are identified; b) strategies for coordination and implementation of programs and resources are developed; c) resources are suitable for student needs; d) appropriate consequences are utilized

Students need to be taught that:

- The expectation is to learn and follow all school and classroom rules and to demonstrate appropriate social skills when interacting with both adults and peers. Also, to work to improve behavior through an acknowledgement system devoted to increase the number of positive interactions that all school staff have

- Positive behavior will be commended during semester assemblies by the staff's acknowledgement team for: a) perfect attendance; b) honor roll; c) most improved; d) leadership; e) field trips; f) special recognitions

Parents and Community Stakeholders can assist by:

- Establishing an active role in supporting the school's efforts to maintain a welcoming school climate supporting the implementation of the school-wide positive behavior support and discipline plan
- Participating in the available training provided by the school with regards school disciplinary policies
- Encouraging and welcoming the development of reinforcements for appropriate student behavior and recognition of safe school environments by: a) reviewing all school rules with their children; b) reinforcing positive behavior; c) acknowledging their children for demonstrating appropriate conduct

School-wide Recommendations

Part of the recommended decision-making approach for the urban middle school site is for the student voice to be considered as students may have important ideas and insights that adults are not privy to, and that could prove to be very helpful to improving schools if adults were willing to listen (Noguera, 2007). The ongoing collection of school data that can be used to further study is always beneficial. This will allow for analyzing of student discipline data to uncover inequities.

The school must step back from punitive practices as a response for stage I misbehavior. Also, the school must lessen police involvement in student disciplinary cases, such as ticketing and arrests for offenses like such as profanity, fighting,

vandalism, and graffiti that pose no immediate and serious threat to others. The school should invest in more counselors and support staff rather than law enforcement. MMS should utilize the community for educational counseling and other services to help address academic struggles, including mental health providers, prevention, and post suspension administration. Practical strategies for creating cause-and-effect thinking, more responsible behavior, and the development of functional social bonds offer a path toward a system that works rather than resorting to the use of punishments and bribes.

Implementing effective disciplinary responses to student misbehavior is a first step for the middle school site. Flexibility when applying disciplinary policies must be considered. It is not necessarily for the student to be left off the hook, instead the school should support the change in behavior needed for the student function appropriately in the learning environment. If there is reason for a student to be placed out of the school, the school must ensure that the student will to continue to receive education when suspended.

Recommendations for Future Research

In this study a mixed methods research approach was employed at the selected school, which included qualitative approaches using interviews with staff and students and a quantitative survey approach. The study found that the type of offenses for which students were isolated from the school or the learning environment included disruption, fighting, and inappropriate behavior. In order to create a positive school environment, school staff training and guidance for handling behavioral problems in a consistent manner must be provided. The findings of this study suggest studying other middle schools that have been proven successful in a similar demographic area.

Limitations of the Study

For this study, several of the proposed ideas for data gathering did not take place due to the limitations the school district insisted upon along with the number of times allowed to interact with selected student participants. Initially three student interviews were proposed to take place for each student but due to the notion of cutting into instructional time, one interview per student was granted by the school principal during the non-instructional period of advisory. The school site was the only place that was allowed for the interview of the student participants and this was restricted to 20 minutes segments of time during the school advisory period only. Time was allocated specifically to perform one good interview with students per day.

Another limitation was the availability of school counselors who mainly deal with all disciplinary concerns. Two counselors reside within the school site but were unable to participate in any of the interviews for unknown reasons. The police officer on site was also unavailable for questioning and participation throughout the time of the study at the site. The information gathered from the teachers and the administrator who did participate nevertheless did provide an adequate basis to contrast staff and student perceptions.

Conclusion

This study focuses on the perception about school discipline and climate at an urban middle school. Using intervention and prevention strategies such as support staff, conflict resolution, or restorative justice are effective ways the school could move away from exclusionary practices. The school must rethink methods of disciplining and use evidence-based interventions.

At the time of this study, the school district in which the data were collected was being urged by school police to end all ticketing and arrests for offenses that posed no immediate and/or serious threat to others, such as fighting, profanity, petty theft, possession of tobacco and less serious drugs, vandalism, and graffiti. Instead of referring students to law officials, other positive alternatives were being suggested such as referral to city youth centers for educational counseling and referral to other services to help address students' academic struggles. The intention was to lessen the police presence in schools. The district mandates for these actions are intended to decrease the police presence through the use of the appropriate application of positive behavior support programs. Research indicates that effective and positive support services that encompass the social, cultural, and academic needs of all students, improve overall student achievement.

These punitive disciplinary practices, which remove the students from the classroom and school, deliver citations and/or tickets for school-based offenses, and can result in at-school arrests for behavior that might not be a crime elsewhere, need to be dismantled. Schools, such as the one in this study, must take a step back from punitive disciplinary practices and look toward ways to promote positive behavior and keep students in school. At the time of this study, a community campaign evolved that urged the school district and school police to end all citing and arrests for student offenses that pose no serious threat to the learning environment such as: fighting, profanity, petty theft, possession of tobacco and less serious drugs, vandalism, and graffiti.

REFERENCES

Ahearn, E. M., & National Association of State Directors of Special Education, A. A. (1994). Discipline and students with disabilities: An analysis of state policies. Final Report. Project FORUM.

Allen, J., R. Weissberg, and J. Hawkins (1989). The relation between values and social competence in early adolescence. *Developmental Psychology, 25*, 458-464.

Alliance for the Study of School Climate (2014). *Sub-scales of the school climate assessment instrument.* Los Angeles, CA: Author. http://web.calstatela.edu/centers/schoolclimate/assessment/

American Psychological Association (1993). *Violence and youth: Psychology's response* (Vol. 1). Washington, D.C.: Author.

American Psychological Association Zero Tolerance Task Force (2008). Are zero tolerance policies effective in the schools? An evidentiary review and recommendations. *American Psychologist, 63*(9), 852-862.

Anderson, G. L., Herr, K. G., & Nihlen, A. (2007). *Studying your own school: An educator's guide to practitioner action research* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Astor, R., Guerra, N., & Van Acker, R. (2010). How can we improve school safety research? *Educational Researcher, 39*(1), 69-78.

Bear, G. (2010). Discipline: Effective school practices. Helping Children at Home and School. *National Association of School Psychologists*, 1-4. http://www.nasponline.org

Blick, D.W., & Test, D.W. (1987). Effects of self-recording on high-school students' on task behavior. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 10*, 203-213.

Bogdan, R. C., & Biklen, S. (1998). *Qualitative research in education. An introduction to theory and methods* (3rd ed.). http://eric.ed.gov

Borum, R., Cornell, D. G., Modzeleski, W., & Jimerson, S. R. (2010). What can be done about school shootings? A review of the evidence. *Educational Researcher, 39*(1), 27-37.

Brady, E., & Guerin, S. (2010). "Not the romantic, all happy, coochy coo experience": A qualitative analysis of interactions on an Irish parenting web site. *Family Relations, 59*(1), 14-27.

Brown-Jeffy, S., & Cooper, J. E. (2011). Toward a conceptual framework of culturally relevant pedagogy: An overview of the conceptual and theoretical literature. *Teacher Education Quarterly, 38*(1), 65-84.

Browne-Dianis, J. (2011). Stepping Back from Zero Tolerance. *Educational Leadership*, *69*(1), 24-28.

Brownstein, R. (2010). Pushed out. *Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed for Quick Review, 75*(7), 23-27.

Bruns, E. J., Moore, E., Stephan, S., Pruitt, D., & Weist, M. D. (2005). The impact of school mental health services on out-of-school suspension rates. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, *34*(1), 23.

Butterfield, D. D., Muse, I. D., Anderson, L., & Brigham Young Univ., P. T. (1996). Patterns of discipline: A contrast between rural and urban junior high schools. http://eric.ed.gov

Caldarella, P., Shatzer, R. H., Gray, K. M., Young, K., & Young, E. L. (2011). The effects of school-wide positive behavior support on middle school climate and student outcomes. *RMLE Online: Research in Middle Level Education*, *35*(4), 1-14. http://eric.ed.gov

Casteel, C. A. (1997). Attitudes of African American and Caucasian eighth grade students about praises, rewards, and punishments. *Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, 31*(4), 262-72.

Christie, C., Nelson, C., & Jolivette, K. (2004). School characteristics related to the use of suspension. *Education & Treatment of Children, 27*(4), 509-526.

Conchas, G. Q., & Vigil, J. (2010). Multiple marginality and urban education: Community and school socialization among low-income Mexican-descent youth. *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk (JESPAR), 15*(1-2), 51-65.

Cook, C. R., Crews, S., Wright, D., Mayer, G., Gale, B., Kraemer, B., & Gresham, F. M. (2007). Establishing and evaluating the substantive adequacy of positive behavioral support plans. *Journal of Behavioral Education, 16*(3), 191-206.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J.W. (2006). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches [with CD-ROM* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Miller, D. L. (2000). Determining validity in qualitative inquiry. *Theory into Practice, 39*(3), 124-30.

Dayton, J. (2000). Discipline procedures for students with disabilities. *Clearing House*, *73*(3), 153-56

Decker, S. H., & Department of Justice, W. n. (2000). Increasing school safety through juvenile accountability programs. Juvenile Accountability Incentive Block Grants (JAIBG) Program Bulletin.

Delaware State Dept. of Education, D. r. (2000). *Notice of procedural safeguards: Special education rights of parents and children under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part B*.

Devine, J. (1996). *Maximum security: The culture of violence in inner-city schools*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Dickinson, M. C., & Miller, T. L. (2006). Issues regarding in-school suspensions and high school students with disabilities. *American Secondary Education, 35*(1), 72-83.

Di Lullo, L. (2004). Appropriate conduct. *Principal Leadership, 4*(5), 27-29.

Dupper, D. R., Theriot, M. T., & Craun, S. W. (2009). Reducing out-of-school suspensions: Practice guidelines for school social workers. *Children & Schools, 31*(1), 6-14.

Essex, N. L. (2001). The limits of zero-tolerance. *Principal Leadership (Middle School Edition), 1*(8), 5–7.

Evertson, C. M., & Weinstein, C. S. (2006). *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Fenning, P., & Rose, J. (2007). Overrepresentation of African American students in exclusionary discipline: The role of school policy. *Urban Education, 42*, 536–559.

Flannery, K., Frank, J. L., & Kato, M. (2012). School disciplinary responses to truancy: Current practice and future directions. *Journal of School Violence*, *11*(2), 118-137.

Glogowska, M., Young, P., & Lockyer, L. (2011). Propriety, process and purpose: Considerations of the use of the telephone interview method in an educational research study. *Higher Education: The International Journal of Higher Education and Educational Planning, 62*(1), 17-26.

Goss v. Lopez, 419 U.S. 565 (1975).

Greene, R. W. (2011). Collaborative problem solving can transform school discipline. *Phi Delta Kappan, 93*(2), 25-28.

Gregory, A., Cornell, D., Fan, X., Sheras, P., Shih, T., & Huang, F. (2010). Authoritative school discipline: High school practices associated with lower bullying and victimization. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 102*(2), 483-496.

Gregory, A., Skiba, R. J., & Noguera, P. A. (2010). The achievement gap and the discipline gap: Two sides of the same coin? *Educational Researcher, 39*(1), 59-68.

Gut, E., & McLaughlin, J. M. (2012). Alternative education's impact on office disciplinary referrals. Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, *Issues and Ideas, 85*(6), 231-236.

Hanson, W. E., Creswell, J. W., Clark, V., Petska, K. S., & Creswell, D. J. (2005). Mixed methods research designs in counseling psychology. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 52*(2), 224-235.

Heitzeg, N. A. (2009). Education or incarceration: Zero tolerance policies and the school to prison pipeline. *Forum on Public Policy Online*, 2009(2). http://eric.ed.gov

Heitzeg, Nancy A. (2010). Education or incarceration: Zero tolerance policies and the school to prison pipeline. *Forum on Public Policy*, 2010(5), 1-2. ABI/INFORM Global. http://eric.ed.gov

Henley, P., Fuston, J., Peters, T., & Wall, L. (2000). Rescuing the troublemakers. *Principal, 79*(4), 33-34,36.

Horner, R. H., Sugai, G., Smolkowski, K., Eber, L., Nakasato, J., Todd, A. W., & Esperanza, J. (2009). A randomized, wait-list controlled effectiveness trial assessing school-wide positive behavior support in elementary schools. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 11*(3), 133-144.

Irvin, L. K., Horner, R. H., Ingram, K., Todd, A. W., Sugai, G., Sampson, N., & Boland, J. B. (2006). Using office discipline referral data for decision making about student behavior in elementary and middle schools: An empirical evaluation of validity. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 8*(1), 10-23.

Irvin, L. K., Tobin, T. J., Sprague, J. R., Sugai, G., & Vincent, C. G. (2004). Validity of office discipline referral measures as indices of school-wide behavioral status and effects of school-wide behavioral interventions. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 6*(3), 131-147.

Jones, S., Fisher, C. J., Greene, B. Z., Hertz, M. F., & Pritzl, J. (2007). Healthy and safe school environment, part I: Results from the school health policies and programs study 2006. *Journal of School Health*, 77(8), 522-543.

Karadag, E. (2011). Instruments used in doctoral dissertations in educational sciences in Turkey: Quality of research and analytical errors. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice, 11*(1), 330-334.

Karathanos, K. A. (2010). Teaching English language learner students in US mainstream schools: Intersections of language, pedagogy, and power. *International Journal of Inclusive Education, 14*(1), 49-65.

Kennedy, B. L. (2011). The importance of student and teacher interactions for disaffected middle school students: A grounded theory study of community day schools. *Urban Education, 46*(1), 4-33.

Kinsler, J. (2011). Understanding the Black-White school discipline gap. *Economics of Education Review, 30*(6), 1370-1383.

Kohn, A., & Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, A. A. (2001). *Beyond discipline: From compliance to community*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Krezmien, M. P., Leone, P. E., & Achilles, G. M. (2006). Suspension, race, and disability: Analysis of statewide practices and reporting. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 14*(4), 217-226.

Lashley, C., & Tate, A. S. (2009). A framework for educative, equitable, and empowering disciplinary practice. *Journal of Special Education Leadership, 22*(1), 24-35.

Lee, P. W. (1999). In their own voices: An ethnographic study of low-achieving students within the context of school reform. *Urban Education*, *34*(2), 214-44.

Leech, N. L., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2011). Beyond constant comparison qualitative data analysis: Using NVivo. *School Psychology Quarterly, 26*(1), 70-84.

Ma, H.H. (2006). An alternative method for quantitative synthesis of single-subject researches. *Behavior Modification, 30*, 598-617.

Manning, M., & Bucher, K. T. (2005). Classroom management for middle and secondary schools. *Clearing House, 79*(1), 5-6.

Marshall, M. (2005). Discipline without stress, punishments, or rewards. *Clearing House, 79*(1), 51-54.

Martinez, S. (2009). A system gone berserk: How are zero-tolerance policies really affecting schools? *Preventing School Failure*, *53*(3), 153-158.

Mayer, M. J., & Furlong, M. J. (2010). How safe are our schools? *Educational Researcher, 39*(1), 16-26.

McCarthy, M., & Soodak, L. C. (2007). The politics of discipline: Balancing school safety and rights of students with disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 73*(4), 456-474.

McMillan, James H. 2008. *Educational Research: Fundamentals for the Consumer. Fifth Edition*. 2008. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon

Meisel, J. S. (2008). The ethics of observing: Confronting the harm of experiential learning. *Teaching Sociology, 36*(3), 196-210.

Mendez, L., & Knoff, H. M. (2003). Who gets suspended from school and why: A demographic analysis of schools and disciplinary infractions in a large school district. *Education and Treatment Of Children*, *26*(1), 30-51.

Michail, S. (2011). Understanding school responses to students' challenging behaviour: A review of literature. *Improving Schools*, *14*(2), 156-171.

Michigan State Dept. of Education, L. s. (2000). *Special education considerations in student discipline procedures*.

Mirsky, L. (2007). SaferSanerSchools: Transforming school cultures with restorative practices. *Reclaiming Children and Youth: The Journal of Strength-based Interventions, 16*(2), 5-12.

Myers, J. (2009). Managing discipline now. *Principal Leadership, 10*(2), 50-54.

Nathanson, I. L., Giffords, E. D., & Calderon, O. (2011). Expanding awareness: Issues in the development of an ethics scale for the social work profession. *Journal of Social Work Education, 47*(1), 133-149.

National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance (2012). What are districts' written policies regarding student substance related incidents? NCEE Evaluation Brief—Appendix. NCEE 2012-4023. National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance.

Nelson, A. (2008). The impact of zero tolerance school discipline policies: Issues of exclusionary discipline. *National Association of School Psychologists Communique, 37*(4).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, § 115, Stat. 1425 (2002).

Noguera, P. (2008). The 2007 Charles H. Thompson Lecture-Colloquium Presentation: Creating schools where race does not predict achievement: The role and

significance of race in the racial achievement gap. *The Journal of Negro Education, 77*(2), 90-103.

Noguera, P. A. (1994). More democracy not less: Confronting the challenge of privatization in public education. *Journal of Negro Education, 63*(2), 237-50.

Noguera, P. A. (1995). Preventing and producing violence: A critical analysis of responses to school violence. *Harvard Educational Review, 65*(2), 189-212.

Noguera, P. A. (2003a). The trouble with Black boys: The role and influence of environmental and cultural factors on the academic performance of African American males. *Urban Education, 38*(4), 431-59.

Noguera, P. A. (2003b). Schools, prisons, and social implications of punishment: Rethinking disciplinary practices. *Theory Into Practice, 42*(4), 341-350.

Noguera, P. A. (2004). Social capital and the education of immigrant students: Categories and generalizations. *Sociology of Education, 77*(2), 180-183.

Noguera, P. A. (2006). Latino youth: Immigration, education, and the future. *Latino Studies, 4*(3), 313-320. doi:1232669001

Noguera, P. A. (2007). How listening to students can help schools to improve. *Theory into Practice*, *46*(3), 205-211.

Ogbu, J. U. (1990). Understanding diversity: Summary comments. *Education and Urban Society, 22*(4), 425-29.

Ogbu, J. U. (1992). Adaptation to minority status and impact on school success. *Theory into Practice, 31*(4), 287-95.

Ogbu, J. U. (1995). Cultural problems in minority education: Their interpretations and consequences--part one: Theoretical background. *Urban Review, 27*(3), 189-205.

Ogbu, J. U. (2004). Collective identity and the burden of "acting White" in Black history, community, and education. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education, 36*(1), 1-35.

Olley, R. I., Cohn, A., & Cowan, K. C. (2010). Promoting safe schools and academic success: Moving your school from punitive discipline to effective discipline. *Communique, 39*(1), 7-8.

Osher, D., Bear, G. G., Sprague, J. R., & Doyle, W. (2010). How can we improve school discipline?. *Educational Researcher, 39*(1), 48-58.

Parker, R.I., Hagan-Burke, S., & Vannest, K. (2007). Percentage of all non-overlapping data (PAND): An alternative to PND. *The Journal of Special Education, 40*, 194-204. doi:12865412302

Pas, E. T., Bradshaw, C. P., Hershfeldt, P. A., & Leaf, P. J. (2010). A multilevel exploration of the influence of teacher efficacy and burnout on response to student problem behavior and school-based service use. *School Psychology Quarterly*, *25*(1), 13-27.

Peterson, R. L., & Skiba, R. (2001). Creating school climates that prevent school violence. *Clearing House, 74*(3), 155-63.

Petras, H., Masyn, K. E., Buckley, J. A., Ialongo, N. S., & Kellam, S. (2011). Who is most at risk for school removal? A multilevel discrete-time survival analysis of individual- and context-level influences. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 103*(1), 223-237

Rausch, M.K., & Skiba, R.J. (2006). *Discipline, disability, and race: Disproportionality in Indiana schools.* Bloomington, IN: Center for Evaluation & Education Policy.

Reyes, A. H. (2006). Discipline, achievement, and race: Is zero tolerance the answer? Rowman & Littlefield Education. http://eric.ed.gov

Rodriguez, L. F., & Conchas, G. Q. (2009). Preventing truancy and dropout among urban middle school youth: Understanding community-based action from the student's perspective. *Education and Urban Society, 41*(2), 216-247.

Rubin, R. (2004). Building a comprehensive discipline system and strengthening school climate. *Reclaiming Children and Youth: The Journal of Strength-based Interventions, 13*(3), 162.

Ryan, J. B., Katsiyannis, A., Peterson, R., & Chmelar, R. (2007). IDEA 2004 and disciplining students with disabilities. *NASSP Bulletin, 91*(2), 130-140.

Ryan, J. B., Peterson, R. L., & Rozalski, M. (2007). State policies concerning the use of seclusion timeout in schools. *Education and Treatment of Children, 30*(4), 215-239.

Sample, R. (2009). A case of black male: The overrepresentation of African American males in special education as emotionally disturbed. (Doctoral dissertation). UC Irvine.

Shah, N. (2012). Heading off trouble before it starts. *Education Week*, *32*(10), 1.

Shah, N. (2012). "Restorative practices" offer alternatives to suspension. *Education Week*, *32*(8), 1.

Shindler, J., Jones, A., Taylor, C., & Cadenas, H. (2004) *Exploring the school climate -- Student achievement connection: And making sense of why the first precedes the second?* Alliance for the Study of School Climate. www.calstatela.edu/schoolclimate.

Shirley, E. M., & Cornell, D. G. (2012). The contribution of student perceptions of school climate to understanding the disproportionate punishment of African American students in a middle school. *School Psychology International*, *33*(2), 115-134.

Skiba, R. J. (2002). Special education and school discipline: A precarious balance. *Behavioral Disorders 27*, no. 2: 81-97.

Skiba, R. J. (2014). The failure of zero tolerance. *Reclaiming Children and Youth, 22*(4), 27-33.

Skiba, R. J., Horner, R. H., Chung, C., Rausch, M., May, S. L., & Tobin, T. (2011). Race is not neutral: A national investigation of African American and Latino disproportionality in school discipline. *School Psychology Review*, *40*(1), 85-107.

Skiba, R. J., & Indiana Univ., B. C. (2000). *Zero tolerance, zero evidence: An analysis of school disciplinary practice. Policy Research Report*.

Skiba, R., & Peterson, R. (1999). The dark side of zero tolerance: Can punishment lead to safe schools? *Phi Delta Kappan, 80*(5), 372-76,381-82.

Skiba, R. J., & Peterson, R. L. (2000). School discipline at a crossroads: From zero tolerance to early response. *Exceptional Children, 66*(3), 335-46.

Skiba, R. J., Peterson, R. L., & Williams, T. (1997). Office referrals and suspension: Disciplinary intervention in middle schools. *Education and Treatment of Children, 20(3), 295-315.*

Skiba, R., & Peterson, R. (2003). Teaching the social curriculum: School discipline as instruction. *Preventing School Failure, 47*(2), 66-73.

Skiba, R.J., & Rausch, M.K. (2006a). School disciplinary systems: Alternatives to suspension and expulsion. In G. Bear & K. Minke (Eds.), *Children's needs III:*

Development, prevention & intervention (pp. 87-102). Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

Skiba, R.J., & Rausch, M.K. (2006b). Zero tolerance, suspension, and expulsion: Questions of equity and effectiveness. In C.M. Evertson & C.S. Weinstein (Eds.), *Handbook of classroom management: Research, practice, and contemporary issues* (pp. 1063-1089). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Skiba, R., Rausch, M., & Ritter, S. (2004). Children left behind: Series summary and recommendations. *Education Policy Briefs*. Volume 2, Number 4, Summer 2004. Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, Indiana University.

Skiba, R., Rausch, M., & Ritter, S. (2004). "Discipline is always teaching": Effective alternatives to zero tolerance in Indiana's schools. *Education Policy Briefs, 2*(3). Bloomington, ID: Center for Evaluation and Education Policy, Indiana University. Retrieved from http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED488903.pdf

Skiba, R., Simmons, A. B., Peterson, R., McKelvey, J., Forde, S., & Gallini, S. (2004). Beyond guns, drugs and gangs: The structure of student perceptions of school safety. *Journal of School Violence*, *3*(2-3), 149-171.

Sox, A. K. (2009). Latino immigrant students in southern schools: What we know and still need to learn. *Theory Into Practice, 48*(4), 312-318.

Stanley, M., Canham, D. L., & Cureton, V. (2006). Assessing prevalence of emotional and behavioral problems in suspended middle school students. *Journal of School Nursing*, *22*(1), 40-47.

Stetson, F. H., & Collins, B. J. (2010). Rethinking suspensions. *Principal Leadership, 11*(2), 40-44.

Swearer, S. M., Espelage, D. L., Vaillancourt, T., & Hymel, S. (2010). What can be done about school bullying? Linking research to educational practice. *Educational Researcher, 39*(1), 38-47.

Theriot, M. T., & Dupper, D. R. (2010). Student discipline problems and the transition from elementary to middle School. *Education and Urban Society, 42*(2), 205-222.

Tobin, T., & And, O. (1996). Patterns in middle school discipline records. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 4(2), 82-94.*

Todis, B., Moses, P., Peter, M., & Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (2008). Perspectives of participants in special education mediation: A qualitative inquiry. *Consortium for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE).* http://eric.ed.gov

Townley, J., Schmieder-Ramirez, J. H., Wehmeyer, L. B., & Lane, K. E. (2007). *School law: A California perspective* (3rd ed.). Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall-Hunt.

Vincent, C. G., & Tobin, T. J. (2011). The relationship between implementation of school-wide positive behavior support (SWPBS) and disciplinary exclusion of students from various ethnic backgrounds with and without disabilities. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 19*(4), 217-232.

Warren, M. R., Mira, M., & Nikundiwe, T. (2008). Youth organizing: From youth development to school reform. *New Directions for Youth Development*, (117), 27-42.

Yucesoy Ozkan, S., & Sonmez, M. (2011). Examination of single subject studies conducted on individuals with disabilities by using self management strategies: A meta analysis study. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice, 11*(2), 809-821.

Zaslaw, J. (2010). Restorative resolution. *Education Digest: Essential Readings Condensed For Quick Review, 76*(2), 10-13.

APPENDIX A

Sub-Scales of the School Climate Assessment Instrument

Sub-Scale	Description
Physical Appearance	Examines the relationship between the physical characteristics and environment of a school and the climate that it promotes. This dimension includes the degree to which intentional efforts have been made related to the consideration of the perceptions outsiders and expectations and treatment of custodial staff.
Faculty Relations	Examines the relationship between how members of the faculty relate to one another its effects on the climate of the school. This dimension includes the degree to which collaboration, respect, capacity to interact, and a sense of collective purpose exist among the members of the faculty. It also includes the explicit and explicit expectations among faculty members as to how decisions are made and duties are delegated and performed.
Student Interactions	Examines the relationships among student expectations, peer interactions, and their place in the school and the climate that is exists. This dimension includes the degree to which students' interactions are governed by intention vs. accidental qualities.
Leadership and Decision-Making	Examines the relationships among decision-making mechanisms, how administrative authority is manifested and the climate that is created as a result. This dimension includes the degree to which the collective possesses a shared sense of values and an operational vision. It also explores the ways in which the quality of leadership affects school life.
Discipline and Management Environment	Examines the relationship between the management and discipline approaches used within the school and the climate that is created as a result. This dimension includes the degree to which management strategies promote higher levels of responsibility and motivation. It also examines teacher-student interactions as a source of management and motivation.
Learning, Instruction and Assessment	Examines the relationships among the instructional strategies and the assessment methods used in the school and the climate that is created. Instruction is explored as it relates to its level of engagement, student empowerment and authenticity. Higher quality instruction and assessment methods are contrasted to less effective methods by the degree to which they promote a psychology of success rather than a psychology of failure.
Attitude and Culture	Examines the pervasive attitudes and cultures that operate within the school and their relationship to the climate. This dimension explores the degree to which social and/or communal bonds are present within the school, the attitudes that the members of the school possess, and the level of pride and ownership they feel. It includes the degree to which efforts in this area are made intentionally or left to chance.
Community Relations	Examines the relationship between the way that the school is perceived externally and its climate. This dimension includes the degree to which the school is welcoming, takes advantage of the resources in the local community including parents, and acts intentionally as a center of community life.

Source: Alliance for the Study of School Climate. (2014). Los Angeles, CA: Author.

APPENDIX B

Faculty Survey

1. What is your position?
    a. Administrator
    b. Teacher
    c. Staff with outside the classroom assignment
2. How many years of experience do you have at this middle school site?
3. What grade level do you teach? (mark all that apply)
    a. 8th grade
    b. 7th grade
    c. 6th grade
4. What class size do you teach? (may list range or average number of students in classes)

    _____

5. What is your age?
    a. 29 years or younger
    b. 30-39 years
    c. 40-49 years
    d. 50-59 years
    e. 60 years and older
6. What is your gender? _____
7. How would you describe your ethnic background?
8. Highest Level of Education:
    a. _____Baccalaureate
    b. _____Master's Degree
    c. _____Doctorate
9. How familiar are you with the term Progressive Discipline?
    a. Not familiar
    b. Familiar
    c. Very familiar

APPENDIX C

Staff Interview Protocol

Participant #: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Student Misconduct and Isolation from the School Environment: A Study of Student, Teacher, and Administrator Perceptions of School Discipline at an Urban Middle School.

- What interventions and programs is the school implementing to prevent students from misbehaving?
- How effective we do you think it is for the ones you mentioned?
    - Not Effective
    - Effective
    - Very effective
- Let's think about the school interventions and programs intended to prevent student misbehavior, how effective do you think each one is?
    - Not Effective
    - Effective
    - Very effective
- What are some ideas you have that could improve them?
- How were your views used in developing these interventions and programs?
- How were student views used in developing these interventions and programs?

The participant is given a list of disciplinary consequences (Appendix N)

- What consequences do you believe are frequently used when disciplining students who engage in misconduct? Why are they used frequently?
- Point to another consequence from the list that is frequently used. Why is it frequently used?

  Are there any others?
- Do you think the progressive discipline procedures works effectively?

- What ideas do you have to help make the progressive discipline procedures work effectively?
- What else would you do to improve overall student behavior?

Participant's description of communication in regards to progressive discipline:

- In what ways does the school communicate with students regarding their behavioral problems?
- What kind of information does the school give to students regarding the school progressive discipline?
- How is this information presented?
- Do you think it is easy to understand?
- Overall how do you see teachers' interaction with their students on this campus?
- How do you see administrators interacting with their students on this campus?

Final Questions:

- What questions has our discussion raised for you?
- What other things come to mind about behavior problems that are occurring at this school?
- What other comments do you have about your school's progressive discipline practices?
- Are there any questions you would have asked regarding progressive discipline that I did not?

APPENDIX D

Student Survey

1. What is your grade level?
    a. 6th grade
    b. 7th grade
    c. 8th grade
2. What is your age?
3. What is your gender? _____
    a. Male
    b. Female
4. How would you describe your ethnic background?

    _____

    ____
5. Are you an English Language Learner (ELL)?
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. I don't know
6. Do you participate in the annual California English Language Development Test (CELDT)?
7. Do you have an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?
8. Have you ever misbehaved in class? At school?
    a. Yes
    b. No
9. What behavioral problem from appendix N did you demonstrate?
10. Have you ever been suspended from class? School?
    a. Yes
    b. No
11. What behavioral consequence from appendix N was applied as a consequence for your misbehavior?

APPENDIX E

Student Interview Protocol

Participant #: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Student Interview Protocol- First Interview

Student Misconduct and Isolation from the School Environment: A Study of Student, Teacher, and Administrator Perceptions of School Discipline at an Urban Middle School.

- Can you give me an example of a student misbehaving at school?
- When a student misbehaves, what is commonly done?
- Let's think about the school programs, how effective do you think each one is?
- What are some ideas you have that could improve them?
- What do teachers do so you don't misbehave?
- What do administrators do so you don't misbehave?
- Is there anything you want them to do differently that would improve your behavior?

APPENDIX F

Student First Interview Protocol

Student Misconduct and Isolation from the School Environment: A Study of Student, Teacher, and Administrator Perceptions of School Discipline at an Urban Middle School.

I would like to show you two lists of behavioral problems and student consequences that are applied due to behavioral problems. Try to check off the most common form of consequence used at your school.

- What behavioral consequence do you believe is used most frequently? Why do you think it is used a lot?
- Point to another consequence from the list that is commonly used. Why do you think it is used a lot?
- What has the school done to improve the overall student behavior?
- What would you do to improve student behavior?
- Can you tell me a recent event that occurred where a behavioral consequence was applied due to a problem behavior?
- What did the school do to address the situation?
- Do you think anything could be done differently in regards to that situation?
- What school programs can you think of that have helped to create positive behaviors on the campus?
- Can you tell me what progressive discipline is?
- What ideas do you have to help make the progressive discipline work effectively?
- Are there any other incidents that have occurred that you would like to share with me?

APPENDIX G

Student Second Interview Protocol

Participant #: _____

Date: _____

Time: _____

Student Misconduct and Isolation from the School Environment: A Study of Student, Teacher, and Administrator Perceptions of School Discipline at an Urban Middle School.

Participant's description of communication in regards to school progressive discipline:

- In what ways does the school communicate with you?
- What kind of behavioral information does the school give to you?
- How is this information presented?
- Do you think it is easy for you to understand?
- If you were an administrator of the school, how would you communicate with students?
- How do teacher attitudes with students, impact behavioral problems?
- What would you recommend for teachers to do when a student misbehaves?
- How do administrator attitudes with students' impact behavioral problems?
- What would you recommend for administrators to do when a student misbehaves?
- How did you learn your role and responsibilities as a student?
- Based upon your experience, what would you like your current school to try, if anything?

Participants own experiences of behavioral problems in previous schools:

- Have you ever attended a school that had an overall positive behavioral atmosphere?
- How did you know that you were in a school with a well-behaved student environment?
- Did the school inform you about any behavioral consequences?
- What questions has our discussion raised for you?
- What other things come to mind about school disciplinary programs that are occurring at your school?

- What other comments do you have about your school's disciplinary consequences?
- From our discussion over the past two interviews, what would you like to recommend to the school to do differently regarding progressive discipline?

APPENDIX H

Behavioral Problems and Disciplinary Consequence

Behavioral Problems

_____No Materials / No Books

_____Out of Seat

_____Talking Out

_____Cheating

_____Disruptive

_____Leaving Class

_____Sleeping in Class

_____Disobedient

_____Defiant

_____Making Noises

_____Passing Notes

_____Arguing in Class

_____Profanity

_____Bullying

_____Fighting

_____Damage to School Property

_____Gambling

_____Stealing, Robbery, or Extortion

_____Other

Behavioral Consequences

_____Verbal Warning

_____Seat Change

_____Time Out to another class

_____Teacher and student Conference

_____Paper Pick-up

_____Campus Beautification

_____Parent Conference

_____Detention (Lunch / After School)

_____Referral to the Counselor

_____Referral to the Dean / Administrator

_____Peer Mediation

_____Behavior Contract

_____Class Suspension

_____In-School Suspension

_____Out-of-School Suspension

_____Schedule Modification

_____Referral to Intervention Programs

_____Parent contact (phone call, conference, mail)

APPENDIX I

Progressive Discipline Guidelines

Stage I Behavior Problems- Teacher's Responsibility

No Materials/ No Books	Talking out	Cheating	Does not do Assignments	
Profanity	Disruptive	Passing Notes	Out of Seat	Attendance/Tardiness
Sleeping in Class	Leaving Class	Lack of Attention	Disobedient	Arguing in class
Eating in class	Dress Code Violation	Horseplay	Defiant	Making Noises

Suggested Procedures:

1. Verbal warning
2. Paper pick-up
3. Time out to another classroom
4. Teacher and student conference
5. Detention with the teacher (not during nutrition and lunch)
6. Parent contact
    a. Phone call home
    b. Parent conference
    c. Mail a "Special Report to Parents
7. Behavior Contract
8. Referral to the Counselor
9. Class Suspension – A teacher may suspend any student for cause, from his/her class for the day of suspension and the following day (UNION/DISTRICT Contract, Article XXIV). The teacher must notify the parent of the suspension. The teacher must also provide assignments for the suspended student.

Stage II Behavior Problems- Counselor's Responsibility

All repeated offenses of Stage I not resolved by the classroom teacher after parent contact has been made and the progressive discipline checklist has been completed.

Suggested Procedures:

1. **Parent Contact and a possible consequence:**
    a. Campus clean-up
    b. Parent conference with a behavior contract
    c. Parent sits in class
    d. After school detention
    e. Daily reports
    f. Schedule modification
    g. Referral to intervention Programs
    h. Referral to the Dean

Stage III Behavior Problems- Administrator's (or Dean's) Responsibility

Students will be subject to disciplinary action for the following:

Fighting	Damage to School Property	Gambling
Fireworks, Arson	Profanity Directed to an Adult	Threatening or Intimidating another student
Defiance	Sexual Harassment	
Willful Disobedience	Bullying	Assault and Battery against another student
Stealing, Robbery or Extortion	Activation of Fire Alarms	

Suggested Procedures:

1. Parent Contact and a consequence:
    a. Behavior Contract
    b. Suspension
    c. Citation by School Police Officer
    d. Pre-Opportunity Transfer Conference