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A Qualitative Study of Effective School Discipline Practices: Perceptions of Administrators, Tenured Teachers, and Parents in Twenty Schools.

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A Qualitative Study of Effective School Discipline Practices:
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by

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ABSTRACT

A Qualitative Study of Effective School Discipline Practices:
Perceptions of Administrators, Tenured Teachers, and
Parents in Twenty Schools

by

Mary Faye Nelson

Many educators and parents are gravely concerned about disorder and danger in school environments. In addition to school discipline issues, American classrooms are frequently plagued by minor infractions of misbehavior that disrupt the flow of classroom activities and interfere with learning.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate common threads of effective school discipline practices as perceived by administrators, tenured teachers, and parents in 20 schools in East Tennessee. I also attempted to determine if the views of administrators, tenured teachers, and parents are consistent with published research on school discipline practices. Data were collected from administrators, tenured teachers, and parents through an open-ended interview form that I designed.

The study offers a number of recommendations regarding components of effective school discipline practices. An effective school discipline practice involves all stakeholders in its design. The principal and the teachers are responsible for carrying out the school discipline practices to foster appropriate behavior from the students. However, parents, students, and community members should be equally represented in the design of discipline procedures. Administrators and teachers need to have quality professional development opportunities to acquire strategies for classroom and school discipline practices. Rewarding students for good behavior and positive contributions to the school community is important. Effective discipline practices are built through consistency and teamwork. Evaluation of school discipline practices should be ongoing, and strategies for reducing school disruptions should be continuously assessed for improvements.

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my loving husband
Steve
and to my wonderful children,
April and Kevin.
They have genuinely encouraged and supported my educational endeavors,
and for that I will be eternally grateful.

I would be remiss not to acknowledge my
son-in-law, Robert and daughter-in-law, Candice
who have been so kind during this time.

I also dedicate this work to my four granddaughters, who truly are gifts from God,
Marlee, Monica, Lexie, and Lindsey.

Additionally, I dedicate this work to my mother,
Edna Carnes
who always encouraged me to do my best and follow my dreams.
She was my inspiration and role model.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge
my Lord, Jesus Christ,
for His guidance and love through this challenging endeavor.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

It was only 8:15 a.m. and already Aaron was on his way to the assistant principal's office to get a discipline referral. With a bright red pen, his teacher had placed three big "X" marks by his offenses: not prepared for class, failure to bring homework, and not sitting in his assigned seat. Aaron had already received one office referral on Monday and two on Tuesday, in which contact with the parents did not result in support. This sixth-grade boy was no stranger to the office. The usual measures to improve his inappropriate behaviors had been tried: notes home, reports, extra assignments, designated seating, and loss of free time. What would it take to get this 11-year-old's attention so that he would be a successful student and not be a discipline problem? As Mrs. Brown, the assistant principal, talked with him about this office referral, she decided it was once again time to try to seek input from his parents. As the administrator dialed the boy's home phone number, he told her that his parents had caller identification, and he was sure because it was the school's number, his mother would not answer the phone or return the call. Could this child be correct? Would parents be this uncaring about their child's discipline and educational problems? Aaron was correct; there was no answer and no returned phone call. He received his 10th discipline referral and returned to his classroom, wiping tears from his eyes.

Teachers, administrators, students, parents, school board members, and citizens usually agree that too much energy and time is devoted to classroom management techniques and discipline interventions. There are many unanswered questions regarding the reasons students misbehave in manners that result in office referrals, in-school suspensions, out-of-school suspensions, or expulsions. The perceptions and ideas of teachers, administrators, and parents about effective school discipline practices could possibly communicate new answers to the age-old question of why students misbehave at school.

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Background to the Problem

Perhaps the only topic of school discipline that produces a consensus in the United States is that students are increasingly out of control (Brookover, 1992). Disruptions hamper lessons for all students, and disruptive students are even more handicapped by their own behavior. A study by Gottfredson (1989) in Charleston, South Carolina concluded that in six middle schools, students lost 7,932 instructional days--or 44 years--to in-school and out-of-school suspensions in a single academic year.

School violence and ineffective disciplinary practices have become perennial problems in public schools (Devine, 1996). School violence, (inclusive of disrespect for authority and school procedures) fighting, gang-like behaviors, and bringing weapons or drugs to school, are catalysts to disciplinary actions. Studies indicate that nationwide as many as 8% of boys routinely carry guns to school and in 1997, 20% of high school students had carried a gun to school (Mercy & Rosenberg, 1998). These students' behaviors have placed students, parents, teachers, administrators, and staff in constant fear. Students have impeded the educational process through severe behavior infractions warranting disciplinary responses. In an attempt to rectify the imbalances, the federal government proposed to spend $566 million on safe and drug-free schools during the 1999 fiscal year alone (Federal Assistance Monitor, 1998).

Historically, the objective of discipline has been to bring the impulses and conduct of the students into harmony with the ideas and standards of the school, administrators, teachers, and community. As administrators seek to eradicate school-wide issues of safety, teachers are challenged by attempting to solve the problems of students not learning. Time spent by teachers addressing discipline leads to lack of learning and time off task. The National School Safety Center (1993) reported that disruptive behavior occurs about every six seconds that school is in session. Jones (1989), in his studies of time-off-task student behavior, found that inappropriate behaviors account for 45% to 55% of time spent in the average middle- and high-school classrooms. Jones also noted a subtler and more debilitating effect of the continual barrage of

classroom problems and interruptions--the stress and related energy drain on teachers who are attempting to maintain control. Such wasted energies result in teachers' feelings of hopelessness and burnout.

The purpose of this study was to investigate common threads of effective school discipline practices as perceived by administrators, tenured teachers, and parents of students in 20 schools in East Tennessee concerning discipline practices in elementary, intermediate, and middle schools, focusing on grades 5 through 8. Administrators, tenured teachers, and parents were interviewed and asked open-ended questions using a qualitative design guided by the following inquiries:

1. What are the views of administrators, tenured teachers, and parents regarding current discipline practices?

2. What factors, as perceived by the participants, play a role in well-organized school discipline practices?

3. What aspects are perceived as barriers to effective discipline practices?

4. What ideas can administrators, tenured teachers, and parents contribute that might enhance effective discipline practices?

I also attempted to determine if the views of administrators, tenured teachers, and parents were consistent with published research on school discipline practices.

Significance of the Study

School discipline and classroom management problems continue to rank at the top of the teacher's headache list. Volumes of books and hundreds of journal articles have been written discussing components of discipline in the classroom. Even well-known authorities on student discipline such as William Glasser (1969) and Lee Canter (1984) have proposed plans that were successful in some schools, yet failed in others. As with any plan in education, the individual school's culture and climate must be considered when implementing a discipline program.

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"Canned programs" like those of Glasser and Canter need monitoring and adjusting via data collection to fine-tune the plans. The qualitative data collected in this study might be used to help determine the common threads of several discipline practices and their successful implementation.

During the past decade, both the United States Congress as well as individual state legislatures have expressed concern for student safety, discipline, and school security through numerous hearings and the passage of several bills aimed at reducing youth violence. Creating an orderly and disciplined school environment free of violence is essential for learning to take place. Consequently, many schools and communities across the nation are working to construct effective discipline practices. Using the findings of this study, teachers, administrators, parents, and school board members will perhaps be better able to evaluate their discipline practices and use some of the suggestions from the participants of the study. Overall, the process of constructing effective discipline practices is a long and arduous task, yet it can be far-reaching in its success.

Limitations, Delimitations, and Assumptions

This study was limited to administrators, tenured teachers, and parents of students from 20 schools in East Tennessee concerning discipline practices in elementary, intermediate, and middle schools, focusing on grades 5 through 8. Analysis of data obtained is generalizable only to the participants in this study, other than the generalizability readers might perceive from the qualitative findings.

The study was dependent on the ability of participants to be familiar with and be aware of school discipline needs and current school discipline practices. A limitation of this study is that parent participants, especially, might have been embarrassed to admit their lack of knowledge about specifics regarding school discipline practices and they might have been hesitant to speculate. In addition, teachers and administrators might assume they could be perceived as

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personal failures by acknowledging that discipline problems existed in their classrooms or schools. These factors may have influenced responses and therefore skewed the results of this study. The study was based upon answers given to open-ended interview questions through oral responses and it was assumed that, in general, the participants were thoughtful, forthright, and honest in providing accurate data.

Definition of Terms

Bullying, as used in this study, is physical or psychological intimidation occurring repeatedly over time to create an ongoing pattern of harassment and abuse.

Class size, as used in this study, refers to the number of students assigned to a teacher in a specific class period.

Climate refers to a school's atmosphere; ideally, it is an environment that best fosters and enhances student learning and appropriate student behavior.

Data support system refers to a comprehensive student information source (bank, resource, or collection) with pertinent student information; i.e. address, parent's name, phone numbers, attendance records, academic records, and discipline history.

Discipline referral, as used in the study, is a written account of a student's inappropriate behavior.

Zero tolerance policy, as used in this study, is a predetermined procedure used by schools and school systems that addresses severe misbehaviors by students.

Overview of the Study

This study is organized and presented in six chapters. Chapter 1 introduced the problem and provided background information on the concept of school discipline practices. The problem was stated, the purpose and significance were explained, the limitations, delimitations, and assumptions were addressed, and terms specific to the study were clarified. Chapter 2

contains a review of literature supporting the need for the study, descriptions of programs to prevent behavior problems, summaries of popular discipline plans currently in use, discipline as reported from students' perceptions, the dilemma of curricula versus time, community involvement, rules, school climate, methods for changing inappropriate behavior, class size, bullying, zero tolerance policies, and the need for a comprehensive data support system. Chapter 3 includes a description of the methods and procedures that were used to obtain and process data. Chapter 4 includes a presentation of the data and Chapter 5 contains an analysis of the data. Chapter 6 contains conclusions, recommendations for implementing effective school discipline practices, and recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

School discipline is not a new phenomenon. Many researchers have documented ineffective discipline practices back to the beginning of United States schooling during early colonialism (Empey & Stafford, 1991; Greenberg, 1999; Regoli & Hewitt, 1997). In every era, some American school children have been unruly and destructive. Greenberg reported although disciplinary responses have changed from the early 19th Century, when school reformer Horace Mann reported seeing 328 floggings in one school during the course of a week, and whereas it is banned in a few states, corporal punishment of students was upheld by the Supreme Court as recently as 1977. Disciplinary problems and practices do not exist in a vacuum but are part of the developing sociological landscape.

Throughout the last decade of the 20th Century, increased attention was given to the lack of discipline and growing use of violence among young people, particularly in and around schools. Contrary to the thinking of some analysts, school-based violence is not reaching epidemic proportions, although it has certainly taken on some new forms that are frightening to most people and intriguing to those who seek to reduce adolescents' use of violence (Watkins & Wagner, 1987). An escalation in the number of school-based shootings has forced many to take a new look at schools, violence, and discipline practices. Public reactions to these shootings have included calls for more school security and demands for accountability on the part of parents, students, teachers, and administrators. According to Harshman and Phillips (1994), there have been renewed pleas to address the issue of gun control and for more stringent policies that further restrict the choices of young people in school settings.

In recent years, numerous practices have emerged to deal with the problem of disorder in America's schools. Some of the implemented programs yielded positive results; even so, each school and community should develop an individual plan to address its own needs.

The literature review addresses published literature as it relates to: (a) programs to prevent classroom problems, (b) discipline plans in current use, (c) the controversy over behavioral curricula versus time for academics, (d) parental and community involvement, (e) importance of rules, (f) climate of schools and the effects on discipline, (g) methods for changing inappropriate behavior, (h) impact of class size on discipline, (i) bullying, (j) zero tolerance policies, (k) data systems for discipline records, and (l) principals as "pals" in school discipline matters.

Practices to Prevent Classroom Problems

Schools use a wide variety of educational and noneducational approaches and practices to address violence. Many school-based violence prevention programs operate under the premise violence is a learned behavior. In general, practices focus on primary prevention; that is, they seek to prevent violence before it occurs. According to Curwin (2000), classrooms are laboratories of learning and each teacher should be involved in a school-wide program that includes: (a) implementing a school violence action plan, (b) addressing rule violators, (c) involving students as decision makers, and (d) meeting with gang leaders. Curwin points out if children are afraid because of school violence, they cannot learn, and if teachers are afraid, they cannot teach. Educators should keep in mind that for any school discipline program to work, everyone within the learning environment must participate. According to the late Al Shanker, former president of the American Federation of Teachers, "Unless you have order and civility, not much learning will go on" (School Discipline, 1999, ¶ 7).

One program that has necessitated students in elementary and middle schools to inventory themselves and be responsible for their actions is Character Counts. The largest and

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clearest impetus for character education was the Aspen Conference on Character Education held in the summer of 1992. From 1992 to 1997, a project of the Josephson Institute of Ethics included 12 national and 53 regional education organizations, 16 national youth development and service organizations, and 83 community organizations. This coalition is based on the theory if students internalize the right values and their actions are influenced by those values, they will become responsible citizens in the school hallways and classrooms, as well as in the community as a whole (Kidder, 1998).

According to Watson (1995), no school is immune to violence; he suggested practical ways to increase a school's resistance and promote a safety program. Primarily, the staff must seek consensus and identify the problems and the solutions. Coming up with solutions should not be the responsibility of the individual school alone; at the outset, the district should form a district-wide safety committee. Everyone in the community should be involved. Committees for the program should be composed of representatives from the schools, community, school system, and community agencies--especially law enforcement, medical, and juvenile services. Safety factors that need to be included are building design, technology, supervisory procedures, discipline practices, and conflict resolution. While looking for a safety program, the committee should look at all relevant state school laws, all state and district board of education regulations that affect safety, model safety plans from other districts, a written timeline, and crisis response teams.

Because no one practice can provide the solution to all discipline problems, several school-wide behavior plans have been developed to address the increase in frequency and severity of misbehavior in schools. The next section gives an overview of some of the more popular discipline practices used in schools.

A Look at Some Disciplinary Practices in Current Use

In an attempt to create an orderly, respectful, and predictable school environment, many schools have implemented school-wide behavior management systems. One such system is Lee Canter's (1984) Assertive Discipline.

Lee Canter's Assertive Discipline

Canter (1992) related the key to Assertive Discipline is catching students being good, recognizing and supporting them when they behave appropriately, and letting them know it is appreciated, day in and day out. He stated it is imperative that classroom teachers have a systematic discipline plan that explains exactly what will happen when students choose to misbehave. An effective discipline plan is applied fairly to all students. The teacher gives specific directions for each classroom situation. Canter suggested that a discipline plan includes a maximum of five consequences for misbehavior, but teachers must choose consequences with which they are comfortable. Teachers must provide positive reinforcement for appropriate and on-task behavior and disciplinary consequences for disruptive or continually off-task behavior. In an earlier work, Canter (1989) stated administrators need to understand that Assertive Discipline is not a negative practice, but it could be misused by negative teachers. Additionally, he reported that administrators should mentor teachers, and staff developers should coach negative teachers in the use of positive reinforcement.

Canter (1987) recommended a three-step cycle of behavior management to establish a positive discipline system. First, whenever teachers want students to follow certain directions, they must teach the specific behaviors. Next, teachers must use positive repetition to reinforce the students when they follow the directions. Finally, if a student is misbehaving after a teacher has taught specific policies and has used positive repetition, only then should the teacher use the negative consequences.

Parental support for teachers' disciplinary efforts is equally important (Canter, 1984). Many teachers become frustrated and give up when they do not receive support from the students' parents. Canter suggested teachers need training in how to communicate effectively with parents and substitute teachers should also be trained in this discipline plan.

Assertive Discipline plans encourage teachers to develop individualized discipline plans for students with severe behavior problems and document chronic student misbehaviors. Canter (1995) stated,

> In any class there may be several students for whom the general classroom plan does not work. Administrators should empower the teachers with skills they need to work successfully with difficult students and improve achievement, and Assertive Discipline is the management system for successful teachers, students, and schools. (p. 77)

The success of a school discipline program relies on a classroom in which students succeed and enjoy school. William Glasser developed a popular school discipline program addressing these needs. Glasser's theory of discipline teaches students how to make effective choices.

William Glasser's Choice Therapy

Beginning in the 1960s, William Glasser created a series of programs for schools incorporating features from his Reality Therapy (Glasser, 1992a). Glasser designed Reality Therapy, and all of his school practices, around a traditional cause-effect theory that he once called Control Theory, but now calls Choice Therapy, that attempts to explain both psychological and physiological behavior. He said a person chooses all of his or her behaviors to satisfy a fixed number of inherited "needs" that all people have in common. The number of the alleged needs identified by Glasser varied from two in 1965, to a current number of five. They are: love, power, freedom, fun, and survival (Glasser, 1993). The author explained these needs are built into one's genetic structure, and from birth, one must devote all behavior to attempt to

satisfy them. Glasser further stated, "Quality is anything we experience that is consistently satisfying to one or more of these basic needs" (p. 19).

A study was conducted in 1975 in a Knoxville, Tennessee primary school based on components from Glasser's then-Reality Therapy Program. Six teachers from the school selected students with the most severe behavior problems to participate in the study. A multiple baseline design was employed that provided for the introduction of intervention strategies at different times for each student. The study determined that the individualized approach resulted in an increase in the students' appropriate behavior and a decrease in the inappropriate behavior (Cates, 1975).

Glasser's (1992b) belief of behavior leads to a natural conclusion: If a student disrupts in school, the environment of the school is the cause. The adults in the school need to create an environment that meets all of the student's needs; then the student will not disrupt. In his book *The Quality School*, Glasser stated,

> Schools should take the time needed for all committed staff to learn, in depth, what a Quality School actually is and to begin to put into practice the three main elements of such a school. These are:
>
> (1) Persuading all students to think about what is quality schoolwork and what is quality in their lives. With this awareness, they will develop a sense of how important it is to make quality a part of all they do.
>
> (2) Persuading all students to evaluate the quality of all they do in school.
>
> (3) Managing both students and teachers without the use of any coercion; in Quality School terms, converting completely from boss-managing to lead-managing. (p. 297)

Glasser (1992b) conveyed that unless the school is led by its principal and can make a substantial start toward accomplishing the three key elements, there is little chance it will become a Quality School. Teachers must arrange the environment of the school in general, and the classrooms in particular, so that the environment meets the needs of all students simultaneously. If they do that, then discipline problems will disappear. Throughout his book, *The Quality School*, Glasser repeated, "Like boss-managers, lead-managers have the goal of getting their workers to work hard; but to do this, they continually keep the needs of the workers

in mind" (p. 42). A recent program developed by Harry K. Wong, a former high school science teacher in Menlo Park, California, not only addresses school discipline; it also focuses on classroom strategies, consistent routines, and day-to-day management.

Harry Wong's Classroom Strategies

An innovative educator, who recently began to write and make national presentations about this concept, is Harry K. Wong. Along with a video series for classroom management and several books, he and his wife Rosemary give presentations on the importance and effectiveness of classroom strategies. Wong and Wong (1998) suggested that the three most important student behaviors that must be taught in the first days of school are: discipline, procedures, and routines. He noted, "The effective teacher invests time in teaching discipline and procedures, knowing that this will be repaid multifold in the effective use of class time. The key word is invests" (p. 143).

Researchers have documented that the most effective schools are those with a well-ordered environment and high academic expectations (Albert, 1996; Curwin, 1992; Glasser, 1992a). Wong and Wong (1998) stated that the most successful classes are those in which the teacher has a clear idea of what is expected from the students and the students have a clear idea of what the teacher expects from them.

Wong and Wong (1998) stated that rules include clear expectations of appropriate student behavior and they should be posted before the first day of school. Clear communication to the students and parents in both verbal and written form about expected and appropriate behaviors is important. According to Wong and Wong, it is easier to maintain good behavior than to change inappropriate behavior that has become established. The author stated that the immediate existence of rules creates a work-oriented atmosphere.

A main component of this discipline plan is that it is applied universally; no matter where the students go, they encounter the same plan and the key is school-wide consistency. Because

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everyone at the school uses the same plan with consistency, the students know what is expected of them and all members of the staff support one another.

Another concept of the Wong and Wong (1998) discipline plan is that academic behavior does not appear on the list of rules, as the plan is concerned with behavior, not academic work. Academic issues such as doing homework, writing in ink, and turning in assignments fall into the realm of procedures and academic performance. Wong and Wong also acknowledged that whenever possible, rules should be stated positively.

Another former teacher turned author and lecturer on school discipline is Alfie Kohn. In his book, *Beyond Discipline From Compliance to Community*, Kohn (1996) criticized many of the discipline practices used by schools nationwide and suggested that a school should be treated, overall, as a community.

Alfie Kohn's Caring Communities

Kohn (1996) stated that students who are able to participate in making decisions at school are more committed to decision making and democracy in other contexts. He explained that when one looks inside the classrooms of teachers who are less controlling and more inclined to support children's autonomy, one finds students who are more self-confident and more interested in learning for its own sake. Each aspect of life in a classroom offers an invitation to think about what decisions might be turned over to students, or negotiated with students, individually and collectively (Kohn, 1990).

Kohn stated classroom-management programs should include (a) purpose, (b) nonrestrictiveness, (c) flexibility, (d) developmental appropriateness, (e) presentation style, and (f) student involvement (1996). He suggested a class should meet and share ideas on good discipline practices and together they should decide the important issues and behaviors that are acceptable or unacceptable in that class or group. It is good when class meetings provide a

chance for students to come together and make decisions. It is better when the approach that defines class meetings is reflected throughout the rest of the day as well (Kohn, 1993).

According to Kohn (1996), a classroom or school should be treated as a community that could be known as a place in which students feel cared about and are encouraged to care about each other. They experience a sense of being valued and respected; the children matter to one another and to the teacher. They come to think in the plural; they feel connected to each other; they are part of an "us" (Kohn). Some of the most important work on formulating, researching, and implementing the idea of caring communities has been done in connection with an elementary school program called the Child Development Project (Battistich, Solomon, Watson, Solomon, & Schaps, 1989; Kohn, 1990; Solomon, 1992; Watson, 1989). The staff of the Child Development Project, based in Oakland, California, worked in eight school districts, both within and beyond California, to promote students' social, moral, and intellectual development.

A wealth of literature was found relating to discipline practices written by former teachers and administrators and the subject of student behavior has been widely studied using viewpoints from community leaders, parents, administrators, and teachers. However, few studies were found addressing discipline from the students' perspective.

A Look at Discipline From Students' Perspectives

Small children tend to regard all punishment as unfair and undeserved, whereas older students generally regard punishment for misbehavior as fair and acceptable, if the punishment is equitable and fits the problem (Cotton, 1990). A study to obtain views about school discipline from students' perceptions was conducted by Masciarelli (1998) at an urban middle school in Colorado. The researcher interviewed 51 middle school seventh graders on the topic of student behavior. Findings revealed that few perceived discipline as a tool to learn self-management; rather the students indicated they felt discipline was merely a consequence for misbehavior, or rules to prevent misbehavior. Reasons given by students for obeying school rules were: (a) to

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avoid home consequences, (b) to avoid school consequences, (c) to gain school and home recognition, and (d) to avoid legal consequences (Masciarelli).

Supaporn (1998) conducted a study to explore misbehavior from a student's point of view with a physical education class composed of 14 seventh and eighth graders during a two-week basketball unit. Data were collected through videotaping class sessions, reviewing critical incidents, shadowing the teacher, and interviewing the students. The students defined misbehavior as doing something that they were not supposed to do or not doing something that they were supposed to do. Most students admitted they misbehaved in class at some time during the two-week duration of the study. Review of the videotape revealed that the teacher's loose accountability and lack of intervention allowed many opportunities for students to misbehave in class. Less effective teaching and lack of organization and delivery of instructional tasks appeared to be the major issues that encouraged students to misbehave (Supaporn).

Management of disruptive students' behavior takes up large portions of a teacher's time for instruction. Deutsch (1993) stated that if the school focused on curricula that encouraged peace, teachers could more easily work on the traditional aspects of education such as reading, writing, and arithmetic. Teachers and administrators would be free to accomplish their educational missions without spending an abundance of time engaged in disciplinary actions with students.

Controversy: Curricula Versus Time

Renewed cries from administrators, students, school board members, parents, and teachers have been heard and schools have begun to strengthen their discipline plans and to look for solutions to reduce inappropriate behavior and the possibility that violence could take place on their school grounds. Such calls for violence prevention curricula are often made without regard to what is known about the impact of such curricula on public education (Quinney, 1989). It is not surprising that concerns about increases in youth violence have led to a barrage of

curricula designed to incorporate the teaching of character and nonviolence, as well as promoting stronger discipline plans within the public schools. It is understandable that teachers and administrators are wary of suggestions about how to address the school discipline problem (Bennis, 1990). Schools have been asked to pick up the slack regarding drug education, sex education, and now violence education, often with little or no concomitant increase in support (Lee, Pulzino, & Perrone, 1998). Within a set school day of mandated hours, when are character, peace, problem solving, conflict resolution, drug awareness, reading, writing, and arithmetic supposed to be taught? Achieving peaceful schools will require a long-term commitment to goals, process, and a change in curriculum. It will require additional support from legislators, especially during the initiative period (Bentro & Long, 1995). Implementation of new curricula and the cyclical process of change require a great deal of time.

The plethora of curricula designed around conflict resolution and peace education in the schools started in the early 1990s. A significant body of research indicates, however, that the adoption of programs on conflict resolution has been slow (Alexander, Haynie, & Walters, 1997; Deutsch, 1993; Eisler, 1999, Prothrow-Stith, 1991; Quinney, 1989).

Teachers and administrators need to subscribe to the tenets of a nonviolent approach to conflict. Cooperative learning and constructive use of controversy requires that each classroom model a form of problem solving that is beneficial to all parties. In addition to problem solving in a cooperative manner and incorporating studies of nonviolence into study topics, schools must also include those who are often excluded and treat all persons in a respectful manner. The positive effects of looking at the curricula for changing discipline problems have been noted as meaningful opportunities to explore learning beyond what is observed or tested in the regular school setting.

A solution to the controversy of curricula versus time would be a school environment that includes both the absence of direct violence and the absence of indirect or structural violence, a method that has been reported as successful by Brock-Utne (1985). To provide a school

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environment with the absence of direct and indirect violence, a school climate and culture with peaceable guidelines is essential. Teaching within classrooms that are peaceable can be accomplished when teaching takes into consideration both the social arrangements of society and the larger issues of diversity and tolerance (Gaustad, 1992). In order to consider these needs of the students, adequate planning, compassion, and teacher collaboration are fundamental.

A study by Webster (1993) concerning nonviolence indicated that the key is not just acquisition of certain problem-solving skills, but that attention must be paid to the reality of people's lives and the anger that exists in schools and the world. As Webster noted, most school-based programs and curricula are implemented with no significant complementary efforts to address aspects of youths' environments. This could help explain why practices restricted to the school may not have the intended outcome of reducing undesired approaches to conflict. Well-designed curricula could be useful components of more comprehensive community-wide strategies. Webster's suggestions of school-based conflict resolution methods include: (a) addressing long-term change, (b) studying interventions, (c) looking at questionable assumptions that lack empirical support, and (d) addressing the use of programs as a political cover to distract communities from an examination of the structural determinants of violence.

To appease the call for accountability by the public, conflict resolution programs, when school-based, are intuitively appealing and politically expedient (Devine, 1996). However, if some youths engage in violence because of a lack of respect and a lack of legitimate opportunities for growth, a program on conflict resolution, absent concomitant attention to greater structural changes, will not likely have any lasting effect on their behavior.

In order to create curricula and environments that are conducive to nonviolence, many researchers have indicated that community involvement is possibly one of the key factors. According to Blum and Rinehart (1997), when parents, students, and the school work together, it becomes possible to accomplish great things. As explained in detail in the following section,

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effective partnerships among schools, families, and communities are beneficial to all, and especially the students.

Parental and Community Involvement

At the foundation of a disciplined school is an involved community and supportive parents. Sergiovanni (1994) stated, "Community building must become the heart of any school improvement effort" (p. 87). Frosch and Gropper (1999) suggested that parents and community are crucial partners in efforts to create a discipline plan and they need ongoing communication about what is going on in the classroom, as well as suggestions for ways to communicate with their own children concerning discipline. Teachers, parents, students, and the school community can play an important role in changing the school environment. By taking a proactive approach and with all groups working together, the community and parents have the opportunity to create a climate that fosters respect and potential friendships among students who might otherwise remain apart (Levin, 1994).

According to some researchers (Battistich et al., 1989; Kohn, 1990), the rationale for promoting parent and community involvement was evident from a 1981 elementary school project called Child Development Project in Oakland, California. This program worked with eight school districts to promote students' social, moral, and intellectual development and incorporated input from the community. The schools reported that the more the community was involved, the more students reported enjoying school and seeing learning as something valuable in its own right. These students also tended to be more concerned about others and more skilled at resolving conflict than those students who reported not feeling as much a part of the community. Discipline tended to be less of a problem at these schools (Battistich et al.). Kohlberg (1975) observed that positive changes in student behavior could be attributed directly "to the sense of community that emerged from the democratic process in which angry conflicts are resolved through fairness and community decision" (p. 99).

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Educators complain that the parents of "problem" students, particularly those from lower-class neighborhoods, refuse to get involved in school-based intervention efforts to curb negative discipline interaction or create preventive plans (Duke & Meckel, 1980). Parents sometimes are intimidated by visits to school administrators and other times are resentful that the school only calls them in times of crisis. Harmin (1995) stated that when parents actually become involved in the resolution of behavior problems, many educators believe the likelihood of problem recurrence is greatly reduced. Ongoing communication, procedures, and rules among schools, homes and community are critical. Williams and Chavkin (1989) agreed that frequent, meaningful communication leads to better rapport among all parties and helps to promote the children's academic learning and social and emotional development.

As parents, grandparents, and community members participate more actively in school programs, the positive effects of role modeling becomes apparent. The pride and school spirit of both students and the community encourage students to apply peer pressure in following rules to make school a better place.

Rules Make the Difference

Rules are agreements between two parties on the degree of appropriate and inappropriate behavior conducive to a setting. When students are learning and enjoy being in school, the evidence of progress is indicative of good enforcement of rules and structure. It is a common viewpoint among educators that one of the first procedures that the teacher can use for a sound discipline plan is to establish the guidelines needed in the classroom for acceptable behavior. It is of inestimable relevance to let the students know at the beginning of school how the classroom will be managed (Lee et al., 1998). This procedure precludes students' being torn between what will and will not be acceptable behavior. Rules often originate from the teacher's anticipating problems in the functioning of the classroom and establishing rules and routines to circumvent

their occurrences. The establishment of rules and guidelines assure that the students know specifically what is expected of them.

Role-playing is a common practice for the demonstration of appropriate rules and guidelines. Paul and Elder (2001) suggested that students should participate in role-playing sessions to demonstrate rules, because students will not always grasp the meaning and intent of rules that have been conveyed to them. Just as students understand and misunderstand subject content in varying degrees, so do they understand and interpret rules differently. Thus, it is necessary to teach the significance, intent, meaning, and consequences of classroom regulations. For most rules, especially with older students, the lessons may simply involve displaying and discussing them with an ongoing use of appropriate cues. For younger students and complex rules, lessons that are more elaborate may be necessary. A study of several urban high schools determined that students who said they felt the most involved in school rule-making tended to report having fewer behavior problems (McPartland & McDill, 1977).

A key element in the encouragement of productive student behavior is to create a feeling among students that they share in the operation of schools. Educators are sometimes threatened because they seem to consider student involvement in rule making will lead students to challenge the teacher's authority in other areas, such as subject-matter knowledge and evaluation. Students generally realize, though, that teachers have greater expertise in these areas. School and classroom rules, as well as the consequences for disobeying them, should be decided collaboratively among teachers, students, administrators, and parents.

In a DeCocco and Richards (1994) study of urban, suburban, and rural high schools, students expressed a strong interest in helping with classroom planning, school policymaking, and discipline. Eighty-one percent of the students claimed that their most violated right was teacher respect for their opinions. The authors questioned thousands of high school students in New York and California and discovered that less than one student in five noted he or she had a voice in the resolution of problems in which he or she personally was involved. Hall posters

displaying rules and the consequences for disobeying them can aid in reinforcing students' awareness of rules. Annual notices of rules can be mailed to all parents. Many schools print rules in student handbooks or publish them in local newspapers. Some schools produce a film about school rules that is used to stimulate community awareness and orient the elementary and transfer students. The establishment and visualization of the rules are indicative of a positive school atmosphere and structure. Rules can be visual and/or verbal yet they are only a small component of a school's overall climate.

School Climate

A healthy school climate contributes to effective teaching, learning, and fewer discipline problems. A fundamental challenge facing the faculty and staff each day is to promote and nurture a wholesome and learning-supportive climate throughout the school. Firm, consistent, and continuous commitment to the students and their education is the foundation upon which educational elements combine to create a climate inclusive of structure and rules.

An empowering school climate strengthens and promotes mutual trust, acceptance of individuality, and school discipline. According to Burbach and Kauffman (1997), educators' first responses to escalating discipline problems and violence should not be to install metal detectors, implement zero-tolerance programs, or increase the number of security guards, but to create a climate of civility in the classroom.

Discipline and climate are ever-changing factors in the lives of the people who work and learn in school. Walker (1995) suggested that getting students involved with beautifying their building and school grounds help create a feeling of school and community ownership. Showing care for the premises by quickly repairing vandalism, for example, can discourage further vandalism (Walker). In order to implement change in school climate, instruments for data collection on the climate can help schools make informed and meaningful changes for the better (Freiberg, 1998).

Furtwengler and Konnert (1982) proposed that the climate components of discipline, organization, and effectiveness include three major orientations: (a) the orientation of the faculty toward the school as a source of the discipline problem, (b) the orientation of the staff and others toward the school's responsibility for improving discipline, and (c) the orientation of those involved in discipline problem solving. The authors stated that these three elements reflect attitudes concerning discipline. The school needs to minimize its own contribution to discipline problems by keeping the number of students in classrooms small, thus avoiding overcrowding, addressing student's needs, and effectively communicating to students and parents.

According to Huber (1993), regardless of the source of the discipline problem, school personnel need to determine how responsible they are for improving discipline. The belief by faculty and administrators that they are bringing about an improvement in school discipline is the key indicator linked to staff effort toward improving discipline. A high sense of responsibility for improving discipline is usually associated with a commitment to action. If a school staff believes it has this responsibility, and is committed to action, the incidents of inappropriate behavior may decrease. Finally, the level of shared responsibility can be increased through the faculty's participation in goal setting. Evertson, Emmer, Sanford, and Clements (1998) stated that the problem of school discipline is a shared problem; participants must achieve a sense of personal responsibility for improving the situation before there will be any real change in a school.

A climate in which faculty, students, administrators, and parents agree they can produce positive change and exert some control over external events is a climate conducive to improving school discipline (Freiberg, 1998). Once climate is addressed in a school, the individual behaviors of students can be examined.

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Changing Inappropriate Behavior

When teachers and administrators look at the misbehaviors of students, they face a difficult task in selecting the appropriate punishment for unwanted behavior. To change inappropriate behaviors, Chapman (1979) stated that educators need to look at previous behaviors as well as the students' developmental stages.

The process of changing inappropriate behavior is complex. The major steps in the reformation process are the issues of problem analysis, the creation of a desire to improve, and the establishment of a contract for appropriate behavior (Chapman, 1979; Galloway, Ball, Bloomfield, & Seyd, 1982; Watkins & Wagner, 1987). Kindsvatter (1978), Glasser (1969), and Furtwengler and Konnert (1982) suggested that the techniques used to help a student change his or her behavior must be designed to fit each student's problem and must help the student adjust and cope--not just control the individual. Deibert and Harmon (1973) listed the first step in the process of changing behavior as the careful and controlled observation of the behavior as it is occurring. Accurate assessment of inappropriate situations and behaviors are important.

Madsen and Madsen (1983) stated that problem identification is a logical place to begin when attempting to change behavior. Assessing who had the problem requires the teacher to decide if the problem belonged to the student or the teacher; then a decision must be made how to proceed with the situation. Often both have a problem--the child, an inappropriate behavior that needs to be changed--the teacher, the responsibility to do something about changing it.

Creating within students the desire to change is a major issue. Muro and Kottman (1995) suggested that a problem should receive direct attention and analysis, including how a student perceives the payoff for his or her behavior. Developing this desire appears to be important in the process of changing behavior. According to Glasser (1969), the establishment of a behavior contract with students that clearly identifies joint areas of responsibility and structural contingencies is the best method for improving student behavior. Watkins and Wagner (1987)

reported the need to help students establish the capacity to stay with a task by using contracts with structural contingencies such as rewards and punishments.

Researchers have stated that the stages of growth, moral development, and appropriate mental health provide the cornerstone for students' learning and their ability to respond to situational factors (Glasser, 1969; Kohlberg, 1970). The authors argued that students should react to situational factors by assuming personal responsibility. Students should make judgments and decisions based on their own feelings of justice. Piaget (1932) urged educators to design educational opportunities that help students learn to do things not because obedience is demanded or because others will approve, but because they have their own standards of what is appropriate and inappropriate. Hunt (1978) suggested that a student's conceptual level is the key factor to consider in determining the instructional approach toward discipline. He relayed that students need a structured and directed approach; whereas others can best learn appropriate behaviors through a little direction and guidance.

Hersey and Blanchard (1977) provided a framework for determining how much autonomy and structure people might need in different situations. Their work indicated that the more immature a group is in its ability to accomplish things as a group, the more structured or custodial the discipline needs to be. They argued that as group members learn to act appropriately, their need for a more humanistic and mature approach to discipline would emerge. When examining the changing of inappropriate behavior, research is becoming increasingly directed at class and school size and their effects on student behavior and discipline problems. Smaller classes allow teachers to focus more time on instruction and less on classroom discipline.

Class Size Can Make a Difference in Classroom Management

According to Barker and Gump (1994) and Heck, Larsen, and Marcoylides (1990), schools with smaller class sizes are more easily managed and have fewer discipline problems

than classrooms with large numbers of students. A consistent finding in ecological psychology has been that the presence of fewer students in behavior settings results in their conviction that demands to participate in the activities are less alienated; they also experience a sense of belonging and self-efficacy. The students display positive behavioral effects in being more punctual, attending class more regularly, and participating in more school activities (Huber, 1993; Sergiovanni, 1994).

Noguera (1995) stated that smaller classes especially benefit children from minority and low-income backgrounds--those who need more support. Results from Wisconsin revealed that low-income first graders in small classes scored significantly higher in reading and math than similar students in larger classes (Noguera). According to Skiba and Peterson (1999), suspensions in three suburban Sacramento school districts were down 19% since the state of California lowered class sizes in grades kindergarten to three.

Gottfredson and Gottfredson (1985) conducted systematic analyses of the Safe Schools Study that culminated in their paper, *Victimization in Schools*. They used an organizational perspective with descriptive and analytical survey techniques to reach their conclusions about the nature and causes of school violence. Recommendations from the researchers included reducing school size and reorganizing instruction so teachers could deal more closely with a smaller number of students. Raywid (1997) found an empirical link between school size and disruption. She found that smaller schools have fewer discipline problems, lower dropout rates, higher student participation levels, and steadier academic progress.

According to Gettinger (1988), Pate-Bain conducted a study in Nashville, Tennessee called Student/Teacher Ratio (STAR) in which researchers studied 3,000 kindergarten- through 3rd-grade students from selected rural, suburban, and urban Tennessee schools from 1985 through 1988. In this $12 million study, students were randomly assigned to classes labeled small (13 to 17) as compared to regular sized classes (18 to 25). The STAR Project revealed that students in smaller classes consistently scored higher on achievement and basic skills tests, with

fewer class disruptions and discipline problems. Funded by grants from the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, Pate-Bain and her colleagues later researched records of 10th graders who had participated in the original STAR Project (NEA Today Online, 1998). The percentage of small-class students who had been held back before grade 10 was half that of their counterparts in regular groups (17 % versus 30% to 44 %). According to Pate-Bain, this is a strong predictor that small-class students are more likely to complete high school (NEA Today Online).

Teachers with smaller classes know their students on a more personal level. With this increased knowledge, teachers are better able to intervene in situations that could involve bullying.

Bullying Is More Than Horseplay

With today's increased communication, problems arising from situations such as bullying are more openly discussed. The literature suggests that many types of abuse can happen at school and a common one is when one student appears to be bullying another one. Administrators and teachers need to understand school bullying and find ways to deal with it and assist students to learn to squelch this behavior. This would be a definite step in the right direction for a peaceful classroom conducive to learning.

Bullying in schools is an international problem for which there appears to be no standard definition, either in popular or research literature. In most cases, bullying is interpreted as direct physical aggression, as well as indirect behavior such as verbal threats. Bullying has recently become the focus of psychological research (Olweus, 1991, 1993; Pepler & Craig, 1995; Stephenson & Smith, 1989; Tattum, 1989; Ziegler & Pepler, 1993). Studies indicate that a large proportion of children are involved in bullying at school (Besag, 1989; Olweus, 1991, 1993; Perry, Kusel, & Perry, 1988; Tattum; Ziegler & Pepler). Between 7% and 34% of school-aged children are involved in bullying occasionally during the school term, in both the capacity of

bullies and as victims of bullying (Besag). According to Harachi, Catalano, and Hawkins (1999), studies have reported estimates ranging from 10% of third- through sixth-grade students who reported being chronically bullied by peers, to 29% of middle school students who reported engaging in bullying behavior in the past 30 days. In another study of middle and high school students, 75% reported being bullied by peers at some point over the course of their schooling (Hazler & Hoover, 1991).

These wide-ranging estimates reflect, in part, the varying definitions, age groups, and self-reporting by victims or bully perpetrators. Many articles refer to the work conducted by Olweus (1991) and make a general reference to the definition he used in his research. Olweus' definition clarifies two key elements of bullying: (a) that bullying behavior occurs repeatedly over time and (b) that there is a power imbalance between the bully and the victim. Hester (1989) relayed that bullies are a subset of aggressive children who seem to derive satisfaction from harming others, physically or psychologically, whereas other references use the term bullying as synonymous with aggressive behavior. Bullying is generally referred to as a childhood occurrence; however, the term is increasingly being used to refer to adult behavior as well.

The National Education Goals Panel (1993) stated as one of six educational goals, "By the year 2000, every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning" (p. 1). Although school violence has traditionally been defined as acts of assault, weapon carrying, and theft, the act of bullying was also included in the definition. The National School Safety Center (1984) was created by presidential mandate through a partnership with the US Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the US Department of Education. Findings from a study by Cowie and Sharp (1994) indicated that bullying problems in schools are determined by multiple factors: (a) neglect at home, (b) low self-esteem, (c) lack of social skills, and (d) aggressive behaviors.

According to Wartik (2001), schools that experience problems with bullying and violence should consider a parent intervention program like the one in Englewood, Colorado. The program, called "Bully-Proofing Your School" teaches parents strategies for uncovering abuse and helps them to teach their children to cope with problems from school. The strategies were: (a) talk to your child about his or her day, (b) know the signs of bullying, (c) recognize that the child cannot deal with the problem alone, (d) contact the school if situations arise, and (e) reassure your child (Wartik). As concerns about violence grow, some schools around the country have begun to adopt more anti-bullying practices at all levels.

Every day in newspapers across the country, one can read tragic accounts of bullying, violence, and deaths in schools. One response to the tragic school violence has been the adoption of stricter disciplinary codes, under the zero tolerance policy.

Zero Tolerance Policy Might Be a Solution

Increases in suspensions and expulsions for minor incidents have raised concerns about the fairness and effectiveness of zero tolerance discipline. As students prepare for the future, many school districts spend large amounts of resources and time to improve student achievement. It is doubtful that much can be accomplished without an environment in which students can be safe and attend classes without fear of violence. According to Sautter (1995), many schools are standing up to violence by trying everything from enacting new school suspension policies to adopting zero tolerance policies for possession of weapons, drugs, or for any kind of violent behavior. From its inception in the federal drug policy of the 1980s, zero tolerance has been intended primarily as a method of sending a message that certain behaviors will not be tolerated, by punishing both major and minor offenses severely (Noguera, 1995).

In 1994, then-President Bill Clinton signed the Gun-Free Schools Act, mandating a one year expulsion for possession of firearms in school. The Gun-Free Schools Act of 1994 mandates a 12-month expulsion for possession of a firearm and referral of law-violating students

to the criminal or juvenile justice system. It also requires that state law must authorize the chief administrative officer of each local school district to modify such expulsions on a case-by-case basis. Some districts have begun to implement permanent expulsion from the system for some offenses or to apply school suspension, expulsion, or transfer to behaviors that occur outside of school.

From the outset, zero tolerance disciplinary policies have created controversy. Across the nation, students have been, and continue to be, suspended or expelled for a host of relatively minor incidents (Gordon, Piana, & Keleher, 2000). After 10 years of implementation in some school districts and five years as national policy, some say that strict zero tolerance policies have made little significant contribution to reducing student misbehavior or improved school safety. Zero tolerance policies seem to be missing the crucial ability to identify the one time offender who wrecks havoc, inclusive of death. Although some states have reported decreases in weapon confiscations, these statistics are hard to interpret in the absence of data on student disruption and violence (Noguera, 1995). Studies have typically shown that between 30% and 40% of all students suspended are repeat offenders, suggesting that the at-risk students targeted by zero tolerance may not, in fact, be getting the message (Costenbader & Markson, 1994).

McAndrews (2001) offered several recommendations for state officials and local school boards to use as they formulate a zero tolerance policy. According to McAndrews, a sound zero tolerance policy should include: (a) clearly defining what constitutes a weapon, a drug, or an act of misbehavior; (b) specifying clear consequences for misbehavior, with consistency of application; (c) allowing for student hearings and complying with state due-process laws; (d) integrating comprehensive health-education programs that include drug and alcohol curricula; (e) tailoring the policy to local needs; and (f) reviewing the policy each year.

Because of the magnitude of the number of discipline referrals that the average school processes, an accurate, up-to-date data support system is necessary. In order for a school to be

efficient in keeping track of students' discipline records, they must develop a data support system that is useful and takes a minimal amount of time to maintain.

A Data Support System for Discipline Records Is Imperative

Administrators who follow orderly guidelines and policies and who use an accurate data support system with standardized information can make record keeping and punishment consistent. Furtwengler and Konnert (1982) stated that teachers and administrators without the benefit of information of previous actions of a student cannot accurately assess the situation or give appropriate consequences for the student. Information related to discipline permeates the school organization. The selection of useful information from among the available data and the classification of that information are extremely important. Educators can use information to appropriately determine the propensity for behaviors to reoccur, the circumstances in which they occur, and the place. Patterns, or the lack of such patterns, can then be observed in the data.

According to Duke and Meckel (1980), keeping data permit school personnel to concentrate on priority problems, anticipate future concerns, combat rumors, and set realistic objectives for the improvement of student behavior. Despite the value of accurate data on student behavior problems, many administrators have difficulty maintaining systematic records beyond student attendance and suspension statistics. Faced with growing crime problems, schools in large cities are being compelled to ensure that incidents are more efficiently recorded. Some Knoxville, Tennessee schools maintain special "incident reporting desks" where behavior problems are catalogued and analyzed (S. Wright, personal communication, November 15, 2001).

Unless specific procedures for data collection are spelled out and individuals are assigned to be in charge of the process, it is doubtful whether school officials will be in a position to know if student behavior is improving, worsening, or remaining stable. It is essential that data collection be made as efficient as possible. Standardized forms developed with input from those

who must fill them out can facilitate collection and analysis of data. Review of collected data should be shared with teachers and others in the school on a regular basis. Time should be allocated so that data can be reviewed and suggestions can be made about how to improve school discipline. According to Duke and Meckel (1980), data on student behavior should be used in the formulation of school-wide objectives related to improvement in discipline.

School improvement planning incorporates all aspects of a school. The principal can encourage a sense of ownership of school programs and policies by using collected data to share information. The principal, as school leader, sets the tone within his or her building, and is a major factor in school-wide discipline.

Can the Principal Be a "Pal" in School Discipline Matters?

The principal plays an important leadership role in establishing school discipline by effective administration and by personal example. As instructional leaders, principals must promote teaching and assist with practices for effective discipline. Principals of well-disciplined students are usually highly visible models. According to Duke (1999) principals should engage in "management by walking around," greeting students and teachers and informally monitoring possible problem areas. What makes an effective school leader? According to Day (2000), a good principal is one who can balance a variety of pressures while never losing sight of his or her values and who inspires and serves the school community. In a 1998 study of 12 principals, Day related that principals' leadership consisted of having vision and articulation, ordering priorities, getting others to go with them, constantly reviewing what they are doing, and holding onto things they value. Among the duties of a principal, discipline of students is paramount. Day stated that school discipline components should include a climate of mutual respect, an environment conducive to learning, and steps to ensure the safety of students.

Effective principals are respected and liked rather than feared by students. They can communicate steadfast consideration and respect for students; yet adhere firmly to the school's

discipline program. In a 1998 study, Blasé and Blasé interviewed more than 800 teachers from public elementary, middle level, and high schools in various regions of the United States to ask their perspectives of effective instructional leadership and their views of discipline. They used open-ended questionnaires and asked the teachers to describe in detail principals' characteristics or strategies, behaviors, attitudes, and goals that influence the school environment, both negatively and positively. According to Blasé and Blasé (1999), principals who are power oriented, and who want to control teachers with bureaucratic "snooping" are not effective. The supportive, inquiry-oriented leader who encourages collegiality and reflective professional development, and assists staff in discipline matters is more successful.

The principal is the ultimate student of education.   He or she should incorporate research, data, curriculum, programs, time, and emotion into a melting pot of education. As every discipline plan does not work in every situation, the common threads among those are key factors to success.

Summary

The school classroom is frequently plagued by misbehaviors that disrupt the flow of activities and interfere with learning. Well-disciplined schools tend to be those that place school-wide emphasis on the importance of learning and make use of practices that assist with discipline problems. Too much classroom time is taken up with activities other than academic instruction, and discipline problems are responsible for a significant portion of this lost time. Many educators and students are gravely concerned about disorder and danger in school environments, and with good reason. Although research has shown that lack of discipline is one of the most serious problems facing the nation's educational system, several barriers stand in the way of conquering this "albatross" that is around the neck of the school system.

It is clear that parental and community involvement is necessary. Recent major legislation such as the Goals 2000: Educate America Act places parental involvement as a

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national priority (National Education Goals Panel, 1993). Researchers have generally found that well-disciplined schools are those that have a high level of communication and partnership with the communities they serve. These schools have parental involvement in school functions and communities are kept informed of school goals and activities. Gottfredson (1989) found that increasing parent involvement is a critical element in improving order in troubled schools.

Commitment of all staff in establishing and maintaining appropriate student behavior as an essential precondition of learning is a crucial component of a successful discipline plan. Rules, sanctions, and procedures are developed with input from students and are made known to everyone in the school and the home. Researchers (Ambrose & Gibson, 1995) found that student participation in developing and reviewing school discipline programs creates a sense of ownership. Widespread dissemination of clearly stated rules and procedures assures that students, parents, and staff understand what is and what is not acceptable.

It is also vital to address the school climate and how it affects school-wide discipline. A warm social climate, characterized by a concern for students as individuals, is typical of well-disciplined schools. Teachers and administrators take an interest in the personal goals, achievements, and problems of students and support them in their academic and extracurricular activities. Some suggestions were school teams and climate innovations, such as school pride campaigns and expanded extracurricular activities.

Changing inappropriate behaviors and teaching misbehaving students general social skills such as cooperation, self-awareness, and consideration for others can help diffuse volatile situations. According to Cecilia Rouse of Princeton University (Evertson et al., 1998), reduced class size enhances communication between parents and teachers. She reported that parents with children in smaller classes follow-up with their teachers more frequently and on a sustained basis.

The challenges of detecting bullying in the classroom suggest that raising teachers' awareness about bullying may be important to increase the frequency of teacher intervention in

bullying interactions. Raising teacher awareness is only part of the solution to reducing bullying problems. Schools must also adopt a perspective for prevention and intervention of bullying problems.

According to Skiba and Peterson (1999), local school districts have broadened the mandate of zero tolerance to include a variety of offenses including weapons, drugs and alcohol, fighting, threats, or swearing. Although various data support systems are available for purchase, research has indicated that the most effective school staffs have adapted practices to meet the needs of their particular schools. Standardized forms and time to record the behavior problems have been addressed as major challenges of a data support system.

Even in school environments with excellent preventive discipline plans, problems still arise and must be addressed. Principals should take responsibility for dealing with serious infractions, but they should encourage teachers to handle routine classroom discipline problems. Administrators should assist teachers to enhance their classroom management and discipline skills by arranging for staff development programs as needed. Administrators and teachers need to intervene quickly when discipline problems arise and not allow behavior that violates school or classroom rules to go unchecked.

No one wants to see schools become armed fortresses; yet, a recent study released by the National Institute of Education pointed out that junior high schools could be more dangerous for students than the streets are (Wartik, 2001). To change this, it will take administrators, teachers, parents, students, and communities working together to make schools the safe places they should be for learning.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Focus of the Inquiry

The focus of my inquiry was to examine the perceptions of administrators, tenured teachers, and parents about school discipline practices and solicit ideas for improvements. The study was conducted in 20 schools in East Tennessee concerning discipline practices in elementary, intermediate, and middle schools, focusing on grades 5 through 8. Administrators, tenured teachers, and parents were interviewed and asked open-ended questions formulated from the following queries:

1. What are the views of administrators, tenured teachers, and parents regarding current discipline practices?

2. What factors, as perceived by the participants, play a role in well-organized school discipline practices?

3. What aspects are perceived as barriers to effective discipline practices?

4. What ideas can administrators, tenured teachers, and parents contribute that might enhance effective discipline practices?

I also attempted to determine if the views of administrators, tenured teachers, and parents were consistent with published research on school discipline practices.

Fit of the Inquiry Paradigm to the Focus

Because this study was an attempt to identify the participants' perceptions of school discipline practices, it was determined that a qualitative approach would be most appropriate. The purpose of qualitative research is to seek answers to questions that stress how social experience is created (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). Open-ended interviews were conducted

because they allowed for maximum use of ideas, thoughts, and memories in the participants' own words rather than words of the researcher (Reinharz, 1992).

Participants

In order to optimize the results of the study, snowball sampling was used to seek professionals with expertise in discipline plans (Gall, Borg, & Gall, 1996). The participants were administrators, tenured teachers, and parents associated with 20 schools in East Tennessee concerning discipline practices in elementary, intermediate, and middle schools, focusing on grades 5 through 8. All administrators from the schools were afforded the opportunity to participate in the study. I phoned the administrator at each chosen school to get his or her recommendation of a list of teachers who represented a maximum variation in their discipline practices and a broad spectrum of parents who might be agreeable to participate in the study. I then contacted each potential participant in person or by phone to explain the purpose of the study and, if agreeable, to set up a time and place for our interview.

Successive Phases of the Inquiry

The first phase of my research was to receive authorization from the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A). Obtaining permission from the directors of schools and the administrators was the next phase (see Appendices B and C). I developed general interview guides (see Appendices D, E, and F) and pilot tested the instruments with several administrators, teachers, and parents. No suggestions were made for revisions to the interview guides. A tape recorder was used to gain insights into the questioning process and to check for unbiased data in the piloted instrument. Initially the exact number of participants to be interviewed was not known; however, redundancy was reached with 63 participants. The point of redundancy is when no more new information is presented (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Therefore, the number of participants in the study was determined when there was a deficiency

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of new information. The research continued until all participants had been interviewed and data were collected.

Instrumentation

The qualitative approach to this study allowed me to describe in depth the perceptions and thoughts expressed by the tenured teachers, administrators and parents concerning school discipline practices. The primary data sources used were interviews and open-ended questions (See Appendices D, E, and F.). The data collected through the open-ended questions were reported in the participants' own words through the process of audio taped recordings and transcriptions. The text of the interviews and questions served as the primary source for interpreting and analyzing data. The interview is more than a session of questions asked by the interviewer that stimulate answers from the interviewees. The role of the interviewer is vital. The role of the interviewer is to make it possible for the person being interviewed to bring the interviewer into his or her world. The quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer. How the interviewer sees his or her role and the participant's role and how the interviewer constructs questions and conducts the interview make the interviewer the most crucial tool in the research process (Patton, 1990).

To be trustworthy, qualitative studies must satisfy the constructs of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To ensure trustworthiness, all interview questions were piloted and a panel of administrators, teachers and parents were asked to determine if questions were appropriate. I kept the names of schools, teachers, administrators, and parents confidential and all names of persons and places throughout the study have been replaced with pseudonyms to protect the privacy of participants and to assure their continued anonymity.

Peer debriefing was used to ensure that personal bias had been identified and eliminated from the collected data. The peer debriefer assumed a role in challenging ideas and reflecting on

the methodology. The person who consented to be the peer debriefer is an assistant principal of a middle school in an adjoining county who has a doctor in education degree and is familiar with school discipline as well as data collection.

The technique used to establish the dependability, confirmability, and trustworthiness of the data was an inquiry auditor. All data and instruments were released to the auditor. If the process for collecting data was adequate, the investigation would be dependable. Lincoln and Guba (1985) referred to the auditor as having the responsibility for ensuring that transcriptions are accurate, as well as inspecting the data and all of the analyses derived from the data for accuracy. The auditor chosen for this study was selected because of her experience and expertise in working with other doctoral students.

Data Collection

I used a general interview guide because it allowed me to provide a common set of topics from which data were collected to determine exact working or sequencing of interview questions (Patton, 1990). Observations and interviews of each participant were included in the data collection. A journal, notes, and the interviews were collected along with tapes to be transcribed. The qualitative method of gathering rich description of school discipline practices afforded me the opportunity to look at similarities and differences, as well as points of uniqueness, as data were collected.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed by a procedure known as inductive analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Inductive analysis works well when the purpose of the study is exploratory and descriptive (Huberman & Miles, 1994). All interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Using the transcriptions, I began the subprocess of unitization (Lincoln & Guba). According to Lincoln and Guba:

Units are single pieces of information that stand by themselves; that is, they are interpretable in the absence of any additional information. A unit may be a simple sentence or an extended paragraph, but, in either case, the test of its unitary character is that if any portion of the unit were to be removed, the remainder would be seriously compromised or rendered uninterpretable. (p. 203)

After the transcriptions were unitized, the process of categorization began (Patton, 1990). Categorization is the process of sorting units into categories with similar characteristics. Data were gathered and coded into the Non-numerical Unstructured Data Indexing Searching and Theory-building (NUD.IST) software. The NUD.IST program was used to organize, analysis, and categorize data.

Because of the nature of the study, I sought to enhance the accuracy of the themes by providing the supporting data for those themes in the participants' own words. The primary data of indepth, open-ended interviews were quotations. What people say, what they think, how they feel, what they have done, and what they know--these are the things one can learn (Patton, 1983).

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF DATA

The purpose of this study was to investigate common threads of effective school discipline practices as perceived by administrators, tenured teachers, and parents of students in 20 schools in East Tennessee. I attempted to determine if the views of the study's 63 participants aligned with the published literature on school discipline practices. Specifically, the study explored whether the perceptions of administrators, tenured teachers, and parents of students in grade five through eight differed regarding current discipline practices, factors that play a role in well-organized school discipline practices, barriers to effective discipline practices, and to solicit ideas that might further enhance effective discipline practices. Each of the 63 participants voluntarily participated in a qualitative indepth interview.

The study used the qualitative method of data collection of open-ended indepth interviews with multiple participants at each site. I developed and pilot tested general interview guides with administrators, tenured teachers, and parents. These interviews, as well as the pilot interviews, took place in the fall of 2002.

In order to optimize the results of the study, snowball sampling was used to seek professionals with expertise in discipline plans (Gall et al., 1996). I initially contacted the administrator at each chosen school to get his or her recommendation of a list of teachers who represented a maximum variation in their discipline practices, and a list of parents who might be agreeable to participate in the study. As I interviewed the administrators, tenured teachers, and parents, they would sometimes recommend other participants who they suggested could add information to my study. I contacted and included some of those who were recommended in the interview process, thus constituting the "snowball" method.

Participants were selected who were likely to be information-rich concerning perceptions of school discipline practices and to have ideas to enhance school discipline practices. All

participants were willing to share their views and suggestions concerning school discipline practices.

Accessibility of participants varied. Administrators and teachers were generally easily accessible and willing to grant interviews. It was more difficult to accommodate parents' work schedules but they worked diligently to participate and were eager to share their perceptions and ideas.

In this chapter, I have presented the themes and related findings that came from interviews with administrators, tenured teachers, and selected parents of students in grades 5 through 8 from 20 schools in East Tennessee. The interviews took place in offices, classrooms, workrooms, and teachers' lounges. I used a tape recorder along with a notebook to record jottings and notes from each interview.

Introduction of the Participants

The motivation for this study was based on my concerns as an administrator as to the amount of time disruptive students take away from classroom instruction and the increasing number of disruptive behavior problems. Indepth interviews were conducted with 63 participants: 21 administrators, 22 tenured teachers, and 20 parents.

The administrators' experiences in teaching and administration ranged from 8 to 35 years. The compositions of the schools varied from kindergarten to grade 8, intermediate, kindergarten to grade 5, and middle schools; however, this study focused on grades 5 through 8. For the purpose of anonymity and to protect those involved, all participants and schools were given fictitious names.

The 22 tenured teachers had a wide range of experience from 5 to 31 years. They were cooperative and excited to share their perceptions of effective school discipline practices that they had used to identify barriers and to give ideas for improvements to enhance current discipline practices.

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The 20 parents were cooperative and seemed pleased that they had been chosen to participate in the interviews. Their children were in fifth through eighth grades. They were quick to elaborate on their experiences as well as their children's experiences regarding discipline practices.

Administrators' Interviews

The majority of administrators seemed eager to share their perceptions about discipline practices. Several commented that they had many books and journals on the topic of student discipline and had attended workshops to try to curtail this time-consuming problem that demands so many of their workdays.

One administrator, Mrs. Cole from Carter Intermediate School with 270 students, related that she felt that parents were the key to successful school discipline when she said:

> Parents who are involved in their child's daily school life have a better understanding of what is acceptable and expected in a school with good order and discipline. Many parents are distressed to find that the classroom teacher cannot teach because of the disorderly and chaotic behavior of a few students.

When asked if Mrs. Cole had suggestions for involving more parents at school, she recommended, "I would suggest a policy requiring parents to attend school with their students as an alternative to suspension and a commitment from the community to support early childhood intervention, before- and after-school care, and crime prevention programs."

Another principal, Mrs. Flowers, from Flagstaff Middle School with 560 students in grades 6, 7, and 8, gave these suggestions as strategies to involve parents in preventing disruptive behavior:

> Let parents contribute to a strong and viable student recognition program for good behavior and practices. Every opportunity should be taken to reinforce the positive factors that contribute to the learning environment. Acts of student kindness and respect should be visible on school bulletin boards, in classroom displays, in school newsletters, at assemblies, and at year-end awards. Parents, grandparents, and community businesses could contribute and have a sense of helping when they participate with incentives, praise, and recognition of this type of program. Additionally, we require all students to document their positive behaviors in a portfolio. The portfolio may include evidence of

what the student has done to improve the school climate through such indicators as good study habits, positive team spirit, and participation in a service learning project or school pride activity.

Mr. Barnes, principal of Berry Elementary School, which has 550 students in grades kindergarten through 5th made a point concerning the importance of parental involvement:

> We have a "conflict cycle model" that we have used to teach our teachers, staff, parents, and students how to keep stressful situations from escalating. An aggressive student under stress creates these same feelings in peers or adults. People who are not trained to recognize these feelings will act on them and mirror the aggressive student's behavior. Then the conflict cycle whirls into retaliation. Most problems originate from problems outside of school, but escalate to violence because participants cannot disengage from confrontations.

Mr. Noel, principal of Nice Primary School a K-5 school with 475 students, has been in education for over 30 years. I heard him speak about school safety and the importance of parental involvement and listening to students. Some advice that he shared included:

> Beginning in elementary school, we must give all children basic training in discipline, but not the boot-camp variety. Teachers should use naturally occurring discipline problems to teach self-discipline and create cultures of nonviolence. We should teach our students to be "peacemakers" with their friends and other students in the classroom.

Practices That Some Administrators Use

The 21 administrators interviewed used many practices to encourage good student behaviors and discourage inappropriate ones. Most of these educators agreed that students need a sense of belonging to the school community and need to know that their principal and teachers believe they are valuable members.

Mrs. Lanier, principal of Lotts Elementary, which has 645 students, uses a program she calls HUG:

> I read about this program called the Human Understanding and Growth Program (HUG). The teachers meet in weekly workshops and share ideas for their small groups of students that they mentor. The curriculum places emphasis on decision-making skills, topics students select to discuss, and displaying good manners and good attitudes.

Another administrator, Mr. Justus from Just Great Intermediate School with 521 students

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enrolled, uses a program called Partners Acting as Instructional Resources (PAIR):

> We have practiced The Partners Acting as Instructional Resources, which is a program that teams volunteer faculty members with selected students who have exhibited some characteristic (attendance, behavior, academics, attitude, etc.) that the administration feels could hinder the student from reaching their (sic) potential. Contact between the faculty member and student are determined by the pair. This could be called "big brother/big sister" format which gives the student an adult advocate to talk with and offer guidance.

One middle school administrator, Mrs. McClain of Middleton Middle with a student

population of 770, stated:

> Schools with good discipline have a common mission, strategies and support the value of good citizenship from students. We use Anger Management Seminars to teach socially appropriate skills to help students deal with anger in a positive, constructive manner. The curriculum recognizes that violent behavior is due to a loss of control. Trained student and faculty facilitators guide participants through the anger management curriculum, which offers students a wide variety of alternative options to express and deal with anger. Students who have been involved in a fight or a serious verbal altercation must attend this program. Other students may attend the seminar. A separate seminar is available in the evening for parents.

Mrs. Tenny, principal of Tuckleechee a kindergarten through grade 8 school with 690

students, told about their mentoring program:

> We trained student mediators who worked with faculty facilitators to assist students in resolving their complaints with other students. The peer mediators work for a mutually acceptable resolution that is signed by all involved parties. Students may volunteer for peer mediation or be mandated by the administration, in conjunction with our discipline plan, depending on the seriousness of the discipline infraction.

Mr. Adams, administrator of Allgood Middle School with 455 students, spoke about the

review committee that has improved discipline problems at the school:

> This group meets monthly to review student discipline issues and look for ways to improve discipline problems/practices. They publish a booklet yearly that shares some of their successful practices with their district and neighboring districts. The review committee includes students, staff, parents, and interested community members. In addition, our staff uses Harry Wong's videos and literature to set the framework for good behavior and rules.

Mrs. Hood, administrator of Howie Intermediate School with 579 students, related that

the staff has seen an improvement in the students' discipline because of these practices:

> We have a parental awareness campaign during orientation and parent-teacher conference

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days, through parent newsletters, and at PTA meetings. The goal is to increase parental awareness of discipline problems, point out the importance of parental involvement for program success, and encourage parental support of program goals. We have developed a whole-school bullying policy, implemented curricular measures, improved the school ground environment, empowered students through conflict resolution, and established peer counseling. We have increased adult supervision at key times such as recess, lunch, and changing classes.

Barriers to Discipline Practices

Mr. Roe, principal of Rogers Elementary School with 725 students, discussed a barrier

that he found at his school:

> A definite barrier we found was the lack of journals, books, and materials concerning discipline problems. So we started a parent library at school with comprehensive health education materials focused on prevention of intimidation, violence, alcohol, and other drug use. We found speakers from health professions to speak at parent meetings to give additional information.

Mrs.Goforth, principal of Golden Middle School with 580 students, related that one

barrier her staff experienced was lack of staff development to handle discipline problems. Her

solution was:

> Several faculty meetings a year are devoted totally to discipline issues. Student management practices are discussed at weekly mentoring sessions that were set up to assist new teachers. All teachers attended at least one workshop in the district or state on discipline practices and the PTA assisted with funds for this staff development.

Mr. Paige, principal of Powell Elementary School with 510 students, related that one of

his barriers is:

> The parents of the misbehaving students do not keep appointments made by the teachers or the principals, and this is the reason that more student violence, drugs, and bullying are in our schools today. Turning this picture around requires a partnership between the family and school. I have worked on this problem for years and it seems to be getting worse.

Mr. Dandy, principal from Danville Middle School with 788 students, stated that one of

the barriers that he has to work with each day is:

> Many children carry to school each morning a stack of accumulated stressors from the night before and the home life that they experience. For them, schools need to be a refuge where their lives can have balance and hope. We educators have a responsibility

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to try to stress-proof students against aggressive behavior and violence and encourage parents to assist us.

Administrators' Ideas to Enhance Effective Discipline Practices

Administrators were glad to share ideas that could enhance their discipline practices and were in the process of trying some of these ideas. The message seemed to be clear from all of them that the entire school needs to be cognizant of the discipline practices and be consistent in following through with the rules, procedures, and consequences. While several mentioned commercial programs that they use or plan to use in the future such as Canter's, Wong's, or HUG, they stressed that regardless of the program used, it should fit the needs of the school. If inappropriate or severe behaviors occur, then the consequences should be fair and consistent. All procedures should be evaluated and ongoing assessment of the practices should be continuous.

Administrators agreed that students should be praised and given rewards for good behaviors and for meeting goals. They emphasized the need for high expectations from all stakeholders. They stated that policies and rules should be discussed and posted the first days of school with all stakeholders having a voice in the discipline practices. They also stressed that students should have opportunities to be successful, and that teachers, administrators, and parents should give positive feedback to reinforce good behavior and academic challenges.

Themes That Emerged From Administrators' Interviews

Discipline practices and interventions used by the 21 administrators were shared and recorded. Several major themes emerged from data obtained from the interviews. The first theme was the importance of parental involvement. The second part of that theme was the significance of change in students' behavior when the parent was included. The last theme was that the most successful classrooms and schools were the ones that had well-established plans or discipline practices in place. All administrators interviewed expressed views that ranged from

discipline problems being slight to discipline infractions functioning as major problems in their schools.

All of the teachers interviewed shared a common voice that parents must be involved in school discipline practices for teachers and administrators to be successful when problems arise with students. Some indicated that when students know that their parents will be contacted and involved in the decisions made because of their misbehavior, disruptions seemed to be minimal. The teachers indicated they would like to see more parents volunteer and be more visible at school and indicated that they would like to see positive role models from the community, also.

Mrs. Montgomery, a teacher from Middleton Middle, stated:

When students know that their parents care about their school, and have high expectations for education and discipline situations, they nearly always respond in a positive manner. These are the students that are rarely written up for a discipline referral. We are so lucky to have so many students of this caliber, and only about 25 in our school that display real discipline issues. Parents should be involved in all aspects of their child's life, not just school. They should know who their [children's] friends are and the parents of their friends. The parents need to communicate with their children and help them establish goals.

Mr. Goins, a teacher from Golden Elementary, said he had very strong feelings about the effect of home involvement on students' behavior. He added:

Home involvement is more than attending PTA meetings or participation in fund raising activities. It is attending programs that all students are in and being a vocal supporter for the school, teachers, and administration. There needs to be open communication concerning discipline, rules, and procedures. Parental involvement is so valuable and can "make or break" a school. If teachers know that parents will be in favor of strict consequences for unacceptable behavior, I believe that students are more likely to make wise decisions about their actions.

Mrs. Ingle, a teacher from Intown Middle School, made the point that if more parents were involved, it could produce a more positive school image that could be proclaimed to the community. She explained:

If the parents and community knew and understood the mission of the school, I think the

problems of discipline could be minimal. Additionally, if the school has a strong discipline policy and it is communicated to the students and parents, I think the school has a definite advantage for a calmer school. When parents, students, and community people talk about a positive attitude and discipline plan, the overall perception of the school is higher.

Mr. King, a teacher from Kieger Intermediate School, stated that he thinks it is easier to get parents involved in intermediate and primary schools than in middle and high schools. He has worked in intermediate, middle, and high schools. He added:

If the parents become involved in supporting the school instead of trying to destroy it, I think we have won. If they support the academic programs, discipline program, and volunteer their time, I know they will project this attitude to their children. If a student thinks the parent is on the side of the school, they will be more likely to tell the truth about a discipline problem or their behavior.

Mr. Sanford, a teacher from Sunnyview Elementary, related that one of the major problems he sees the school facing concerning discipline problems is students bullying each other. He elaborated:

Parents need to talk to their children about the bullying problems in school today. I think they are often unaware of the severity of this problem. Teachers can work with students at the class level to develop class rules against bullying. Many programs encourage students to participate in role-playing exercises and assignments that can equip students to identify unacceptable bullying behaviors and alternative methods of interaction. These programs can assist victims and encourage all students to work to create a friendly school atmosphere where bullying will have harsh consequences.

Mrs. Union, a teacher from Uptown Middle School, said that she thinks bullying is almost at an epidemic stage in most schools, adding:

Bullying is a serious problem that can dramatically affect the ability of students to advance socially and academically. A comprehensive discipline plan that specifically addresses bullying behaviors and strict consequences is a step in the right direction. The plan must involve all students, parents, and school staff to ensure that all students can attend a safe and caring school. Direct bullying seems to increase through the elementary school years and peak in the middle school years. I think direct physical assault seems to decrease with age, but verbal abuse appears to remain constant. Students who engage in bullying behaviors seem to have a need to feel powerful and in control.

Mrs. Queen, a teacher from Quincy Intermediate School, stated that the characteristics of victims should be discussed and strong practices should be implemented to assist the students.

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She also stated:

> Students who are victims of bullying are typically insecure, cautious and suffer from low-esteem. They usually do not defend themselves or retaliate when a bully approaches. They may lack social skills and friends and are often socially isolated. Sometimes I have found in my classroom that the victims often fear school and consider it an unsafe and unhappy place.

Mr. Little, a teacher from Lotts Elementary, expressed that an anti-bullying program at his school seems to have reduced this problem significantly, stating:

> Teachers have participated in an awareness campaign, which was conducted during parent-teacher conference days, PTA meetings, parent newsletters, and student handbooks. The goals were to increase parental awareness of the bullying problem and to point out the importance of support of the school's anti-bullying program and the importance of parental involvement.

Mrs. Dearborn, a teacher from Danville Middle School, said that because of the increasing level of violence in United States schools, we should develop a wide range of approaches to combat the problems at schools. She further explained:

> The conspicuous presence of more adults, and particularly parents, has proven to be the most successful deterrent to violence, bullying, and discipline problems in our school in the last few years. We engage students in discussions about the differences in people and have students to help each other academically. Students are not as likely to bully other students that they help and get to know. When we schedule students and design class rosters, we try to spread out the students with major discipline problems and those that have been known to bully others.

Practices That Some Teachers Use

The 22 tenured teachers interviewed shared a variety of practices that they had used, read about, and hoped to use in the future to address student discipline problems. The teachers agreed that when practices and strategies are used to create schools where students feel safe and disruptions caused by bullying behavior are not permitted, a better school climate is produced where learning is maximized.

Mr. Johnson, a teacher from Just Great Intermediate School, shared some of the practices that he has found to be successful:

We have incorporated character education, called Character Counts into the curriculum and have worked very diligently through speakers, activities, newsletters, and promotions to make the students more aware of positive actions and words. We have activities to bolster students' self-esteem, pride in themselves and their culture, high expectations for themselves, and respect for one another. Although our students are only intermediate school age, we use the newspaper in the classroom to talk about stories where people are involved in violent acts and other people are not treated fairly. We discuss what a deep impact that rejection and violence can have on a person, family, and school.

Mrs. Fern, a teacher from Flagstaff Middle School, uses the curriculum and programs to change attitudes about bullying and inappropriate student behaviors. She explained:

Each Language Arts class establishes its motto and shares it with the other classes through poetry, art, music, and stories they write. We think this sets the tone for the classroom. We incorporate bullying prevention and positive behavior into reading, often selecting fables with morals about fairness and writing lessons that are shared with first and second grade classes. This is not a one or two lesson plan, it is an every day, all year practice. It must become a way of life for the teacher and the student. We have changed our curriculum to incorporate many cooperative learning activities and more group work.

Mr. Ingle, a teacher from Intown Middle School, shared ideas that he considered had improved school discipline and seemed to decrease bullying incidents:

We installed eight security cameras in the hallways, lunchroom, and the gym. This has drastically reduced fights and bullying in our school and we have an overall sense of calm in the halls. Our students say they feel safer and that is the important thing. Additionally, the teachers assist by trying to match amicable students in cooperative groups and encourage class spirit.

Another teacher from Intown Middle, Mrs. Iris, was very proud of a workshop she attended and shared anti-bullying practices from an inservice that the school implemented. She described what she learned:

At the beginning of school all students, parents, and teachers filled out an initial questionnaire designed to assess the extent of the bullying problem, the frequency of teacher intervention, and the knowledge of parents about their children's school experiences. The results of the questionnaires were shared with all participants at a school assembly. The results helped students, parents, and teachers become more aware of the extent of the problem, and served as a benchmark for an intervention progress. We monitored all referrals that indicated bullying was a factor, referred the students to mentoring sessions, and completed a follow-up every two weeks to record progress. We have evaluations of the school discipline practices at the end of each year.

Mr. Green, a teacher from Goforth Elementary, has seen a reduction in discipline

infractions because of a new program. He explained the program by saying:

> We have a Student Assistance Program that trains certain staff to recognize and deal with a host of discipline and crisis situations. The principal, several teachers, and counselors make up the team. All students know who the team members are, and programs are presented each six weeks to show alternatives to bullying and unacceptable behaviors.

Barriers to Discipline Practices

Mr. Keener, a teacher from Kieser Elementary, related that after 25 years in education he considers that all efforts must be unified and rules must be explicit concerning discipline practices. He explained:

> It must be a whole-school approach. Everyone in the school: teachers, parents, administrators, custodians, lunchroom personnel, office staff, and bus drivers must participate in efforts to address and extinguish the bullying behaviors. We need training and implementation. Letting the problem fester can have serious long-term consequences. Most teachers feel overwhelmed when they try to solve these discipline problems; that is why we need to have a whole-school approach. I think a barrier is that we are not proactive enough concerning these student discipline behaviors before a serious incident happens.

Mr. Burris, a teacher from Berry Elementary, suggested that one barrier is the physical structure of the school. Students have too many places that cannot be monitored effectively by the principal or teachers. He iterated:

> The building is on two levels and we only have two cameras at each end of the hall and all the students know where the "blind spots" are, so that is where the name-calling, fighting, and bullying takes place. We try to monitor the areas as best we can, but it is difficult to be at the classroom door, on the stairs, and checking around bathroom areas at the same time. We have assigned areas for hall duty, but we still do not feel the students are as safe as they need to be because of the physical layout of the school.

Mrs. Terrance, a teacher from Tuckleechee School, noted that a barrier to better school discipline is the need for stricter enforcement of rules, suspension, and more alternative school placements, explaining:

> School discipline is everybody's problem, and we need to be stricter in school. All the recent tragic events in schools are a clear indicator that we must get serious about school discipline and safety. We need new and tougher policies being put into place; schools must have an alternative place for students who are removed from regular classrooms. Suspension should be used immediately when a student threatens or endangers another

student. Maybe it is time for metal detectors in all schools. I want students to be safe so they can come to school for the right reason, to get an education.

Mr. Lon, a teacher from Lotts Elementary, stated the curriculum is not challenging enough to keep the students focused on the class work; therefore, they seem to get into trouble. He elaborated on this impression by stating:

> When students are faced with unchallenging subject matter they will become bored, and search for other outlets for their energies. Some of these outlets can be distracting their neighbor or bullying the student in front of them. Projects such as multi-media, science, social studies, and math seem to keep the students engaged and on-task.

Mrs. Payne, from Powell Elementary, related that she thinks the greatest barrier is the lack of structure in programs such as Character Education:

> I know that character education or character building, as it should be called, goes back to the beginning of American history. I think we need a new emphasis on character education so students can discuss values and hopefully internalize the values. They might become better school citizens as well as in the community.

Miss Marlee, from Middleton Middle School, acknowledged that parents' being too busy is a barrier that she has faced as she has tried to discuss student discipline problems or academic weaknesses. She added:

> I think that too many parents are too busy to really get involved at school when there is a problem or a need. I do not think that many parents spend much quality time together. In order to support student's learning, schools and parents must work together. Communication is the key ingredient and parents are very busy. We see some parents when their children participate in sports or the music program, but this is only a small number of parents. Parents need to spend more time and get involved in their children's school and friends.

Teachers' Ideas to Enhance Effective Discipline Practices

The teachers seemed very appreciative of the opportunity to tell about ideas that could enhance an effective discipline practice. They stated that inservice days and appropriate staff development activities could provide them with opportunities to enhance their classroom management strategies. The teachers acknowledged that they want to be encouraged to handle discipline problems and to have the endorsement of the administration to support their decisions.

They agreed the entire school should be committed to following the discipline practices and that everyone should get to know the students as individuals and to take an interest in their academic successes as well as personal activities. They stated that informal involvement and visibility of teachers and administrators were very important for the success of effective discipline practices.

Themes That Emerged From Teachers' Interviews

The 22 tenured teachers interviewed were cooperative and excited to share their perceptions about discipline practices. Many had attended workshops and conferences on violence, school practices, and ways to improve discipline in the classroom and the school. They appeared honored to be asked to share their experiences and opinions, and several thanked me for the opportunity to talk about a topic that was so important to them and their classroom. No one seemed to be in a hurry or resentful of the time that the interview took. The major themes that emerged from the teacher interviews were bullying and parental involvement.

Parents' Interviews

The parents sometimes had difficulty arranging a time for the interview, but they were cooperative as we met before and during school, on the weekends, and sometimes at their workplace. They were comfortable with the interviews and readily shared their perceptions and ideas. Their children were in fifth through eighth grades in elementary, intermediate, or middle schools. Some parents had only one child in school and others as many as five. Their experiences were varied.

Mrs. Ora, a parent from Oglethorpe Elementary, said that the tone of the school discipline practice starts with the principal. She related:

> I have been in several different schools because I have three children and the two schools that had the best discipline practices were the ones where the principal was visible and always available to see students as well as parents. They were in the halls, lunchroom, ballgames, and doing bus duty. They knew their students by name and knew something about the families.

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Mrs. McConnell, a parent from Middleton Middle School, recognized that communication from the principal about discipline practices is vital if the school is to be successful. She described good communication practices:

> The principal as well as the teachers must "get the word out" concerning the practices, expectations, and procedures concerning discipline practices. They need to be published in handbooks, placed on classroom bulletin boards, and discussed in PTA meetings. When my child breaks rules or has a discipline referral, the teacher or principal should call me and I will be cooperative and help resolve my child's bad behavior. I appreciate it when the school lets me know. I like the open door policy that I see at my child's school.

Mr. Robert, a parent from Rogers Elementary, stated that consistency from the principal is vital for successful discipline practices by adding:

> The principal is the "captain of the ship" and should check daily with the assistant principal to assure that the two have a united front. Control and power should be given to the teachers, as they are the ones who work and deal with the students constantly. An advisory board of teachers, administration, guidance counselor, students, and parents is a great idea. We have one at my son's school and it has made a positive impact on students, parents, and teachers. Teachers and students make multimedia presentations, brochures, and films of the school to promote academics, clubs, and various teams.

Practices That Parents Agree Work

Mrs. LaDonna, a parent from Lotts Elementary, talked about the mentoring program that seems to work at her daughter's school. She confirmed this by saying:

> I like the way the school pairs students to work cooperatively on projects and to peer edit each other's work. My daughter works with a girl in our neighborhood and now they are friends. I think they have learned so much from each other and it seems to make them listen more carefully to instructions. This was the principal's idea and it has worked well in all the classes that I have visited. She has shared this idea at PTA and students' meetings.

Mrs. Jordan, a parent from Just Great Intermediate School, described a program that helps students understand high expectations and display the behaviors that are desired:

> At my son's school, there is a welcoming, positive school attitude that seems to work to let students realize the high expectations that the principal, teachers, and all parents have for them. This is visible in the school mission statement that is posted as a huge sign when we walk in the front door, in the cafeteria, and in the library. The students seem to

know that everyone values them and their academic progress. They also know that their good behavior is important, and safety and peace are high on the list of priorities.

Mr. Anderson, a parent from Allgood Middle School, said that the full involvement of stakeholders: administrators, teachers, students, parents, and support staff was what makes his daughter's school successful. He added:

I have been very happy to share with my colleagues at work about my daughter's school. Everyone has input into the practices and policies. They sent out newsletters and surveys to ask for ideas and suggestions concerning the calendar, activities, fundraising, and discipline policies. They have only two fundraisers because the parents related that they would rather give larger contributions to avoid more fundraisers. They presented a new discipline policy because of the suggestions of students, teachers, and parents. Communication is a key to letting everyone know what is going on, and this school gets an A on their report card in that department.

Mrs. Todd, a parent from Tuckleechee School, expressed that she thinks having teachers discuss the rules and policies with students has been a successful practice. She iterated:

The rules are agreed upon and posted in each classroom and the hallway. Teachers and staff discuss the rules, expectations, and consequences with the students. The rules are visible all during the year. Tuckleechee uses the discipline plan of Lee Cantor where students are caught being good and recognized for that behavior. All students are treated fairly with consequences for inappropriate behavior, too. I know that the teachers spend several days planning and mentoring new teachers in the Cantor program. Reinforcement and emulation of good discipline practices by the teachers have made ours a happy, safe place to go to school.

Mrs. Creswell, a parent from Carter Elementary School, stated that students who misbehave at her children's school are counseled. She shared several other good practices:

The initial intervention by the guidance counselors has helped the offending students 'buy into' the discipline system at our school. Discussions concerning rules that the entire school [sic] wrote and voted on are the key factor used to show students that they are in control of their own behavior. Everything important to a student is written in the student handbook and this is read, discussed and signed by the student and the parent. There is no excuse for everyone not knowing the rules, expectations, and consequences.

Mr. Hanks, a parent from Howie School, shared a practice that he thinks is positive and the students seem to enjoy:

Our students' names, pictures, and accomplishments are put in the newspapers very often and this builds their self-esteem so much. Sometimes it is for honor roll, sports, class projects, attendance, leadership activities, or service projects. I think this lets the students

and parents realize that school is a place they can be recognized for many different kinds of accomplishments.

Barriers to Discipline Practices

Although the parents had many complimentary things to say about their children's schools, they had several concerns. Mrs. Long, a parent from Lotts Elementary, related some of her concerns by stating, "I wish teachers and principals would observe and interview students to determine the misbehaviors of the students. I wish they would set limits and enforce consequences. Students need to assume personal responsibilities for their behavior and obey the rules." Mrs. DeLozier, from Danville Middle School, acknowledged that parents were not always as helpful and attentive as they sometimes need to be and this could be a definite barrier to communication with the teacher or the principal. She added:

> I think one big problem is that so many parents do not have the knowledge or expertise to handle the inappropriate behaviors that their children have at school. We have so many one-parent families and I think they lack the experience or training to cope with these situations. Fights, name-calling, and bullying on the bus usually are the end results of neighbor or home problems and students bring these situations to the bus stop and problems quickly ensue. Training for teachers, parents and students to learn how to cope with these situations could help.

Mrs. Ogden, from Oglethorpe Elementary, stated that schools should offer more help to students to overcome problems. Her comments were:

> Students need to hear speakers who are positive role models and they need programs that help students cope with problems, and even summer camps to give them opportunities to learn coping skills. I think if we worked together, we could find organizations or groups to sponsor students to go to camp if there should be a financial need. Students need to know there is help available.

Mr. Bevis, from Berry School, spoke of a drastic need for more security and said this is a major barrier to him. He emphasized some of his concerns:

> More cameras and a security officer are needed at my daughter's school. The officer could patrol the halls and the campus and the students would feel safer and have an additional adult to speak to if they feel threatened or have a problem. The high school is in great need of metal detectors as several students have been caught with weapons in the last two years and a metal detector could have stopped that.

Mrs. Sohn, a parent from Sunnyview Elementary, related that she though the lack of money was a barrier, adding:

> If there was more money at the local schools the teachers and administration could attend workshops or conferences concerning discipline training or managing difficult students. I think the advantages to our teachers would be helpful and greatly help our children. They could improve techniques for classroom management skills. Think of the advantages for new teachers. Money for professional development is needed to better prepare teachers to meet needs of students and their needs as well.

Parents' Ideas to Enhance Effective Discipline Practices

Discipline seemed to be a topic that parents enjoyed discussing. They mentioned the need for more programs to include mentoring, tutoring, and counseling services for all students, but especially for the ones with discipline problems. They wanted rules and consequences of breaking them stated clearly. They stated that problems need to be handled quickly so that inappropriate behaviors do not escalate. Several parents suggested the need to train students who have discipline problems and implement contingency contracts so they can develop coping skills and be responsible for their own behavior. The parents agreed that having caring adults with high expectations to reinforce good behavior and reward efforts would enhance effective school discipline practices.

Themes That Emerged From Parents' Interviews

The parents were cooperative during the interviews and were eager to discuss their experiences related to school discipline practices and perceived barriers and to share ideas for improvements. The main theme that became evident was the need for a clear, uniform policy that everyone can understand and follow. Another theme was the principal's role in the discipline practices of the school.

CHAPTER 5

ANALYSIS OF DATA

The American public is well acquainted with the national need to ensure the personal safety of students and teachers in schools. Recent tragic events have riveted attention on the misbehavior of students in the nation's schools. Educational literature increasingly refers to parents' active participation in their children's education. When parents, students, and the community members participate in school activities, there seems to be more pride and positive comments concerning schools and their discipline practices.

This study established the common threads of effective school discipline practices as perceived by administrators, tenured teachers, and parents of students in 20 schools in East Tennessee concerning discipline practices in elementary, intermediate, and middle schools, focusing on grades 5 through 8. Specifically, the study explored the views of administrators, tenured teachers, and parents regarding current discipline practices, the factors that play a role in well-organized school discipline practices, the aspects that were perceived as barriers to effective discipline practices, and ideas that administrators, tenured teachers, and parents contributed that might enhance effective discipline practices. In addition, I attempted to determine if the views of administrators, tenured teachers, and parents were consistent with published research on school discipline practices.

Major Findings of the Study

Research Question # 1

What are the views of administrators, tenured teachers, and parents regarding current discipline practices?

Views of Administrators. The administrators expressed views that ranged from discipline

practices being efficient and successful to several who viewed their practices as significantly

lacking. The 21 administrators were very knowledgeable about literature and practices that are

available concerning school discipline. Many of these educators talked about their concerns for

safe schools and shared some practices that they had experienced or read of in journals and

books. They told of newsletters, handbooks, and conferences where school discipline practices

were discussed and communication was open. They spoke of several practices that they were

currently working on and hoped to try in the future. Principal Tenny, of Tuckleechee School,

emphasized that the school administration and the faculty need adequate information concerning

a practice or policy before it is implemented:

> Each student, each school, and each discipline problem is unique. There is no single
> solution to discipline problems. A team from each school needs to gather information to
> see what can work for that school. Policies must be aimed at factual problems, not
> merely teachers or principal's opinions or feelings. School districts and individual
> schools should gather accurate data on student behavior in their schools before setting
> policy.

Many current practices were working for these administrators and they discussed the

diligent searches they undertook as they looked for programs that might be successful in their

schools. Two programs that were discussed by administrators, HUG and PAIR, proved to be

successful in some schools. Lee Cantor's method of catching students being good and Harry

Wong's practices and routines for the first days of school were also spoken of as model programs

to be considered. Principal Barnes, of Berry Elementary, has used Alfie Kohn's method of

classroom-management program since 1990 when she attended a workshop. She gave details:

> The classroom is like a community and each student has a specific place in it. This gives
> ownership to the student and a sense of belonging. Discipline problems are kept to a
> minimum because the students have rights and responsibilities for themselves as well as
> to the class.

Views of Teachers.   Several practices that have been successful were Character Counts,

mentoring, and changing curriculum to incorporate group work. Involvement of the students in

successful discipline practices was a common response by most teachers. They said that all groups affected by a policy should be involved in creating it; these groups are the students who must conform to the policy, the school personnel who must enforce it, and, ideally, students' parents. Additionally, the teachers seemed to want all current practices to remain in their schools with the addition of more conflict resolution training for students and teachers. Teacher Byrne, from Berry School, related that since her school district instituted stricter discipline policies and an alternative school, discipline problems have been greatly reduced. She explained by noting:

> New and tougher policies have lead to removal of students from the classroom, sometimes to an alternative educational setting; this has brought an improvement in behavior problems. When students know there is a chance for suspension, alternative school, or expulsion they think twice before they participate in unacceptable behavior. I think the zero tolerance policy is good because the students know the consequences before they commit the offence. Our in-school suspension program includes guidance, support, planning for change, and opportunities to build new skills. This seems to be effective in improving individual student behavior and thus increasing school order.

Views of Parents. The 20 parents interviewed stated they felt good about the practices that were being used at their children's schools. A number of parents mentioned the need for counseling and mentoring. Many parents spoke of the importance of having a visible, supportive principal, one who attends school functions in a participative role, not just as a visitor. The parents also remarked about tutoring programs and their far-reaching effects. Effective communication to parents was continually discussed as an imperative part of a successful discipline program.

Research Question # 2

What factors, as perceived by the participants, play a role in well-organized school discipline practice?

Views of Administrators. According to the administrators, communication and involvement among parents, students, teachers, and the administrators are definite factors in a

well-organized school and the discipline practices of that school. Every opportunity should be taken to formulate discipline rules and practices with all parties that will be affected. By taking a proactive approach to discipline, all members are more likely to consider the school's discipline practices as successful. Rules and practices should be discussed and written down so that all parties know the expectations and consequences of breaking them. Handbooks, brochures, newspaper articles, posters, slide presentations, and films are good promoters of school discipline practices. Behaviors such as teasing and bullying should be addressed and corrective consequences dealt to the students who exhibit these behaviors. All administrators related that maintaining an effective data support system was imperative to track behaviors and the number of offenses by each student. By maintaining the data on student behavior both individually and school-wide, patterns can be ascertained and changes can be implemented if there is a need.

Views of Teachers. Most teachers articulated that parental involvement is the most important factor in well-organized schools and discipline practices. Students' participation in the formulating of the rules, policies, and practices is necessary for them to accept ownership of discipline practices. Addressing inappropriate behaviors early and having specific consequences for infractions can help in maintaining peace and order in the classroom. Ensuring that curriculum is challenging and pertinent helps keep students on track and involved. Having more adults, such as teachers, administrators, and parent volunteers in the hallways at bell-change times could help to project a climate of control and support. Full involvement of administration, teachers, students, parents, and support staff is needed for a whole-school approach for the safety and peace of all parties.

Views of Parents. An involved principal and caring teachers are paramount for implementing successful discipline practices. Teachers should discuss, reinforce, and emulate good discipline practices. If the teacher seeks input from students and parents concerning

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discipline, the practices will belong to everyone. Open communication is an important factor. Posting of the policies is necessary to keep them visible and foremost in the students' minds. High behavioral expectations and consequences should be clear in order to keep the students on track.

Research Question # 3

What aspects are perceived as barriers to effective discipline practices?

Views of Administrators. The lack of literature concerning discipline problems was a major barrier reported by the administrators. In addition, because staff development gives teachers the opportunities to observe strategies for classroom management, the administrators stated that there is a need for more of this type of training.   Professional development resources concerning student discipline problems and formulating practices have been very scarce.

Parents of a misbehaving student are not always agreeable to meeting with teachers or administrators to discuss the problems of their child. At least one administrator reported that many parents in his school do not keep appointments made by teachers or principals. Additionally, many parents work long hours or have schedules that are not convenient for parent-teacher conferences; this can be a barrier to communication. Home problems: alcohol, drugs, poverty, and dysfunctional situations that students experience sometimes makes it difficult for teachers and administrators to help students deal with academics and discipline.

Views of Teachers. Teachers reported that they need to be more proactive before misbehaviors or infractions occur. Student management practices and their own lack of expertise in dealing with discipline seemed to be a problem for the teachers who were interviewed. The layout of school buildings is not always conducive to monitoring the halls, bathrooms, cafeterias,

and gymnasiums. Teachers expressed their views that more adults need to be involved during changing of classes.

Rules and consequences that were not specific nor consistently enforced were seen as major barriers. The lack of appropriate punishments was discussed. Another barrier according to teachers are parents who are too busy or not willing to meet to discuss their child's behavior problems.

Views of Parents. A lack of parental knowledge concerning student behavior and a lack of expertise to deal with inappropriate behaviors were seen as barriers. Some parents mentioned potential barriers come from problems at home that are brought to school. Suggestions were made that the schools should have programs, speakers, or summer camps to train both students and parents. The parents also noted that students and teachers need to be better trained in skills for de-escalating dangerous situations. Many parents spoke of a lack of security as a school problem and expressed a desire for more cameras, metal detectors, and additional officers. Parents suggested there was a need for money to conduct workshops in discipline training and professional development for teachers.

Research Question # 4

What ideas can administrators, tenured teachers, and parents contribute that might enhance an effective discipline practice?

Views of Administrators. Several participants expressed the idea that administrators and teachers should encourage not only schools but also community-wide commitment to establishing and maintaining appropriate student behavior during the academic week as well as at school-sponsored events. The administrators noted that establishing and communicating high expectations for student behavior is important. Creating opportunities for students to experience

success in learning activities, social settings, and behavioral situations needs to occur. They suggested that both teachers and administrators could monitor classroom activities more closely and give students feedback more often in order to reinforce positive behavior. Administrators acknowledged when teachers maintain a brisk instructional pace and make smooth transitions between activities such procedures help keep distractions to a minimum. They also stressed the need to enforce classroom rules promptly, consistently, and equitably from the first day of school and to make use of in-school suspension programs, which include guidance, support, planning for change, and skill building. In schools that are troubled with severe discipline problems and negative climates, the administrators agreed that a broad based organizational development approach might be needed to bring about meaningful change. The administrators also noted that if commercial packaged discipline programs were used, each school should modify the components to meet their unique situation and delete the parts that do not apply to their student population.

Views of Teachers. Responses given by the teachers included getting to know students as individuals and taking an interest in their plans and activities. They stated the need for administrators to encourage teachers to handle all classroom discipline problems that they reasonably can and to empower them to use strong classroom strategies for classroom management, as well as supporting their decisions. They agreed that administrators and teachers should increase their visibility and informal involvement in the everyday life of the school. Finally, they suggested that the administration could enhance teachers' skills as classroom managers and disciplinarians by arranging for appropriate staff development activities.

Views of Parents. The parents agreed that administrators and teachers should intervene quickly when a discipline problem arises and not allow inappropriate behaviors to escalate. They stated that the school could teach students with behavior problems self-control skills,

training them to observe their own behavior, and to find a caring adult when they foresee a potential problem. Students who are misbehaving could be placed in a peer tutoring arrangement or with a mentor. Parents gave many constructive ideas, including:

1. Administrators could make use of counseling services for students with behavior problems and assist students in developing needed skills to behave appropriately.

2. Administrators could collaborate with misbehaving students on developing and signing contingency contracts to help stimulate behavioral change.

3. Administrators and teachers could reinforce good behavior and have reward programs for students who meet expectations and goals of the school discipline practices.

Comparisons to the Research Literature

Participants in this study expressed agreement with the findings of Gaustad (1992), when she stated that school discipline has two main goals: to ensure the safety of staff and students, and to create an environment conducive to learning. Serious student conduct involving violent or criminal behavior defeats these goals and often makes headlines in the process. However, the most common discipline problems usually involve student behavior of a noncriminal nature. These less dramatic problems may not threaten personal safety, but they still negatively affect the learning environment.

For years administrators, teachers, parents, and students did not view school discipline problems, such as bullying and violence as serious concerns. This is not the case in today's society. As concern about violence grows, schools around the country have begun to evaluate their discipline practices. Most of the participants' perceptions in this study supported the findings of Frosch and Gropper (1999), when they stated that parental involvement in the schools is important for maintaining appropriate discipline, as well as for serving as volunteers and ambassadors to the community on behalf of the schools.

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The participants seemed to be in agreement with the aspects of effective discipline practices and their consensus was reinforced in the literature. Each school, each student, and each situation concerning discipline is unique. There is no simple solution to discipline problems; however, several aspects were identified from the results of this study:

1. All students, parents, and school personnel should be aware of a school's discipline practices.

2. Discipline policies should be written in a readable handbook and given to all students.

3. Discipline Practices should be implemented fairly and consistently.

4. Appropriate curriculum, counseling, mentoring, and training sessions must be provided for teachers, students, parents, and administrators in order to establish and maintain positive and effective discipline practices.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PRACTICE, AND

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Conclusions

As this study has indicated, and research has made clear, appropriate behavior by

students is essential to their ability to attain successful educations. Without a disciplined

atmosphere, teachers cannot teach effectively and learners cannot learn effectively. Appropriate

school discipline practices involve all stakeholders in their designs. The principals and the

teachers are responsible for carrying out an individual school's discipline practices; but to bolster

success, the practices must be custom designed by all participants including parents and students.

The discipline practices chosen should reflect a shared expectancy--indeed, an obligation--to

address real school problems in real ways. Effective practices address the root cause of students'

misconduct. They answer important questions, such as:

1. What code of behavior is expected?

2. What set of values should students exemplify?

Effective practices respond with specific measures, such as:

1. All students will learn to resolve conflicts in socially acceptable ways and without

   violence.

2. Bullying other students will not be tolerated.

3. No student will be permitted to intimidate or disrupt the work of others.

Whatever the design, effective discipline practices should inspire a climate in which students

take responsibility for their own behavior, treat each other with kindness and respect, and learn

the value of productive work and good citizenship.

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Parents are the first link in preventing problems in effective school discipline practices. Parents who are involved in their children's daily school lives have a better understanding of what is acceptable, and expected, in the school's environment. Many parents are distressed to find that the classrooms they remember--with orderly rows and students paying quiet attention--now look disorderly and chaotic. Acts of student violence, chronic disruptions, bullying, and intimidation are all too frequent. Turning this picture around requires a partnership between families and schools. Investment in prevention works. The first step is to involve parents in cooperative preschool education programs where they learn good discipline practices firsthand from early childhood educators. Then parents must continue to be engaged as essential partners throughout their children's school years.

Administrators and teachers stated they feel more confident about effective school discipline practices evolving when they have access to quality professional development opportunities. These opportunities should emphasize practices in prevention, including attention to equity issues and how to access existing support services. Time for dialogue and administrative support are key components. Teachers should be given time to engage in conversations about strategies that work, with ample opportunities for peer coaching and refresher courses. All staff members should be assured that habitually disruptive or violent students will be suspended or recommended to attend an alternative educational program. The climate should be free of intimidation and disruptions for students and staff members alike.

Rewarding students for their good behavior and positive contributions to the school community is important. Activities, programs and opportunities should be planned to focus on positive behaviors and appropriate actions of the students. Every attempt should be made to put students' names, pictures and groups in newsletters, school hallways, the local newspaper, and school assemblies to let everyone know that the school is pleased with positive behaviors and good reports.

Effective discipline practices thrive on consistency and teamwork. The staff and administrative team should be expected to reinforce the same behavior for all students and to follow common discipline practices. A staff should work together for the common good of the students and the school. Students and staff want to be certain they are safe and every precaution and intervention should be considered to be sure this goal is accomplished.

Evaluation should be ongoing and strategies for reducing school disruptions should be assessed continuously for their impact on the overall success of the school discipline practices. Several suggestions from teacher participants were to establish focus groups that work with at-risk students, and counseling and positive peer mentoring for students that receive repeated discipline referrals. Data should be collected and used to continuously improve current discipline practices and implement any new procedures that could improve the process. An annual evaluation should be conducted with the strengths and needs of the discipline practices.

Recommendations for Practice

The following recommendations for practice are based on the findings from this study and personal experiences from my 27 years in public education. Based on the results of this study, it is recommended that schools with safe, orderly, and effective discipline practices contain the following components:

1. High behavioral expectations. Staffs in well-disciplined schools share and communicate high expectations for appropriate student behavior.
2. Commitment from the staff to establish and maintain appropriate student behavior as an essential precondition of learning. Effective schools tend to be those in which there is a schoolwide emphasis on the importance of learning and intolerance of conditions that inhibit learning.
3. Clear and broad-based rules. Rules, sanctions, and procedures are developed with input from students, are clearly specified, and are made known to everyone in the school.

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Widespread dissemination of clearly stated rules and procedures assures that all students, parents, and staff understand what is and is not acceptable.

4. Warm school climate. A warm social climate, characterized by a concern for students as individuals, is essential for a well-disciplined school. Teachers and administrators should demonstrate an interest in the personal goals, achievements, and problems of students and support them in their academic and extracurricular activities.

5. A visible, supportive principal. The principal tends to be very visible in hallways and classrooms, talking informally with students and teachers, expressing an interest in their activities.

6. Delegation of discipline authority to teachers. Principals in well-disciplined schools take responsibility for dealing with serious infractions, but they empower teachers to handle routine classroom discipline problems.

7. Specific consequences for misbehaviors. Consequences for student's misbehaviors should be clearly identified and made known to students and staff at the onset of the school year.

Recommendations for Further Research

Although this study was limited to 63 participants in 20 schools in East Tennessee, questions have developed that may lead to further research regarding effective school discipline practices. From the findings of this study the following recommendations are suggested:

1. The findings of this particular study are not generalizable beyond the 63 participants. Further research should examine this topic with another group of participants in order to substantiate similar findings or add to the research base other effective discipline practices.

2. Further research should evaluate classroom strategies and how they relate to the reduction of classroom disruptions and their impact on students' behavior.

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3. Further research should be done to reinterview some of the participants in this study as time passes, to see if their perceptions have changed since their participation in the study.

4. Further research should include students as participants and record their perceptions and comments concerning school discipline practices.

5. This particular study looked at administrators, tenured teachers, and parents from 20 schools in East Tennessee. Further research should examine participants from other areas in Tennessee.

6. This study concentrated on grades 5 through 8. Future research should include a broader base of grades such as grades 3 and 4 and high school.

7. Future research should examine the effects of different levels of consequences for students with several referrals.

8. Future research should examine established agencies and practices that have been found to offer support and guidance for families of students who have experienced severe discipline problems. These findings should be made readily available to educators and parents.

Well-disciplined, effective schools are not the product of chance. Effective discipline requires the enforcement of simple classroom and school rules that facilitate learning and minimize disruptions. Administrators, teachers, parents, and students must work together to reach a common goal of peace and harmony in well-disciplined schools.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Form

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Faye Nelson

TITLE OF PROJECT: A Qualitative Study of Effective School Discipline Practices: Perceptions of Tenured Teachers, Administrators, and Parents in Twenty Schools in East Tennessee

INTRODUCTION: You are being invited to participate in this study to examine common threads of effective discipline practices as perceived by tenured teachers, administrators and parents of students in twenty schools in east Tennessee focusing on grades five through eight and barriers to school discipline practices. Please read, review, and ask any questions that you might have concerning this study. You are free to stop the interview at any time or choose not to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable.

PURPOSE: The purpose of this study is to examine common threads of effective discipline practices as perceived by tenured teachers, administrators, and parents of students in twenty schools in east Tennessee concerning discipline practices in elementary, intermediate, and middle schools, focusing on grades five through eight. The study will also look at barriers to school discipline practices as perceived by the participants of the study. The participants will be selected by contacting principals, tenured teachers, and parents in east Tennessee after permission has been granted by the Director of Schools in that county. The researcher will select the schools from a list that will be secured at the Central Office in that county. Phone calls to the principal will glean a roster of teachers and names of parents that will participate in the study. There will be at least twenty participants in each of the three categories: administrators, tenured teachers, and parents for a total of sixty or more participants.

DURATION: The interview that will be conducted with each teacher, administrator, and parent will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes. A second meeting for member checking, allowing the participant to judge the accuracy and completeness of statements made in the researcher's report, will require approximately 15 minutes of time. Member checking is a second visit that the researcher will make so that the participant can look over the comments that have been transcribed by the researcher for accuracy and completeness.

PROCEDURES: Data will be collected by using a general interview guide with open-ended questions. All participants will be given as much time as they feel necessary to respond to

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questions. With the expressed permission of each participant, the interviews will be tape recorded. A professional transcriptionist will transcribe audiotapes. Copies of transcribed data will be available upon request. The participants will have control over the audio tape recorder and may cease taping at any time. No participant's name will be used, but each interview will be coded with a number that is strictly to permit matching interviews to a teacher, administrator, or parent category. In no way will the identification number be used to determine participant identity.

POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS: Some of the questions asked during the interview may make the participant feel uncomfortable or may be difficult to answer. Participants are free to stop the interview without prejudice at any time, and may choose not to answer any question that makes them feel uncomfortable.

POSSIBLE BENEFITS AND/OR COMPENSATION: No participant benefits or forms of compensation are included in this study.

CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS: If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Faye Nelson or Dr. Louise McKay at East Tennessee State University. You may also contact the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board, Jim Fox, at (423)-439-xxxx for any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Every attempt will be made to see that participants and interview information is kept confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in a locked file cabinet at my home for at least 10 years after the end of this research. Audiocassette tapes used for this study will be disposed of immediately following transcription and verification of the transcription. The results of this study may be published and/or presented without naming the participants. Although the participants' rights and privacy will be maintained, the East Tennessee State University Institutional Review Board and the ETSU Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis have access to the study records. My records will be kept completely confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

COMPENSATION FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT: East Tennessee State University (ETSU) will pay the cost of emergency first aid for any injury that may happen as a result of your being in this study. They will not pay for any other medical treatment. Claims against ETSU or any of its agents or employees may be submitted to the Tennessee Claims Commission. These claims will be settled to the extent allowable as provided under TCA Section 0-9-307. For more information about claims, call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board of ETSU at (423)-439-xxxx.

Version: July 15, 2002   Subject's Initial_____

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION: The nature, demands, risks, and the benefits of the project have been explained to me as well as are known and available. I understand what my participation involves. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to ask questions and withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty. I have read, or have had read to me, and fully understand this consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A signed copy will be given to me upon request.

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_____/_____
SIGNATURE OF VOLUNTEER PARENT, ADMINISTRATOR,   DATE
OR TENURED TEACHER

_____/_____
SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR   DATE

_____/_____
WITNESS   DATE

APPENDIX B

Letter to Directors of Schools

Month Day, 2002

Mr. Xxxx Xxxxxx
Xxxxxx County Schools
Xxxx Street
Xxxxxxxxxxx, XX xxxxx

Dear Mr. Xxxxxx:

I am presently an administrator for Sevier County School System, as well as a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. This summer I would like to conduct research within your system with the intention of acquiring valuable information that may be used to better serve your students.

My research proposal centers on effective school discipline practices. Management of disruptive students' behavior takes up large portions of a teacher's time for instruction; therefore, I hope the results of this study will allow for the formulation of more effective discipline practices.

I would like to conduct open-ended interviews with administrators, tenured teachers, and parents concerning discipline practices in elementary, intermediate, and middle schools, focusing on grades five through eight. to gain their views regarding current discipline practices and barriers, and to solicit ideas that might enhance effective discipline practices. The study will also attempt to determine if the views of parents, tenured teachers, and administrators are consistent with published research on school discipline plans.

I am seeking your permission to communicate with administrators, tenured teachers, and parents concerning perceptions of school discipline practices and solicit their ideas for improvement. Please feel free to contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Louise MacKay at (423) 439-xxxx. If you have any questions, you may reach me at (865) 579-xxxx. Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Faye Nelson

Letter to Administrators

Month Day, 2002

Mr. Xxxx Xxxxxx
Xxxxxx County Schools
Xxxx Street
Xxxxxxxxxxx, XX xxxxx

Dear Mr. Xxxxxx:

I am presently an administrator for Sevier County School System, as well as a doctoral student at East Tennessee State University in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis. This summer I would like to conduct an interview with you at your school with the intention of acquiring valuable information that may be used to better serve your students.

My research proposal centers on effective school discipline practices. Management of disruptive students' behavior takes up large portions of a teacher's time for instruction; therefore, I hope the results of this study will allow for the formulation of more effective discipline practices.

I would like to conduct open-ended interviews with administrators, tenured teachers, and parents concerning discipline practices in elementary, intermediate, and middle schools, focusing on grades five through eight. to gain their views regarding current discipline practices and barriers, and to solicit ideas that might enhance effective discipline practices. The study will also attempt to determine if the views of parents, teachers, and administrators are consistent with published research on school discipline practices. I would like your assistance in choosing teachers who represent a maximum variation in their discipline practices, and parents who represent a broad spectrum of the student body.

Please feel free to contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. Louise MacKay at (423) 439-xxxx. If you have any questions, you may reach me at (865) 579-xxxx. . Thank you for considering my request.

Sincerely,

Faye Nelson

Interview Guide for Administrators

1. To what extent do you think student misbehavior creates a problem for you, as well as teachers, parents and students? If so, how? Would you please give an example?

2. To what extent, if any, do you think that time for teaching curriculum is hindered because of discipline problems? How?

3. What are current discipline practices in your school?

4. What are the most effective discipline practices you have used in the past?

5. What are the least effective discipline practices you have used in the past?

6. To what extent do you, as an administrator, have a say in determining discipline practices?

7. What part do an involved community and parents play in school discipline practices?

8. To what extent, if any, do you think that students and parents need input in school discipline practices? If so, how should this be implemented?

9. What types of communication concerning rules and discipline practices do you think would be beneficial?

10. To what extent, if any, do you think that the climate of the school affects discipline practices? How?

11. How do you think inappropriate behaviors should be handled?

12. To what extent, if any, do you think that class size makes a difference concerning discipline practices? If so, how?

13. What do you believe about bullying in schools and the impact that it has on students?

    a. How can bullying be avoided?
    b. What can teachers, students, and parents do to change bullying behaviors?

14. What do you believe about zero tolerance policies and do you think these policies have reduced discipline problems?

15. How relevant is record-keeping (data support system) for managing discipline problems?

16. Do you feel that there are any additional barriers to effective discipline practices that we have not discussed yet? If so, what are they?

APPENDIX E

Interview Guide for Teachers

1. What is your opinion about discipline practices in school and how do they affect teacher's attitudes about school?

2. Are you familiar with practices that have or could affect student behavior?

3. Do you feel that schools need more or less practices that address behavior problems?

4. To what extent do you, as a teacher, have a say in determining discipline practices?

5. To what extent, if any, do you think that time for teaching curriculum is hindered because of discipline problems? How?

6. What role do parents play in school discipline practices? What role do you think they should ideally play?

7. To what extent, if any, do you think that students and parents need input in school discipline practices? If so, how should this be implemented?

8. What types of communication concerning rules and discipline practices do you think would be beneficial?

9. To what extent, if any, do you think that the climate of the school affects discipline practices? If so, how?

10. How do you think inappropriate behaviors should be handled?

11. To what extent, if any, do you think that class size makes a difference concerning discipline practices? If so, how?

12. What is your opinion about bullying in schools and the impact that it has on students?

   a. How can bullying be avoided?
   b. What can teachers, students, and parents do to change bullying behaviors?

13. What is your opinion about zero tolerance policies and do you think these policies have reduced discipline problems?

14. How relevant is a data support system for managing discipline problems?

15. What do you feel is the principal's role in discipline practices of the school?

16. Do you feel that there are any additional barriers to effective discipline practices that we have not discussed yet? If so, what are they?

APPENDIX F

Interview Guide for Parents

1. To what extend do you think student misbehavior creates a problem for schools, teachers, and administrators? How?

2. What do you believe about discipline practices in school and how do they affect your child's attitude about school?

3. What are current discipline practices in your child's school?

4. What are the most effective discipline practices that your child's school used in the past?

5. What are the least effective discipline practices that your child's school used in the past?

6. Do you feel that schools need more or fewer practices that address behavior problems? Why?

7. To what extent, if any, should you as a parent have a say in determining discipline practices?

8. What input, if any, do you think teachers should have in determining discipline practices?

9. To what extent, if any, do you think that students need input in rules and procedures in the classroom? If so, how should this be implemented?

10. What types of communication between school and parents concerning rules do you think would be beneficial?

11. Do you think that the school's surroundings, atmosphere, and environment affect discipline problems? If so, how?

12. How do you think inappropriate behaviors should be handled?

13. To what extent, if any, do you think that the number of students in a classroom makes a difference concerning discipline problems? If so, how?

14. What do you believe about bullying in schools and what impact do you think it has on students?

    a. How can bullying be avoided?
    b. What can teachers do to change bullying behaviors?
    c. What can students do to change bullying behaviors?
    d. What can parents do to change bullying behaviors?

15. What do you believe about zero tolerance policies and do you think these policies have reduced discipline problems?

16. What do you feel is the principal's role in the discipline practices of the school?

VITA

MARY FAYE NELSON

Personal Data: Date of Birth: December 7, 1947
Place of Birth: Sevierville, Tennessee
Marital Status: Married

Education: University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee;
    Bachelor of Science Degree in Elementary Education
    1979

University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee;
    Masters Degree in Curriculum and Instruction
    1982

Lincoln Memorial University, Harrogate, Tennessee;
    Educational Specialist Degree in Supervision And Administration
    1997

East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;
    Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, Ed. D.,
    2002

Professional
Experience: Teacher, Seymour Middle School, Seymour, Tennessee
    1979-1998

Principal, Seymour Middle School, Seymour, Tennessee
    1998-present

Publications: Nelson, F., & Kincaid, R. (2000). Ongoing practical staff development
    WILL make a difference in teaching reading. *The Tennessee Reading
Teacher, 29,* 18-19.

Honors and
Awards: Seymour Middle School Teacher of the Year, 1997
Sevier County Middle School Teacher of the Year, 1997
Tennessee Junior Beta State Sponsor, 1992
Tennessee Junior Beta State Council, 1993
Member, Kappa Delta Pi National Honor Society in Education
Member, Gamma Iota Educational Sorority