THE IMPACT OF DISCIPLINE REMOVALS ON HIGH SCHOOL AFRICAN
AMERICAN STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT: WHAT SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
NEED TO KNOW

A Doctoral Thesis Presented to the
Faculty of the College of Education
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education
in Professional Leadership

by

Allison E. Matney

May, 2012

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if the number of days of in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and alternative discipline placements impacts mathematics achievement as measured by the 2011TAKS assessment in a Houston school district. This study compared grade nine, ten, and eleven TAKS math achievement scores to the number of days served in out-of-class discipline placements for African American students as it relates to gender and reported socioeconomic status. The subjects in this study are ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade African American students in the research district who were assessed with the mathematics TAKS assessment in the spring of 2011. With the permission of the research district, archival data was gathered from both the research district's PEIMS summer 2011 submission to the state of Texas and the TAKS data file provided by Pearson Education, Inc. Survey data was gathered from campus principals to determine if principal attitudes about discipline and race affected the district's placement data. Descriptive statistics were analyzed in conjunction with the qualitative principal analysis.

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You are the two most important things in my life.

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CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

Introduction to the Problem

In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.

Brown v. Board of Education, May 17, 1954

When students are removed from the learning environment for any reason, they are not receiving instruction or opportunity for education. These removals tilt the educational terms so that they are no longer equal. Exclusion through suspension is creating a crisis situation in our schools (The Civil Rights Project, 2000). What is even more disturbing is the growing amount of research showing that America's black students are being excluded from educational settings through discipline placements at a much higher rate than their white or other minority peers (e.g., Children's Defense Fund 1975; Education Rights Center; Eitle, and Eitle 2004; Fenning, and Rose 2007; Raffaele Mendez, and Knoff 2003; Skiba, Michael, Nardo, and Peterson 2002; Walker-Dalhouse 2005).

Skinner's research on operant conditioning is a critical component of this research study. "For Skinner, the essence of operant conditioning was that behavior is not triggered by the environment but selected by it" (Iverson, 1992, p. 1326). To this point, operant conditioning was grounded in the idea that a specific reinforcement will increase

the probability that a similar response will occur in a future instance (Skinner, 1988).
Although teachers view the removal of students from class as positive punishment,
hoping for a change in the behavior, it is actually serving as positive reinforcement.
When students are removed from the educational setting as a consequence of their
behavior, their initial behavior is being reinforced rather than modified. The actual
removal is increasing the likelihood of recurrence rather than preventing the negative
behavior from occurring again. No replacement behavior is being taught. Despite what
educators have believed about discipline consequences:

> According to Skinner, a response does not occur because of what will
> follow it. That is, behavior is not caused by something that has not yet
> happened. Rather, in operant conditioning, the emission of a response
> reflects past conditioning. The response occurs because similar responses
> were reinforced earlier, not because it will be reinforced later. As far as
> Skinner was concerned, the initial high response rate seen in extinction
> sessions exemplified this important aspect of operant conditioning. Of
> equal importance was the fact that a single reinforcement may be
> sufficient for strengthening of a response. (Iverson, 1992, p. 1327)

Given this, it is possible that teachers' decisions to remove students from the
classroom due to what they consider inappropriate behavior may actually be promoting
continued inappropriate behavior in the future. Students who act out in class as an
avoidance behavior, have their behavior reinforced by the educators when they are
removed for such behaviors. Furthering this idea,

The efficacy of positive consequences for managing student behavior, for example, has been widely demonstrated (Gottfredson, Gottfredson, & Hybl, 1993; C. Nelson & Rutherford, 1987); the failure to balance positive and negative consequences may indeed yield a coercive cycle that increases the likelihood of disruptive behavior (Shores, Gunter, & Jack, 1993) Yet negative consequences appear to outpace the use of positive reinforcers both in general education (Gable, Hendrickson, Young, Shores, & Stowitschek, 1983; Heller & White, 1975; Shores et al., 1993) and special education (Knitzer, Steinberg, & Fleisch, 1990). (Skiba & Peterson, 2000, p. 336)

A disturbing facet to this idea of using classroom removals for disciplinary purposes is that current research shows that out-of-class suspensions actually lead to further suspensions, and possible expulsions, all promoting future drop outs (The Civil Rights Project, 2000; Raffaele Mendez, and Knoff 2003). What is seemingly a minor short-term discipline placement endangers a student's educational future if used time after time. The compounding nature of suspensions imperils long-term success rates among students (Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace & Bachman, 2008). While educators are attempting to utilize out-of-class placements as a future deterrent, a time-out, or short term punitive act, they are actually sealing a future track for these students.

While Skinner stated that behavior is created from the environment, the outcomes can be seen in classrooms through disciplinary practices all over the country. The educators' desired effect is positive punishment, but they are actually creating a positive reinforcement environment instead.

Zero Tolerance

The laws passed by Congress that became known as "Zero Tolerance Policies" originally were in response to egregious and truly dangerous criminal acts. Zero tolerance policies required that students "convicted" of bringing guns to school be expelled. According to The Civil Rights Project report (2000),

> Many states later extended these laws to include other weapons and possession or use of drugs. School districts throughout the country quickly expanded zero tolerance policies to include many more types of behavior and, significantly, to cover infractions that pose little or no safety concerns. (p. 1)

Too often discipline consequences are administered under the auspices of a zero tolerance policy when, in fact, the policy itself has morphed into something much milder than the original intent. The Civil Rights Project report (2000) goes on to give a sample of incidents from around the country that demonstrate how districts have taken zero tolerance too far in the interpretation. Scenarios included a six year old's toenail clippers, a kindergartener's toy axe, and a seventh- grade student sniffing Wite-Out and being suspended for drug abuse. All of these students were African American and received out-of-school placements under the auspices of zero tolerance (pp. 4-7).

> According to many leading psychologists, rigid and inflexible discipline policies directly conflict with two major developmental needs of school-aged youths: 1) the development of strong and trusting relationships with key adults in their lives, particularly those in their school; and 2) the

formation of positive attitudes toward fairness and justice. As a result,

these policies often further alienate students from school and exacerbate

the behaviors they seek to remedy. This damage is particularly acute for

children who are already considered "at-risk" for school failure and often

has the effect of pushing them out of school completely. (The Civil Rights

Project, 2000, p. 10)

Skiba and Peterson (1999a) also outlined an array of examples where the zero

tolerance policies have been taken to an extreme. They expanded on the idea that fear is

the prime motivator for the zero tolerance policies.

This expansion went beyond what was considered criminal in common society.

Many local entities broadened the definition even further to include illegal and even legal

drug use and possession (Hanson, 2005). Herein lies one of the most critical problems

with zero tolerance policies: They are not uniform across states, districts, and sometimes,

even campuses. To compound that impact even more, there is great subjectivity within

each policy, allowing for the possible discriminatory practices seen across the country. It

is as if local education entities are struggling for conformity around a rule that in and of

itself is ambiguous as it applies to education. Couple that with the fact that these policies

have widely been misapplied and it is not a surprise that there are wide disparities in

disciplinary practices.

The Texas 81st Legislature enacted House Bill 171, which gave campuses the

authority to consider extenuating circumstances when assigning out-of-classroom

disciplinary placements. In fact, the bill required administrators to consider these

mitigating factors regardless if the action should result in mandatory or discretionary

placement out-of-class. According to House Bill 171, mitigating factors include a student's disability, intent, lack of intent, or self-defense. This was a positive step in promoting the common sense that should be applied to discipline consequences. However, district codes of conduct still refer to "mandatory" or "discretionary" placements in isolation from a consideration of mitigating circumstances, resulting in a narrow-minded approach to the placement of students out-of-class. Unfortunately, there is still disparity in mandatory and discretionary placements, particularly with African American students placements when compared to their non-African American peers. The subjectivity of discipline assignments is expected, as there cannot ever be a "one-size-fits-all" rulebook, but large disparities must lead educators to examine the data, practices, and stories behind such placements.

Significance of the Study

In today's era of public school accountability, Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and increasing standards, it is critical to examine facets of the system that do not align with student achievement. The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 mandates that public schools create safe learning environments that are conducive to learning for all students. For the 2009-2010 school year, The Texas Education Agency reported that in-school-suspension placements for African American students represented 20.6% of the state's student population. This population also represented 13.07% in the out-of-school-suspension category, 3.2% in the District Alternative Educational Placement (DAEP) category, and .17% in the Juvenile Justice Alternative Educational Placement (JJAEP) category. In all four of these categories, the African American student group had the highest percent representation among ethnicity groups reported. This data

remains consistent with the findings of the Children's Defense Fund (1975) findings that

African American suspension rates were between two and three times higher than those

of their white peers at all three academic levels – elementary, middle, and high. If

students are out of the classroom, the learning environment is hardly conducive

(Morrison, Anthony, Storino, & Dillon, 2001; Nichols, 2004). Rather, it is nonexistent.

With such a large representation of out-of-class placements, an examination of the data is

warranted to improve practices.

Implications for Administrators

It is important for campus level administrators to be aware of the data trends that

exist across the country regarding discipline and ethnic representation. In order to ensure

equitable and just practices at the campus level, the data should be examined. An in-depth

analysis of local campus practices considering mitigating factors, along with the

infraction itself, will also yield data to possibly modify practice.

District and campus administrators should create discipline practices that support

culturally responsive strategies. Fenning and Rose (2007) posit that policy should support

the direct teaching of expected behavior. They go on to cite examples of alternatives to

in-school suspension that are proving effective (p. 554). Creating expectations by using

proactive strategies will not only improve practices for keeping all students in the

classroom; it will specifically keep our historically over-represented African American

population in the classroom.

Discipline policies need to be rewritten so as to benefit and improve students

rather than focusing on punitive actions which harm students. When administrators focus

on student needs and ensure that punishment modifies behavior, then students are less

likely to repeat unwanted behaviors. This is most beneficial to the student, but also has direct benefits for the classroom environment as a whole.

CHAPTER 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction - Opportunity for Education

Opportunity for an equal education is widely seen in the United States as a fundamental right. Although Brown v. Board of Education raised the awareness of the need to eliminate the idea behind "separate but equal" (Plessy v. Ferguson, 1896), Coleman et al (1966) found that "American public education remains largely unequal in most regions of the country, including all those [regions] where Negroes form any significant proportion on the population." There was a breakdown between the court ruling and the implementation in the schools that those attending schools between 1954 and 1966 certainly witnessed. Although compulsory by the states, in the 1950s and 1960s education was not seen as a right directly afforded to citizens in the United States Constitution or the Bill of Rights.

However, in their 1973 *Lopez v. Williams* decision, the United States District Court for the Southern District of Ohio, Eastern Division outlined the reasoning behind the accepted view that the right to an education is within the concept of "liberty" as it relates to the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States. *Lopez v. Williams* upheld the claim the plaintiffs brought that "suspension without prior hearing is violative of the Fourteenth Amendment to the Constitution of the United States because it denies students an education, an important public right, without due process of law." The court's opinion outlined a link between educational interest and property right. "The concept of liberty includes…the right to acquire useful knowledge" (Lopez v. Williams, 1973). Students facing suspension placements have a liberty as well as a property right,

as opined from the Supreme Court decision *Goss v. Lopez* (1975). Subsequently, the groundwork was laid to defend education being a right afforded by the Constitution of the United States.

Educational opportunity was not just viewed as a right; to many poor and middle class African American families, education was considered the only route for their children to receive the quality of life they desired (Blanchett, Mumford, & Beachum, 2005). However, in the years following the formal desegregation movement, an underlying re-segregation began to occur. Rogers and Oakes (2005) even went so far as to state that minority students attending schools today are possibly even more segregated than before the 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. Many African American students were being held to white middle-class norms, and thus, being referred to special education and out-of-class discipline placements at alarming rates. Individual students were being blamed for their underachievement, rather than the institutions where they were being educated. Instead of examining institutional practices and implementing student interventions, schools were simply placing African American students in environments outside of the general education classroom setting (Blanchett et al., 2005). These placements out of the general education setting essentially re-segregated the students away from their peers (Eitle & Eitle 2004).

The opportunity for an education is hindered through removal from the educational environment. Discipline policies and practices are a form of legal and overt discrimination in public education. The Texas Education Code Chapter 37 states, "The board of trustees of an independent school district shall, with the advice of its district-level committee established under Subchapter F, Chapter 11, adopt a student code of

conduct for the district." This gives each district the authority to determine appropriate discretionary discipline consequences for its students. These consequences and placements vary greatly across the vast difference in school districts in the state. The lack of alignment in and of itself creates a question of unjust practices. Troyan (2003) posited that although students in "in-school suspension" removals should be receiving an equal education to their peers learning in class with the teacher, this theory does not translate into practice.

Although the removed students are expected to learn and perform at the same level as their peers who have not been removed from the classroom, this cannot happen due to the lack of appropriate educational time they receive. "And to the extent that they do not receive substantive and meaningful instruction in their core classes during the ISS sentence, their right to an equal education is impacted" (Troyan, 2003, p. 1639). Thus, their property right under the Fourteenth Amendment is violated. Students who are not in class to receive the instruction are not being afforded their rights. Although the definition of a minimum education for students as it pertains to the quality or quantity of this right is ambiguous, "…[s]tate courts have been more explicit than the Supreme Court and have defined the right to education in terms of required results, regardless of the level of scrutiny that they accord the right" (Morgan, 1991, p. 122).

Troyan (2003) stated, "Considering these constitutionally mandated minimums for education, it is surprising that so few claims have been made for a deprivation of the right to education due to in-school suspension" (p. 1654). He went on to argue that this may be because a common in-school suspension placement results in a minimal impact on the student's learning outcomes. However, when one examines the data supporting the claim

that African American students are overrepresented in out-of-class placements, it is reasonable to deduce that they are not receiving the typical in-school suspension treatment. Rather, the in-school suspension placements could result in an impact to the education.

Troyan also outlined four presumptions about how in-school suspension is supposed to work so as to not make an impact on the student's learning. First, there is knowledge on behalf of the teachers that the student is in an in-school suspension placement. Second, an assignment is an adequate substitute for teacher instruction and interaction. Third, the students assigned to the in-school suspension setting can do the assignments on their own without direct interaction with the teacher. Fourth and final, the student actually completes the work and does so accurately. Given all four of these presumptions for an ideal in-school suspension setting, the argument could be made that the educational setting is equivalent for the student. However, in reality, almost none of the four are in place in a school in-school suspension setting. When all four are not in place, the education of the students in such a placement does not meet the minimum constitutional guidelines for an equal education (pp.1656-1658). As Troyan stated, "At best, these students are being told to teach themselves. It is a de facto deprivation of the right to an equal education" (p. 1654).

In 1981, the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals defined educational rights further in *Debra P. v. Turlington*. In their rendition, they held that students have a property right in attending classes and in graduating. This ruling helps define to what extent students have a right to an education. Attendance and graduation were both refinements not previously addressed by the courts and actually give solid outcomes for students to be guaranteed.

Zero Tolerance

Zero tolerance is not a new concept in educational or justice settings. However, the misapplication has been documented primarily in our schools. Webb and Kritsonis (2006) analyzed the multiple uses of zero tolerance in their article. They referred to zero tolerance as a "crime control measure" (p. 1) that actually led to an initial increase in law enforcement brutality cases during the early stages of implementation in the early 1980s. Schools went on to adopt similar policies in the early 1990s, and by 1994, the country had a new federal law in the Gun-Free Schools Act. The Act was intended to remove from school any student who brought a gun onto campus, but many states expanded the definition to include tobacco and non-criminal acts. Webb and Kritsonis (2006) give one specific example of a state taking zero tolerance from its original intent to an extreme. The state of Michigan applied the same zero tolerance for possession of a firearm on campus, but the permutation in that state's case was that they applied a permanent expulsion to the student. The student was not provided any alternative setting for education. The student was also never afforded an opportunity to return to school. "This strict liability in schools does not achieve the goal of preventing violence; it only removes some of it from the school grounds" (p. 3).

Webb and Kritsonis asserted that zero tolerance policies, for all practical purposes, define students as criminals, a stark contrast from the innocent-until-proven-guilty concept. They also outlined how such laws continue to polarize the public due to racial beliefs about violence. "Zero tolerance policies and laws appear to be well-tailored for mobilizing racialized codes and rave-based moral panics that portray black and brown urban youth as a frightening and violent threat to the safety of 'decent' Americans" (p. 5).

This concept aligns with the research conducted by the Harvard University Civil Rights Project and presented in 2000. From their research and examination, the authors deduced that zero tolerance policies must be revisited and modified. Safety must be a primary focus, while ensuring equity and fairness for today's students. Additionally, they proposed withholding of resources from schools that have discriminatory data trends while applying these policies (p. 6-7).

In their article, Gorman and Pauken (2003) addressed the affective side of zero tolerance. They stressed that "a school leader must never forget his or her true ethical role – one of creation, maintenance, and respect for a learning environment that allows students to mature into successful, productive citizens in a larger democratic society" (p. 25). They presented this tough question: "How should moral decision-making and personal values become a part of the development and execution of school policy and the school discipline code of conduct?" (p. 25). This is a dichotomic question. School administrators are often torn between what the rulebook says and what their conscience tells them is good for the student in order to teach them and prevent such actions in the future. When administrators look at a discipline manual or code of conduct, rarely do they actually think that the action to be taken against the student will prevent the behavior from happening in the future. Although the moral struggle is rarely with those most egregious actions such as bringing a loaded firearm on campus or violent acts of assault, it is prevalent with relatively minor infractions being placed under the zero tolerance umbrella. Skiba and Peterson (1999b) described this as "a near epidemic of suspensions and expulsions for seemingly trivial events" (p. 26). This is where we see administrators using the zero tolerance policy as a curtain. They believe their hands are tied according to

the zero tolerance policies, when in fact the real issue might be that they do not truly understand the policies and their ability to apply discipline apart from these policies.

Gorman and Pauken (2003) discussed the predicament school administrators are in when faced with a scenario that the public might view as needing to fall under zero tolerance policies, but in reality, should not. That is the moral struggle facing administrators daily. Does the administrator cave to the public and apply harsher policies than an action warrants, or does she stand firm with her beliefs and face the criticism? "What is the ethical educator to do when faced with a dangerous dilemma, limited discretion, a nervous and edgy constituency, and a zero tolerance policy?" (p. 27). Further, the authors asserted that administrators must apply their ethics in these scenarios to all ethnic groups, a short but powerful sentiment related to the justice of discipline. The responsibility of a school administrator is to apply the consequences with justice, and to ensure the "punishment fits the crime." The zero tolerance policies often conflict with this. Added to that, the zero tolerance policies have not had the results policy makers hoped for when they crafted them. Rather than resulting in a decrease in school discipline placements, there has actually been an increase in out-of-class suspension and expulsion placements according to the United States Department of Education (as cited in Gorman & Pauken, 2003). When policies fail, people suffer. Specifically in this case, our most at risk students are stuck in the middle of policy and education. Equitable discipline decisions must also be just. Administrators must not only apply due process to a discipline incident; they are morally bound to take into consideration common sense. If an administrator cannot in good faith say that the consequence links to the behavior, additional analysis and consideration must take place. "Zero tolerance, if taken to the

extreme, can mirror the witch-hunts in Salem, Massachusetts" (Gorman & Pauken, 2003, p. 32). Although this sentiment is striking, it is grounded in truth about the consequences of the misapplication of the zero tolerance policies.

Gorman and Pauken not only discussed the role of the administrator but also the implications for the students and, thus, the school climate, when zero tolerance policies are applied. In any school building on any day, visitors could hear a cry of, "That's not fair!" Although staff tends to brush this off, the students are saying something. They understand the concepts of fairness and justice. When the adults they trust in the school system tarnish these ideals, relationships are fractured. Although an individual student's discipline record is confidential, word spreads from student to student about what discipline consequence was administered for what action. Misalignment of such actions breaks down the level of trust and respect in a school. The authors ultimately made recommendations for improving the overall climate and respect level at the school building level. Creating a shared vision, providing targeted staff development for school violence issues, and integrating courtesy and mutual respect into daily interactions are all critical components of a holistic approach to combat the negative effects of a zero tolerance policy.

In his analysis of school discipline policies and practice, Skiba (2002) analyzed examples of schools administering punishment for a variety of incidents at varying levels of severity. He connects the examples given as all having "at their heart a conflict between two fundamental rights: the right of free speech, and the right of schools to protect students and staff from real or perceived harm" (p. 6). At the center of controversy is the application of the policy of zero tolerance and common sense. Because

zero tolerance policies seek to remove students equally with no regard for the severity or consequences, the external unintended consequences of removal are far reaching. Skiba (2002) lists disproportionality, excessive suspensions, and therefore, a violation of justice as primary unintended outcomes from broad applications of zero tolerance (p. 10-11). Additional unintended consequences are even more damaging to the individual student: continued behavioral issues including increased aggression, and emotional issues such as posttraumatic stress disorder (p. 14). The intended results, however, are not being observed. "There appears to be little evidence, direct or indirect, supporting the effectiveness of suspension or expulsion for improving student behavior or contributing to overall school safety" (p. 13).

In his concluding section, Skiba (2000) comments that the issue can be clearly relayed back to how zero tolerance policies are processed and implemented, not the zero tolerance policy itself. While the policy may be sound in its construct, the application and misapplication of the intent is what is creating the concern. He addresses the wealth of data that refutes the position that zero tolerance policies are improving school safety and decreasing school violence. In fact, he counters with the compilation of documentation related to at risk youth, who are overrepresented in zero tolerance discipline. This population of youth actually shows an increase in discipline behaviors, suspension, expulsion, and eventually they drop out. He also cites evidence that some communities are "no longer comfortable with a forced choice between school safety and civil rights" (p. 16). This is a positive trend that will be disruptive in process, but could result in more aligned practice using social justice as a theme. It is possible to maintain the safety of students in today's schools and protect the civil rights of all students.

Current Discipline Practices

Zero tolerance can be considered the set of policies behind addressing the most severe of discipline actions. However, there is a plethora of discipline actions occurring and actions being applied that are not truly related to zero tolerance. Skiba and Peterson (2000) noted the meaning of the word *discipline*. "The word *discipline* comes from the same Latin root as the word *disciplie: discipere*, to teach or comprehend" (p. 342). In contrast, the Latin word for *punish* is *vindicto*. So are schools teaching or being vindictive with their current discipline practices? According to Troyan (2003), the purpose of discipline tends to lean more toward the side of punishment rather than teaching. Removal of a seemingly disruptive student from the classroom setting will help create a more focused learning environment for the other students (p. 1639).

Skiba and Peterson (2000) outlined that current research supports the use of proactive and positive methods to prevent negative actions. This practice also can be seen in a more positive school climate (p. 336). However, there is a disconnect in this research and what is happening in schools across the country. Schools are resorting to a reactive and punitive practice, which does not minimize the negative actions of students. There are three out of class discipline placements that are most commonly used in schools today. In-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and disciplinary alternative education programs are the three that administrators use when they have discretion to decide placements. The mandatory expulsion is also used, but education code, or state law more often decides this placement.

In-school Suspension

In-school suspension should be a placement for students apart from their classroom

peers, but should still allow for an equal education (Morris & Howard, 2003; Noblit & Short, 1984; Sullivan, 1989; Troyan, 2003). This in-school suspension placement is generally seen as an appropriate placement for students whose behavior is not so severe that it warrants placement outside of the school building, but is seen to undermine the teacher's authority. In-school suspension is considered the lesser restriction in comparison to the more restrictive out-of school placements (Troyan, 2003). Sheets (1996) claimed the in-school suspension placement still allows the student to be in the authority of the school.

Morris and Howard (2003) outlined four main types of in-school suspension program designs: punitive, academic, therapeutic, and individual. While the first three have been popular since the 1990s, John Sheets (1996) identified the last as a recent model in the late 1990s. The punitive model has several main characteristics. A punitive in-school suspension setting has students assigned for a specific period of days, has strict rules, and students complete class assignments as well as do punitive tasks. The academic in-school suspension model's characteristics include diagnosis of learning gaps, tutorial instruction, and have a specially trained teacher to help address learning difficulties. The therapeutic in-school suspension model includes counseling sessions to address students' needs, parent training, staff development, and behavior monitoring post-placement. The individual in-school suspension model incorporates some of the therapeutic model's concepts, focusing on the short and long-term behavioral goals and needs of the student (Morris & Howard, 2003).

Noblit and Short (1984) examined the variance in the realities of in-school suspension programs. One goal is to rehabilitate the disruptive students through

counseling programs, and behavioral modifications. However, many involved in the education system feel that the other purpose is strictly to punish the students. Although the concept of in-school suspension can be one of teaching students about their mistakes, and modeling or practicing appropriate replacement behaviors, the educators interviewed in Noblit and Short's (1984) study "were nearly unanimous in their belief that ISS programs were designed to punish students' misbehavior" (p. 61). The educators also reported to the researchers that they were aware that more rehabilitative techniques should have been occurring in the in-school suspension setting, but most often ended the interview with a certain, "After all, they broke a rule and need to be punished" (p. 61). Although the responses from the educators reflected a punitive theme, in this study, academic components to the in-school suspension settings were also observed. The students in the in-school suspension placements had work from their regular classroom teachers to complete. The students, however, were less than engaged in the class work they were to complete. According to Noblit and Short (1984), "We were even more concerned, however, with the mix of punitive and academic models. While it may sound good in rhetoric, in reality it appeared that academic work was part of the punishment, especially in the students' view" (p. 62). This could be one reason why in their study, Nichols, Ludwin, and Iadicola (1999) found that the consequences of an in-school suspension actually include trauma and emotional stressors, possibly leading to continued behavioral concerns.

The effectiveness of in-school suspension programs is as varied as the administrators designing them. Proactive programs, which focus on a combination of the individual and therapeutic models, tend to be more effective in preventing further

negative behaviors in students than the other models (Morris & Howard, 2003). Of greatest concern with all of the in-school suspension models is that they will not be effective in preventing future misbehavior. Troyan (2003) discussed concerns about students who are in in-school suspension placements for extended periods of time. "When this sanction is imposed repeatedly or for a prolonged period of time, the student suffers from the same learning handicap as a student who spends a large segment of the school term sick at home" (p. 1638). Andrews, Taylor, Martin, and Slate (1998) also proposed these same long-term outcomes. They stated that students in these settings had a higher probability of dropping out, lost the support of their peers, teachers, and other adults who support their learning process. Students in in-school suspension placements for long periods of time also tended to have more academic problems, compounded by the fact they were not in school. Again, when the students were not in school, they were not in contact with an educator who could support their learning.

The state of Texas had 596,422 students in 1,537,324 in-school suspension placements during the 2010-2011 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2011). With such a large number of placements, it is critical that the settings these students are in be conducive to both academic and behavioral learning. Campus administrators must examine the characteristics of successful in-school suspension programs and replicate what works to benefit students.

Out-of-school Suspension

A more exclusionary placement than in-school suspension is an out-of-school suspension. In this type of disciplinary placement, students are removed from the school all together. This type of removal happens when students pose a danger to others or to the

school setting. This placement is believed to respond to serious misbehavior, not necessarily to prevent future misbehavior. Although intended for serious behavior offences, Taras et al. (2003) found through their research that the placements rarely were for offences so severe that assault was threatened. Out-of-school discipline is also said to assist in maintaining a positive climate in schools (Raffaele Mendez et al., 2003). Taras et al. (2003) put forward that out-of-school placements also provide school staff a cooling off period from the offending student. These placements also can serve as an early warning to parents about their child's behavioral patterns and impending consequences. Other than expulsion, this is the most severe discipline placement (Nichols, Ludwin & Iadicola, 1999; Raffaele Mendez et al., 2003). Out-of-school suspensions impact a student's attendance and learning, as the students are no longer present for classroom instruction or assignments. Very few out-of-school suspension programs require teachers to provide an equal education for out-of-school suspended students (DeRidder, 1991). Much like in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension has been found to speed up the dropout process by creating academic gaps, social ousting, and declining adult support in school (Christle, Nelson, & Jolivette, 2004; DeRidder, 1991; Raffaele Mendez et al., 2003; Skiba et al. 2011; Taras et al., 2003). Because out-of-school suspensions traditionally mean the student will be at home, concern has grown about lack of supervision. This concern is why in-school suspension placements are more appropriate for many youth (Andrews, Taylor, Martin, & Slate, 1998).

Vavrus and Cole (2002) examined the factors that go into the assignment of an out-of-school suspension. They found that many times, multiple disruptions would occur in one classroom setting, but only one student would be selected for the punishment. Also,

these disruptions were not violent or threatening to other students or teachers. They looked into the idea that assumptions can be made about the events preceding a suspension assignment and the social context of the classroom setting. They contended that disruptions in the school setting and resulting suspensions are actually examples of social practice in the specific community. Using this concept, what constitutes a disruption varies greatly from classroom to classroom. The individual class's social interactions many times determine the extent of, or even definition of, disruption.

When bias and subjectivity enter into any discipline placement, it is prudent to conduct a thorough due process hearing. However, when that placement is a removal from the educational setting for any length of time, it is the administrator's responsibility to understand all the social interactions and context in the particular setting of the perceived disruption. Discipline consequences cannot be handled in isolation from the environmental context or with a one-size-fits-all approach.

Costenbader and Markson (1998) contended that out-of-school suspensions can only serve to decrease unwanted behaviors if the environments into which students are being placed are less desirable than the environment from which they are being removed. In the vast majority of cases, students who are disciplined with out-of-class placements are being removed from a classroom and school setting to a home setting. Home placement being perceived as more of a punishment than school placement is the rare case. There is also concern that such out-of-school discipline placements are actually pushing a school's problem of discipline onto the general community (Cosenbader & Markson, 1998).

Christle, Nelson, and Jolivette (2004) examined out-of-school placement rates of

schools and compared the school characteristics of those with high placement rates to those with lower placement rates. They noted that, due to increasing accountability and scrutiny from policies such as No Child Left Behind, administrators are more prone to assign an out-of-school discipline placement to students even if the behavior is relatively minor. The research shows patterns of disproportionate placement for students from low socioeconomic family settings, for students who are male, and for minority students. Students with a learning disability or other disability were also more likely to receive out-of-school discipline placements. The findings of the comparison research conducted by Christle et al. (2004) confirmed these trends. They also deduced that the characteristics of schools with lower suspension rates offered more positive incentives. Proactive tactics were employed to assist students regardless of their demographic category.

Texas had 265,543 students in 529,699 out-of-school suspension placements during the 2010-2011 school year (Texas Education Agency, 2011). That number represents almost two placements per student suspended. This ratio indicates that out-of-school suspension is not a wide-reaching placement option, but when used, there is a possible high rate of recidivism, suggesting that this practice requires further examination in order to establish its true benefit for preventing future misbehavior. These students were not in class as a result of their suspension, and consequently, missed the educational opportunity afforded to them.

Disproportionality in Discipline

Noting the history of placing African American students in-out-of-class placements is not a new finding. Walker-Dalhouse (2005) reviewed research that supports this finding. In fact, she discussed the finding that suspensions lead to decreased student

achievement, and that the achievement rates will not improve unless the climate of the schools improves. This is especially true for the African American youth in our schools. The fact that there is disproportionality across the United States as well as in Texas could explain academic achievement levels. Walker-Dalhouse (2005) described students' behavior as being directly influenced by classroom environment and interactions (p. 25). This being the case, a classroom setting can either prevent or cause student excessive misbehavior that results in disciplinary action placing the student out of the classroom. She challenged her readers with the idea that classroom teachers must employ culturally relevant teaching and fair discipline. She discussed three things that classroom teachers must do to ensure these are in place. These include the use of judicious authority, viewing students as family, and changing perceptions about student achievement (p. 25).

Townsend's article (2000) related this same finding. She discussed research showing that in a New Orleans school district, African American males made up 43% of the population but represented 65% of the expulsions (p. 382). This is not a rare instance in the research. Townsend (2000) went on to outline the effects of these practices. As quoted in Townsend (2000), DeRidder (1991) stated, "When the vast majority of school exclusions are meted out to African American students who comprise a minority of the school population, it is easy for those students to interpret this disparity as rejection and to suffer from lower self esteem as a result" (p. 382). Townsend (2000) also examined the cultural disparities between a shortage of African American teachers and the cultural responsiveness of the teaching staff who are of a different race or culture. The ways students who are African American work are, at times, in direct conflict with how a teacher from another ethnic group perceives behavior should be in the classroom (p. 383).

To conclude her article, Townsend (2000) suggested ways to reduce the numbers of African American students in out-of-school placements.

Skiba et al. (2011) investigated possibilities for the disproportionality much in line with the research by Townsend (2000). Their research raised questions about whether the disparity among discipline data is truly the result of the cultural differences Townsend (2000) discussed or a blatant form of racial stereotyping. No matter the reasons behind the inequity in the data, the end result is schools systems are in essence creating at-risk students through their own policies and practices. Skiba et al. (2011) link the removal from the school environment for students to an increase in drop-out rates, poor academic achievement, and eventual participation in the justice system. Due to these serious consequences to not only the individual student, but to society, we are urged to take this issue very seriously.

In his 2004 research Nichols followed up on an earlier report where school discipline data was examined. In this body of research, Nichols gave the background of the earlier research, which was partially started due to media reports that discipline data was racially divided, and that minority students were substantially overrepresented, over 10 times their white peers in some cases. Nichols ran correlational analyses that virtually eliminated the question of socioeconomic status playing a part in the overrepresentation of minorities in discipline consequences. He then ran an analysis of discipline incidents by location in order to create potential solutions for administrators to consider in addressing the issue of overrepresentation. His work also created a question of a negative belief of students from diverse backgrounds, manifesting itself in behavior and discipline patterns (p. 419). Administrative implications include ongoing support of staff and

faculty in behavior techniques. Nichols (2004) also stated that changes must come from the data; therefore, it is critical that school personnel analyze their discipline data by ethnicity and location of infraction. This can drive knowledge and change in the schools.

Gregory and Mosely (2004) conducted a qualitative study to examine teachers' theories about discipline problems. In this study, the study high school was made up of 37% African American and 37% white students. In contrast, African American on-campus discipline placements represented 80% of the total on-campus placements, and the white student population represented 9% of such placements. Teachers in this study reported perceptions about why students had discipline problems, and the resulting answers fell into five categories: "1) Adolescent Development; 2) Low Achievement; 3) Community and Culture Deficit; 4) School Organization and School Culture; and 5) Teacher Beliefs and Practices" (p. 21). The authors of this study concluded that most of the teachers did not identify a specific discipline gap among student groups, and therefore, were not currently addressing it actively. The authors further posited that a new way of implementing discipline practices be put in place in schools. They call this new way "culturally relevant discipline (CRD)" (p. 22).

In CRD, teachers would consider individual student factors before deciding a specific discipline technique to employ. Not only would a student's needs be identified, but also a teacher's individual qualities. The teacher's beliefs would need to be considered as a potential direct or indirect causal factor in the student's behavior prior to any specific discipline action being taken by administrators. After examining the research study conducted, Gregory and Mosely (2004) concluded that it is crucial to continue to study the teacher as well as student causal factors for the ethnicity gap schools are seeing

in discipline placements.

Mattison and Aber (2007) also conducted research that utilized a qualitative method to find the relationship of student discipline and academic results with the perceived school climate for building relationships between races. In this study, students were administered a survey that addressed whether students had been suspended, received detention, and also addressed school climate and racial issues. Because this study brought in racial climate questions, the authors were able to incorporate perceptions into their results. The racial climate influence was seen as a slight to moderate factor in all levels of school data. There was a correlation in the findings of this research between students' academic and discipline data with the racial climate of the school. Therefore, the authors recommend improving the school climate in relation to racial factors in order to improve student academic and behavioral outcomes (Mattison & Aber, 2007).

In their study, Eitle and Eitle (2004) considered the varying levels of segregation and the impact on suspension rates of African American students. They reviewed the two main reasons to explain the overrepresentation of African American students in suspension placements: differential and discrimination theses. The differential thesis reflects the idea that African American students have a true higher rate of misbehavior. The discrimination thesis is based on the idea that there is an imbalance in how students from different races are treated in regard to suspension placements. Research conducted by Eitle and Eitle (2004) suggested that although there could possibly be a mixture of both these factors at play with suspension rates, the likelihood is that differential involvement thesis cannot be the whole answer. The numbers of suspensions throughout their research does not support that premise. The majority of researchers and practitioners

have found that the reason for overrepresentation of African American students in suspension placements must be due to discriminatory practices. However, this also cannot be assumed. "The accumulation of evidence suggesting that the differential involvement thesis cannot fully explain the suspension imbalance should not be assumed, however, to provide prima facie evidence for the discrimination thesis" (Eitle & Eitle, 2004, p. 270). Rather, further examination into all the factors leading up to a discipline referral as well as the consequences themselves should be conducted.

In their research study, Wallace, Goodkind, Wallace, and Bachman (2008) examined patterns in school discipline over time (1991-2005). They found that discipline practices are not utilized equally over ethnicities. The more punitive consequences were administered to Black students more often than their White peers, and "Black boys are 30% more likely than White boys to be sent to the office or detained, and they are 330% (3.3 times) more likely than White boys to be suspended or expelled" (p. 57). The authors posited that with a push in recent years to increase disciplinary practices, it seems that those receiving the majority of the increase are African American students, specifically, African American boys.

Gregory and Thompson (2010) took this notion of African American overrepresentation in discipline placements and linked it to teacher perception. They found that teacher perceptions of defiant behavior increased the likelihood of teacher referrals for such behavior. This, the authors reported, "may reflect a wider range of negative interpersonal interactions than the more typical reasons for expulsion (e.g., assault, carrying a weapon)" (p. 395). They suggest that less overt forms of negative interactions between students and teachers can be detrimental to the student, such as

relational aggression. Their study showed that students who had a positive relationship with their teacher had fewer incidents of office referrals and subsequent disciplinary placements than those who viewed their teachers in a more negative way.

Blanchett, Mumford, and Beachum (2005) expanded on the notion that the teacher's perceptions impact discipline placements. They discussed the specific causes of urban school failure, citing English (2002) "The low success rate of minority students in our schools has too often been portrayed as individual failures of students instead of instructional failures of the system based on false notions of objectivity" (p. 74). Community leaders surveyed by the authors reported that teachers are sacrificing student relationships for teaching the curriculum as a threat to education. They went on to identify a teacher-student racial mismatch as a factor in the lack of connections teachers are making with students. Although the authors suggested policy and legal ways to improve the disproportionality in schools, they stated that the most critical component is the relationship the teacher and school make with the student.

Rocque and Paternoster (2011) addressed the connection between school discipline data and the jail inmate population. They posited that African American students disengage from schools far younger than their white peers. They contended that the conflicts with preconceived notions and perceptions by both white students and teachers led to the disciplinary placements, and a self-fulfilling prophecy. Stereotypes were prominent in their study, and thus, led to the disparate discipline treatment and placement for African American students. In their study, the authors examined both demographic and academic data for the students ($n = 19,645$), teachers ($n = 990$), and schools ($n = 45$) in their study population. A few key findings came out of their study data. The first is that

males, students in special education, over-age students, and low socioeconomic students are all more likely to receive a discipline referral. When controlling for all those demographic factors, however, African American students are still more likely to receive a discipline referral than their white peers. The second significant finding is that male teachers are less likely to refer students than female teachers. The third significant finding of the research is "schools with a higher proportion of African-American students are more likely to use office referrals for punishment is consistent with the racial threat hypothesis found in other criminological literature" (p. 655). They expand on this finding, noting that teachers in the study revert to greater social control of the students, in essence, creating the environment for greater negative behaviors from the students. The researched summarized their findings by showing that the overrepresentation of African American students in discipline placements begins as early as elementary school. Because it only compounds over time, it also feeds into the idea that African American students are more disengaged and will continue to feed the school-to-jail pipeline.

In his examination of discipline data based on race, Rocque (2010) took the discipline data from 45 elementary schools, controlling for varying discipline policies and practices by looking at each of the schools separate and apart from the aggregate. The researcher looked at demographic and academic influences for the study participants. His research findings included the idea that school context plays a part in racial disparity in school discipline. This context includes social expectations, teacher perceptions, and student behavior overall. However, the role of context is not significant enough to explain the large body of data supporting discipline bias in schools. Rather, a historical labeling of students based on behavior may play a larger role. The historical labeling can be

rooted in staff background, social influences, or stereotypes, but not necessarily actual experience. The labeling of students plays a part in identifying students as deviant, regardless of actual behavior. This results in a greater number of referrals and subsequent discipline placements for students, or groups of students targeted. Staff understanding of student behaviors and what causes them is one step in combating the biases and stereotypes that lead to discipline referrals.

In their 1992 study, McFadden and Marsh found that the instances of severe punishment and behavior did not exist as prominently as supposed. However, one significant finding was that African American students and white students were referred for the same types of offences, but were not receiving the same types of punishments. The study supported the idea that there was bias around disciplinary referrals and punishments. While white students were referred for defiance of authority, fighting, and bothering others more frequently, they were not receiving the same corporal punishment the African American students received for the same offenses. According to the referral data in this study, the white students should have been receiving corporal punishment more frequently than the African American students, but were not. Such practices have been revealed in multiple studies, but the reasoning behind such unequal discipline practices are more important to examine than the data itself. Teacher bias, administrator bias, the culture of the campus, the norms and expectations for all students, and the cultural teaching must all be considered critical components of the precursors to disciplinary actions and consequences. In order to fully understand the actions themselves, educators must understand why they occurred.

Summary

In summary, the literature points directly to a strong correlation with African American students and out-of-classroom discipline placements, so much so that an argument can be made for a violation of student rights to an appropriate education. By placing African American students out of the classroom for extended periods of time, school personnel is, in essence, allowing and promoting failure of this population. The research begins with the relevant court cases, showing that the right to an education is backed in the Constitution. There is a plethora of research that attempts to explain the reasoning behind this overt form of discrimination. The body of research has compared different ethnicities, teacher attitudes, historical data, types of behavior, types of punishments, and the equitable assignment of such punishments. It is critical to note that although there is much research proving the overrepresentation of African American students in discipline placements, little has been done to connect such placements directly with academic achievement. There is also not the accumulation of evidence that points directly to one cause of the overrepresentation, but rather, multiple factors are considered the reason for the discriminatory data. Specifically, the students themselves have not been involved in the research base by lending their voice to the process. Without this voice, researchers are making assumptions.

Sociological factors such as demographic makeup of the school, culture, mission, norms, and attitudes of the school are all critical components to the environment for the students (Eitle & Eitle, 2004). The subjective nature of discipline placements means that it is even more crucial for the values and norms to be aligned from the principals to the teachers. This is a tedious process that must be lead with focused vision and mission.

Once all the educators involved are aligned in the vision and purpose for discipline

actions, decision making is more streamlined.

CHAPTER 3. RESEARCH METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this study was to determine if there is a relationship between discipline removals and student achievement for African American high school students in a large urban school district in Texas. Further, the study examined if significant differences exist between the entire study population, by gender, and by economically disadvantaged status. Descriptive statistics were used with this mixed method study. It is not known if there is a relationship between the two variables. Principals at the three study schools were surveyed to include the perspective of school leadership on practices and policies guiding the discipline system at each campus. The survey results were incorporated into the qualitative findings of the discipline patterns to determine a relationship between principal responses and out-of-campus placements.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide this research study:

Research Question I. What is the relationship between the number of days of out-of-class discipline placements and the mathematics TAKS passing score of African American ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students?

Research Question II. What is the relationship between the number of days of out-of-class discipline placements and the mathematics TAKS passing score of African American ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade male versus female students?

Research Question III. What is the relationship between the number of days of out-of-class discipline placements and the mathematics TAKS passing score of African

American ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students by economically disadvantaged status?

Research Question IV. What is the relationship of the principal attitudes toward out-of-class discipline placements and the number of placements?

Population and Sampling Procedure

The population of this study included all 9th, 10th, and 11th grade African American students enrolled in the research district located in Houston, Texas for the 2010-2011 school year. According to the 2010-2011 Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) report, the study district served 36,230 students. 2,888 students were enrolled in 9th grade; 2,622 enrolled in 10th grade; and 2,149 enrolled in 11th grade. The urban district north of Houston for that school year was comprised of 40.2% African American students, 40.4% Hispanic students 14% White students, and 4.3% Asian students (Student Assessment Division, 2011a). During the 2010-2011 school year 71.6% of the district's students were identified as Economically Disadvantaged, and receiving free or reduced-price lunches. 18% were identified as Limited English Proficient, 45.1% were At-Risk, 8.3% were receiving Special Education services, and 15.6% of the students were identified as Gifted and Talented. For the 2010-2011 school year, the district achieved the state rating of Academically Acceptable. Out of the three comprehensive high schools, one achieved the state rating of Academically Acceptable, and two were rated Academically Unacceptable by the state.

The study population was inclusive of all African American students enrolled in 9th, 10th, 11th grade in the 2010-2011 school year and who were assessed using the state assessment in the spring of 2011. Discipline removals were defined as out-of-class

discipline placements including in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, District Alternative Education Placement, and Juvenile Justice Alternative Education Placement. The data was obtained from the 2010-2011 historical PEIMS file with permission from the research district. The Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) test was used to determine math achievement for these students. The TAKS data was collected from the historical TAKS data file provided by Pearson Education, Inc., for the 2010-2011 academic year with permission of the district. Variable indicators included the number of days of out-of-class placements versus the mathematics scale score overall, by gender, and by socioeconomic status.

Data Collection

Historical quantitative archival data was gathered from two different sources. Achievement data was collected from the district's TAKS data file and analyzed. Discipline placement data was compiled from the PEIMS file submitted to the state by the district. The data was analyzed to determine the correlation between out-of-class discipline placement days and student achievement. A Likert survey was conducted with three principals to gather the qualitative data regarding discipline practices and attitudes at each of the high schools. There is research that puts forward the idea that schools with high suspension rates also have a discipline, rather than instruction, focus (DeRidder, 1991).

Mathematics TAKS Scores

The TAKS data came from the state of Texas's standardized achievement test. This assessment was administered on an annual basis to the state's third through eleventh graders in reading, writing, English language arts, mathematics, science and social

studies from 2003 through 2011. The students' scale scores were used to determine math TAKS proficiency. Only students who had a valid score were included in this study.

Students' TAKS mathematics scores from their ninth, tenth, or initial exit level spring 2011 TAKS assessment was collected, These scores were presented in two forms: raw score and scale score. For each of the three mathematics assessments, the scale score 2100 indicated "met standard." The raw score for this 2100 met standard varies according to the number of items on the assessment. For the ninth grade mathematics 2011 TAKS, a raw score of 28 converted to the 2100 scale score. For the tenth grade mathematics 2011 TAKS, a raw score of 32 converted to the 2100 met standard scale score. For the eleventh grade initial 2011 TAKS Exit Level mathematics exam, a scale score of 31 converted to the 2100 met standard (Student Assessment Division, 2011b). Because the raw scores vary by assessment, for the purposes of this study, the scale scores were used to determine if the student met (1) or did not meet (0) standard for the mathematics TAKS examination they were administered. This met (1) or not met (2) data was used in the analysis.

Student Discipline Data

The student discipline data that was used incorporated discipline data from the district's historical PEIMS submission file. Texas Education Code §42.006 requires districts to submit data to the state annually. This submission includes a requirement for various discipline codes such as incident type, reason, days of placement, and demographics of involved students. Data collected included out-of-class discipline placement days. For the purposes of this study, out-of-class placements were defined as number of days of placement in an in-school suspension (ISS) setting, number of days of

placement in an out-of-school suspension (OSS) setting, number of days of placement in

a district alternative education placement (DAEP), and number of days of placement in a

juvenile justice alternative education placement (JJAEP). The number of days of

placement were considered regardless of the type of infraction leading up to the

placement. The total number of placement days were compiled for each student in this

research study, regardless of category. Although ISS, DAEP, and JJAEP assignments are

all associated with some sort of learning expectation, for the purposes of this study, they

were combined with the OSS placements, all reflecting that the student was in a

placement away from their general education classroom. ISS, OSS, DAEP, and JJAEP

placement days were all totaled for one common days of out-of-class placement number.

The total number of days was also sectioned into six range of days of placement. This

total number and ranges of days were then part of the analysis through the SPSS

statistical software to determine correlation to the student achievement data.

Student Gender

Student gender was also a factor in this study to address one of the research

questions. For the purposes of this study, gender was determined based on the district's

historical PEIMS data file. Gender is one of the defining criteria for the district PEIMS

425 record to the state of Texas, so during the analysis of this research question, the

gender of each student was gathered from this source. In this study, gender was defined

as "M" for male, and "F" for female students. This data was utilized to respond to the

third research question and was entered into the SPSS statistical software to determine

correlation.

Student Socioeconomic Status

Student socioeconomic status, or economically disadvantaged status, as reported by the PEIMS submission, is divided into four categories. Parents complete federal paperwork to determine eligibility for each of these four categories. The first is coded a 0 and indicates that a student is not considered economically disadvantaged. The second coded with a 1 notes that the student is eligible for full economically disadvantaged status, and thus, receives full participation in the National School Lunch Program. The third category is coded a 2 and notes that the student is eligible for partial funding through the National School Lunch program. The final category, coded a 9, indicates that the student is living in a homeless situation. For the purposes of this study, "economically disadvantaged," or students from a low socioeconomic status, included all students coded as a 1, 2, or 9 in the PEIMS file. "Not economically disadvantaged," or not low socioeconomic status included all students coded a 0 in the PEIMS file. This data was utilized to respond to the third research question and was entered into the SPSS statistical software to determine correlation.

Principal Perception

The fourth research question was addressed using a comprehensive survey broken into three parts: Likert-style survey, true/false questions, and a final open-ended response section. The survey was anonymous due to the role the researcher has in the district. In order to obtain a 100% response rate, with accurate, honest responses, the condition of anonymity was critical. Therefore, the aggregate of all open-ended responses was compiled to determine the impact on district results.

Data Procedure

The district granted permission for the researcher to utilize both the historical

TAKS file as well as the historical PEIMS discipline data from the 2010-2011 school

year. Permission was also granted to survey the three comprehensive high school

principals. Data was masked to protect the rights and confidentiality of each of the high

school students involved in this research. The data was saved on a secure password-

protected folder on a school district server with access granted only to the researcher. It

was also saved on a password-protected drive on the researcher's home computer. The

impact on the students in the study is minimal, with only masked data being used for

analysis.

The additional descriptive data that was obtained for inclusion in the analysis was

the students' gender and economic status. These two pieces of demographic data were

included in the data set obtained from the PEIMS 425 discipline file but could also be

found in the TAKS data file with student results. This data provided the information to

allow the researcher to respond to research questions two and three.

The information gathering began with the researcher selecting from the TAKS file

all African American students who were assessed with the 9th, 10th, and Exit Level TAKS

mathematics test in the spring of 2011. Only students who received a valid score were

included. Students who received a score code of "A" were removed from the data set, as

these students were absent from the test administration. Additionally, students who

received a score code of "O" were removed, as these students had an anomaly with their

test situation, resulting in a score code of "Other." These data were then divided into

three different sets. The first set was inclusive of all selected students. The second set was

divided by gender. The third data set divided the group by economically disadvantaged status. Each student was identified by local identification code to mask the data.

Next, the researcher gathered the out-of-class placement discipline data for all African American 9th, 10th, and 11th graders enrolled in the research district for any portion of the 2010-2011 school year. Removed from the group were students who do not match up using local identification numbers to a mathematics TAKS score. The researcher then divided the discipline data into the same three sets outlined previously.

Data Analysis

The design of this study was a mixed method, non-experimental study to measure the correlation of African American student out-of-class discipline placement days to their math TAKS passing rates. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the mean score and standard deviations, frequencies, and corresponding percents. Non-experimental quantitative research is defined as research where "no experimental variables are manipulated" (Wiersma & Jurs, 2009). The specific non-experimental quantitative design that was used was ex-post-facto research. All data was archival, historical data as it occurred during the 2010-2011 school year. No data was manipulated or designed other than data that was removed because it did not meet the intent of the study; such removals are listed in the *scope and limitations* section. This study focused on whether there was an inverse correlation between the number of days in an out-of-class discipline placement and student achievement as measured by mathematics TAKS. The descriptive statistics were used to determine if a significant relationship existed for the entire study population, by gender, or by economically disadvantaged status. Additionally, a qualitative component involving the principal responses to the open-

ended questions were incorporated into the results to determine if collective principal attitudes influenced, or impacted discipline removals overall, or by gender or socioeconomic status. This qualitative component gave the research a more specific look at the affective factors of campus leadership as it relates to discipline and discipline practices.

Scope and Limitations

Although all ethical and professional research processes were adhered to, this research study included several limitations.

The first limitation related to the reliability and validity of the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) assessment. This assessment was created by the Texas Education Agency, who does report that the assessment is tested for reliability and validity. However, this researcher did not conduct this test to determine firsthand that this assessment is both reliable and valid.

Second, the student population used for the research only included students from the research district enrolled in grades nine, ten, and eleven for the 2010-2011 school year who were still enrolled at the time of testing in the spring of 2011. The results cannot be generalized to students in other grade levels.

Third, there were students removed from this study based on the type of score code on their mathematics TAKS assessment, or because of their mobility between districts.

Fourth, the discipline data was gathered from the district's PEIMS file. Campus personnel, whose responsibilities vary at each campus, enter the data. An assumption of

this researcher is that all discipline data was collected, recorded, and entered correctly and comprehensively.

Fifth, although there is an assumption of some type of learning environment with an ISS, DAEP, and JJAEP placement, for the purposes of this study, all were combined with the OSS placements.

Sixth, only the campus principal was surveyed for the qualitative component of the research. Other high school campus administrators and administrators from other grade level campuses were not included in this study.

Summary

The research questions in this study focused primarily on whether the number of out-of-class discipline placements African American students received impacted their score on the mathematics TAKS assessment administered in the spring of 2011. Further analysis was conducted to determine if the impact was significant by gender or by economically disadvantaged status. The dependent variable in this study was the mathematics TAKS scale score. The independent variable was the number of out-of-class discipline placements for study participants. The study used the data in the study district's TAKS results file and from the PEIMS data submission for the 2010-2011 school year. Study participants were inclusive of all enrolled ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade African American students in the study district who were assessed using mathematics TAKS in 2011. Students not meeting study criteria were removed from the sample to ensure consistency in the data. Principals for the three comprehensive high schools in the study district participated in a survey designed to identify perceptions related to school discipline and practices at their campuses specifically from the 2010-2011 school year.

Open-ended questions guided the qualitative component of this mixed method study. An

examination of the data led to trends, consistencies, and implications for school

administrators. It will also guide recommendations for further policy, research and

informed practice.

CHAPTER 4. RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade out-of-class discipline placement days and their corresponding initial mathematics TAKS examination results. This study looked at the 2011 TAKS mathematics examination scores for the study district in urban Houston, Texas. The 2011 discipline data the study district reported to the state was obtained and utilized in conjunction with the 2011 TAKS data file provided by Pearson, Inc. This study examined the relationship for African American students also by gender and socioeconomic status. Passing rates for the examination for African American students were compared to the number of days of out of class discipline placements the students had been assigned to. Additionally, the gender and socioeconomic status variables were examined for correlation.

The principals for the three comprehensive high schools in the study district were administered a survey (Appendix A). This survey examined principal perceptions of school discipline practices, the resulting academic achievement, and the role of the campus administrator in the discipline process. It allowed for qualitative responses to the questions posed.

Demographic Data

Participants in the study were from the study district. The demographics of the study district are displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Data for Study District

Demographic	n	%
Total Population	36,230	100.0%
Grade Nine	2,888	7.9%
Grade Ten	2,622	7.2%
Grade Eleven	2,149	5.9%
African American	14,564	40.2%
Hispanic	14,636	40.4%
White	5,072	14.0%
Asian	1,557	4.3%
Economically Disadvantaged	25,940	71.6%
Limited English Proficient	6,521	18.0%
At Risk	16,303	45.1%
Special Education	3,007	8.3%
Gifted/Talented	5,651	15.6%

Participants in the historical data portion of this study included 3,175 African American students total. Table 2 displays the profile of the study population.

Table 2

Demographic Data for Study Participants

Demographic	n	%
Grade		
Nine	1,188	37.4%
Ten	1,105	34.8%
Eleven	882	27.8%
Gender		
Female	1,581	49.8%
Male	1,594	50.2%
Socioeconomic status		
Receiving free or reduced lunch	2,108	66.4%
Not receiving free or reduced price lunch	1,067	33.6%

Mathematics TAKS Data

TAKS mathematics "Met Standard" data was reported as pass or fail only. For this study each student was coded either a 0 if the score on the 2010-2011 mathematics TAKS examination was a failing score, or a 1 if the score was a passing score. A large percentage of students meeting standard on the mathematics TAKS examination were students who did not receive free or reduced price lunch (62.9%) compared to 50.9% passing for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. A larger percentage of

females (57.5%) passed compared to 52.4% of males. Overall, from this African American study population, more than 50% of the participants passed regardless of socioeconomic status or gender. Table 3 displays the data related to the passing rates for each of the study populations.

Table 3

Met Standard on the 2011 Mathematics TAKS Examination

Demographic	Not Met		Met	
	n	%	n	%
Gender				
Female	672	42.5%	909	57.5%
Male	758	47.6%	836	52.4%
Socioeconomic status				
Receiving free or reduced lunch	1,034	49.1%	1,074	50.9%
Not receiving free or reduced price lunch	396	37.1%	671	62.9%

Discipline Data

Discipline data included in this study was specific to placements that removed a student from the classroom environment. In-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and DAEP placements were all grouped together to be included as an out-of-class

placement. Each of the 3,175 African American students in this study had a discipline placement number assigned to them. This number was the total number of days they had been in an out-of-class placement during the 2010-2011 school year. Although not each day was an equally severe placement, each day does indicate that the student was not in their regularly scheduled classroom placement. As shown in Table 4, the number of days of out of class placements in this study ranged from zero to 32.

Table 4

Distribution of Students by Out of Class Placement Days

Days	n	%
0	1,832	57.7%
1	475	15.0%
2	255	8.0%
3	164	5.2%
4	102	3.2%
5	69	2.2%
6	63	2.0%
7	46	1.4%
8	23	.7%
9	25	.8%
10	23	.7%
11	20	.6%
12	10	.3%
13	11	.3%
14	9	.3%
15	6	.2%
16	11	.3%
17	7	.2%
18	5	.2%
19	6	.2%
20	3	.1%
21	1	.0%
22	2	.1%
23	1	.0%
25	1	.0%
26	2	.1%
29	1	.0%
31	1	.0%
32	1	.0%

In order to detect if there were specific trends in the statistical data, these total numbers of days of out-of-class placements were grouped into six ranges. These ranges include zero days of placement, one day of placement, two to three days of placement, four to seven days of placement, eight to 16 days of placement, and 17 or more days of placement. The majority of students in this study had zero days of out-of-school

placements (57.7%). 15.0% received one day of some kind of out-of-class discipline placement. 13.2% received two or three days of out-of-class discipline placements, and 14.1% received four or more days of out-of-class disciplinary action. The data is described in Table 5.

Table 5

Distribution Ranges of Out-of-Class Placement Days

Days	n	%
0	1,832	57.7%
1	475	15.0%
2-3	419	13.2%
4-7	280	8.8%
8-16	138	4.3%
17+	31	1.0%

Descriptive Statistics

In order to further understand the impact of these days of removal on the academic achievement for each of the demographic groups, the distribution of days of removal was conducted by demographic. In all ranges except 0 days of removal, male students were out of school at a higher percentage than female students. In all ranges, low

socioeconomic students were out of class at a higher percentage than their non-low

socioeconomic peers. Although male students accounted for 50.2% of the total study

population, they were over-represented in all discipline placement ranges where

placements occurred. Additionally, although low socioeconomic students represented

66.4% of the total study population, they were overrepresented in all discipline

placements for ranges above two days out of class. The data is displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

Demographics by Days of Placement

	Gender				Socioeconomic Status			
	F		M		0		1	
Days	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
0	972	53.1%	860	46.9%	684	37.3%	1,148	62.7%
1	236	49.7%	239	50.3%	161	33.9%	314	66.1%
2-3	202	48.2%	217	51.8%	106	25.3%	313	74.7%
4-7	110	39.3%	170	60.7%	86	30.7%	194	69.3%
8-16	49	35.5%	89	64.5%	25	18.1%	113	81.9%
17+	12	38.7%	19	61.3%	5	16.1%	26	83.9%

A breakdown of the "Met Standard" data by the days students were placed out of

class for disciplinary purposes was created. The percentage of students meeting standard

on the 2011 mathematics TAKS exam decreased steadily from one (61.7%) to 13 (9.1%) days of out-of-class placements. At that point the total numbers were low, causing the percentages to vary up and down. With the exception of one student passing who had been in an out-of-class placement for 26 days, no one passed the mathematics TAKS examination that had been out of class for discipline purposes for more than 20 days. The detail can be found in Table 7.

Table 7

Distribution of Passing Rates by Out-of-Class Placement Days

Days	n	%
0	1,130	61.7%
1	270	56.8%
2	125	49.0%
3	76	46.3%
4	38	37.3%
5	25	36.2%
6	23	36.5%
7	18	39.1%
8	6	26.1%
9	10	40.0%
10	7	30.4%
11	4	20.0%
12	1	10.0%
13	1	9.1%
14	3	33.3%
15	2	33.3%
16	1	9.1%
17	2	28.6%
18	0	0.0%
19	1	16.7%
20	1	33.3%
21	0	0.0%
22	0	0.0%
23	0	0.0%
25	0	0.0%
26	1	50.0%
29	0	0.0%
31	0	0.0%
32	0	0.0%

A breakdown of the "Met Standard" data by the range of days students were placed out of class for disciplinary purposes was created. The percentage of students meeting standard on the 2011 mathematics TAKS examination decreased with every out-of-class discipline placement range. 64.8% of the students with no disciplinary removals from class passed the test, compared to only 16.1% passing with 17 or more days of out-

of-class placement. Conversely, 83.9% of the students who had been out of class for 17

or more days due to disciplinary placements did not meet standard on the high stakes test.

The data is represented in Table 8.

Table 8

Met Standard by Range of Days of Placement

	Not Met			Met	
Days	n	%		n	%
0	702	38.3%		1,130	64.8%
1	205	43.2%		270	56.8%
2-3	218	52.0%		201	48.0%
4-7	176	62.9%		104	37.1%
8-16	103	74.6%		35	25.4%
17+	26	83.9%		5	16.1%

To fully understand the impact of number of placement days on the passing rate

for the 2011 mathematics TAKS examination, further analysis of the data in Table 5 and

Table 7 was conducted. The overall population-passing rate (55%) was computed. It was

compared to the passing rate for the aggregate population of students by range of days of

removal for disciplinary purposes. Students placed out of class for disciplinary purposes

for zero or one day have a higher "Met Standard" percentage than those with two or more

days of placement. The passing rate decreases by about 10 percentage points with every

range increase. The data is displayed in Table 9.

Table 9

Difference from Population Passing Rate

Days	n	%	Δ[a]
0	1,130	61.7%	6.7%
1	270	56.8%	1.8%
2-3	201	48.0%	-7.0%
4-7	104	37.1%	-17.9%
8-16	35	25.4%	-29.6%
17+	5	16.1%	-38.9%

[a]$\mu = 55.0\%$

The overall population-passing rate for both females (57.5%) and males (52.4%)

was computed. It was compared to the passing rate for the specific population of students

by range of days of removal for disciplinary purposes. The outcome of this analysis was

that females who were not out of class for disciplinary reasons during the 2010-2011

school year outperformed the mean passing rate by 6.3% (63.8%). Males who were not

out of class for disciplinary reasons, or who only received one day of discipline

placement out of class, outperformed their peers by 6.9% and 5.8% respectively. Female

students who had out-of-class discipline placements for one or more days had their

passing rate decrease with each range of days increase until 17 or more days of

placement. That range has a small increase in passing rate (33.3%) compared to 24.5%

for the 8-16 range due in large part to the small aggregate numbers. Male students'

passing rates steadily decreased with each range of placement days, resulting in only

5.3% passing for male students placed out of class for 17 or more days in the school year.

The results are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10

Difference from Population Passing Rate by Gender

	F				M		
Days	n	%	Δ^a		n	%	Δ^b
0	620	63.8%	6.3%		510	59.3%	6.9%
1	131	55.5%	-2.0%		139	58.2%	5.8%
2-3	100	49.5%	-8.0%		101	46.5%	-5.9%
4-7	42	38.2%	-19.3%		62	36.5%	-15.9%
8-16	12	24.5%	-33.0%		23	25.8%	-26.6%
17+	4	33.3%	-24.2%		1	5.3%	-47.1%

[a]$\mu = 57.5\%$. [b]$\mu = 52.4\%$

The same analysis was conducted with socioeconomic status of the population. For both populations in this analysis, students who were not out of class for disciplinary reasons, or who were placed for one day outperformed the total study population. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds who did not receive any days of out-of-class discipline placements outperformed the total low socioeconomic population by 7.2%. Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds had less of a difference in met standard percentages than their non-low socioeconomic status peers for eight or more placement days. There was a 24.4% difference for low socioeconomic status students compared to a 42.9% difference for their peers receiving eight to 16 days of placements. There was a 35.5% difference for low socioeconomic status students compared to a 42.9% difference for their peers receiving 17 or more days of placements. Table 11 presents the results.

Table 11

Difference from Population Passing Rate by Socioeconomic Status

Days	0				1		
	n	%	Δ^a		n	%	Δ^b
0	463	67.7%	4.8%		667	58.1%	7.2%
1	109	67.7%	4.8%		161	51.3%	0.4%
2-3	54	50.9%	-12.0%		147	47.0%	-3.9%
4-7	39	45.3%	-17.6%		65	33.5%	-17.4%
8-16	5	20.0%	-42.9%		30	26.5%	-24.4%
17+	1	20.0%	-42.9%		4	15.4%	-35.5%

$^a\mu = 62.9\%$. $^b\mu = 50.9\%$

Simple descriptive statistics for the mathematics TAKS examination for the study population (N=3,175) are displayed in Table 12. As expected, there is a low Standard Deviation for met standard ($SD = 0.498$), gender ($SD = 0.500$), and socioeconomic status ($SD = 0.472$). Conversely, the Standard Deviation is larger for days of placement ($SD = 3.268$) and range of days of placement ($SD = 1.265$). This translates into the statistical expectation of 95% of the study population having 4.868 or fewer days of out-of-class discipline placements ($2SD$). In this study, fewer than 95% of the study population had 4.868 days of out-of-class placements.

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics for Met, Days, Range, Gender, and Socioeconomic Status

Variable[a]	Range	*M*	*SD*	Variance
Met Standard	1	0.550	0.498	0.248
Days of Placement	32	1.600	3.268	10.682
Range of Placement Days	6	1.900	1.265	1.600
Gender	1	1.500	0.500	0.250
Socioeconomic Status	1	.660	0.472	0.223

[a]N = 3,175

Principal Survey Descriptive Statistics

The principal survey contained 14 questions and also asked for the respondent's opinions on three questions (Appendix A). It also provided for open-ended comments related to discipline in general. The survey was created to elicit responses that delve into the deep beliefs of the principal for the three study campuses. 12 questions were scored with a Likert-style scale, asking for respondents to rank each question according to *strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree*. Two questions were formatted to elicit a *true* or *false* answer.

Three participants were asked to complete the survey. These were the three principals at the three comprehensive high schools in the study district during the 2010-

2011 school year. All three completed the entire survey. Table 13 lists the frequency and

percentage of responses to the 12 Likert-scale items; the first section of the survey

administered.

Table 13

Frequency and Percentages of Principal Responses – Questions 1-12

Item	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	f	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*
1	0	0.0%	2	66.7%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	0	0.0%
2	1	33.3%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	1	33.3%
3	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	1	33.3%
4	0	0.0%	2	66.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%
5	0	0.0%	2	66.7%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	0	0.0%
6	1	33.3%	2	66.7%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
7	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	1	33.3%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%
8	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	1	33.3%	1	33.3%
9	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	0	0.0%	2	66.7%	0	0.0%
10	0	0.0%	1	33.3%	1	33.3%	1	33.3%	0	0.0%
11	0	0.0%	3	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
12	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	100.0%	0	0.0%

The three principals were aligned with their responses to item 11 "On my campus out-of-class discipline placements are used in a punitive way rather than a preventative learning technique" ($f = 3/100\%$ agree) and item 12 "On my campus out-of-class discipline placements are used as a preventative learning technique rather than in a punitive way" ($f = 3/100\%$ disagree).

However, all three had differing responses to five of the questions. This signifies a lack of philosophical alignment within the high school level in the study district. Not only are the principals not in alignment, but as they are the leader of the campus, it is expected that their staff is not in alignment from one campus to the next either. They differed on item 2 "Teacher attitudes about race influence office referrals" ($f = 1/33.3\%$ each for strongly agree, disagree, and strongly disagree); item 3 "Administrators' attitudes about race influence disciplinary actions" ($f = 1/33.3\%$ each for agree, disagree, and strongly disagree); item 7 "There are many varied discipline actions available to campus administrators" ($f = 1/33.3\%$ each for agree, neutral, and strongly disagree); item 8 "High school campus administrators should consider student demographic information prior to assigning a disciplinary action" ($f = 1/33.3\%$ each for neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree); and item 10 "On my campus students are assigned discipline placements fairly and in accordance with their action" ($f = 1/33.3\%$ each for agree, neutral, and disagree).

Two questions in the survey (Appendix A) were designed to elicit a *true* or *false* answer. These two questions touched on specific statements about race, discipline, and discriminatory practices. Principals surveyed were in alignment with their response to item 13 "African American students are placed in out of class discipline placements at a

higher rate than other ethnicities at your campus" ($f = 3/100\%$ true). The respondents

were divided on their answer to question 14 "If one ethnicity is overrepresented in out of

class discipline placements, there are underlying discriminatory practices occurring" ($f =$

1/33.3% true, $f = 2/66.7\%$ false). The division of the results demonstrates additional

discrepancies in how the principals in the study district view discipline, race, and

practices at their campuses. It may also signify discrepancies in how each principal

defines "overrepresentation" or "discriminatory practices." Table 14 details the frequency

and percentage for these questions.

Table 14

Frequency and Percentages of Principal Responses – Questions 13-14

	True			False	
Item	*f*	*%*		*f*	*%*
13	3	100.0%		0	0.0%
14	1	33.3%		2	66.7%

Principal Qualitative Responses

The principals included in this study were asked three open-ended questions that

were designed to elicit their complete thought process regarding discipline and their

campus. They were also offered an opportunity to provide further thoughts about

"discipline removals, African American overrepresentation in discipline settings, and

campus administrator role in discipline" through a final open-ended comment section. Their voices can be heard throughout the open-ended questions.

The principals in this study all agreed on the theme of their response for the question, "What is the purpose of an out-of-class discipline placement?" (Appendix A). Each of their answers centered on the student. One respondent had a proactive belief about the purpose of such a placement. That respondent stated that the placement provides "an opportunity to reorient student to appropriate behavior" (Anonymous Survey Participant 2, Principal Discipline Survey, March 05, 2012). Two respondents stated the purpose of an out-of-class discipline placement was to allow for students to cool down. One elaborated, saying it was a "negative consequence to an inappropriate action" (Anonymous Survey Participant 1, Principal Discipline Survey, March 01, 2012). One respondent stated that it could also be used so that the issue does not come up again. This, too, could be construed as a proactive method.

Survey participants were also asked to respond to the question, "What is the biggest challenge you face with discipline at your high school campus?" (Appendix A). The answers varied greatly. Anonymous survey participant 3 stated that it was a "lack of character," and went on to explain, "I feel that parents and the students' community should provide better examples of conflict resolution" (Principal Discipline Survey, March 06, 2012). Another respondent expressed that the challenge is related to students being out of class and falling further behind in their schoolwork. That participant ended the response with "…but it is inappropriate for the student to stay in class" (Anonymous Survey Participant 1, Principal Discipline Survey, March 01, 2012). As a principal, one respondent felt that the greatest challenge in regard to discipline is "…teacher expectation

that every situation is a major disciplinary offense" (Anonymous Survey Participant 2, Principal Discipline Survey, March 05, 2012).

The final structured question presented to the respondents was "What is the role of the High School administrator with campus discipline?" (Appendix A). Once again, the responses varied greatly. While one respondent said that their role is "to oversee the activities of the discipline assistant principals" (Anonymous Survey Participant 3, Principal Discipline Survey, March 06, 2012), another respondent stated that their role was to "intervene and correct (coach student and/or teacher)" (Anonymous Survey Participant 2, Principal Discipline Survey, March 05, 2012). The final respondent was much more elaborate and comprehensive in response to the question. "[P]roviding teachers with classroom management tools which include positive behavioal [sic] supports. training [sic] administrators in behavior management plans/discipline options and positive behavioral supports. Following data trends and investigating causes of trends, reporting data to all stakeholders" (Anonymous Survey Participant 1, Principal Discipline Survey, March 01, 2012).

Survey participants were afforded an opportunity to provide additional detail, thoughts, or comments related to the topic of the survey in an essay format. Although one respondent did not offer any additional information, two did. Both of those responses focused on the future and making things better. "We need to create new ways to make a positive difference for students so that they do not repeat misbehaviors" (Anonymous Survey Participant 2, Principal Discipline Survey, March 05, 2012). The other respondent commented that

Studnets [sic] need consequences to their actions regardless of race,

ethnicity…schools need to do a better job of teaching behavioral expectations but

at a high school it is difficult to change patterns that have been established for 15

or 16 years. (Anonymous Survey Participant 1, Principal Discipline Survey,

March 01, 2012)

Summary

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between out of class

discipline placement days and the passing rate on the 2011 mathematics TAKS

examination for enrolled African American ninth, tenth, and eleventh graders in the study

district. Descriptive statistics were used to draw patterns and conclusions about the

relationships of the data as an aggregate, and for each of the gender and socioeconomic

student groups. Quantitative and qualitative data were taken from a survey conducted

with the three comprehensive high school principals from the 2010-2011 school year in

the study district.

CHAPTER 5. SUMMARY, FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In our current age of increasing accountability, students' access to a quality education is of paramount importance. Students who are not in class do not have access to an educator who is qualified in the subject matter. When educators are the ones excluding students from the classroom setting, a new variable is at play. As recently as last summer, exclusionary discipline practices were called into question in *The Houston Chronicle*: "Nearly 60 percent of junior high school and high school students get suspended or expelled, according to a report that tracked about 1 million Texas children over a six-year period" (Scharrer & Lloyd, 2011). When 60 percent of the student body is placed out of the classroom setting for a period of time, academic disruption occurs and impairs learning for that student, certainly for the short term, and possibly long term as well. During a time when African American students are performing behind their peers already, this removal from class time further hampers their education (Lewis, Hancock, James & Larke, 2008).

Summary of the Study

This study examined the demographic, discipline, and academic data of 3,175 African American students in an urban Houston, Texas school district. The purpose of the study was to explore the connection between days African American students were placed out of class for disciplinary purposes and their academic achievement as measured by the 2011 mathematics TAKS examination. The connection was also examined by

gender and socioeconomic status. The three campus principals where the study

participants were enrolled also participated in a survey. The purpose of the survey was to

gain insight into the perceptions and attitudes of the leadership at those campuses.

Principals were provided an opportunity to include comments regarding any of the survey

topics in an open-ended format.

Findings

Summary

The sample size for the study was ample to examine the relationships of discipline

and demographic factors as they related to academic achievement. The sample's gender

and socioeconomic breakdown reflected the breakdown of the entire high school

population in the study district. All three principals who served in that role during the

2010-2011 school year were still in that role for the 2011-2012 school year, and all three

responded to the survey presented to them for analysis. The analysis of the mathematics

TAKS data proved more difficult than expected due to the high mobility rate for two of

the high school campuses. However, the sample size remained significant, even with the

omission of some students who had discipline data but did not take the TAKS assessment

in the study district, or whose results were not included in the study sample. The percent

of students passing the mathematics TAKS examination for this study population, in

almost every situation, decreased with the number of days of out-of-class placement. The

principals were divided on the majority of the questions on all three portions of the

survey they completed. Their disparate views indicate a misaligned culture in the study

district among high school administrators.

Disciplinary Placement Days' Effect on Mathematics TAKS Passing Rates

The passing rate on the mathematics TAKS examination decreased significantly with each range days of placement for the entire study population. The almost 10 percent decrease at each range level indicates an inverse relationship between the number of days of placement out of class for disciplinary reasons and mathematics TAKS passing rate.

Disciplinary Placement Days' Effect on Mathematics TAKS Passing Rates by Gender

As with the aggregate study population, the apparent effect on student achievement strengthened negatively with each range of placement for both females and males. The one exception to this was a surprising increase in met standard percentage for females assigned to 17 or more days of out-of-class discipline placement. Female students went from a 24.5% passing rate for the 8-16 days of placement range to the increased 33.3% passing rate for 17 or more days of placement. This could be attributed to a placement in a DAEP, where some learning is still occurring. This increase was not observed in the male discipline data, where even more males (19) were placed in the DAEP setting than female students (12). Male students who were placed out of class for two or more days during the school year had a 10 or more percent decrease in "Met Standard" with each range of increase of days of placement. The female difference was not nearly as striking. This data by gender shows that there is some relationship between the number of days of out-of-class placement and student "Met Standard" on the mathematics TAKS exam for male students. However, neither population varied

significantly from the total study population's difference in passing rate by range of placement days. Therefore, there was not a significant difference between the aggregate study population and either gender breakdown in the degree of inverse relationship between days of placement and TAKS passing rates.

Disciplinary Placement Days' Effect on Mathematics TAKS Passing Rates by Socioeconomic Status

There appears to be an effect on the "Met Standard" rates for the study population by socioeconomic status. Both the low socioeconomic students as well as their non-economically disadvantaged peers had passing rates above the mean for one or fewer out-of-class disciplinary placements. Although the mean for each of the two populations varied by 12 percentage points, the distribution of placements with corresponding "Met Standard" percentages was equitable in all except one area. That area was with non-low socioeconomic students placement for 8 to 16 days. Their passing percentage was an outlier, at only 20% passing. This was 42.9% lower than the total non-economically disadvantaged study population mean (62.9%) and primarily due to the low numbers resulting in varied percentages. Overall, the difference in population mean passing rates for low socioeconomic students did not vary from the difference in passing rates for the total study population. The resulting conclusion is that, although the low socioeconomic students had lower passing rates than their peers, they did not decrease at a vastly different rate than the study population passing rates by range of placement days. Therefore, there was not a significant difference between the aggregate study population and either low socioeconomic students or their non-economically disadvantaged peers in the degree of inverse relationship between days of placement and TAKS passing rates.

Relationship of Principal Attitudes and Placements

The principals surveyed for this study unanimously acknowledge that the placements are used in a punitive way rather than as a prevention method. However, they were divided on other relevant beliefs, such as the role of the principal, the options available to administrators for discipline, and the idea that students are placed fairly at their campuses. Such division in responses in the same school district signifies a mismatch in the expectation for student discipline and the practices. In a mobile district, when the three campus principals are not in alignment with their belief systems and practices occurring at the campuses, the students will continue to receive discipline as a punitive measure. The principals unanimously acknowledged that African American students were placed in out-of-class settings for disciplinary purposes at a higher rate than other students. This is a positive statement, as it signifies that they are examining the data and can then make plans for addressing the problem. However, it is also representative of the overarching problem in our educational society today.

The three respondents all gave ideas in their open-ended responses that would improve discipline practices at the campuses but still would not necessarily provide for alignment of those practices. Some of their responses were focused on prevention of behaviors, but none saw their role as being the leader in disciplinary expectations for the campus.

Two of the three respondents did not feel that discriminatory practices were in place if one population of students is overrepresented in discipline placements. This speaks to the idea that they may understand the data for their campuses but forecasts that

no change will occur. This viewpoint gives credibility to the numbers of African American students in discipline placements and their resulting declining student achievement with each range of days of placement.

Implications and Recommendations

This study adds to the body of research linking student exclusionary discipline practices to lower academic achievement. When students are removed from the classroom for discretionary discipline placements, they are being stripped of their right to an education as measured by the outcomes. When that population is overrepresented in discipline placements already, as is the African American population, a re-segregation process begins to occur (Rogers & Oakes, 2005). Because this is the case, school administrators need to act to prevent this process.

Leadership

District and campus leaders should use data such as the findings in this research to drive the decisions they make and their hiring practices. Campus leaders especially must be aware that the teachers they are bringing in to work with the students will possibly need much support and development. Principals should use their vision and direction for discipline to guide questions they ask potential candidates. Omitting questions that delve into the candidate's philosophy and belief in student success can be as detrimental as not even meeting the candidate at all prior to hiring.

Coupled with hiring, Principals must be the outspoken leader of the vision as it relates to academics and behavior expectations. Living the expectation models for staff

members what is required for staff and students related to student discipline. This kind of leadership must be overt for all to witness.

Knowledge

District leaders and campus administrators must be keenly aware of what education code and district policy states about disciplinary consequences. House Bill 171 in Texas specifically requires a manifestation review to be conducted even if the offense requires a mandatory placement. If educators are not aware of this law, they could make the assumption that all mandatory placements must be acted upon. This is not accurate. Educators must also have knowledge about different techniques to use in place of an out-of-class discipline placement. Such alternatives could actually better deter the behavior from recurring rather than only serving the punitive role that out-of-class placements serve (Skiba, Peterson, & Williams, 1997). Knowing all the alternatives and the law behind discipline can actually then allow the administrator to apply their moral compass with discipline rather than only applying "the book" to each situation. Being able to apply a moral compass is one way to combat the overrepresentation of specific groups of students in discipline placements.

All staff that works with students should also have specific knowledge regarding the data for the campus. Data should include classroom referral numbers, campus referral numbers, academic data by classroom, demographic data by classroom, and discipline breakdown by demographic, location of infractions, type of placement, and recidivism (Tobin, Sugai, & Colvin, 2000; Townsend, 2000; Yang, 2009). Data should also include student interview or focus group responses to the precursors to the incidents,

and the placements themselves. This type of qualitative data gives the staff greater insight into the effect of their practices on the students themselves. This data should be transparent to allow for professionals to support each other in the improvement process and to ultimately surround the students with assistance. Ideally, this data should be shared weekly to inform practice and improvement with the staff and students. The more knowledge a staff has about a particular focus area, the better equipped they are to set goals for change and begin to attack the problem strategically. The data, without judgment, serves as the catalyst for changing behavior. Although this could in and of itself be a cultural change for the campus, ultimately, the use of this kind of data will become routine, and the results will prove the importance of the data. Embedding data into the culture of the school will lead all staff members to utilizing it on a frequent and ongoing basis. When new staff members are hired, they too are brought in to the culture and expectation that the data is an integral component of daily life in the school for the benefit of all students (Nichols, 2004).

Race-Conscious Professional Learning

Schools that report making progress with minimizing the discipline proportionality gap are using more focused race-conscious strategies (Lewis, Bonner, Butler, & Joubert, 2010; Monroe, 2005). Such professional learning must be mandatory and centered around specific data patterns from the school. Professional learning sessions should center on how discipline relates to academic achievement in order to set the tone for the learning. Although these can be uncomfortable for some, "[p]roviding opportunities for teachers to interrogate their own beliefs about student groups as well as culturally based expectations concerning discipline are powerful means of shifting

present trends in disproportionality" (Monroe, 2005, p. 51). Campus administrators must be the role models for such professional learning and model the practices at all times. Setting and modeling expectations for all the staff is a critical component for driving change in school culture. Once the expectation is set and embedded in the culture true change can occur.

Part of this type of professional learning must be related to addressing and informing about specific cultural norms for the cultures represented in the school. Understanding these norms will assist in the relationship building the teachers must do to engage students in the classroom. Examining the differences and addressing openly how to respond to them is a proactive way to help staff in being prepared for students of differing backgrounds than themselves. Incorporating differentiated instruction activities such as movement and choice reflect an understanding that not all students are engaged while sitting in rows all day. When a teacher understands the need to incorporate such practices, that teacher is more adept at monitoring the engagement of the students in the classroom and thus, is more cognizant of the need to be more engaging as the teacher.

Poverty-Conscious Professional Learning

The study district also had a high poverty rate. Teachers working with students in high poverty situations must be equipped to address the unique social and learning needs of these students. While there was not a wide variance in the placement data of the non versus the low socioeconomic students, the high percentage of students in the district who are identified as low socioeconomic raises the need for additional professional learning to support the practices of the educators in the classrooms.

Behavior Response to Intervention

Although components of this study address the continued development needs of the adult educators, a critical facet is also the intervention support needs for the students. Behavior response to intervention (RtI) must be used to address the gaps in knowledge students have for behavior expectations just as academic intervention is used for gaps in core knowledge learning. Such examples would include the culturally relevant discipline Gregory and Mosely (2004) discuss in their research. Implementing a solid behavioral RtI program not only empowers students with positive replacement behaviors, but also allows staff to see incremental improvements for some of the toughest students. These short term improvements will provide the base for positive reinforcements and praise that will sustain the longer term improvements.

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Future Research

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This mixed method study intended to examine the relationship of out-of-class discipline placements with student achievement rates. The target study population was urban Houston ninth, tenth, and eleventh grade students during the 2010-2011 school year. Additional questions arise out of this study. More research could be done with the data used in this study. The recommendations for further research can be categorized into four areas.

School Climate

Analyze the school climate in relationship to school discipline and student achievement data. The quantitative piece of this topic would be similar data incorporated in this study. An additional qualitative component could be included to address student,

teacher, and parent perceptions of the climate at the campus. This could then be analyzed in conjunction with the discipline and academic data to triangulate the impact all three play in student success.

Principal Involvement

Conduct a mixed method study to analyze the extent to which the campus principal is involved in key decisions and setting beliefs and values for the campus. Principals over a selection of campuses would be interviewed and shadowed for a series of days. Quantitative data could be gathered from archival academic and discipline records as well as from teacher surveys. The analysis would investigate the link of principal involvement and attitude with the student level data.

Student Perception

The voice that was omitted from this study was that of the student. Conducting a small group qualitative study with a group of students would give voice to the population at the center of school discipline: the student. Interviews could be conducted to gain insight into their beliefs about the treatment of students, the assignment of discipline across the campus, and how certain discipline placements impact their achievement, self-esteem, and self-worth.

Equity of Discipline

One question that was raised in many pieces of research examined for this study was that of equity of discipline, not in total overall placements and numbers, but in the kind of discipline utilized with one group of students as opposed to another. A

quantitative examination could be conducted into a school district's discipline actions and placements by ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status. This would provide a partial answer the question as to whether African American students are punished in the same way as other students for the same offenses.

Summary

This research study focused on the relationship between out-of-class discipline placements and mathematics TAKS passing rates for high school students in the study district. Additional examination was conducted to find see if there was additional relationship according to gender or socioeconomic status for the study population. A critical component to the mixed method study was the incorporation of principal perspectives on race, overrepresentation, and discipline at their assigned campuses where the study participants attended school during the 2010-2011 school year. Although an inverse relationship was discovered for the number of days of out-of-class discipline placements and math TAKS passing rates, that relationship did not vary greatly by gender or economic status. A critical lens must be placed by administrators on their own campus data in order to set goals for improving the discipline placement data for students, particularly, the African American population. The use of professional learning communities with targeted goals and data can help address the discrepancies at each campus. Additionally, administrators who know and understand the discipline codes, laws, and district expectations can better apply a moral lens to each placement.

The education community has come far since the 1954 *Brown* decision, but in order to completely integrate the school system, today's educators must be armed with

the knowledge, data, and courage to rectify this overt form of discrimination of our youth. Addressing the problem at hand, rather than excusing it away, models such courage and will go far to improve the number of days our students are in the classroom, receiving the education guaranteed to them by the Fourteenth Amendment.

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APPENDIX A

Principal Discipline Survey

+ Add Question ▼

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✱1. Please rate the following statements according to the choices listed below.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A High School Campus Principal should be directly involved with student discipline	○	○	○	○	○
Teacher attitudes about race influence office referrals	○	○	○	○	○
Administrators' attitudes about race influence disciplinary actions	○	○	○	○	○
Students from different races have differing behavioral norms	○	○	○	○	○
Out of class placements (ISS, OSS, DAEP, JJAEP) assist with student behaviors	○	○	○	○	○
A High School Campus Principal should act on discipline data trends	○	○	○	○	○
There are many varied discipline actions available to campus administrators	○	○	○	○	○
High School campus administrators should consider student demographic information prior to assigning a disciplinary action	○	○	○	○	○
On my campus students are referred to the office from the classroom fairly and without regard to student demographic information	○	○	○	○	○
On my campus students are assigned discipline placements fairly and in accordance with their action	○	○	○	○	○

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
On my campus out of class discipline placements are used in a punitive way rather than a preventative learning technique	○	○	○	○	○
On my campus out of class discipline placements are used as a preventative learning technique rather than in a punitive way	○	○	○	○	○

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+ Add Question ▼

Q2   Edit Question ▼ Add Question Logic Move Copy Delete

✱ 2. African American students are placed in out of class discipline placements at a higher rate than other ethnicities at your campus.

○ True
○ False

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✱ 3. If one ethnicity is overrepresented in out of class discipline placements, there are underlying discriminatory practices occurring.

○ True
○ False

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4. What is the purpose of an out of class discipline placement?

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Q5 [Edit Question ▼] [Move] [Copy] [Delete]

✱5. What is the biggest challenge you face with discipline at your high school campus?

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Q6 [Edit Question ▼] [Move] [Copy] [Delete]

✱6. What is the role of the High School administrator with campus discipline?

[+ Add Question ▼] [Split Page Here]

Q7 [Edit Question ▼] [Move] [Copy] [Delete]

✱7. Please add any additional comments you have related to the topics of discipline removals, African American overrepresentation in discipline settings, and campus administrator role in discipline.

[+ Add Question ▼]