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Development of Effective Discipline Practices of a Rural Georgia Elementary School

Laurie Hale Lewis

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EFFECTIVE DISCIPLINE PRACTICES OF A RURAL GEORGIA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by

LAURIE H. LEWIS

(Under the Direction of Linda M. Arthur)

ABSTRACT

For U. S. schools, never had there been a crisis on the scale of what happened at the Columbine High School on April 20, 1999, when two students killed 12 students and one teacher, and injured 21 others before committing suicide (Barrios, 2001). Violence, or the threat of violence, has a direct impact on the quality of education provided and on the way teachers and students work together in the classroom (Winett, 1998). Well-disciplined, effective schools are not a product of chance; it takes administrators, teachers, students, and parents working together to provide an environment conducive to learning (Marzano & Pickering, 2002).

Developments in recent years indicate there is a need to change the way discipline is addressed. It is no longer enough to preserve the past's narrow perception of the role of discipline. School administrators are just beginning to learn and understand that discipline includes much more than handing down punishment.

This qualitative study focused on perceptions of administrators, teachers and parents in terms of effective discipline practices. Schools are discovering that the most effective means of reducing discipline referrals is to become proactive with school discipline. Collaborative development of school-wide rules that are clear, all

encompassing and seen as fair must be communicated to the school community and consistently followed. Consequences must be reasonable for the offense and combined with the teaching of strategies that address the behavior. It is recommended that future research include students since they are the ultimate factor in school discipline issues.

INDEX WORDS: School Discipline, Aggressive Behavior, Violence, and Conflict Management

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by

LAURIE H. LEWIS

A. A., Truett-McConnell College, 1992

B. S., Brenau University, 1994

M. Ed., Clemson University, 1998

Ed. S, Lincoln Memorial University, 2002

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LAURIE H.LEWIS

Major Professor: Linda M.Arthur

Committee: Marilyn Berrong
Paul M. Brinson

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my children Brandon and Haleigh. As you grow and dream of goals you want to accomplish in life, I hope that through my actions, you will learn that with persistence, determination, hard work, and the will of God, you too can accomplish great endeavors. Despite any disappointments, setbacks, or even unexpected circumstances that may grace your life's path, you should never give up on your aspirations to be what God has already destined you to become. May God bless you both always.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

For U. S. schools, never had there been a crisis on the scale of what happened at the Columbine High School on April 20, 1999, when two students killed 12 students and one teacher, and injured 21 others before committing suicide (Barrios, 2001). Violence, or the threat of violence, has a direct impact on the quality of education provided and on the way teachers and students work together in the classroom (Winett, 1998). Well-disciplined, effective schools are not a product of chance; it takes administrators, teachers, students, and parents working together to provide an environment conducive to learning (Marzano & Pickering, 2002).

Children and adolescents are being exposed to more frequent and more intense levels of violence. Barrios (2001) reported that three of four adolescents have witnessed someone else being threatened, slapped, hit, or punched at school during the past year. School safety has become a priority for parents, students, teachers, school administrators, politicians and policy makers (Lawrence, 2000). Creating school environments that are free of violence and drugs has become a national goal (Walker & Gresham, 1997).

For some schools, violence may be a minor issue; for others, it may be a daily presence. Though the most extreme forms of violence are rare, the threat of all kinds of violence can keep students away from school, prevent them from going to after school events, and leave them in fear every day (Arnette & Walsleben, 1998). Issues of violence have placed students, parents, teachers, and administrators in constant fear (Elliott, Hamburg, & Williams, 1998). It has become clear that many fear violence in schools, but the premise nature of this fear and its relationship to the actual probability of harm are

much less certain (Arnette & Walsleben, 1998; Furlong & Morrison, 1994; Henry, 2000; Hyman & Perone, 1998; Hyman, Weiler, Perone, Romano, Britton & Shanock, 1997; Lawrence, 2000; U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 1999). Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the discipline practices in a small elementary school environment to understand what discipline practices work and those that do not.

Statement of the Problem

Developments in recent years indicate there is a need to change the way discipline is addressed. It is no longer enough to preserve the past's narrow perception of the role of discipline. School administrators are just beginning to learn and understand that discipline includes much more than handing down punishment.

Many educational program developers have responded to the prevalence of school discipline problems by preparing and marketing packaged programs, which contend to bring about reductions in misconduct and consequent increases in school order. Much can be found in the research literature about the effectiveness of such programs. However, while there are many studies on school violence, prevention and treatment interventions, little is known about the discipline practices and policies within schools in rural areas that do not utilize such programs.

Significance of the Study

Educators are learning that student concern about aggression and other forms of disciplinary issues has a detrimental effect on the school environment and on student learning. The findings of this study may be useful to current administrators, teachers, students, and parents in small school environments in terms of exploring and

implementing effective discipline options. The findings of this study will be made available to the district's superintendent, school administrators and leadership teams for the purpose of improving local policy regarding school discipline. Creating an orderly and well-disciplined school environment free of violence and disruptive behavior is fundamental for learning to take place.

Autobiographical Roots of the Study

As an educational leader, looking for ways to provide self-improvement, professional gains and improvement for others and the organization in which one is associated brings about a certain amount of personal satisfaction. This study is of personal importance to the researcher for several reasons. The main significance of this research project is a concentration on career advancement. In the particular school district in which the researcher is employed, it is customary for an educator moving from a classroom teacher to an administrative position to begin as an assistant principal. Regardless of which school the assistant principal is assigned, the job bestowed to the assistant principals includes handling the discipline for that particular school. Through the process of conducting this study, the researcher intends to gain important data that will facilitate the preparation for a career change as a beginning administrator for the local school district as more is learned about school discipline practices.

This study also has personal significance for the researcher in terms of providing leadership opportunities upon completion of the study. The researcher plans to share the findings of this study with the superintendent, leadership teams, and concerned parents in an effort to improve school discipline policies and practices within the local school district. As an educator and leader, the researcher has always had a personal desire to lead

the school and school district in areas of improvement. Therefore, utilizing the findings of this study in an effective manner will lend the opportunity for the researcher to exhibit further leadership skills.

The researcher currently holds the Teacher Support Specialist (TSS) certification and serves as a mentor in the local school. Upon the completion of the study, the researcher will utilize findings to help colleagues who struggle with classroom discipline issues and will take the opportunity to enhance personal insights of effective discipline practices. Collaboration among educators is essential for professional improvement.

Finally, as a current classroom teacher, the researcher can relate to the literature and how disruptive behavior can hinder the teaching and learning process. The researcher also understands that ineffective discipline practices are not conducive to a positive school climate.

Therefore, this project will allow the researcher to gather baseline data from administrators, teachers, and parents concerning current discipline practices at the selected elementary school so that an action research plan can be implemented upon the conclusion of this project to help administrators, teachers, and parents establish an effective discipline plan for their school.

Preliminary Literature Review

The issue of school discipline is not a new phenomenon. Many researchers have documented ineffective discipline practices back to the beginning of United States schooling during early colonialism (Empey & Stafford, 1991; Greenberg, 1999; Regoli & Hewitt, 1997). Perhaps the only topic of school discipline that produces a consensus in the United States is that students are increasingly out of control (Brookover, 1992).

School violence, inclusive of disrespect for authority and school procedures, serves as a catalyst to disciplinary actions (Henry, 2000).

In the past, the term “discipline” in schools most often conjured up images of some form of correction or punishment in response to the student’s misbehavior (Tobin, Sugai & Colvin, 2000). Disruptions were dealt with severely. Frequent disruptive classroom discipline problems in the school include talking and getting up without permission, chewing gum, and being disrespectful toward adults (Peterson, 2000).

In defining school violence, the word “violence” needs to be considered along a gamut of behavior within a developmental structure. For example, violent behavior for young elementary school children primarily consists of aggressive behavior, such as kicking, hitting, spitting, or name-calling (Regoli & Hewitt, 1997). As children grow older, behavior becomes more serious, characterized by bullying, extortion, and physical fighting. Aggressive or other violent acts may include assault, sexual harassment, gang activity, or weapon violations against other students and staff (Metropolitan Life Insurance Co., 1999). The term school crime has also been used to define different types of criminal behavior at school including theft, property offenses, and vandalism (Furlong & Morrison, 1994).

School violence and disciplinary problems have become recurrent issues in public schools (Devine, 1996). Furlong, Morrison, Chug, Bates, and Morrison (1997) state that violence on school grounds can be damaging to a child’s sense of security and interpersonal trust. Violence can certainly affect a child’s academic performance (Kaufman et al., 2001). According to the 1998, Children’s Defense Report, students cannot learn if they “feel” unsafe. Violence, disruptive behavior and aggression can

interfere with learning, resulting in a loss of instructional time, and reduction in student achievement (Kincaid, 2003). Furlong, Morrison, and Pavelski (2000) further state "violence on school grounds has violated fundamental tenets about providing safe conditions in which teaching and learning take place."

While it is recognized that the schools are not the source of school violence, it becomes clear that the school has a major role in helping children learn appropriate behaviors and decision-making strategies to avoid engaging in violent behavior (Weatherburn, Donnely & Grunseit, 2005). Overall, the process of constructing effective discipline practices is a long and arduous task, yet it can be far-reaching in its success. When it comes down to it, it really is the responsibility of school districts to learn more about and fully understand the interrelationship of school discipline, school violence and student achievement (Weatherburn et. al., 2005).

One of the largest challenges facing educators in the United States is addressing problem behavior within schools. A recent study indicates that general education teachers report, on average, one in five of their students exhibit disruptive/off-task behavior and one in twenty exhibits aggressive behavior to the point that intervention is necessary (Myers & Holland, 2000). Research indicates that schools implementing a school-wide violence prevention program report significantly lower numbers of referrals for inappropriate student behavior (Sugai & Horner, 2002). Unfortunately, educators continue to rely on traditional discipline practices that generally involve punishment and/or exclusionary options (Myers & Holland, 2000). The assumption is that punishment-based discipline actions implemented in response to rule violations will deter future occurrences and somehow teach and promote more pro-social skills (Sugai &

Horner, 2002). Relying exclusively on reactive, consequent-based discipline policies is actually associated with increases in problem behavior (Mayer, 1995).

According to Mayer (1995), traditional discipline practices in schools have been punitive and exclusionary in nature, including practices such as detention, suspension and expulsion. Many principals have felt the pressure to "get tough" on students who are out of control (Saiba, 2002). Literature shows that this type of practice, sometimes called zero-tolerance, which treats every child the same using standard practices, does not provide support to students with behavior problems or long-term resolution of inappropriate behaviors (Myers & Holland, 2000). When schools do intervene, violent students are likely to be punished; the increasing adoption of zero-tolerance policies by schools is a contributing factor for increased discipline problems (Saiba, 2002). The punishment most commonly reported is suspension or expulsion (Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 1999), which does not solve the problems. The current zero-tolerance approach to discipline has proven ineffective in reducing problem behavior because students who are not at school do not learn how to modify their behavior (Saiba, 2002), and they also get behind in their schoolwork.

School administrators use a wide variety of educational and non-educational approaches and practices to address violence. Because no one practice can provide the solutions to all discipline problems, several school-wide behavior plans have been developed to address the increase in frequency and severity of misbehavior in schools (Walker & Gresham, 1997). While conflict management classes, programs for at-risk students, implementation of violence prevention curricula, character education programs, and school climate changes have been tried, violence prevention researchers have

increasingly focused on theories of social cognition to explain children's aggression (Furlong, Morrison & Pavelski, 2000).

Sometimes administrators, teachers, parents and others express a sense of hopelessness about the many challenges of, and the role schools play in, promoting or reducing violence (Walker & Gresham, 1997). Concern about school disruptive behavior, violence, and victimization has permeated the education system since the 1950s (Atkinson, 2001). Educators have a number of professional concerns including control of class, handling disruptive behavior, bullying and violent issues of their students. The tragedy of Columbine has forced educators to change the way they think about current discipline practices. Children have always suffered the effects of violence regardless of the degree of incident. School violence is "any behavior that violates a school's educational mission or climate of respect or jeopardizes the intent of the school to be free of aggression against persons or property, drugs, weapons, disruptions, and disorder," according to the Center for the Prevention of School Violence (2002). School discipline and classroom management problems continue to rank high on many educators' needs improvement list.

Research Questions

The overarching question is this: What discipline practices are most effective in a rural Georgia elementary school? Through this study, the researcher will answer the following research questions:

1. What effective discipline practices do parents, administrators and teachers believe are in place in the rural Georgia elementary school?

2. What do parents, administrators and teachers believe are the biggest obstacles to effective discipline?
3. What changes in discipline procedures do parents, administrators and teachers believe should be implemented to bring about effective change in the behavior of children in a rural elementary school?

Methodology

Because this study will attempt to identify the participants' perceptions of school discipline practices, a qualitative study will be used. Through focus group discussions, the researcher will gather information about what the participants believe defines effective daily disciplinary practices. The researcher will facilitate the focus group discussions. Focus group research is based on facilitating an organized discussion with a group of individuals (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Discussion is used to bring out insights and understanding in ways which simple questionnaire items may not be able to tap.

The researcher will establish three focus groups. The first group will include two administrators and the superintendent or his designee. The second group will include six teachers, one each from kindergarten through grade 5, selected randomly. The third group will include six parents. The researcher will select every 90th parent name from an alphabetical listing of students, which is kept on file in the school office for the selection of parent participants.

Research Design

Qualitative research explores traits of individuals and settings that cannot easily be described numerically. The information is largely verbal and is collected through observations, descriptions, and recordings (Crotty, 1998). Data collection common to

qualitative research is through the process of using in-depth, open-ended interviews or focus groups. The researcher will utilize focus groups for this research project. By setting up a situation where an interviewer guides the participants through a series of questions, data related to a particular topic can be collected. The role of the focus group moderator is to facilitate the focus group by asking open-ended questions (Krueger & Casey, 2000).

Qualitative research is the attempt to understand human behaviors, beliefs, and perceptions by observations, interviews, or archival analysis (Crotty, 1998). By using data from the focus groups, conclusions will be drawn from real world experiences. In qualitative methodology, subjectivity is an important part of the research process since the researcher plays a central role in defining issues for study, interpreting information, and guiding the research process.

Participants

This research project will be conducted in one small elementary school, which is located in a rural county, northeast of Atlanta. The school selected for this study will be a convenience sample. According to the local Chamber of Commerce Office, this rural area has a total population of approximately 27,000 people. There are multiple elementary schools comprised of kindergarten through grade 5 in the selected school district. The average enrollment is 550 students per elementary school. Each of the elementary schools has approximately 45 teachers. The researcher will establish three focus groups. The first group will include two administrators and the superintendent or his designee. The second group will include six teachers, which will include one teacher from grades kindergarten through 5, selected randomly. The third group will include six parents. The researcher will randomly select participants for the parent focus group.

Data Collection

Before the research project begins, the researcher will obtain permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Georgia Southern University in order to proceed with the focus groups. A cover letter will be sent to each participant explaining the researcher's affiliation and the purpose of the study (see Appendix A). The researcher will protect confidentiality and anonymity of all participants involved in the study.

Data Analysis

Collected data from the focus group discussions will be analyzed by a procedure known as inductive analysis. All focus group discussions will be taped recorded and transcribed. The researcher will transcribe the tapes and use the data to organize, classify, and develop themes that will be reported in an ethnographic manner.

Summary

The goals of school discipline are to ensure the safety of staff and students and to create an environment conducive to learning. Although serious student misconduct involving violent or criminal behaviors does occur, the most common discipline problems involve non-criminal student behavior. Disruptions can interrupt instructional time for students. Therefore, it is important to identify effective school discipline strategies that seek to encourage responsible behavior and to provide administrators, teachers, students, and parents with a satisfying and productive school experience.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RESEARCH AND RELATED LITERATURE

One of the largest challenges facing educators in the United States today is addressing problem behavior within schools. A recent study indicated that general education teachers reported, on average, one in five of their students exhibited disruptive or off-task behavior and one in twenty exhibited aggressive behavior to the point intervention was necessary (Myers & Holland, 2000). Unfortunately, educators continue to rely on traditional discipline practices that generally involve punishment and/or exclusionary options. The assumption is that punishment-based discipline actions implemented in response to rule violations will deter future occurrences and somehow teach and promote more pro-social skills (Sugai & Horner, 2002). However, the traditional approach to discipline has proven ineffective in reducing problem behavior (Skiba, 2002). In fact, relying exclusively on reactive, consequent-based discipline policies is actually associated with increases in problem behavior, and thus more problems with aggression and violent acts become prevalent (Mayer, 1995).

Whenever violent behavior occurs at school, whether in the form of physical assault or emotional abuse, the learning process is disrupted, not only for the students directly involved, but also for teachers and student bystanders (Henry, 2000). Aggressive and impulsive behaviors, if unchecked, have been linked to a lifetime of failure, exacting a great toll upon society (Mayer, 1995). Students demonstrating such behaviors are at risk for rejection by peers, academic underachievement or school dropout, violent behavior toward others, and performance below their potential throughout their careers, with a one in four chance of landing in correctional institutions by the age of 30 (Beland, 1997).

Aside from the immediate disruption of violent or aggressive behavior, the risk of these and other long-term consequences necessitates action on the part of school personnel to establish and maintain safe and effective learning environments (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

While those in the general public may perceive the problem of school violence to have increased drastically over the years, current studies suggest that the occurrences of school violence have declined (U. S. Departments of Education & Justice, 2000). The 2000 Annual Report on School Safety reported that overall school crime has also decreased. Schools are reported to be one of the safest places where children and adolescents spend their time (Dusenbury, Falco, Lake, Brannigan, & Bosworth, 1997; Dwyer & Osher, 2000; U. S. Departments of Education & Justice, 2000). However, in recent decades the dismay of even rare fatal acts of school violence has encouraged the need to improve the safety of our nations' schools. Student aggression, disruptive behavior, and even horseplay can result in school violence (Sugai & Horner, 2002).

Although bullying is not the primary focus of this research study, it is, however, important to address it since it has a place in aiding in the understanding of school discipline problems. The word bullying is used to describe many different types of behavior ranging from teasing or deliberately excluding individuals out of a social gathering or ignoring them, to more serious infractions such as assaults and abuse (O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001). Bullying is defined as negative action against someone (the victim) in which someone else (the bully) intentionally inflicts, or attempts to inflict, injury or discomfort repeatedly and over time (Bond, 2001).

Violent, aggressive, and bullying behavior affects feelings of safety at school for both students and teachers. Bullying is a problem in schools not just because it may lead

to more aggressive or violent behavior, but also because it may interfere with the learning of the victim (Horne & Socherman, 1996). Often people dismiss bullying among young children as a normal part of growing up (Bond, 2001). Nonetheless, bullying is harmful. For some, the effects of bullying can last a lifetime (O'Moore & Kirkham, 2001).

Given the complexity of the phenomenon of violence in schools, it is important to also consider the historical context of the issue. A review of the historical context of school violence will demonstrate that violence in schools is not only an old issue, it is an issue that changes as society's views of what constitutes violence change.

The History of Violence in Schools

A brief look into the history of school violence uncovers the fact that school violence has been a part of European, English, and American schools for centuries (Hyman & Snook, 1999). For example, in seventeenth-century France, students were often armed and feared by schoolmates (Hyman & Snook, 1999). Between 1775 and 1836, English students frequently caused violence, such as mutinies and strikes. The American schools are considered relatively tame; however, problems within the realm of classroom disruptions, sex, drugs, gambling and

violence have been common throughout the centuries (Hyman & Snook, 1999).

During the 1700s, society assumed that children were inherently evil and lacked the ability to make moral judgments. Teachers corrected children's evil nature and directed them towards morality (Newman & Newman, 1980). Therefore, teachers devoted a large portion of each school day to imposing discipline (Crews & Counts, 1997). Fear, intimidation, and unconditional obedience became integrated into the classroom. Teachers punished children who did not approach their education seriously

(Newman & Newman, 1980). For example, disobedient students were routinely tied to posts and beaten in front of their classmates (Hyman & Snook, 1999). Teachers also employed other violent and publicly shaming measures, such as public caning or branding. Although these actions sound extreme by today's standards, teachers were encouraged and expected by parents and community leaders to use violence as a form of disciplinary measures.

During the 1800s, expectations of proper student behavior continued to be high, and punishments were still severe (Crews & Counts, 1997). Corporal punishment involved striking students' hands, tying them to chairs, twisting their ears, and locking them in windowless closets (Baker & Rubel, 1980; Crews & Counts, 1997). Teachers were poorly trained and paid, and they worked in poor physical conditions. The majority of teachers were male, but women slowly began to join the profession. In contrast to their male counterparts, the careers of female teachers were often brief, usually starting after completion of the education and ending after marriage Baker & Rubel, 1980). Interestingly, as more women became teachers, fewer students were beaten in the classroom (Kaestle, 1983). Some scholars attribute the reduction in teacher-student violence to "female nature" or their inability to physically handle the job of correcting their students (Crews & Counts, 1997). However, there are other explanations. The reduction in teacher-student violence could reflect increased intimidation and threats of violence toward female teachers from male students. According to Kaestle (1983), female teachers were often threatened or beaten by larger male students. Male teachers experienced far fewer threats. Because of this, most women chose to teach primarily during the summer months because larger male students, typically, were working and

were not in school. Therefore, it is possible that, in order to protect themselves from harm, female teachers may have chosen to ignore some behaviors or avoided confrontations. This avoidance, not merely "female nature," could have contributed to the observed decline in teacher-student violence (Crews & Counts, 1997). A reduction in teacher-student violence was evident, but at what cost? Rather than reducing violence in the educational system, violence was re-directed toward a new target.

In addition to student-teacher violence, parent-teacher violence emerged as a problem during the 1800s (Crews & Counts, 1997). Parents who were dissatisfied with disciplinary practices would interrupt teachers' classes to intimidate and confront them. Some parents would go as far as physically assaulting teachers in their classrooms (Kaestle, 1932). The increased threat of parent-teacher violence may have served to further reduce the use of physical discipline in the classroom (Hyman & Snook, 1999).

The early twentieth century was a major era of transformation for education, as well as for the United States (U. S.) society. Immigration, urbanization, and industrialization increased (Crews & Counts, 1997), and with these societal changes also came transformation within the educational system. In 1900, the U.S. enacted compulsory education laws to help socialize immigrant children and to keep them out of the labor force. These laws brought greater numbers of children into the educational system, and mandated that children be in schools for longer periods of time than in the past (Crews & Counts, 1997).

By 1900, almost 90 percent of elementary and secondary children were enrolled in public schools. Public schools emerged as integrative tools in the complex, modern United States. This caused the curriculum to expand, to include vocational training. With

the shift in focus also came a decrease in the use of corporal punishment in urban schools (Burgan & Rubel, 1980). More teachers were trained to increase structure in the classroom rather than relying on corporal punishment to control potentially disruptive student behavior (Crews & Counts, 1997). However, teachers in rural school districts, who did not have access to training, continued to rely on harsh corporal punishment to help them maintain order in their classrooms (Hyman & Snook, 1999).

During the 1930s, school officials established disciplinary classrooms to help those students who could not behave in traditional classrooms (Crews & Counts, 1997). Although these classes were used primarily as a way of removing disruptive students from regular classrooms, some consideration was given to adjusting the structure of the classroom to meet the needs of misbehaving children. During the 1940s, World War II resulted in a great deal of change throughout the United States. At the close of the war, teaching had risen to a new position of importance and recognition, resulting in more support for teachers and the development of improved teaching methods. This newfound focus on education was due in large part to the return of male veterans to the profession and the United States government's desire to surpass foreign competitors in technological development. Interestingly, reports of school violence were less prevalent. A study conducted by Goldstein, Apter, and Harootunian (1994) examined the leading causes of school discipline problems in the 1940s, indicating that the primary types of school misbehavior by students involved talking, chewing gum, making noise, and not putting paper in the wastebaskets.

During the 1950s, a renewed sense of nationalism spread throughout U.S. society in response to World War II and communism. According to Crews and Counts (1997),

the perceived goal of schools was to maintain society and to perpetuate the “American way of life.” The 1950s were considered one of the fastest changing decades in U.S. history, and the population increased rapidly. During this time, schools became overcrowded and a shortage of well-qualified teachers emerged. School desegregation became a primary focus during the mid-1950s, and protests in and around schools became common (Crews & Counts, 1997).

According to Burgan and Rubel (1980), this decade marked the beginning of the public’s awareness of violence in schools, particularly schools in major urban centers. Students, teachers, and administrators experienced increased harassment, intimidation, and assault. During this decade, buildings were defaced, vandalized, and burned beyond repair with alarming frequency (Burgan & Rubel, 1980). Equipment and supplies were stolen or damaged. The problems became so apparent by the mid-1950s that the U. S. Senate conducted hearings in cities throughout the nation to determine the scope of the problems (Crews & Counts, 1997).

By the mid-to-late 1960s, the media began to draw attention to numerous disciplinary infractions that were occurring in U.S. schools (Burgan & Rubel, 1980). In a response to the media’s coverage, Congress held extensive hearings on the problem of school violence and vandalism (Crews & Counts, 1997). The first school safety plans were established during this time. Parents served as hall monitors and peer leadership programs were established. By the early 1970s, nearly all school systems in urban areas with populations over 100,000 had implemented some form of school security in response to criminal and violent student behavior (Burgan & Rubel, 1980).

Fear of crime became a major focus during the 1970s (Crews & Counts, 1997).

Many people questioned the safety of their homes, neighborhoods, and their schools. During this decade, Congress initiated a survey on school violence. The subsequent report was entitled Violent Schools-Safe Schools (National Institute of Education, 1978). The purpose of this study was to determine the number of schools, nationwide, that were affected by crime or violence, the type and seriousness of those crimes, and best methods of prevention. This study was significant because it was the first to include the experiences of teachers, students, and staff members in schools in large cities, small cities, suburban areas, and rural areas. Results of 10 case studies indicated that the most important factors in making schools safer included organizational leadership by principals and teachers, as well as involvement of the community in promoting safe environments.

Although incidents of school violence continued during the 1980s, less media attention was given than in the 1970s. In a nationally representative sample of public school teachers, 44 percent reported more disruptive classroom behavior in 1986-87 than five years before (National School Safety Center, 1992). Almost a third of these teachers indicated having given serious consideration to leaving teaching because of student misbehavior. In addition, almost 20 percent surveyed indicated a student had threatened them at some point in their teaching career.

Widespread media coverage of lethal gun violence in American public schools began in the mid-1990s. In 1997, a 16-year-old male student shot nine students at his high school in Pearl, Mississippi. Two died. Two months later, a 14-year-old boy in West Paducah, Kentucky, killed three students and wounded five when he opened fire during a student prayer circle. In 1998, two male students shot and killed four students and a

teacher in Jonesboro, Arkansas. The most infamous incident of lethal gun violence in the 1990s occurred on April 20, 1999 when two male students opened fire at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, killing a teacher and 12 classmates before taking their own lives. A month later, a 15-year-old male student wounded six students at Heritage High School in Conyers, Georgia (Burns & Crawford, 1999; Capozzoli & McVey, 2000; Kenney & Watson, 1998). Several other incidences of lethal gun violence in schools have been reported since 1999 (Bower, 2001). According to the School Violence Resource Center (2005), the shooting in Red Lake, Minnesota, resulted in 10 deaths, including the 16-year-old perpetrator, his grandfather and his grandfather's companion, a teacher, a security guard, and five students.

Incidents of lethal gun violence heightened the public's concern about safety in schools. School boards and policy makers have adopted violence prevention plans and programs, hired school safety officers, and installed metal detectors (Goldstein & Conley, 1997). Disciplinary problems and practices do not exist in a vacuum but are part of the developing sociological landscape (Greenberg, 1999). With each passing decade, researchers have increased efforts to address this issue. In order to make significant improvements in this critical area, it must begin with effective discipline practices at the elementary level (Bower, 2001).

Throughout the last decade of the 20th Century, increased attention was given to the lack of discipline and growing acts of violence among young people, particularly in and around schools. Contrary to the thinking of some analysts, school-based violence is not reaching epidemic proportions, although it has certainly taken on some new forms that are frightening to most people and intriguing to those who seek to reduce

adolescents' use of violence (Watkins & Wagner, 1987). An escalation in the number of school-based shootings has forced many to take a new look at schools, violence and discipline practices. Public reactions to school shootings have called for more school security and demands for accountability on the part of parents, students, teachers, and administrators.

Practices to Prevent Classroom Problems

Now more than ever schools are using a wide variety of educational and non-educational approaches and practices to address disruptive behavior and violence. Many school-based prevention programs operate under the premise that violence is a learned behavior. In general, practices focus on primary prevention; that is, they seek to prevent problems before they occur. According to Curwin (2000), classrooms are laboratories of learning and each teacher should be involved in a school-wide discipline program that promotes strategies for preventative measures. Educators should keep in mind that for any school discipline program to work, everyone within the learning environment must participate (Curwin, 2000).

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

Assertive Discipline

Assertive Discipline is a method of discipline being used in many school districts throughout the country. Lee Canter, a child management expert, developed this plan after

studying discipline practiced in the schools. The Assertive Discipline plan is a positive approach to discipline that seems to be effective for teachers and beneficial to students.

According to Canter (1992), the key to Assertive Discipline is catching students being good, recognizing and supporting them when they behave appropriately, and letting them know it is appreciated, day in and day out. Canter believes that it is imperative that classroom teachers have a systematic discipline plan that explains exactly what will happen when students choose to misbehave. An effective discipline plan is applied fairly to all students. The teacher gives specific directions for each classroom situation. Canter suggests a discipline plan should include a maximum of five consequences for misbehavior, but teachers must choose consequences with which they are comfortable.

Teachers are encouraged to provide positive reinforcement for appropriate and on-task behavior and disciplinary consequences for disruptive or continually off-task behavior. In an earlier work, Canter (1989), stated administrators need to understand that Assertive Discipline is not a negative practice, but it could be misused by negative teachers. In addition, Canter reported that administrators should mentor teachers, and staff developers should coach negative teachers in the use of positive reinforcement.

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

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

Choice Therapy

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

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

Glasser's (1992), belief of behavior leads to a natural conclusion: If a student disrupts in school, the environment of the school is the cause. Glasser further believes

that the teachers must arrange the environment of the school in general, and the classrooms in particular, so that the environment meets the needs of all students simultaneously. If they do that, then discipline problems will disappear (Glasser, 1992).

Classroom Management

Harry K. Wong, a former high-school science teacher in Menlo Park, California, is now one of the country's leading speakers in the field of education. Along with a video series for classroom management and several books, he and his wife Rosemary give presentations on the importance and effectiveness of classroom strategies. Wong and Wong (1998) believe that it is important to recognize that classroom management and discipline are not the same thing. Discipline concerns how students behave, and classroom management utilizes procedures that concern how things are done. According to Wong and Wong (1998), teachers use penalties and rewards to discipline their students, but procedures have no penalties or rewards.

Wong and Wong (1998) suggest that the three most important student behaviors that must be taught in the first days of school are: discipline, procedures, and routines. The effective teacher, according to Wong and Wong, invests time in teaching discipline and procedures, knowing that this will be repaid multifold in the effective use of class time. The most successful classes are those in which the teacher has a clear idea of what is expected from the students and the students have a clear idea of what the teacher expects from them. Researchers have documented that the most effective schools are those with a well-ordered environment and high academic expectations (Albert, 1996; Curwin, 1992; Glasser, 1992).

Wong and Wong (1998) feel the vast majority of behavior problems in the classroom are caused by the failure of students to follow procedures and routines, which in turn are caused by teachers who do not have procedures and routines; therefore, it is important that expectations be known, and that rules include clear expectations of appropriate student behavior. Clear communication with the students and parents in both verbal and written form about expected and appropriate behaviors is important. According to Wong and Wong, it is easier to maintain good behavior than to change inappropriate behavior that has become established.

A main component of this discipline plan is that it is applied universally; regardless of where the students are within the school, they encounter the same plan and the key is school-wide consistency. Because everyone at the school uses the same plan with consistency, the students know what is expected of them and all members of the staff support one another.

Conflict Resolution

The *Second Step* program is a classroom-based social skills curriculum for students from preschool through middle school. The curriculum aims to reduce impulsive and aggressive behaviors and increase protective factors and social-emotional competence. The *Second Step* program is classified as a universal intervention, meaning that it is appropriate for whole classrooms of children and not just those at risk for inappropriate behavior.

The *Second Step* program helps children change the attitudes and behaviors that contribute to violence. Organized by grade level, the curriculum teaches social and emotional skills to reduce impulsive and aggressive behavior in children and increase

their level of social competence. Research reveals that people prone to violent and aggressive behavior commonly lack specific social skills (Grossman, Holly, Thomas, Kenneth, & Frederick, 1997). The *Second Step* program addresses this research by teaching, modeling, practicing and reinforcing skills in empathy, impulse control, and problem solving as well as anger management. The content of the lessons varies according to grade level and the skills targeted for practice are designed to be developmentally appropriate.

Caring Communities

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

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

provide a chance for students to come together and make decisions that will promote an orderly and productive day (Kohn, 1996).

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

Summary

The effective use of behavioral and cognitive strategies in the classroom may appear daunting even to experienced teachers. However, strong classroom management is important for teachers to have when creating a classroom that fosters active engagement, self-motivation and positive social interaction. Teachers have the power to define their classroom in terms of student cooperation, motivation and positive group spirit. A positive attitude is contagious. Teachers that believe in their students and enjoy their jobs are more likely to spread a positive message that school and learning is fun and important.

Educational professionals generally agree that it is essential to begin developing prosocial attitudes and behaviors in children at a very young age because aggression that is not remedied nearly always leads to later acts of delinquency. The most effective antiviolence efforts focus on measures that prevent all types of inappropriate behavior. Prevention measures seek to help children feel cared for, secure, and attached to supportive institutions and individuals.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Developments in recent years indicate there is a need to change the way discipline is addressed. It is no longer enough to preserve the past's narrow perception of the role of discipline. School administrators are just beginning to learn and understand that discipline includes much more than handing down punishment.

Educational program developers have responded to the prevalence of school discipline problems by preparing and marketing packaged programs, which contend to bring about reductions in misconduct and consequent increases in school order. Much can be found in the research literature about the effectiveness of such programs. However, while there are many studies on school violence, prevention, and treatment interventions, little is known about the discipline practices and policies within schools in rural areas that do not utilize such programs. What discipline practices are most effective in a rural Georgia elementary school?

Because this study will attempt to identify the participants' perceptions of school discipline practices, a qualitative study will be used. Through focus group discussions, the researcher will gather information about what the participants believe defines effective daily disciplinary practices. The researcher will facilitate the focus group discussions. Focus group research is based on facilitating an organized discussion with a group of individuals (Krueger & Casey, 2000). Discussion is used to bring out insights and understanding in ways which simple questionnaire items may not be able to tap.

The researcher will establish three focus groups. The first group will include two administrators and the superintendent or his designee. The second group will include six

teachers, one each from kindergarten through grade 5, selected randomly. The third group will include six parents. The researcher will select every 90th parent name from an alphabetical listing of students, which is kept on file in the school office for the selection of parent participants.

Research Questions

The overarching question is this: What discipline practices are most effective in a rural Georgia elementary school? Through this study, the researcher will answer the following research questions:

1. What effective discipline practices do parents, administrators and teachers believe are in place in the rural Georgia elementary school?
2. What do parents, administrators and teachers believe are the biggest obstacles to effective discipline?
3. What changes in discipline procedures do parents, administrators and teachers believe should be implemented to bring about effective change in the behavior of children in this rural elementary school?

Research Design

Qualitative Research explores traits of individuals and settings that cannot easily be described numerically. The information is largely verbal and is collected through observations, descriptions, and recordings (Crotty, 1998). Data collection common to qualitative research is through the process of using in-depth, open-ended interviews or focus groups. The researcher will utilize focus groups for this research project. By setting up a situation where the focus group moderator guides the participants through a series of questions, data related to a particular topic can be collected.

Qualitative research is the attempt to understand human behaviors, beliefs, and perceptions by observations, interviews, or archival analysis (Crotty, 1998). By using data from the focus groups, conclusions will be drawn from real world experiences. In qualitative methodology, subjectivity is an important part of the research process since the researcher plays a central role in defining issues for study, interpreting information, and guiding the research process.

Participants

Because this study will attempt to identify the participants' perceptions of school discipline practices, a qualitative study will be used. Through focus group discussions, the researcher will gather information about what the participants believe defines effective daily disciplinary practices. The researcher will facilitate the focus group discussions. Focus group research is based on facilitating an organized discussion with a group of individuals (Krueger & Casey 2000). Discussion is used to bring out insights and understanding in ways which simple questionnaire items may not be able to tap. The researcher will establish three focus groups. The first group will include two administrators and the superintendent or his/ her designee. The second group will include six teachers, one each from grades kindergarten through 5, selected by a process known as random selection. The third group will include six parents. In order to obtain parent participants, the researcher will select every 90^{th} parent name from an alphabetical listing of students, which is kept on file in the school office.

This research project will be conducted in one small elementary school, which is located in a rural county, northeast of Atlanta. According to the local Chamber of Commerce Office, this rural area has a total population of approximately 27,000 people.

There are multiple elementary schools housing kindergarten through grade 5, in the selected school district. The school selected for this study will be a convenience sample. The average enrollment is 550 students per elementary school. Each of the elementary schools has approximately 45 teachers. The researcher will establish three focus groups.

Data Collection

Before the research project begins, the researcher will submit a copy of the informed consent form (see Appendix B) and obtain permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Georgia Southern University in order to proceed with the interviews and discussion sessions involving the established focus groups. A cover letter will be sent to each participant explaining the researcher's affiliation, and the purpose of the study (see Appendix A). The researcher will protect confidentiality and anonymity of all participants involved in the study.

Data Analysis

Collected data from the focus group discussions will be analyzed by a procedure known as inductive analysis. All focus group discussions will be tape recorded and transcribed. The researcher will transcribe the tapes and use the data to organize, classify, and develop themes that will be reported in a descriptive manner. Upon the conclusion of the project, the findings will be forwarded to the administrators in order to establish an action plan, which will include the implementation of an effective school-wide discipline plan.

Summary

A qualitative study will be conducted involving three focus groups to include two administrators and the superintendent or his designee, six teachers, and six parents selected

through a process known as random sampling. The researcher will serve as the focus group moderator for each of the three groups. The research project will not begin until the researcher has obtained approval of the informed consent form and permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Georgia Southern University to proceed with the research study. The purpose of the focus groups is to help the researcher gather data about current school discipline practices in order to establish an action plan, which will include the implementation of an effective school-wide discipline plan.

CHAPTER 4

REPORT OF THE DATA AND DATA ANALYSIS

Developments in recent years indicate a need to change the way discipline is addressed. It is no longer enough to preserve the past's narrow perception of the role of discipline. School administrators are just beginning to learn and understand that discipline includes much more than handing down punishment.

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents regarding effective school discipline practices. The researcher utilized focused groups in order to obtain information for this research project. All participants were randomly selected and included school administrators, teachers and parents.

After receiving approval from the IRB, Georgia Southern University, the researcher contacted each prospective participant about the research project and extended an invitation to join a specific focus group to discuss the issue of school discipline. The researcher explained to the prospective participant that he or she had been randomly selected to participate in a small focus group to discuss perceptions of effective school discipline practices. Most prospective participants seemed very excited to help the researcher gather information regarding the research project. One parent was so happy to help out that she began discussing ideas about school discipline during the initial conversation about participation in the research project. Those who were a little hesitant explained they did not know if they actually knew enough about the issue to help provide information that would be beneficial to the researcher.

Because time was of the essence, the researcher was unable to mail the cover letter to prospective participants and instead, handed the participants the cover letter and

explained the purpose of the research project during the beginning of each focus group meeting (see Appendix A). Also, at the beginning of each focus group session, the researcher provided the informed consent form to each participant (see Appendix B). The informed consent form was reviewed, and the opportunity for questions was provided. The informed consent forms were signed by participants and collected by the researcher. The researcher also gathered demographic information from participants at the beginning of the focus group sessions (see Appendix C).

In order to help insure participant confidentiality, real names of the participants have not been used. No codes or identifying links to participants and information provided was used for this project. The focus group sessions were audio taped in order to allow the researcher to transcribe the data and to report the findings.

Demographics

The researcher gathered demographic information from each participant prior to the focus group sessions (see Appendix C). Participants for this research study included six teachers, two administrators and five parents. Among the teachers and administrators, there were six females and three males. The participants from the educator group ranged from five years teaching experience to more than 30 years experience in the education field. Three of these participants have experience outside the school system from which the school selected for this study belongs.

There were five participants from the parent group. From this group, there were four females and one male. Of this group of parents, two have had children in the selected school for five years, while one parent has had a child in this school for three years, and two parents have children in this school for the first time this year. Only one parent

participant has had a child attend another school other than the one selected for this study. Four parent participants are active members of the Parent, Teacher Organization (PTO). Of the five parent participants, only two indicated they had education beyond the high school level, and only one of these indicated having earned a college degree.

Research Questions

In order to answer the research questions, the overarching question served as the focus of the group discussions. The overarching question was: What discipline practices are most effective in a rural Georgia elementary school?

Research Question 1

What effective discipline practices do parents, administrators and teachers believe are in place in the rural Georgia elementary school?

There seemed to be a general consensus among the participants that the teachers within this school try to implement effective discipline practices by establishing communication between all parties involved within the child's education. Sue, an administrator, believes that "communication is the key to the success of the educational program and especially concerning the issue of discipline." Brandon, also an administrator, said, "Parents must be informed of classroom and school rules." Brandon also said, "teachers must make clear their expectations."

Renee, a parent who has had children in this school for five years, stated "The experiences I have had with the teachers in this school has been a positive experience in that each teacher my child has had, has always made known his or her expectations regarding classroom rules." Renee goes on to add, "Some teachers have informed me on

a daily basis how my child's behavior measured up, while some teachers informed me weekly."

Beth, another parent who has had children in this school for five years, stated, "I have had the same experience." She said, "For me, it was much better to be informed on a daily basis rather than a weekly basis." Beth further explained, "When dealing with discipline issues, it is better to know daily so that you can discuss the inappropriate behavior with your child the day it occurs rather than waiting for several days to pass by." She added, "You can't be as effective when you are talking to your child about the choices he or she made several days after it has happened."

Waymon, another parent, agreed with Beth on this issue and explained, "When dealing with younger children, I also believe it is best to face the issue immediately." He continued by saying, "I believe this is true whether you are disciplining a child for inappropriate behavior, or whether you are praising the child for good behavior." Waymon also said, "It is most effective when reinforcement occurs immediately."

John and Robin, who teach upper elementary level, both say that parents are notified daily about student behavior. John said, "Students carry an agenda book, which provides teachers a place to write comments about student discipline issues." Robin added, "Parents have to make the effort to read daily comments in order to be informed of what their child has been up to."

Annie, a teacher of five and six year olds, explained, "I have always sent home weekly behavior choice cards to inform parents about student discipline." She also stated, "I have never had any parent to be unhappy with my method of communication." She was also quick to add, "I run a pretty strict classroom, and when a significant

problem presents itself, I always call the parent and have the child explain his or her behavior to the parent."

Jean, a teacher, also stated, "I do the weekly behavior management sheets as a form of communication to parents about student discipline." Jean also indicated, "One reason I do the weekly method instead of the daily form is due to time." She said, "I make quick notes of behavior problems during the day, and then transfer more detailed information on the weekly behavior management sheets that are sent home to parents at the end of the school week."

Pam, also a teacher, added, "I used to send home weekly behavior sheets simply because that was what the other teachers at my grade level did, but when I began to get requests from parents to send home daily discipline reports, I changed to accommodate the parents." Now, Pam sends home daily reports and explained, "It really does not require any more time to send daily reports than weekly reports."

In addition to teachers sending home behavior reports for parents, Leigh, an administrator, added, "Parents are encouraged to talk with the teachers on early release days, which is time set aside for parent/teacher conferences, and parents are also encouraged to talk with teachers anytime the parent wants to inquire about the student." Sue added, "Teachers are also required to send a copy of their classroom discipline plan home with students at the beginning of the school year, and there is also a copy of each teacher's discipline plan on file in the school office."

Research Question 2

What do parents, administrators, and teachers believe are the biggest obstacles to effective discipline?

Participants had various opinions as to what is believed to be the biggest obstacle to effective discipline. Sue, an administrator, began by stating, “I believe some teachers seem to have a shorter fuse compared to that at other times.” She added, “If rules are not consistent, students received a mixed message as to what the teacher will tolerate. It is important to be consistent with the toleration level and expectations involving student behaviors.”

Sue told the group, “Since I have been working as an administrator, I have seen a different side of parents.” She also added, “Parents have a difficult time believing their child is anything less than perfect.” Brandon said, “I noticed the same thing when talking with some parents.” He was also quick to add, “But not all are like that, because I have had some dealings with some very supportive parents.”

Brandon, an administrator, added, “I observe teachers discussing student behavior among other teachers while overlooking things that should be addressed.” He believes, “Teachers cannot afford to let their guard down at any time.” In a stern voice, Brandon added, “Everyone must be vigilant at all times.”

Laura, a parent, said “My son complained in the past about getting in trouble because he got up out of his seat to sharpen his pencil without asking his teacher, when the day before, he did the same thing and there was no problem.” Laura continued by saying, “If the teacher had been consistent in her expectations, my son would have known the rule about sharpening his pencil.” She also said, “My son tells me that students get yelled at when they do things that teachers feel students should know better than doing, and again, this could be avoided if there was more consistency in terms of expectations.”

Nicci, also a parent, was nodding in agreement to what she was hearing. She stated, “I agree that teachers should be more consistent in regard to classroom management expectations.” She added, “My child complains that sometimes the teacher does not say anything to the class when students are talking, but at other times the teacher forbids any talking at all during the same type of activities that are taking place in the classroom.” According to Nicci, “This confuses the students who really want to follow the rules.”

Beth, a parent who has had several children in attendance at this school brought up the fact that “it is not only teachers who are inconsistent with discipline issues.” She recalled an incident from a couple years in the past, where a small group of children were in trouble for cheating on a reading test. She explained, “All the students involved were not disciplined the same.” She further stated, “When some of the other parents inquired about this problem, the administrator at the time, did not provide an answer to why these students were not disciplined the same.” Beth feels very strongly about students being disciplined in an equal and appropriate manner. She questioned, “What type of message are we sending our kids when they realize some students receive preferential treatment for whatever reason?” Beth believes that when kids break the same rule, they should get the same consequences. Beth tells the group, “Treating every student the same sends a better message than playing favorites.”

John, a teacher with more than 30 years experience, said “There has been a problem in the past with regard to administrators being inconsistent in the consequences given to students with the same rule violations.” It does not matter the reason behind the decision, John feels that “This sends a bad message to students, teachers and parents.”

John said, “There should be some type of guidelines in place so that when students break rules, consistency with regard to consequences is spelled out, no questions asked.”

Robin, a teacher with more than 25 years experience, agreed with John with much confidence. She said, “This is the very type of discussion that we can learn from.” According to Robin, “When we share past experiences that have yielded a bad outcome, we need to use that as a learning tool.” Robin also said, “As you know, we are always looking for ways to improve what we do even in the area of handling discipline.” Robin believes that “inconsistency has been an obstacle in effective school discipline.”

Kristi and Annie, teacher participants with the fewest years of experience, both agreed that this not only sends mixed messages to students and parents, but also to teachers. As beginning teachers, according to Kristi, “It becomes difficult to explain to parents why a child was disciplined in a certain way when another child may have caused the same problem, but are disciplined in a different manner.” Annie said, “I had this happen to me last year.” She added, “I had two students fighting on the playground, I completed a discipline referral on both students; one student was assigned to the In School Suspension room (ISS) while the other received a written warning.”

John said, “ If the administrators have a discipline policy that is being used as a guide, teachers should be made aware of it.” John believes, “This would eliminate a lot of confusion for teachers.” He added, “This would also empower teachers to talk with parents who are aware of the inconsistencies among student discipline actions.” John also explained, “The problems with discipline inconsistencies are not limited to administrators; teachers are also inconsistent with enforcing school rules.”

Waymon wanted to know, “Is this the same thing as zero tolerance”? Jean answered, “No that’s not the same thing we are talking about.” Sue gave a simple definition of zero tolerance by stating, “ Zero tolerance policies were put in place as a tool to help fight drug and violence on campuses, and it purposely increased the intensity of consequences for all offenders regardless of the severity of the behavior.” She also added, “This has been a political buzzword for many years now.”

Kristi, a young teacher, believes “an established school-wide discipline plan would be beneficial to me in that it would allow me to be more effective when dealing with student discipline issues.” Annie, another young teacher, stated, “Dealing with discipline had been the most difficult part of being a teacher.” She explained that “the curriculum is mapped out, so the teacher knows what they are expected to teach, but when it comes to discipline the teacher is left on their own.”

Pam spoke up at this point and stated, “When students get to my grade level, it is obvious that they have been exposed to different behavior expectations and that some teachers have allowed some types of behaviors to occur, while others have been more strict with certain daily routines.” She thinks, “It would be great to have a school-wide discipline plan in place, then every student would have the same expectations and teachers would be more effective while guiding the child to understand what is expected of him or her.”

Research Question 3

What changes in discipline procedures do parents, administrators, and teachers believe should be implemented to bring about effective change in the behavior of children in this rural elementary school?

As each focus group discussed what could be implemented to bring about effective change in the behavior of students in the school selected for the study, it became apparent that it was easier to provide suggestions as to how the other group members could make improvements instead of focusing on the changes their own group could make.

Teachers were quick to suggest that many parents need to change the way they discipline students at home. John states, “During the years I have taught, I have seen a decline in the way parents respect teachers, and this comes across in student behavior that we see everyday.”

Kristi, a fairly new teacher to the teaching field added, “I did not know students could be so disrespectful until I started teaching.” Jean added, “Students are a lot different today than when I was a student in elementary school.” Robin added, “Our society has contributed to the problem of disrespect because we seem to accept what once was considered the unacceptable.” Annie told the group, “I had a student who consistently used unacceptable language at school, so when I talked with the student about this problem, I asked where she learned such words, and the response I got from the young child was that she heard those words at home.”

Annie said, “It is appalling to think what children are exposed to at such an early age.” Pam recalled an event that happened with her own child. “I remember my son coming home from school and using a word he had never heard his dad or I use, and when we tried to get to the bottom of this problem, his dad and I learned that one of our son’s friends had taught him the unacceptable word on the playground that day.”

According to John, “If parents would tighten up in terms of the control they should have over their children, and teach them that self-control and respect are a positive thing, and not a sign of weakness, we would see better disciplined students at school.”

Parents were eager to discuss how teachers and administrators could implement changes in discipline procedures that they felt would bring about effective changes with student behavior. Waymon who seemed to be an advocate of positive reinforcement suggested, “Students should be recognized for good behavior.” Renee added, “This doesn’t mean that you have to go all out to do this.” She continued by saying, “Teachers can simply tell the student he or she is doing a good job in terms of behavior.”

Laura contends, “Most students want to please their teacher, so if the teacher would spend the time required to build a relationship with each student, a kind word of praise or encouragement would go a long way.” Beth agreed with Laura and explained, “Many teachers get caught in a trap of giving out rewards or prizes to students when they exhibit good behavior, and this causes a problem at home because my child wants to know what he is going to get or earn for doing what I tell him to do.”

Nicci said, “I don’t see anything wrong with kids earning rewards for good behavior.” She added, “I understand there needs to be a balance so that the child doesn’t come to expect a treat every time he does something good. That’s why teachers have such an important role in this area.”

Renee added, “Building relationships with students like Laura said can be an effective way to improve student discipline.” She continued, “I believe most students want to do good for those they care about, and this would also give them a sense of belonging.”

The administrators, Brandon and Sue, advised that everyone has a key role in providing effective changes that will bring about improvements in terms of student behaviors. Brandon was very serious about everyone being on the same page. He stated, " If we are going to implement effective changes in our school discipline practices, everyone must get on board." He continued, "Being effective will not work if everyone doesn't do their part, and this means teachers, paraprofessionals, lunchroom ladies, custodians, parents, everybody."

Sue also added the importance of parents having their child at school on time and prepared to learn. Sue stated, "Parents need to get involved and know what is going on here at school." Sue also suggested, "Parents need to find time to volunteer in the classrooms and join the Parent, Teacher Organization (PTO) so they will see the discipline practices that are in place and can reinforce these expectations at home."

Common Themes

There were several common themes that emerged during the focus group sessions. Participants seemed to encompass similar thoughts and perceptions as the interview questions were discussed. The common themes that surfaced during the focus groups were communication, consistency, accountability and responsibility.

Communication

The most common and significant idea about effective school discipline that emerged during the focus group discussions was communication. Each participant made reference to communication as an important ingredient to the success of acceptable student behavior. Sometimes open communication between teacher and student, or teacher and parent is all that it takes to improve a behavior problem.

It is easy to think that elementary age children should be old enough to know what the rules and expectation of school are, and that only a few reminders are needed in order to get the child back on track. Unfortunately, this is not true. Students must be taught expectations, routines, and rules, as well as, given time to practice the skills it takes to be a better-disciplined person.

Communicating the rules and expectations not only to students, but also to parents, helps establish clear expectations. Communication between teacher and student is very important in effective school discipline. Teachers have to tell students what the expectations are regarding classroom behavior. Communications is also key when dealing with a student who may have been disruptive. The teacher has a very definite role in communicating with the student about the behavior choices he or she made, and the appropriate choice that should have been made in order to have a more positive outcome.

The key to better discipline is having informed parents. Therefore, good communication lines between school and home is essential for effective school discipline. When parents know school and classroom rules, then they can be supportive when a misbehavior or discipline problems arises. Otherwise, if parents have not been informed, and a problem comes up, they are more likely to side with the child on a discipline issue.

Consistency

Consistency is also seen as an important ingredient to effective school discipline. Administrators, teachers and parents have a significant impact on student behavior, and they all must be consistent in what they do regarding school discipline. Consequences must be consistent when implemented. However, consistency is more than consequences. Consistency is part of the structure of a child's life. It is the reliability of a weekly

schedule, a set bedtime, and the rituals that goes along with traditional holidays. Consistency is saying what you plan to do and following through with the plan as stated.

Being consistent requires a lot of dedication and commitment on the part of parents, teachers, and administrators. However, being consistent, in terms of discipline, on a part time basis causes problems for children. Inconsistency causes children to be unsure of themselves. This can cause children to feel unimportant, insecure and confused. Confusion compels children to manipulate or take advantage of unclear situations. Therefore, consistency in terms of student expectations must be a priority at all times.

Consistency can be viewed as an expression of love and caring. When parents, teachers and administrators behave consistently, students will have better self-discipline. Students will see that they are important to those in charge of them. They will believe they are valued because someone has put time and energy into making sure they behave.

Being consistent with regard to a school-wide discipline plan, means that all participants are vested in the commitment it takes to see that a safe and orderly environment is maintained for the children. It is no easy task, but being committed to the steadfast plan will result in desired outcomes.

Accountability and Responsibility

When students display appropriate behavior, it is important to tell them they are acting like responsible individuals. It is important to emphasize the importance of being responsible for good behavior choices. Accountability is also vital to effective discipline practices. In terms of student behavior, children are going to mess up. All youngsters will make mistakes and misbehave from time to time. When this occurs, it is important that they take responsibility for their actions. Parents, teachers, and administrators have the

responsibility to teach those students how to correct and learn from their mistakes. After all, the goal is to have students act appropriately even when they think no one is watching.

All school personnel and all parents should be accountable for the enforcement of school rules and student expectations. Parents should hold their children accountable for their inappropriate actions at school. Many parents need to take more responsibility for teaching their children appropriate behavior choices at home so this can be carried over to the school environment. It takes supportive parents, teachers, and administrators working together to ensure successful student behavior.

Summary

As children grow, they will begin to make more choices for themselves. Through this process, many children will make inappropriate behavior choices. Although all children make mistakes in terms of behavior choices, this should not mean the end of the world. This presents a wonderful opportunity for parents and school personnel to teach the child what behaviors are acceptable.

The goal of discipline is to teach children how to act appropriately in the family, with friends, in school and the community. Parents, teachers and administrators have the responsibility to guide children so that they can become competent, caring and contributing members of society. After all, teaching children social skills has become as important as teaching them academics.

Parent participation and communication are an integral component of effective school discipline. Continuous efforts to involve parents by informing them about school

discipline policies, routine updates on their children's behavior, and involvement in the school-wide discipline procedures are common practice for safe and effective schools.

The participants in this study unveiled several common themes during group discussions. These common themes serve as key elements in effective school discipline practices. It became evident that, while these elements are in place in the elementary school selected for this study, there is room for improvement in all of the identified areas. The major key element to effective school discipline practices is having everyone committed to the same goals. Regardless of the specific strategy used, all strategies are dependent upon clear lines of communication, and work best when good relationships have been established between administrators, teachers, students and parents.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this study was to explore perceptions of administrators, teachers, and parents regarding effective school discipline practices. The researcher utilized focused groups in order to obtain information for this research project. All participants were randomly selected and included school administrators, teachers and parents. This research project was driven by one overarching question and three sub questions. The overarching question was: What discipline practices are most effective in a rural Georgia elementary school? Through this study, the researcher found that the most effective discipline practices include effective communication, consistency in terms of rules, expectations and consequences, and accountability and responsibility as it pertains to school discipline. Each stakeholder whether it is the administrator, teacher, or parent, should hold their children accountable for their actions. It takes a team effort to implement an effective school discipline plan.

Research Question 1

What effective discipline practices do parents, administrators and teachers believe are in place in the rural Georgia elementary school?

Communication was identified and discussed by all focus group participants as being the most valuable ingredient to effective school discipline. Although the focus group participants believe that communication is being utilized in a meaningful way, there is room for improvement. Communicating the rules and expectations not only to students, but also to parents, helps establish clear expectations.

Orderly schools are typically a product of a balance of clearly established expectations, and communicated rules. Communication was identified as a major key to effective discipline practices. Consequences for students' behaviors should be clearly identified and made known to students and parents at the onset of the school year.

Participants in this study also believe that instead of focusing only on specific children with problem behaviors, administrators, teachers, and parents should focus on a proactive school-wide discipline plan that defines and teaches expectations, and supports appropriate behaviors for all students throughout the school day in all areas of the school. This approach establishes a school culture in which students encourage responsible behaviors and discourage negative behaviors among themselves, thus allowing teachers to focus on teaching students rather than controlling students.

School discipline has two main goals: one, to ensure the safety of all staff and students; and, two, to create an environment conducive to learning. As the review of literature explained, serious student misconduct involving aggressive or violent behavior defeats these goals and can make headlines in the process. However, the most common discipline problems involve non-criminal student behavior, and off-task behavior.

Research Question 2

What do parents, administrators and teachers believe are the biggest obstacles to effective discipline?

It is important to keep the ultimate goal in mind while working to improve school discipline. As administrators, teachers, and parents point out, the goal of good behavior is necessary, but not sufficient to ensure academic growth. Effective school discipline strategies seek to encourage responsible behavior, and to provide all students, parents,

teachers, and administrators with a satisfying school experience, as well as, to discourage misconduct.

Among the research participants, inconsistencies in terms of expectations and consequences were identified as the biggest obstacle to effective discipline for the school selected for this study. Behavioral expectations need to be taught to all students in the school. Teaching appropriate behavior involves much more than simply telling students what behaviors they should avoid. Modeling is an important factor that can positively impact students. Zero-tolerance, which treats every student the same in terms of punishment without taking into consideration any underlying factors that may have contributed to the inappropriate behavior, does not provide the necessary support to students that helps promote an improvement in self-control and appropriate decision making strategies for these individuals.

The first few days of class are critical in establishing the climate of the classroom. Classroom rules and procedures should be clearly explained and enforced. It is important to spend the first few weeks helping the students learn rules and procedures. Teachers of younger students need to spend more time than teachers of older students, as there is a carryover from year to year of basic school socialization procedures. Teacher participants feel that a developed routine of classroom procedures decreases disruptions because students know what is expected.

Research Question 3

What changes in discipline procedures do parents, administrators and teachers believe should be implemented to bring about effective change in the behavior of children in a rural elementary school?

The school climate should be free of intimidation and disruptions for students and staff members alike. In order to improve this issue, a partnership between families and schools must be established. Parents must also learn what good discipline practices are in order to reinforce this at home. Parents must continue to be engaged as essential partners throughout their children's school years.

Parents are the first link in preventing problems in effective school discipline practices, and, therefore, play a major role in effective school discipline practices. Parents who are involved in their children's daily school experiences have a better understanding of what is acceptable, and expected in the school's environment.

Effective discipline practices thrive on consistency and teamwork. The administrators and teachers should be expected to reinforce the same behavior for all students and to follow common discipline practices. Administrators, teachers, and parents should not be driven by political implications. Discipline practices should be consistent and fair for all individuals. As indicated in the literature, all faculty and staff members should work together for the common good of the students and the school.

Conclusion

Building relationships with students by demonstrating an interest in the personal goals, achievements and even problems of students is also vital to an effective discipline plan. Establishing a warm social climate, characterized by concern for students as individuals, makes a positive impact on the students and parents. Working together as a team yields positive outcomes in terms of student behavior. Good communication and shared values are important elements in the establishment of relationships.

Research has shown that the implementation of punishment, especially when it is used inconsistently and in the absence of other positive strategies, is ineffective (Myers & Holland, 2000). Students need to be introduced to the defined social expectations and behaviors that are acceptable for the good of the organization. Modeling and reinforcing positive social behavior helps students realize that appropriate behavior is the norm.

An effective school-wide discipline plan that focuses on positive behavioral interventions and support is only as good as the structures and processes that are in place to support their sustained use. There are several identifiable components of a school-wide discipline plan that the research participants expect to see. These components include an agreed upon and common approach to discipline, a positive statement of purpose, a small number of positively stated expectations for all students and staff, procedures for teaching these expectations to students, a continuum of procedures for encouraging displays and maintenance of the expectations, a continuum of procedures for discouraging displays of rule-violation and unacceptable behavior, and procedures for monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of the discipline plan on a regular and frequent basis.

Many schools purchase published school-wide discipline programs that have the necessary features for success. However, every school has its unique features such as leadership styles, students, size, staff composition, and geographic location. These things must be taken into account when implementing any discipline program.

If desirable behavior is to be learned, educators must teach expectations. Educators need to commit themselves to developing methods, procedures, and practices

for teaching it. Discipline is not punishment. Discipline encourages learning, responsibility and self-control.

Schools are discovering that the most effective means of reducing discipline referrals is to become proactive with school discipline. Collaborative development of school-wide rules that are clear, all encompassing and seen as fair must then be communicated to the school community and consistently followed. Mayer (1995) contends that traditional discipline practices in schools have been punitive and exclusionary in nature. Therefore, consequences must be reasonable for the offense and combined with the teaching of strategies that address the behavior.

This research project has served as a type of needs assessment in the area of effective school-wide discipline practices. Administrators and teachers said they would like to have access to quality professional development that affords opportunities that emphasize practices in prevention strategies addressing disruptive behavior. Training for all faculty and staff including administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, lunchroom staff, custodians and bus drivers will be a priority. It is vital to the success of an effective school-wide discipline plan that everyone understands the ultimate goal and be committed to achieving that goal.

Upon the close of each focus group discussion, it was determined by each participant that all school personnel and all parents should be accountable for the enforcement of school rules and student expectations. Parents should hold their children accountable for their inappropriate actions at school. Many parents need to take more responsibility for teaching their children appropriate behavior choices at home so this can

be carried over to the school environment. It takes supportive parents, teachers, and administrators working together to ensure successful student behavior.

Recommendations and Summary

Although this study was limited to one elementary school in the selected school district, further research to examine current discipline practices in place at each elementary school within the district is recommended. The goal of the researcher is to share the findings with the school superintendent so that further studies can be done in order to evaluate the discipline practices in each of the other elementary schools. Because every school has its unique features such as leadership styles, students, size, staff composition, and geographic location, it becomes necessary to conduct further research to evaluate the effectiveness of the discipline practices as implemented in the other elementary schools. The ultimate goal is to have all elementary schools within the district implement and practice similar discipline strategies.

The findings of this study also indicate that teachers need to shift their thinking from an authoritative attitude to one of teamwork, from intimidating to encouraging, and from requiring corrective actions to fostering good decision making skills among all students. Further research should be to evaluate the effectiveness of the changes that teachers will be taught to implement.

This study focused on perceptions of administrators, teachers and parents in terms of effective discipline practices. Future research should include students since they are the ultimate factor in school discipline issues. Student input could add a unique dimension to the study of school discipline. The final recommendation for future research

would be to include individual interviews whereby the researcher could obtain more in-depth thoughts and perceptions from the participants.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER

Dear Research Participant:

My name is Laurie Lewis. I am a doctoral student at Georgia Southern University. I am interested in examining the development of effective discipline practices of a rural Georgia elementary school.

This letter is to request your assistance in gathering data to analyze this topic. There is, of course, no penalty should you decide not to participate or to later withdraw from the study. If you agree to participate, a focus group and time will be established where you will be asked a series of questions about school discipline practices. Participation in the focus group will be considered permission to use the information you provide in the study. Please be assured that your responses will be kept absolutely confidential. The study will be most useful if you respond to every question. The risks in participating in this research should not be beyond those experienced in everyday life. Some of the questions are personal and might cause discomfort. If this occurs, you may choose not to answer one or more of the question, without penalty. You must be at least 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you would like a copy of the study's results, you may indicate your interest below. You will be given a copy of the consent form to keep for your records.

If you have any questions about this research project, please call Laurie Lewis at xxxxxxxxxxxx. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant in this study they should be directed to Dr. Linda Arthur at Georgia Southern University at (912) 681-0275.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in participating in this research study. The results should allow me to better understand the development of effective school discipline practices.

Respectfully,

Laurie Lewis
Doctoral Student
Georgia Southern University

Title of Project: The Development of Effective Discipline Practices of a Rural Georgia Elementary School.
Principal Investigator: Laurie Lewis
Faculty Advisor: Dr. Linda Arthur, P.O. Box 8131, Statesboro, Georgia 30460
912-681-0275, larthur@georgiasouthern.edu

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

My name is Laurie H. Lewis, doctoral student at Georgia Southern University, and I am doing this research project to complete requirements for the Ed. D program and to gain an understanding of effective school discipline practices.

1. Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this research is to explore perceptions of school discipline practices in an elementary school environment.

2. Procedures to be followed: Participation in this research will include three focus groups which will include 2 administrators, 6 teachers, and 6 parents. These groups will be randomly selected.

3. Discomforts and Risks: The risks in participating in this research project are not expected to go beyond those experienced in everyday life. However, some of the questions are personal and might cause discomfort when discussing an issue within the focus group. Because school discipline can be an emotional–charged issue, and because the research project only involves one elementary school, participants should understand that any comments or discussion could carry high political and social stakes. However, the researcher and participants will be encouraged to respect one another and act in a professional manner. Since participants are volunteering information through discussion groups, he/she may elect not to answer any question that may cause harm or discomfort to him/her. The researcher does not expect every participant to answer every question. Furthermore, if at any time the participant feels the need to withdraw from the research project, he/she may do so without penalty. Participants are asked to contact the researcher to have his/her name withdrawn from the project.

4. Benefits:
   a. The benefits to participants include knowing they provided valuable information in order to help the researcher explore perceptions of school discipline practices.
   b. The benefits to society include better-disciplined students who experience a more productive school year.

5. Duration/Time: Focus group meetings will last approximately 2 -3 hours.

6. Statement of Confidentiality: Although focused groups will be used in order to obtain information for this research project, the researcher will try to protect participant's confidentiality by limiting the link between respondents to specific answers within the individual focus groups. For the purpose of reporting the findings, the researcher will not use actual names of participants. An effort to protect anonymity of participants will be made by the researcher in that no connection to any identifying information with participant and interview results

will be made public. Names or codes will not be personally linked to anyone involved in this research project.

7. Right to Ask Questions: Participants have the right to ask questions and have those questions answered. If you have questions about this study, please contact the researcher named above or the researcher's faculty advisor, whose contact information is located at the end of the informed consent. For questions concerning your rights as a research participant, contact Georgia Southern University Office of Research Services and Sponsored Programs at 912-681-0843.

8. Compensation: The researcher does not expect any compensation for the research project.

9. Voluntary Participation: Participation in this research project is strictly voluntary. If at any time, the participant does not want to continue in the research project, no penalty will occur.

10. Penalty: There is no penalty for deciding not to participate in the study. If participants decide at any time they want to withdraw, they may do so without penalty or retribution.

11. You must be 18 years of age or older to consent to participate in this research study. If you consent to participate in this research study and to the terms above, please sign your name and indicate the date below.

You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your records.

Title of Project: The Development of Effective Discipline Practices of a Rural Georgia Elementary School

Principal Investigator: Laurie H. Lewis

Other Investigator(s): none

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Linda M. Arthur, Department of Leadership, Technology and Human Development, PO Box 8131 Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, Ga. 30460-8131

_____ _____

Participant Signature Date

I, the undersigned, verify that the above informed consent procedure has been followed.

_____ _____

Investigator Signature Date

APPENDIX C

DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS

1. Name:_____

Please circle the appropriate answer.

2. I am a(n)

a. administrator

b. teacher

c. parent

4. I am

a. male

b. female

5. Level of education:

a. Some high school

b. High school graduate

c. Some college or technical school

d. 4-year college degree

e. Graduate degree: Masters, Specialist, or Doctorate

<u>For Administrators and Teachers</u>

5. Number years of experience:

a. less than 5 years

b. 6-10 years

c. 11-20 years

d. 21-30 years

e. more than 30 years

6. Do you have experience outside this school system?

d. Yes

b. No

For Parent Participants

6. Number of children at this school:

a. 1

b. 2

c. 3

d. 4

e. 5 or more

7. **Number of years you have had a child or children at this school:**

a. 1 year

b. 2 years

c . 3 years

d. 4 years

e. 5 or more years

8. **Have any of your children attended a school in another school system?**

a. Yes

b. No

10. Are you a member of the PTO at this school?

a. Yes

b. No

APPENDIX D

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. What discipline practices works best for your children?
2. What discipline practices being used at this school do you believe are most effective?
3. How should inappropriate or disruptive behavior be handled at school?
4. How do discipline practices in general affect parents, teachers and administrators?
5. How do the discipline practices you observe at school affect student behavior?
6. To what extent, if any, do you think the teacher has a say in determining discipline practices at this school?
7. To what extent, if any, do you think the parent has a say in determining discipline practices at this school?
8. How do the school's surrounding, atmosphere, and environment affect discipline problems at this school?
9. How can bullying be avoided?
10. Explain the barriers you see preventing effective discipline practices at this school.
11. What do you believe about zero tolerance policies?
12. What can the administrators do to improve school discipline practices at this school?
13. What can the teacher do to improve school discipline practices at this school?
14. What can the parents do to improve school discipline practices at this school?