

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

Theses and Dissertations

4-30-1997

A comparison of two pre-referral intervention committees

Tammy L. Kouser
Rowan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Educational Psychology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Kouser, Tammy L., "A comparison of two pre-referral intervention committees" (1997). *Theses and Dissertations*. 2075.

<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/2075>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact graduateresearch@rowan.edu.

A COMPARISON OF TWO PRE-REFERRAL
INTERVENTION COMMITTEES

by
Tammy L. Kouser

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree in School Psychology
of Rowan University
May 06, 1997

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved 4/30/97

ABSTRACT

Tammy L. Kouser
A Comparison of Two Pre-Referral
Intervention Committees
1997
Dr. Klanderman, Ph.D.
School Psychology

The purpose of this study is to descriptively analyze two pre-referral intervention committees in a New Jersey suburban school district. The committee is also labeled Pupil Assistance Committee (PAC).

The sample was the two committees observed by the researcher. Questionnaires were also filled out by referral teachers to suggest effectiveness of the committees. The referral teachers vary in age and sex.

This study yielded the following findings: the make up of the committees were very similar, the format of the two committees greatly differed, the number of interventions and time spent on students varied between schools, the effectiveness suggested by the referral teachers showed no difference between committees.

Mini-Abstract

Tammy L. Kouser
A Comparison of Two Pre-Referral
Intervention Committees
1997
Dr. Klanderman, Ph.D.
School Psychology

The purpose of this study is to descriptively compare two pre-referral intervention committees. This study found the following: the two committees practiced two different formats, yet the referral teachers from both schools had similar rankings, suggesting effectiveness. The committees also varied in the number of interventions and time spent on each referred student.

Table of Contents

Chapter I The Problem.....	1
Need.....	1
Purpose.....	2
Hypothesis.....	3
Research Questions.....	3
Theory.....	4
Definitions.....	6
Assumptions.....	7
Limitations.....	8
Overview.....	8
Chapter II Review of Literature.....	10
Development.....	12
Current Implementation.....	13
The Committee.....	13
Success.....	15
Previous Studies.....	16
Summary.....	21
Chapter III Design of Study.....	23
Sample.....	24
Measurements.....	25

Design.....	25
Testable Hypothesis.....	26
Analysis.....	26
Summary.....	27
Chapter IV Analysis of Results.....	28
Table 4.1.....	29
Table 4.2.....	30
Table 4.3.....	30
Table 4.4.....	31
Table 4.5.....	32
Table 4.6.....	32
Table 4.7.....	33
Chapter V Summary and Conclusions.....	34
Discussion.....	37
Implications for Future Research.....	38
References.....	39
Appendices.....	41

Chapter One

NEED

In many public schools it has been mandated to have interventions for children having academic or behavioral problems. These programs and committees, known as Pupil Assistance Committees serve a major purpose in helping learning and behavioral problems. For this reason they deserve the attention required to make them as efficient and effective as possible. This study is important in order to help the overall impact on the delivery of special education services (Nelson, 1991). The focus is to help children who have difficulties in the classroom without classifying them. Finding the most effective pre-referral intervention process will help the teachers better understand how to help these children reach their desired performance. The Pupil Assistance Committees (PAC) play a significant role in the different interventions, chosen for the referred students. There are different styles among PAC, and examining effective styles will only benefit the whole intervention process.

PURPOSE

Pre-referral intervention is a systematic collaborative effort to assist general education teachers. The intervention is designed to reduce need of special education services by providing assistance to students in general classrooms, to decrease the over identification of students having handicaps, and finally to facilitate the integration of students with handicaps into a general education environment (Nelson, 1991).

The purpose of this study is to gather information about intervention practices used in a large suburban district that will analyze the pre-referral process, specifically the committees. The actual practice will vary from district to district. This particular study will focus on two different committees and observe the different styles used. This study will evaluate the success or failure of the committees by the referral teachers answers to a questionnaire. Results may vary, but the goal is to find the most effective pre-referral intervention process.

Many of these interventions are also successful in supporting children with mild, specific problems who do not meet the criteria for special education. The pre-referral intervention helps to make child study teams more efficient.

HYPOTHESIS

Pre-referral interventions are an asset to all school districts. They benefit children who need to be referred to a child study team, and children who can be helped within their classroom. The specific intervention being observed is the different styles used by the committees. Finding the most effective pre-referral intervention committee style will be extremely beneficial and this study will be a comparison of two committee styles. The hypothesis is that there will not be a difference between committee style or results.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Do PAC outcomes overall or patterns of referrals vary from school to school?
2. What types of target problems are most often the reason for referral?
3. Who is the person in charge?
4. How many people are on the committee?
5. Who are the people that make up the committee (title)?
6. How much time is spent on each newly referred student?
7. How many interventions are suggested per meeting?
8. How many interventions are suggested per child?
9. Who is the monitor chosen for each child?

10. How is the time spent in the meeting?
11. Does the meeting follow the procedures stated in the manual?

THEORY

The pre-referral intervention committee was discussed as early as the year 1979, and at that time the committee was called the Teacher Assistance Team or TAT. The purpose was to give suggestions to teachers on how to handle difficult students, and offered recommendations for interventions. The committee usually consisted of three teachers and the referral teacher. The evolution of these programs lead to what is now known as the Pupil Assistance Committee or PAC.

The work of Chalfant, Pysk, and their colleagues on TATs exemplifies the development of an approach to pre-referral intervention. Chalfant and Pysk defined a TAT as "a schoolbased problem-solving unit used to assist teachers in generating intervention strategies" so that they may "cope with a wide range of issues" (P. 50) related to difficult-to-teach and difficult-to-manage students. In schools where TATs operate, teachers request assistance from and participate with the TAT in:

- a) analyzing problems
- b) setting goals

c) devising solutions.

Nearly 60% of the goals established by the TATs were non academic, suggesting that teachers were more concerned with their ability to address management problems than their ability to address academic problems. Teachers felt the interventions of TAT resulted in greater or considerable progress for nearly one-third of the goals they set and little or no progress for roughly 20% of the goals. The authors felt the probability of success of an intervention was related to the severity of the original problem and the quality of the teachers' implementation of the intervention plan (Chalfant and Pysk (1989).

Pre-referral interventions are designed to call early attention to student learning and behavior problems, conduct on-site adjustments in the regular classroom, and monitor student progress. They are being practiced to reduce the number of students referred for eligibility, evaluated special education placement; increase regular education teachers to meet academic and behavioral needs of students; and make use of resources to benefit a large portion of students (McCarney, 1993).

Reports have shown that testing and placement declined as a result of pre-referral intervention. At the point of the initial referral the pre-referral intervention model should provide the appropriate interventions to meet students needs and reduce special education services.

One goal is to create a balanced responsibility between special and regular education, and try to improve the skills of teachers in meeting unique needs of all students. Therefore a variety of interventions is helpful (McCarney, 1993).

Garden, Casey, and Christenson (1985) were the first to use the term pre-referral intervention in the special education literature through the development of an intervention model to be implemented in the schools. Their study produced reasonable optimism about the usefulness and effectiveness of pre-referral interventions. Over a four year period, more students were served in the regular education classroom and fewer students were referred for a comprehensive evaluation to determine special education eligibility.

DEFINITIONS

Least Restrictive Environment- to the maximum extent appropriate, handicapped children, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are not handicapped, and that special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of handicapped children from the regular environment occurs only when the nature of severity of the handicap is such that education in regular classes with the use of

supplemental aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily.

Mainstreaming= placement in regular education classroom environment with or without other accommodations.

Mainstream Assistance Teams= a multidisciplinary, school-based team which involved a consultant, teacher, and student. The ultimate goal is to achieve mainstreaming in regular education classrooms.

Pre-Referral Intervention= refers to a teacher's modification of instruction or classroom management to better accommodate a difficult-to-teach (DTT) pupil without disabilities.

Teacher Assistance Teams= introduced as an alternative to traditional teacher inservice training. Created to function as day-to-day problem-solving groups for teachers.

ASSUMPTIONS

In order to conduct this study several assumptions are made.

1. All data was collected in the same, unbiased manner.
2. The regular education teacher making the referral was

aware of the pre-referral, PAC, process and understood the process.

3. The sample of students was a random one.
4. The PAC process is generally the same in a high school and elementary school, and the age in referred students is insignificant.

LIMITATIONS

1. One limitation is that it is being conducted in two suburban school's in a southern New Jersey town.
2. Another limitation is that one pre-referral intervention committee has been established for years while the other is relitively new.
3. A final limitation may be that one school is an elementary school while the other is a high school.

OVERVIEW

In the State of New Jersey it has been mandated that public schools form some type of pre-referral intervention. This study uses the committee form, which is also labeled Pupil Assistance Committee (PAC). They are designed to call attention to referred students with either behavior or learning problems, than suggest interventions, and observe the effects on the student. After discussing the

Theory behind the Pupil Assistance Committee Chapter Two will look at the development of (PAC), and examine previous literature. Chapter Three will explain the design of this study, and an analysis of the results will follow. Finally there will be a summary and conclusion followed by a discussion for future research. This study hopes to show positive effects of the committees, and discuss which tactics being compared will better serve the students.

CHAPTER TWO

This chapter is broken down into different sections, beginning with general information about pre-referral interventions. It then changes its focus to the development and history of committees used today, either TATs, MATs, or PAC. The implementation of pre-referral intervention procedures in different areas is briefly discussed, leading to the format of PAC. This section looks at the members, and the actual procedure of the meetings. Another section is success, which examines the results successful programs, and committee styles may have. Finally there is an analysis on previous studies, which closely examines research done on the topic, and looks at the results found.

It has become accepted that educational and behavioral interventions can be implemented within regular education settings instead of placing students in segregated classrooms. For this reason, pre-referral intervention has become a common practice. The purpose is to call early attention to learning and behavioral problems, have on-site adjustments in the regular classroom, and observe student

progress (McCarney and Stephen, 1993).

Pre-referral intervention is referred to for remedial actions undertaken by teachers for the purpose of maintaining students in regular programs. The large understanding is on the word "remedial"; pre-referral intervention does not occur until teachers recognize learning or behavior problems and take remedial actions to correct them (Sindelar et al., 1992). The success or failure of the pre-referral intervention depends on the nature and appropriateness of the intervention and the quality of its implementation (pg.252).

For over a decade school psychologists have been encouraged to place a greater emphasis on assessment activities that are closely related to effective intervention. Broussard and Northup (1995) define functional assessment as, "the use of a variety of assessment strategies to identify specific antecedent and consequent events that are directly related to problem behaviors". They also define functional analysis, "as an assessment strategy in which environment events are manipulated in order to evaluated relationships".

Recently, functional assessment and analysis procedures have been extended to school settings. These extensions suggest that functional analysis may pertain to prevalent disruptive behaviors in regular classrooms and may be useful for the selection and development of pre-referral

interventions. The literature suggests three variables as often related to disruptive behavior in the classroom: teacher attention, peer attention, and escape from academic demands (Broussard and Northup, 1995).

DEVELOPMENT

The historical origins of special education approaches to pre-referral intervention will be briefly discussed in order to understand the current state of practice. Teacher Assistance Teams (TATs) began in the early 1970's as problem-solving groups for teachers. They were introduced as an alternative to traditional teacher inservice training. TATs were created to serve as day-to-day problem solving groups for teachers. These groups usually consisted of three teachers with the referring teacher as a fourth member. The goal of this group was to help teachers meet the needs of difficult to teach students in regular classrooms (Sindelar et al., 1992).

In the early 1980's there was an over identification of students with mild disabilities. A consultative model previously used emerged as a variable model. Pre-referral intervention was implemented through a collaborative, consultative approach. From this model came the development of Mainstream Assistance Teams (MATs). Its central purpose

was to prevent inappropriate special education placements by strengthening teachers' teaching and management skills. Assistance was provided by special education teachers or school psychologists. Similar to the earlier models MATs focused on preventing referral of students for special education services (Fuchs and Fuch, 1990).

CURRENT IMPLEMENTATION

Findings of a national survey of state directors of special education conducted by Carter and Sugai (1989), found a large number of state education agencies have adopted and are implementing pre-referral intervention procedures. They reported that 34 of 50 states now require or recommend some form of prereferral intervention. In 38 of 50 states, regular educators play a large role in pre-referral intervention. Today special education's involvement in pre-referral intervention has produced both self-help (TATs) and collaborative (MATs) approaches.

THE COMMITTEE

A report from the PAC Curriculum Committee defines the PAC committee as a school based instructional support team using the process of the members collaboration to help the classroom teacher in the development and

implementation of educational strategies for meeting a variety of student needs in regular education classes. The team should include the building principal or designated person, a minimum of one member of the Child Study Team, at least one guidance counselor, and at least one regular education teacher. Children are referred to PAC in a few ways. An elementary teacher who is having difficulty meeting the educational or behavioral needs of a student will speak to the principal about the issues. After different suggestions are explored, a teacher or principal may request a PAC referral form. In high school, it goes straight to the PAC committee by filling out a referral form and parent notification.

After the student is referred information is gathered, a monitor is assigned, data is collected, potential solutions are brainstormed, strategies are selected, desired outcomes are defined, strategies are implemented and monitored, and finally a follow-up meeting is held. The format of the meeting should be held as follows: 1. reach a consensus on student's problem (4 minutes) 2. negotiate the objective for the meeting (2 minutes) 3. brainstorm alternatives (8 minutes) 4. discuss suggestions (4 minutes) 5. teacher selects 2 to 6 suggestions for trial (2 minutes) 6. committee refines teacher selections (5 minutes) 7. accommodation plan developed with specifics (5 minutes) (unsited source).

SUCCESS

A successful program of pre-referral intervention can be expected to reduce the rate of referral. Successful pre-referral interventions should lead to improved academic performance and classroom conduct, or perhaps in adjusting teacher expectations. Successful pre-referral interventions should be used and liked by teachers; parents and students should express their satisfaction with successful placement in regular classes. Participants in successful pre-referral interventions should benefit from and value their involvement. Improvement in educational practice is where pre-referral intervention should be judged (Sindelar et al., 1992).

Contact between parents and teachers is also important because it improves student achievement. A specific intervention that benefits students is peer tutoring. Studies have shown that peer tutoring had significant positive effects on achievement and attitude toward subject matter. When used properly the success suggests that it may be a recommended intervention chosen by PAC (Cohen, Kulik, and Kulik, 1982).

Teachers believed the interventions of Teacher Assistance Teams resulted in great or considerable progress for nearly one-third of the goals they set. Chaefant and Pysk (1989) concluded that the probability of success of

an intervention was related to the severity of the original problem and the quality of the teachers implementation of the intervention plan.

Pre-referral intervention can be expected to reduce the rate of referral for possible special education placement, render consumer satisfaction, and create student behavior change through enhanced professional practice. To a large extent, the success of a pre-referral strategy depends on the appropriateness of the intervention team's proposed action and the degree to which the proposed action is implemented by the teacher, which is the most crucial step in the process. The approaches found in the Sindelar et al. (1992) study results showed positive outcome in such areas as reducing the referral rate for special education, testing and subsequent placement, promoting teacher and student satisfaction, and changing student behavior for the better.

PREVIOUS STUDIES

A study by Flugum and Reschly (1992) contributed part of a statewide education reform effort, by examining means of information gathered from regular education teachers and related service providers, the quality and outcome of interventions provided by students prior to referral for special education (Flugum, Reschly 1992). Successful

pre-referral interventions not only have the potential to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals and special education placements, they also enhance compliance with the least restrictive environment principle (LRE) as students remain in the regular classroom. It's reasonable to assume that the success of pre-referral interventions is influenced by the quality of the interventions (pg.2).

The quality indices in this study are based on prior literature (Baer et al, 1968). These quality indices are a) behavioral definition of the target behavior; b) direct measure of the student's behavior in the natural setting prior to intervention implementation (baseline data); c) step-by-step intervention plan; d) implementation of the intervention as planned; e) graphing of results; and f) direct comparison of the students post-intervention performance with baseline data. Flugum and Reschly (1994) strongly suspect that greater implementation of the quality indicators would produce more effective interventions and better outcomes for students.

Pre-referral interventions have not to date reduced the number of students classified with disabilities and needing special education. Based on the authors results there are two possible explanations: 1) few pre-referral interventions are being provided to students, and 2) the pre-referral interventions chosen are poor in quality. Pre-referral interventions will not be effective until

they are provided on a regular basis and meet some set of standards for quality. Training practitioners in designing and implementing quality interventions may be the first step to ensuring positive outcomes for all students. It should be noted that a critical limitation to this study was its dependence on self-reported data (pg. 12).

The results of this study support four major claims. First, many students with learning and behavioral problems are not provided pre-referral interventions. Secondly, pre-referral interventions significantly vary in quality. Improved quality of interventions can lead to more successful outcomes for students. Finally, research and training are needed on how to apply the existing knowledge base on systematic problem solving with pre-referral interventions (Flugum and Reschly, 1992).

A study by Chalfant and Pysk (1989) addresses questions often asked by educators interested in establishing or strengthening school-based teams. The data was summarized with respect to intervention goals of teams, team impact on student performance, and the special education referral process, reactions of classroom teachers to teams, factors related to team effectiveness or ineffectiveness, and recommendations for improving team effectiveness.

Between 1979 and 1988 five program development studies were conducted on 96 first-year TATs. The teams were located in urban, suburban, rural, and isolated schools

with populations ranging from 20 to over 1000 students. First year teams were chosen because the successes and problems that occur during the first year influence the maintenance of teams over time (Chalfant and Pysk, 1989).

The reason for this article is to present data and information frequently sought by school faculty who are interested in establishing or strengthening school-based teams. This study addresses five questions typically asked (pg. 50).

What kinds of intervention goals were written by teams? The number of months a team was in operation influenced the number of students assisted and the number of goals written. All students for whom teachers requested assistance had multiple problems leading to several intervention goals for each, of them 57% of the goals were non-academic. Goals that were non-academic were primarily concerned with maintenance and management of student behavior. Only 22% of the behavior goals were academic (pg. 51).

Can student performance be improved by a consultative school-based team model? Student performance was measured before, during, and after teachers' intervention. The teachers and team members had to arrive at a consensus about the amount of student progress achieved. Of 112 students, 44% were rated as having made great or considerable progress. Moderate progress was reported

for 35%, and little or no progress was reported for 21% (pg.52).

The amount of progress is affected by the severity of the student's problem, the appropriateness of the intervention strategies, and the extent teachers implemented the plan. The data demonstrated that teachers perceive improvement in most students' performance in their classrooms as a result of schoolbased teams (pg.53).

What impact do teams have on the referral and identification process for special education? The study showed that inappropriate referrals were reduced after TATs were implemented. Preceding the implementation of TATs the schools in this study referred an average of 22 students per year who were found ineligible for special services. After implementing TAT, a 63% drop occurred in the number of inappropriate referrals. The average cost to list each student in the district was \$1,200, therefore school-based teams saved the district money (pg. 53).

What are teachers reactions to school-based teams? Teachers were sent an open-ended survey questionnaire. The teachers responses were broken down into 399 statements; 88% were positive and 12% were negative. Teachers were satisfied with their teams because they helped them to analyze and understand student behavior, and generate interventions that improved student behavior. (pg. 54).

What factors are related to team effectiveness?
Members of 11 teams (48%) believed their teams were very effective; 26% believed they were moderately effective; and 26% thought they were occasionally effective. Three major factors were identified as contributing to team effectiveness: a) principal support, b) team attributes and performance, and c) teacher support (pg. 55).

School-based teams such as TATs are ways that teachers can share their problems in a professional way and brainstorm solutions. They build a forum to share their problems in a professional way and brainstorm solutions. They can consult with one another, share their expertise, and benefit from one another's experiences and areas of specialty (Chalfant and Pysh, 1981).

SUMMARY

Chapter two attempts to be an informative system to display general information on pre-referral interventions, and examine aspects of PAC. The focus began general on the purpose and need for pre-referral interventions. In the preceding section the development of what is now considered PAC was discussed. TATs served as problem solving groups, where MATs attempted to strengthen teaching and management skills. Pre-referral interventions have been implemented in a large number of state education

agencies. The Committee section examined the format and procedures mentioned in the manual to give an understanding of the proper way to maintain a committee (unsited source). The effects of a successful program was observed, and factors that lead to success were discussed in the following section. Finally, there was an examination of previous studies. The first study looked at the quality of interventions and the success rate. The following study examined team impact on students, and ways to improve team effectiveness. The following chapter will analyze the design of the study, and describe the settings and procedure to collect the data.

CHAPTER THREE

In order to determine the effectiveness of the two pre-referral intervention committees being observed and compared, there are several questions which are addressed. These questions are rated by the referral teacher with a 7-point Likert type scale. These ratings determine the levels of success the committee had on the students he/she referred.

What was your reasoning for referring the child? How would you rate the child's behavior/academic performance before referral to the committee? How would you rate the child's behavior/academic performance after referral to the committee? Do you believe your referral was considered for an adequate amount of time by the committee? How would you rate the committees suggested interventions? How would you rate the committees attention to your particular referral? How would you rate the committee's follow-up procedure? How would you rate the composition of the committee? How would you rate your overall satisfaction of the committee (process/interventions/ outcomes)? These

questions are ranked using a Likert scale.

This chapter analyzes the design of the study. The chapter describes the setting and the procedure to collect the data which is analyzed by descriptive statistics (comparing the committees and ranking each committee).

SAMPLE

This study will be comparing two intervention committees, and evaluating which develops better result on the referral students. The success will be determined by how the referral teachers rank the committee they bring their student. Both schools are in an upper middle class area of Southern New Jersey. One intervention committee is in a high school while the other is in an elementary school, both are public schools.

The intervention committee for the elementary school is made up of five people. There are two teachers, one for sixth graders and one for third graders. There is one learning disabilities teacher/consultant (LDTC), a guidance counselor, and the principal in charge. Everyone on the committee is a women except the principal and guidance counselor.

The intervention committee for the high school is in its first stages of development. It is run by a male principal. There are two teachers, one is a male and one

is a female. There is also a female guidance counselor and school psychologist. The referral teachers in both schools vary in age and sex. They were chosen based on if they had to refer a student to the committee for some reason.

MEASUREMENTS

The data used to answer the research questions for this study are being collected by use of a coding instrument developed by the researcher. The coding instrument is a questionnaire which asked the eight questions to the referral teachers, which have been previously listed. Each question had a scale of one (being the lowest) to seven (being the best), four was considered an average result.

There is also a questionnaire (mentioned in chapter one) for the researcher to answer while attending three meetings from both intervention committees. These questions are ways to determine differences between each group. Therefore, if results show one committee scores higher on the referral questionnaire, we may suggest reasons why.

DESIGN

The design of this study is a descriptive analysis

of two different pre-referral intervention committees. The success of these committees is measured by the referral teachers with a Likert scale.

TESTABLE HYPOTHESIS

This study is based on research questions for the researcher to answer, while observing the committees, and for the referral teacher to answer with a Likert scale. There is also a hypothesis stating that there will not be a difference between committee style or results. Finding the most effective pre-referral intervention committee will suggest to be extremely beneficial. This study will be a comparison of two committee styles, it will analyze results obtained by the questionnaires distributed at both schools.

ANALYSIS

The data will be gathered in two systems. The first will be information obtained during the pre-referral intervention meetings. These results will be displayed in tables, in order to compare results from the different committees.

The information obtained by the questionnaires filled out by the referral teachers will also be displayed in

tables. These tables will then be compared in order to determine which committee obtained better results.

SUMMARY

This chapter reiterates the research questions and explains how they will be answered by the researcher and referral teacher. The questions answered by the referral teacher were examined by the Likert scale. Measurements on the time spent on each referred student, and the number of interventions suggested by the committees are a few statistics obtained by the researcher. The schools this study was conducted in were suburban schools, one middle and one an elementary school. The results are not to be generalized to all committees. The following chapters will be a discussion of the results this study found along with tables to display the results. The final chapter will be a discussion of this study and implications for future research.

Chapter Four

Several research questions were addressed by the researcher, while observing the two committees. The questions are listed in chapter one. There is also a hypothesis stating that there will not be a difference between committee style or results. The make up of the two committees is compared on the proceeding page, Table 4.1. The elementary school, with the experienced PAC committee is represented by school 1. The high school with the new PAC committee is represented by school 2.

Although the make up is very similar, the roles were quite different between committees. In school 2 the principal was often not present. They also conduct their meetings without a written agenda. School one closely follows the procedures stated in the report from the PAC Curriculum Committee (unsited source).

Table 4.1-Make up of the two pre-referral committees

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>School 1</u>	<u>School 2</u>
Person in charge	Principal	Principal
Number of members	Five	Five
Title of each member	-Teacher	-Teacher
	-Teacher	-Teacher
	-LDTC	-School Psychologist
	-Guidance	-Guidance
	Counselor	Counselor
	-Principal	-Principal

The researcher observed three PAC meetings at each school, and compared the process each committee used. The outline proposed in the report from the PAC Curriculum Committee was compared to the actual meetings held by school 1 and school 2. The format the meeting is suggested to follow is displayed in Chapter two under The Committee section. Tables 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 outline the format of school 1. The number under the student's referred number is the minutes spent on each section. Suggestions and Refines are the numbers of interventions suggested by the committee and refined by the referral teacher.

Table 4.2-School 1 PAC Process

Student referred	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Consensus	7	10	5	8	8	6	5
Brain Storming	7	7	10	8	9	8	8
Suggestions (#)	13	9	16	10	14	13	8
Teacher Selects	5	2	3	2	4	7	2
Refines (#)	6	4	7	5	8	10	4
Plan Developed	3	4	2	1	0	0	0

Table 4.3-Average format of school 1

	Minutes	Amount
Consensus	7	
Brain Storming	8	
Suggestion (#)		11.8
Teacher Selects	3.5	
Refines		6.2
Plan Developed	1.4	

Table 4.4-School 1 student break down

<u>Student</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Interventions</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Monitor</u>
1	24	6	Behavior	none
2	23	4	Academic	none
3	20	7	Academic	Guidance
4	19	5	Emotional/ Behavior	none
5	24	8	Emotional/ Behavior	Guidance
6	23	10	Academic	Teacher
7	17	4	Emotional/ Academic	none
<u>Average</u>	<u>21.4</u>	<u>6.2</u>		

The format of school 1 and school 2 was quite different. Table 4.5 will show these differences. Time is represented by minutes, and the interventions are the total number suggested throughout the meeting. Table 4.5 shown on the following page is the format school 2 used. The break down was not the same as suggested in the report from the Curriculum Committee.

Table 4.5-School 2 PAC process

<u>Student</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Interventions</u>	<u>Reason</u>
1	10	4	Academic
2	4	3	Academic
3	5	0	Academic
4	8	2	Academic
5	8	0	Academic
6	4	0	Behavior
<u>Average</u>	<u>6.5</u>	<u>1.5</u>	

In order to measure the effectiveness of the PAC committees, questionnaires were distributed to all teachers that referred students to the committee. Percentages were obtained by adding the ranks, from the Likert scale, the teachers gave PAC out of a total of 49. The percentages were then averaged to obtain a percentage for school 1 and school 2, see Table 4.6.

Table 4.6-Effectiveness of PAC committee out of 100%

<u>School</u>	<u>Average Percentage</u>
School 1	71.4%
School 2	69.0%

Finally questions two and three from the questionnaire were compared between school 1 and school 2. These questions ask the teacher to rank the child's behavior/academic performance before and after referral. The higher the difference, the more improvement in the child's performance. Therefore an average difference between school 1 and school 2 was compared, see Table 4.7.

Table 4.7-Average difference School 1 vs. School 2

<u>School</u>	<u>Average Difference</u>
School 1	1.8
School 2	1.6

The results obtained by the questionnaires suggest that the two committees are closely ranked in effectiveness. These results are interesting because the format and process between the two committees are extremely different. The hypothesis states there will not be a difference between committee style or results. This study found the styles do differ, but the results from the referral teachers did not vary. A discussion of these results will be examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE

This study was designed to gather information concerning pre-referral intervention committees used in public schools. The State of New Jersey mandates that all public schools have some form of pre-referral intervention. The schools examined in this study, practice the committee form of pre-referral intervention. The committee is also labeled Pupil Assistance Committee (PAC). They are designed to call attention to referred students with either behavior or learning problems, suggest interventions, and observe the effects on the student. This study focused on two committees and observed the different styles used. The committees were compared to analyze the differences, and how the referral teacher rated their experience with the committee.

A comparison of the PAC committees was conducted by the researcher. A questionnaire was designed for the researcher to obtain information during the meetings in an organized fashion. This coding device allowed for a descriptive analysis of the format and style of each committee. The following results were obtained: the make

up of the committees were the same except for school 1 (the elementary school) had a learning disabilities teacher/consultant (LDT/C), and school 2 (the high school) had a school psychologist. These committees also differed in that the principal was always present and in charge of school 1's PAC committee, on the other hand the principal did not always attend school 2's meetings.

The process of the two committees was quite different. School 1 followed the suggestions in the report from the Curriculum Committee (unsited source) where as school 2 did not. The average time spent on a student from school 1 was 21.4 minutes, whereas school 2 spent an average time of 6.5 minutes per student. There was also a large difference between the average number of interventions. School 2 only suggested interventions. Since the referral teacher was not present during the high school PAC meeting there wasn't a process where the teacher would select and the committee would refine the interventions. The average number of interventions suggested by committee 2 (school 2) was 1.5. The average suggested by committee 1 (school 1) was 11.8, and refined was 6.2. It was extremely apparent that the two schools had different PAC processes.

Another interesting factor was the reason for referral. The high school (school 2) had five out of six students referred due to academic reasons; the other was due to behavioral problems. The elementary school had new

referrals for a variety of reasons. Behavior alone was referred once, and academic alone was the reason for three students to be referred. The emotional/behavior or emotional/academic meant the child had emotional problems that were effecting their behavior or academics, three students were referred for these reasons.

The committees effectiveness was obtained by a questionnaire designed by the researcher. These questionnaires were distributed to all the teachers in each school. It asked for anyone who had referred a student to PAC to respond. The questionnaire was measured on a Likert scale with one as considered low and seven as a high rank. For seven of the nine questions a high mark reflected that the referral teacher thought highly of the PAC committee, and vice versa. Percentages were obtained (from the seven questions) by adding the ranks the teachers gave PAC out of a total of 49. School 1 received an average percentage of 71.4, and school 2 received an average of 69%. The results from the referral teacher's questionnaire were close in ranking the committees, with an average difference of 2.4%.

The final analysis was on questions two and three. These questions asked the referral teacher to rank the behavior/academic performance of the child before and after referral. The higher the difference, the more improvement in the child's performance. The best improvement would

be a score of six. This would suggest the student was ranked at one before referral, and received a seven after the PAC process. The average difference for school 1 was 1.8, and school 2 was 1.6.

Discussion

Pre-referral interventions are designed to call early attention to student learning and behavior problems, conduct on-site adjustments in the regular classroom, and monitor student progress. They are practiced to reduce the number of students referred to Child Study Teams. Examining the committees was beneficial to analyze how different committees are conducted. The two PAC committees have a different format, but the referral teachers ranked them close to the same. This may have been due to the coding device developed by the researcher. The questionnaire may have made it difficult to distinguish if the committee was or was not beneficial to the students.

The committees may have been closely ranked because of the relationship the referral teachers had with the committee members. Some teachers may work closely with the members, therefore a lack of improvement by the student may be viewed differently, and not due to PAC. Finally, comments were written from referral teachers about their concerns with PAC. A teacher from school 2 suggested that

the committee had good intentions, but was unorganized and overwhelmed. Another teacher from school 2 stated any attention to these children is better than none. Therefore, some referral teachers may have focused on the goal of PAC rather than their actual practice.

Implications for Future Research

This study can be continued by moving forward. Now that data has been obtained by comparing two committee processes, future research can use this information to conduct a larger study. A new study can look at a few case studies from the two committees. Since the differences have been determined, the actual affects they have on the student can be examined. A case study could observe if the referral teacher follows the intervention plan. This process is one of the most important to make PAC successful. A comparison of two case studies from each PAC committee could prove extremely beneficial to the entire pre-referral intervention process.

References

- Baer, D.M., Wolf, M.M., and Risley, T.R. (1968). Some current dimensions of applied behavior analysis. Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 1, 91-97.
- Broussard, C. D. Northrup, J. (1995). An approach to functional assessment and analysis of disruptive behavior in regular education classrooms. School Psychology, 10 (2), 151-164.
- Carter, J., Sugai, G. (1989). Survey on pre-referral practices: responses from state departments of education. Exceptional Children, 55, 298-302.
- Chalfant, J.C. and Pysk, M.V. (1981). Teacher assistance teams: A model for within-building problem solving. Counterpoint, 11.
- Chalfant, J.C. and Pysk, M.V. (1989). Teacher assistance teams: five descriptive studies on 96 teams. Remedial and Special Education, 10 (6), 49-58.
- Cohen, P.A., Kulik, J.A., and Kulik, C.C. (1982). Educational outcomes of tutoring. A meta-analysis of findings. American Educational Research Journal, 19, 237-248.
- Flugum, K.R., and Reschly, D.J. (1992). Quality of pre-referral interventions and outcomes for learning and behavioral problems. School Psychologist breakout (research report #5). Des Moines, IA: Iowa Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, Renewed Service Delivery System.
- Flugum, K.R., and Reschly, D.J. (1994). Pre-referral interventions: quality indices and outcomes. Journal of School Psychology. 32, 1-14.

- Fuchs, D., and Fuchs, L.S. (1989). Exploring effective and efficient pre-referral interventions: A component analysis of behavioral consultation. School Psychology Review, 18, 260-279.
- Fuchs, D., Fuchs, L.S., and Bahr, M.W. (1990). Mainstream assistance team's: a scientific basis for the art of consultation. Exceptional Children, (Oct.-Nov.): 128-139.
- Graden, J.L., Casey, A., and Christenson, S.L. (1986). Implementing pre-referral intervention system part 1: the model. Exceptional Children, 51, 377-384.
- McCarney, S.B., Wunderlich K.C., Bauer, A.M. (1993). The Pre-referral Intervention Manual. Missouri: Hawthorne.
- Nelson, R.J., Taylor, L., Dodd, M.J., Reavis, K. (1991). Pre-referral intervention: a review of the research. Education and Treatment of Children, 14, 243-253.
- Sindelar, P., Griffin, C., Smith, S., Watanabe, K.A. (1992). Pre-referral intervention: encouraging notes on preliminary findings. The Elementary School Journal, 92 (3), 245-257.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

To whom it may concern,

I am conducting my thesis for graduate school on pre-referral intervention committees. In order to retrieve data, I need the help of teachers who have referred students to the PAC committee. If this applies to you, I'd appreciate it if you could answer a few questions measured on a Likert scale. One is considered low or bad, and seven is considered a high/good score, therefore four is an average mark. When you complete this questionnaire please mail it in the stamped, self addressed envelope provided. Thanks for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Tammy Kouser
Graduate student at Rowan University
School Psychology program

APPENDIX 2

ONE IS CONSIDERED LOW, AND SEVEN IS THE HIGHEST SCORE.

1. How many students did you refer to PAC, for each reason?

Academic____ Behavior____

(If you referred more than one student answer questions on average.)

2. How would you rate the child's behavior/academic performance before referral to the committee?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. How would you rate the child's behavior/academic performance after referral to the committee?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. Do you believe your referral was considered for an adequate amount of time by the committee?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

5. How would you rate the committee's suggested interventions?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

6. How would you rate the committee's attention to your particular referral?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

7. How would you rate the committee's follow up procedure?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

8. How would you rate the composition of the committee?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

9. How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the committee (process, interventions, outcomes)?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7

(Please use back of questionnaire for any additional comments)

Thanks Again!

PLEASE RETURN AS PROMPTLY AS POSSIBLE