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Alternative Education: A Comparative Case Study of the Behavior Modification Programs of two Upstate South Carolina Alternative Schools for Youth who Exhibit Behavior that is Disruptive

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Programs of two Upstate South Carolina Alternative Schools for Youth who Exhibit
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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my wonderful wife, Oti. I am so glad that this journey was taken with you on my side. Truly, I could not have completed this great accomplishment without your love, patience and support. I am overwhelmed with emotion as I think of the countless hours you sacrificed to allow me to study to show myself approved. Thanks for your constructive feedback about my work and thanks for helping me balance my life in the midst of great pressure. You are the best wife in the whole world. I am so appreciative to the Lord for joining us together. The last four years of our marriage has been consumed by classes, papers, and discussion sessions about education administration topics. I look forward to future years with you that are more centered on us discovering the Father's dream for our lives together. You are my dream come true!

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ABSTRACT

This study examined behavior modification programs in schools designed to focus on discipline and that aim to reform disruptive behavior in students, usually over a limited period of time. This was a comparative case study of two type II alternative schools in the Upstate of South Carolina. The findings contributed to the research base regarding the practical implementation of the essential components for an effective behavior modification program in type II alternative schools. The primary research question was used to guide the study to discover the most effective components within the behavior modification program used by two leaders of Type II alternative schools. The question explored the perspectives of two Upstate of South Carolina Type II alternative school principals and their staffs regarding the behavior modification program implemented in their schools and its effectiveness.

Furthermore, this study explored the various ways the behavior modification strategies used by these principals and their staffs were based on, or reflected, the current indicators of success identified by Reimer & Cash (2003). The ten elements that have been identified included: 1) student accountability measures, 2) administrative structure & policies, 3) curriculum & instruction, 4) faculty & staff, 5) facilities & grounds, 6) school leadership, 7) student support services, 8) learning community(staff, students, parents, & community), 9) program funding, and 10) school climate. The result of the comparative case study revealed that each school, in fact, expressed or utilized each of the ten essential components, but in varying degrees. The most significant themes that

emerged as determinants of effectiveness of the behavior modification programs in the type II alternative schools studied were: 1) Positive behavior supports, 2) Teacher capacity building, 3) Progress assessment, 4) Student empowerment, 5) Transition, and 6) Core values.

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Chapter I

Introduction

Jim Collins in *Good to Great* challenged organizations to embrace the first difficult step toward improvement which is to "confront the brutal facts" about themselves (Collins, 2001). American education has been facing the brutal facts about education reform for many years; the public school environment has had to contend with various forms of inequality and inadequacy that were the impetus for alternative educational modes of providing instruction for the populace. Educational options have been a part of the American education system since its origin. Moreover, the purpose of the various options has varied throughout several generations. For example, during the time of slavery, slaves were legally not allowed to learn to read, write or learn arithmetic, but they found ways to educate themselves in spite of the laws established that prohibited the education of slaves (Anderson, 1988). Furthermore, after the emancipation of the slaves, many freed slaves began to start their own schools for the purpose of helping other freed slaves better their lives through education (Anderson, 1988). During the heated years of the Civil Rights Movement, separate but equal schools were legally considered unconstitutional, but the status of many minority state-run schools did not change. In response, minority community leaders decided to create an alternate school system outside of the public school realm. They called these schools Freedom Schools. This was a direct revolt against the traditional educational system of that day. These schools were developed as a community-school model and were run outside of the public

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education system in settings ranging from church basements to store fronts (Lange & Sletten, 2002). The Freedom School movement was comprised of groups of people who sought control of oppressive educational processes that they and their children had been subject to (Lange & Sletten, 2002). This movement was a catalyst that mobilized the practice of community control of education.

Another non-public school system emerged during this same period. Its founders identified themselves as opponents to the public educational system. The Free School Movement, as it was called, was based on individual achievement and fulfillment, instead of emphasizing community (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Proponents established these schools because they felt "mainstream public education was inhibiting and alienating too many students" and thought schools should be structured to allow students to freely explore their natural intellect and curiosity. These schools were intended to give children the freedom to learn and the freedom from restrictions (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Several characteristics fundamentally distinguished them from other schools.

- There was no required learning and no set discipline or controls imposed on students (natural consequences were assumed to prevail).
- The only moral value taught was that 'everyone has an equal right to self-determined fulfillment.'
- Evaluation did not consist of assessing progress toward learning goals, but of the 'learning environment in its ability to facilitate the investigations the students' desire and find rewarding' (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

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Self-fulfillment was the primary goal of these schools. Academic achievement was important, but secondary to individual happiness and valuable only insofar as it helped one achieve the primary goal (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Although these systems did not last long, they had a great impact on the public education system in particular. The initial transformation of the traditional educational setting started outside of the public education system, but the ideas proved to inspire public educators to develop alternatives within their school buildings. The alternatives of the 1960's were the foundation for the present-day forms of alternative education. Alternatives of that era were clear in promoting the paradigm that "a singular, inflexible system of education that alienated or excluded major sectors of the population would no longer be tolerated" (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Alternative education within the public school arena was initially inspired by private school efforts to establish improved educational systems. As a result, public school educators created *Open Schools*. Characteristics of these schools included: choice for parents, students, and teachers; autonomy in learning and pace; non-competitive evaluation; and a child-centered approach. Open Schools inspired a myriad of other options such as *Schools without Walls, Schools within Schools, Multicultural Schools, Continuation Schools, Learning Centers, Fundamental Schools, and Magnet Schools* (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Wikipedia, 2010).

The move for alternative education was birthed in the late 1960's and was initially a reaction to the perceived injustice and inequality within the traditional public school setting. As a result, these various alternatives were developed "to respond to a group that appeared not to be optimally served by the regular program, and, consequently have

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represented varying degrees of departure from standard school organization, programs and environments (Lange & Sletten, 2002). These early schools were fundamentally based on choice and students had the option to attend or not.

Alternative education is a term that has a broader meaning in our nation today. It covers all educational activities outside of the traditional k-12 school system. This includes home schools, special programs for gifted students, charter schools, etc. One form of alternative schools is designed for servicing disengaged students who cannot function in the traditional setting. Students are usually placed in these schools by public school administration to avoid suspensions and expulsions. There are many versions of alternative schools in our nation. As a result, it has been difficult to classify the various types.

Mary Anne Raywid developed a three part typology that is based on a program's goals. According to Raywid, "Type I schools offer full-time, multiyear, education options for students of all kinds, including students needing individualization, those seeking an innovative or challenging curriculum, or dropouts wishing to earn their diploma… Students choose to attend (Aron, 2006, p.4)." Type II schools focus on discipline and aim to segregate, contain, and reform disruptive students. Students do not typically choose to attend these schools, but are sent for specified periods of time or until behavior and academic requirements are met. Finally, Type III programs provide short-term but therapeutic settings for students with social and emotional problems that create barriers to learning.

The main purpose of type II alternative schools is to reform the behavior of youth who exhibit behavior that is disruptive. When they have met behavior and academic

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requirements, they are to return to their schools of origin. Regretfully, many of the students who attend type II alternative schools either do not get the opportunity to return to their school of origin, or they do return but their behavior becomes disruptive again. This is a problem because many of these students are at risk of dropping out of school. Type II alternative schools were created to modify disruptive behavior, and help students recover and gain academic credit so that they have an opportunity to graduate with a high school diploma.

Researchers have discovered ten main elements that will promote the work of effective alternative schools. However, there is limited research that reveals best practices for implementing a behavior modification program within a type II alternative school for youth who exhibit behavior that is disruptive. Research does not disclose the best way to build and increase teacher capacity for such an environment. Furthermore, it does not disclose how type II alternative school principals should implement their behavior modification programs. There is a need to discover how type II alternative schools implement their behavior modification programs in order to help their students transform in such a way that they are able to ultimately earn their high school diplomas.

Significance of Study

Research currently available would indicate that Type I schools seem to be the most successful of the three (Reimer & Cash, 2003; Aron, 2003). However, limited research has been done to effectively evaluate the success of Type II alternative schools. Researchers have identified several characteristics that should be in the framework of all alternative schools, but there is little empirical evidence to prove that those predictors have a strong relationship to student success within Type II alternative schools (personal

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communication, Cash, 2010). Some of the characteristics are common in traditional
school settings while others are specific to alternative schools. The National Dropout
Prevention Center at Clemson University developed an evaluation tool that helps
administrators of Type I alternative schools evaluate their programs. This tool is
significant because the effectiveness of alternative programs is directly related to funding
of the programs. It has not been easy to empirically assess the positive impact these
schools have had on students and communities. Mixed reports have been written about
community support of alternative schools. Some communities embrace the concept and
welcome the alternative option for youth who exhibit behavior that is disruptive; while
others reject the presence of such a school because of their lack of knowledge about the
program.

      Community support is one challenge for alternative school administrators, but an
even greater challenge is meeting the new accountability measures being demanded of
them. It has been difficult to measure student outcomes based on traditional indicators of
success in Type II alternative schools, such as, graduation rates, high stakes end of course
tests, and High School Assessment Program (HSAP) exam passing rate. The pressure to
demonstrate some type of success that is measurable by state standards is a new weight
on the shoulders of alternative school administrators. During the 1960's and 1970's, there
was a strong push against those types of accountability measures by administrators and
teachers because they felt true success was measured by the very act of offering
educational options to students who would otherwise be in the streets or committing
illegal acts in the community (Reimer &Cash, 2003).

Measuring true success of alternative programs is important because every state legislature has established policies that form the basis to provide funding for the development of alternative schools. The exponential increase of these schools is directly related to the increase of school related offenses that require students to be removed from the traditional educational setting; resulting in an increase in dropout risk factors (Lehr, C.A., Lanners, E.J., Lange, C.M., 2003). States have recognized this need for decades and have made provision for the creation of options for at-risk students. Yet, there has not been a consistent best practices tool that could guide administrators in effectively implementing behavior modification programs within Type II alternative schools.

There are many variations of alternative education. The variations make it difficult to measure all schools by the same standards. However, current research has identified several characteristics that are common in effective alternative schools. These characteristics are indicators of success for administrators striving to build an effective program or endeavoring to improve their current programs.

Type II Alternative school principals have a huge challenge of providing the appropriate education needed for their students. These students come with many complex problems that complicate their educational process. In addition, they are sent to these schools by their origin school administration and usually have a negative attitude toward the alternative school. It is imperative for principals to build programs that can help these students who exhibit at risk behaviors embrace the value of education, modify inappropriate behavior and become positively connected to school staff. Thus, principals need a best practices tool that can help them identify indicators of success and effectively implement their behavior modification programs. The tools will help guide administrators

in strategic planning as they forecast the future of professional development for their staff.

An effective best practices tool will also help principals assess staffing needs. Teachers and mentors are key components of all educational systems. However, it takes a special teacher with a gift and heart to work with at-risk students to be on staff at a type II alternative school (Reimer & Cash, 2003). The best practices tool can help clarify the need and guide the interviewing process for new staff members. This tool can also be used in a longitudinal evaluation process. Looking at a school in only one moment in time may not give an accurate representation of its effectiveness. Principals will do well to collect data over time to more accurately assess their programs (Reimer & Cash, 2003).

Training future teachers for the classroom is the goal of many universities in our nation. However, very few teacher training programs do a great job preparing teachers to enter into the classrooms of a type II alternative school. Also, education leadership programs usually do not train their administrators with the intent of leading a type II alternative school. Thus, teacher training programs and administrator training programs can benefit from the research base developed in this study. The information about effective type II alternative schools will be a good resource to help guide the training process.

This study provided informative data about the phenomenon of type II alternative school education and contributed to the research base about the practical implementation

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of the essential components for an effective behavior modification program within these schools.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to discover what two principals and their staffs considered to be the most effective components used in their behavior modification programs in two Type II alternative schools. Furthermore, this study explored the various ways the behavior modification strategies used by these alternative school educators were based on, or reflected, the current indicators of success identified by alternative school researchers. Reimer & Cash (2003) purported, that 10 essential elements comprised the current indicators of success. Those ten elements are: 1) student accountability measures, 2) administrative structure & policies, 3) curriculum & instruction, 4) faculty & staff, 5) facilities & grounds, 6) school leadership, 7) student support services, 8) learning community(staff, students, parents, & community), 9) program funding, and 10) school climate.

A comparative case study of two alternative schools in the Upstate of South Carolina composed this study. One school was located in an urban location in the Upstate, and served students from urban, suburban and rural areas. This school served multiple districts in the Upstate. Thus, its student population ranged from 70 to 300 students a semester. This alternative school program had a director over the entire alternative school program, one principal for the high school, and one principal for the middle school.

In contrast, the other alternative school was located in a rural town in the Upstate. Its location was not as visible to the community and there were not many street signs to help direct a person to the school as there was for the other school in this study. The other school was located next to an elementary school. This school was hidden off in a small low income neighborhood away from other schools in the district. The alternative school program shared a building with Head Start and a few other community agencies. The program was contained to one hallway in the building. There was a director over the school that also functioned as the principal of the high school and the middle school. Furthermore, the director, by choice, taught a class within the school. The student population was smaller here than at the other alternative school. The student population ranged from 20 to 70 students a semester.

Research Questions

The following primary research question helped to guide the study to discover what two leaders and their staffs considered to be the most effective components within the behavior modification programs in their Type II alternative schools:

What are the perspectives of two Upstate of South Carolina Type II alternative school principals and their staffs regarding the behavior modification program implemented in their schools and its effectiveness? The sub-questions were:

1. How do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs define effectiveness when assessing their school's behavior modification strategies?

2. What do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs consider to be the effective components of their school's behavior modification strategies?

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3. How do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs cultivate the effective behavioral components of their schools?

4. In what ways are those components identified in the literature as essential for a "successful" alternative school program reflected in the participants' articulations about their programs?

Methodology

A comparative case study was employed to explore the depths of the research question. According to Creswell (2009), case studies are a strategy of inquiry in which there is an in-depth exploration of a program, event, activity, process, or one or more individuals. Cases are bounded by time and activity, and detailed information is collected using a variety of procedures over a sustained period of time. A comparative case study involves collecting and analyzing data from several cases and may be distinguished from the single case study that may have subunits or subcases embedded within (such as students within a school). By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can strengthen the precision, the validity and the stability of the findings. (Miles & Huberman, 1994 as cited on Qualitative Case Study Research Method, n.d, para. 13)

I explored the practice of modifying inappropriate behavior in students who struggle with behavioral issues within two Type II alternative education programs. Data collected from these sites were analyzed to establish themes and patterns that informed me of the various ways these schools assessed the success of their behavior modification programs and the various ways they nurtured the essential components that produced effectiveness. The comparative case study method aligned with this research plan because

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it allowed me to gather data comprehensively about the organizational system of the schools, the relational culture of the schools, and the leadership impact on the students and the teachers of each school.

Delimitations

This was a comparative case study of only two Type II alternative school principals in the Upstate of South Carolina. These alternative schools served students in grades 6–12. Alternative school administrators were interviewed on their perceptions of their school effectiveness in relation to their behavior modification programs.

The research was limited to students who have been enrolled in Type II alternative schools for a minimum of one semester. Students in the 8th grade-12th grade were chosen as the sample group. Schools were limited to programs whose principal's tenure was a minimum of three years. The study was conducted during the 2012-2013 school year. Staff members interviewed ranged from core subject teachers, orientation teachers, Character Education teachers, Medicaid-based counselors, guidance counselors, and administrators.

Limitations

I assumed the principals would respond with their honest individual perception of how their behavior modification programs were implemented and expected each to disclose the essential components of their programs. Furthermore, their response was a factor that was out of the researcher's control.

In addition, I chose to follow-up with students during the second semester of the 2012-2013 school year to review transcriptions, but many of those students had either

returned to their origin school, stopped coming to school, were fully expelled because of criminal activity, or chose to transition to an online virtual school. Therefore, my efforts to get transcript feedback from all the alternative schools students were limited with some of those students.

Definitions

Alternative education--- Alternative education is a perspective, not a procedure or a program. It is based on the belief that there are many ways to become educated as well as many environments and structures within this may occur. Further, it recognizes that all people can be educated and that it is society's interest to ensure that all are educated at least something like an ideal, general high school education at the mastery level.... (Morley,1991).

Alternative School — public elementary or secondary school that addresses the needs of students that cannot typically be met in a traditional school (Obleton, 2010).

At-Risk Students — students who, due to one or multiple risk factors, face greater chances of becoming low achievers and/or dropouts (Obleton, 2010).

Behaviorally challenged student- From the educational perspective the most important point to consider is that whatever the form of behavior labelled "challenging" it is a type of behavior most unlikely to respond to the customary strategies used in the classroom and school. Behavior is challenging when our efforts as educators, assuming they are appropriate in the first instance, fail to reduce either its frequency or intensity. (Carey, n.d., para. 4)

Continuation Schools--- Provide an option for dropouts, potential dropouts, pregnant students and teenage parents. These are designed to provide a less competitive, more

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individualized approach to learning. Programs vary, but usually include individualized

learning plans that accommodate support services, personal responsibility for attendance

and progress, non-graded or continuous progress, and personal/social development

experiences (Morley, 1991).

Disengaged students--- At-risk students that demonstrate several risk factors that may
   lead to them dropping out of school such as:

- Has a learning disability or emotional disturbance
- High number of work hours
- Parenthood
- High-risk peer group
- High-risk social behavior
- Highly socially active outside of school
- Low achievement

- Early aggression
- Low socioeconomic status
- High family mobility
- Low education level of parents
- Large number of siblings
- Not living with both natural parents
- Family disruption
- Low educational expectations

- Retention/over-age for grade
- Poor attendance
- Low educational expectations
- Lack of effort
- Low commitment to school
- No extracurricular participation
- Misbehavior

- Sibling has dropped out
- Low family contact with school
- Lack of family conversations about school

(Hammond, Linton, Smink, & Drew, 2007, p. 41).

Fundamental Schools---- Provide a back-to-the basics curriculum and teacher-directed

instruction with strict discipline. Ability grouping is practiced, letter grades are given, a

dress code is usually established and homework is required (Morley, 1991).

Learning Centers---- Provide special resources and programs concentrated in one

location. Most centers at the secondary level are vocational or technical in nature and

include career awareness and preparation. Many contain special academic preparation for

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entry into occupations or vocational training and offer options such as study skills training (Morley, 1991).

Level One Analysis--- A basic look at an alternative school with regard to its resources, policies and practices. It is a self-evaluation process that can be used to take a wide-angle look at the effectiveness of the school (Reimer & Cash, 2003).

Magnet Schools--- Are public schools with specialized courses or curricula. "Magnet" refers to how the schools draw students from across the normal boundaries defined by authorities (usually school boards) as school zones that feed into certain schools (Wikipedia, 2010).

Multicultural Schools--- Designed to serve students from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds with curricula that emphasizes cultural pluralism. Course work in human relations and cultural practices and languages is common. Many of the schools serve a particular ethnic or racial group such as Black, Asian or Puerto Rican students (Morley, 1991).

Recidivism rate--- The act of a person repeating an undesirable behavior after they have either experienced negative consequences of that behavior, or have been treated or trained to extinguish that behavior (Wikipedia, 2010).

Schools within Schools---- An option developed primarily at the secondary level to reduce the size and numbers of large comprehensive high schools into more manageable and humane units (Morley, 1991).

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Schools without Walls---- Offer a program of community-based learning experiences and incorporate community resource people as instructors (Morley, 1991).

Separate but Equal schools--- Segregated school systems that established white schools and blacks schools. The black schools were by law supposed to receive equal funding, equal educational opportunities and facilities, but did not because the educational system and the proponents of it were unjust in the application of the law.

Summary

South Carolina, like many states, has experienced the increased need for Type II alternative schools that effectively educate and prepare students who exhibit at-risk behavior to be productive citizens. This increased need also makes a demand for increased funding. Thus, it is imperative that an efficient system for ensuring effective implementation of behavior modification programs in these alternative schools be established so that appropriate funding distributions will be utilized. Chapter II will further establish and expound on the current literature available concerning alternative education and alternative schools. Some emphasis will be given to the impact of principal leadership on student behavior. Behaviorist theory and behavior modification will be explored to discover the various systems in place that utilize this theory to modify inappropriate behaviors. Chapter three will explain and describe the methodology used in this particular study. Chapter four will present the results of the study and chapter five will summarize and discuss the results presented in chapter four.

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Chapter II

Literature Review

Alternative Schools in the American Education System

"Alternative education is a perspective, not a procedure or program. It is based upon the belief that there are many ways to become educated, as well as many types of environments and structures within which this may occur" (Reimer & Cash, 2003, p.4).

Public education in the United States is the foundation of learning for much of the diverse population in this nation. Educating our populace is considered key to developing productive citizens. However, the growing dropout rate, teen pregnancy, and increased school violence has made that job more challenging for public school officials. Thus, educators and policymakers have seen a need to create alternative pathways for students who are at- risk of not completing high school (Lehr, C.A., Lanners, E.J., Lange, C.M., 2003). As a result, various forms of alternative schools have developed across the nation to address this growing problem of educating students at- risk of academic failure. These students usually have a difficult time adjusting to the traditional school setting. Many times their living experience at home and in the community keeps them from taking advantage of the opportunities available in a traditional setting. Therefore, alternative schools may provide an environment that better fits students at risk of not completing high school and helps them transition into productive living. There are many forms of

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alternative schools in this nation. The purpose of this review is to examine available research on alternative schools: What are alternative schools and what role do they play in the American Education system? This review will sequentially examine six sub-questions related to alternative education:

1. What are alternative schools? How are alternative schools different from traditional schools?

2. How are alternative schools classified? Are these classifications widely accepted?

3. How have alternative schools evolved over time?

4. How do alternative schools determine effectiveness?

5. What impact does principal leadership in alternative schools have on student behavior?

6. How does behaviorist theory influence the process of behavior modification within alternative school settings?

The review is organized as follows. It begins with an explanation of possible reasons for the development of alternative schools. This will be followed by a discussion of the methodology for selecting and evaluating research. In addition, there will be a review of the literature in accordance with the six research questions mentioned above. Finally, the last section presents a summary, conclusions, and suggestions for future research.

In today's environment, structural change in organizations seems less and less driven by competition or by efficiency. Instead, Dimaggio & Powell (1983) contend that

organizational change occurs as the result of processes that make organizations more similar without necessarily making them more efficient. The Institutional Theory concept that best explains this process of homogenization is isomorphism. This is a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions (Dimaggio & Powell, 1983). Institutional isomorphism, a specific subset, explains more appropriately how traditional public education has become increasingly crystalized into a form of service that mostly meets the needs of students who are not considered at risk of completing high school. The crystallization process has been perceived as change and includes many educational reforms in public education. Yet, the changes have increasingly been isomorphic in nature and less effective in addressing the needs of disenfranchised students.

Institutional theorists have identified three general sources of isomorphic pressure: coercive pressures, mimetic pressures, and normative pressures (Marion, 2002, p.284). Marion calls these pressures the "engines of isomorphism" (Marion, 2002; Zucker, 1987). These pressures are the specific reasons why schools and many other organizations across a culture are structured and behave so much alike (Marion, 2002).

Coercive pressures are typically associated with the legal and political expectations of a state or nation (Marion, 2002). To bring clarity, one example of coercive pressure in the school system follows:

Public Law 94-142, which mandated equal access to public education by handicapped children in the United States, has a profound isomorphic impact on the way schools structure their programs for exceptional children. One could go to

just about any public school in the U.S. and find that structure and activities for exceptional children in that school are largely the same as those in any other school in the nation (Marion, 2002, p.284).

Mimicry pressure happens when organizations, school districts in particular, mimic programs that are successful in other districts. Dimaggio and Powell (1983) discovered that mimicry was most prevalent in organizations that deal with uncertainty. For instance, if a district has had challenges increasing standardized test scores, they may research and imitate other programs that have been successful in other districts (Marion, 2002, p.285).

Finally, normative pressure refers to a social culture within organizations that is taken for granted. Zucker (1983) made the statement that institutionalization is rooted in conformity. He called it the kind of conformity that is rooted in the taken-for-granted aspect of everyday life (Marion, 2002, p. 286). According to Zucker (1983), institutionalization operates to produce common understandings about what is appropriate and, fundamentally, meaningful behavior (Marion, 2002, p.286).

The three forms of isomorphism provide a guide to understanding how environmental pressures have helped the traditional public school setting become an environment that is less appropriate for effectively dealing with the varied lives of students at risk of not completing high school. The inflexibility of the traditional setting is influenced by many factors. The very structure of public schools is homogeneous across the nation and reflects the institutionalization that Zucker (1983) describes for normative isomorphism.

Institutional isomorphism manifested in the form of systemic racism during the early years of the American education system and was a probable reason for the development of the initial alternative schools. Alternative schools had their beginnings in the 1960's during the civil rights era of this nation (Lange & Sletten, 2002; Aron, 2006; Reimer & Cash, 2003). There was great inequality in this nation in relation to educating minorities. This was systemic throughout the nation. Thus, public school structure was highly influenced by unjust educational policies that pressured schools to establish organizations that treated minority students with less regard. These coercive policies were examples of the kinds of isomorphic pressure placed on educational agencies to act in discriminatory ways toward minority students. The inequality demonstrated toward minorities in public education was a crystalizing process of homogenization that affected the entire public education system. The result was a push to separate from the public school option and create private alternative school options (Lange & Sletten, 2002). A more comprehensive discussion of the evolution of alternative schools will occur later in the literature review section. For now, it was appropriate to show how isomorphism worked during the 1960's in public education and inspired educational reform through the development of alternative schools.

Isomorphism will not explain why there is not a clear typology for the various forms of alternative education programs in this nation. However, it may give insight into the coercive pressures that have helped to direct formation of these programs in each state. Thus, institutional theory provides the perfect explanation for understanding the development of alternative schools.

Methodology/Scope

My literature review included studies that centered on providing a comprehensive review of the literature on alternative education programs. The selections were based on the following criteria: (a) alternative school history, (b) classifications, (c) organizational structure, (d) alternative education program assessment, (e) impact of principal leadership within alternative schools, (f) influence of behaviorist theory on behavior modification.

To assess the historical strength of a study I determined if it provided insight into the original purpose of alternative schools and then followed a systemic documentation of their evolution. I restricted my studies to alternative programs developed only in the United States. This was done to provide readers with information that is directly relevant to my research questions. Furthermore, I only considered studies that were able to bring clarity about the various forms of alternative education programs. The studies needed to be able to show how alternative schools have been classified or provided information about the overall acceptance of the typologies.

In addition, I restricted my review to studies that provided examples of the various organizational structures for alternative education programs. These studies were assessed as appropriate if they provided information about the characteristics of an effective program and discussed why certain characteristics were important for alternative school programs.

Finally, I reviewed only those articles, books, and review studies that provided insight into the job of assessing alternative school programs, explained the impact of principals on the behavior of alternative school students, and provided pertinent

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information about the influence of behaviorist theory on the development and implementation of behavior modification programs. A study was included in this review if it provided quantitative or qualitative information about the various forms of alternative schools and the discipline programs.

I performed electronic database searches through the Thomas Cooper Library and searched Education Abstracts, Social Science Abstracts, ERIC, and JSTOR. I also used Google Scholar to locate articles which then helped me discover the journal the articles were in. I then used Thomas Cooper Library to access JSTOR to find the journal and the article.

Review of the Relevant Literature

What are alternative schools? How are alternative schools different from traditional schools?

Alternative schools have become a very popular form of educational delivery, but the program variations across the nation make it difficult to make generalizations concerning definition and application. (Lange & Sletten, 2002) However, the Common Core of data, the U.S. Department of Education's primary database on public elementary and secondary education attempted a definition of alternative schools. The following definition is their attempt to encapsulate a broad idea into a condensed framework. The Common Core of data defines an alternative school as "a public elementary/secondary school that addresses needs of students that typically cannot be met in a regular school, provides nontraditional education, serves as an adjunct to a regular school, or falls

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outside the categories of regular, special education or vocational education" (Aron, 2006, p.3).

Aron (2006) expands the description of alternative education to "cover all educational activities that fall outside the traditional K-12 school system (including home schooling, GED preparation programs, special programs for gifted children, charter schools, etc.)" (p.3). Alternative education is usually associated with educating "vulnerable youth who are no longer in traditional schools."(Aron, 2006, p.3) The literature suggests that present-day alternatives typically serve students who are at risk for school failure or are disenfranchised from the traditional school system. However, this is limited because there is not an accurate comprehensive national picture of alternative programs and the students who attend. (Lange &Sletten, 2002, pp.20-21)

The differences between alternative schools and traditional education programs are evident when you examine the types of students primarily serviced in alternative education programs. However, the differences are not limited to student characteristics. Contrasts are also observed in class size, academic program goals, and design features. To bring clarity, we will use a study done by the National Center in which they surveyed fifteen programs to learn about key aspects of their academic program. The academic component of the fifteen alternative programs varied by their academic goals(s) for their participants, as well as by the way they were structured to meet the needs of their target population (Ruzzi& Kraemer, 2006, p.8).

The academic goals for students included "getting a job or vocational credential, learning English well enough to work towards a credential, obtaining a GED, earning a high school diploma, gaining entry to college, and earning college credit. Some of the

programs had multiple goals for their students" (Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006, p.8-9). Several of the programs offered vocational training or job placement assistance alongside the academic programs (Ruzzi & Kraemer, 2006, p.9).

Table 2.1 gives insight into the learning environment in the high school programs surveyed in the study. The class sizes are relatively small in comparison to traditional high school class sizes. However, some of the learning strategies are similar to what currently happens in traditional settings. Yet, there are differences as noted by classes that are competency-based instead of seat-time based, which is commonly seen in traditional educational settings. There are also computer-based classroom settings where the teacher is more of a support for the students as they complete learning lab tutorials. Other differences include divergence from standard school organization and practices. Teachers have more flexibility and autonomy. These reforms help alternative schools break the homogenization process that happens within many traditional educational settings.

How are alternative schools classified? Are these classifications widely accepted?

According to Lange and Sletton (2002), it is difficult to provide a comprehensive listing of the types of alternatives schools. For many of the same reasons that static, all-inclusive definitions of alternatives are difficult to supply, a single comprehensive listing of the types of alternative schools is not easily obtained. The constant evolving nature of alternative programs and the rules that govern them have made them something of a moving target and difficult to describe. With estimates of over 20,000 alternatives

Table 2.1 High School Programs' Learning Environment within Alternative Schools

Program	Teaching Methods Used	Average Class Size
Open Meadow High School (Portland, OR)	Variety including project-based, portfolio	12 students
Educational Options Form(Philadelphia, PA)	Mostly lecture but time for one-on-one	15 students
SIATech Charter School (various sites)	Computer-assisted instruction with teacher support via learning labs	20 students
Johanna Boss High School (Stockton, CA)	Mostly lecture but also cooperative learning groups and one-on-one assistance	12 students
Jefferson County High School (Louisville, KY)	75% individualized competency-based 15% computer-based 10% literacy and math labs	25 students (2 teachers per class)
Griggs On-Line Diploma Program (various Job Corps sites around the country)	Computer-based	Varies by center
Biotech Career Academy (San Jose, CA)	Lecture plus projects relating to theme	32 students
Champion Charter School (Brockton, MA)	Contextual learning, portfolio development, projects, internship, college coursework	15 students
Gateway to College (Portland, OR)	Mix: lecture, small group, project-based, etc.	20-25 students

(Ruzzi& Kraemer, 2006, p.19)

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currently operating within the public education system, it is difficult to provide a succinct description that would apply across the country (Lange &Sletten, 2002, p.6).

However, efforts have been made by researchers such as Mary Raywid and Melissa Roderick to develop some broad based typology that will help with classifying alternative schools. Researchers have discussed using many dimensions of interest in order to create a framework for developing typologies (Aron, 2006, p.3). The ideas ranged from focusing on target population, the program's purpose and focus, the physical setting relative to regular schools or other institutions such as residential treatment or juvenile justice facilities, the educational focus or credential offered (Aron, 2006, p.3).

Raywid was one of the first to attempt to develop a comprehensive typology. Her original typology was divided into three categories. She called the options Type I, II, and III alternative schools. "Type I schools offer full-time, multiyear, education options for students of all kinds, including students needing individualization, those seeking an innovative or challenging curriculum, or dropouts wishing to earn their diploma… Students choose to attend" (Aron, 2006, p.4). Type II schools focus on discipline and aim to segregate, contain, and reform disruptive students. Students do not typically choose to attend these schools, but are sent for specified periods of time or until behavior and academic requirements are met. Finally, Type III programs provide short-term but therapeutic settings for students with social and emotional problems that create barriers to learning (Aron, 2006, p.4).

Raywid's original program types are less distinctive today because alternative programs continue to mix strategies or the programs have multiple objectives (Aron, 2006, p. 5). This trend inspired Raywid to create a derivative of her original three-level

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classification. The second typology combines Types II and III into a single group whose focus is on changing the student. There is a second grouping of types that is focused on changing the school and "her newly defined third group is focused on changing the educational system" (Aron, 2006, p.5).

Roderick proposed another typology that puts students' educational needs as the primary framework for classification. "Rather than focusing on a student's demographic characteristic (or 'risk factor') or even a program characteristic, this typology focuses on the educational problems or challenges students present (Aron, 2006, p.5).

Raywid's original classification is the more accepted typology within the literature on alternative school classifications. Her classification is frequently referenced when researchers attempt to develop a greater understanding of the various alternative education programs in the nation. Raywid and Roderick have provided a valuable framework for understanding alternatives. Yet, a definitive survey of alternatives as they currently exist and operate across the nation is still needed. Until this happens, researchers will continue to struggle to comprehensively define and classify alternative school programs.

How have alternative schools evolved over time?

Alternative education is not a new idea to the American public education system. Alternative forms of teaching and learning have always been available. However, the modern form of alternative education got its initial birth in the late 1950's and early 1960's during the civil rights movement. During the heated years of the Civil Rights Movement, Separate but Equal schools were legally considered unconstitutional, but the status of many minority state-run schools did not change. In response, minority

community leaders decided to create an alternate school system outside of the public school realm. They called these schools Freedom Schools. This was a direct revolt against the traditional educational system of that day. These schools were developed as a community-school model and were run outside of the public education system in settings ranging from church basements to store fronts (Lange &Sletten, 2002). The Freedom School movement was comprised of groups of people who sought control of oppressive educational processes that they and their children had been subject to (Lange & Sletten, 2002). This movement was a catalyst that mobilized the practice of community control of education.

Another non-public school system emerged during this same period. Its founders identified themselves as opponents to the public educational system. The Free School Movement, as it was called, was based on individual achievement and fulfillment, instead of emphasizing community (Lange & Sletten, 2002). Proponents established these schools because they felt "mainstream public education was inhibiting and alienating too many students" and thought schools should be structured to allow students to freely explore their natural intellect and curiosity. These schools were intended to give children the freedom to learn and the freedom from restrictions (Lange & Sletten, 2002).

Although these systems did not last long, they had a great impact on the public education system in particular. The initial transformation of the traditional educational setting started outside of the public education system, but the ideas proved to inspire public educators to develop alternatives within their school buildings. Moreover, educators within public school developed *Open Schools*. "These schools were characterized by parent, student and teacher choice; autonomy in learning and pace; non-

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competitive evaluation; and a child-centered approach" (Lange & Sletten, 2002, p 4).The alternatives of the 1960's were the foundation for the present-day alternative movement.

Within their first decade of existence, public alternatives increased from ''100 to more than 10,000'' (Lange & Sletten, 2002, p 5). The original private school alternatives inspired the creation of public school alternatives in the following: (Young, 1990):

- **Schools without Walls**- emphasized community-based learning; individuals within the community were brought in to teach students.
- **Schools within a school**- intended to make large high schools into communities of belonging.
- **Multicultural Schools**-designed to integrate culture and ethnicity into the curriculum.
- **Learning Centers**- intended to meet particular student needs by including special resources, such as vocational education, in the school setting.
- **Fundamental Schools**- emphasized a back to basics approach in reaction to the lack of academic rigor perceived in the Free Schools.
- **Magnet Schools**- developed in response to the need for racial integration; offered a curriculum that emphasized themes meant to attract diverse groups of students from a range of racial and cultural backgrounds (Lange &Sletten, 2002, p 5).

Alternative schools evolved after their initial introduction to the educational environment to provide an academic option for students not successful in regular education programs (Raywid, 1994). The failure of students in traditional settings was significant enough to warrant a systemic response to the growing trend of non-successful students. This is evident by recent safe-schools legislation and the commitment to provide orderly, safe, learning environments (Wilson, 2011, p.35). As a result, states have established alternative programs for disciplinary purposes.

Raywid (1994) suggested that the initial alternative schools addressed the one-size-fit all educational system by tailoring their curriculum to better fit the needs of some students. According to Wilson (2011), student outcomes were improved through

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individualized instruction, personal attention, and a modified or innovative curriculum. Furthermore, much of the current alternative school legislation within states addresses student behavior. It aims to modify student behavior so that students better fit the system. Wilson (2011) explains that although both approaches share the ultimate goal of improving student outcomes, a fix-the-student focus carries educational, financial, and legal risks and does not address weaknesses in the larger system.

The literature suggests that the shift from systemic change in the 1960's to a focus on the student changing in our present day educational environment is a result of bureaucratic influences on the educational system (Raywid 1994). Those types of influences make it extremely difficult to make changes to an organization that has an established way of responding to student needs and student disciplinary infractions. Such, crystallizations were made even more evident several decades ago when the Annie Casey Foundation launched a project intended to enhance the life chances of at-risk youth. Raywid (1994) described the innovation as a large scale initiative that involved several high schools in four cities. Moreover, the project was funded with 40 million dollars with an explicit goal of transformative change, both in instruction and in school organization, and many of the specifics they recommended were fairly standard alternative school arrangements.

Many of the positive features of alternative schools were adopted by these participating schools. Yet, after three years, an evaluation team could find no evidence that restructuring had begun or was even "on the horizon" (Wehlage, Smith, and Lipman as cited in Raywid 1994). The team discovered that the features had been adopted as add-ons or supplements to an existing system instead of as replacements to the schools'

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current programs. Thus, the results of this innovation reinforced the reality of the powerful influence of bureaucracy within the traditional educational setting.

The resistance to change experienced in the 1960's educational environment was a staunch push back against educational equality for minority students. Thus, many minority leaders established their own private alternative schools to educate their community children. Those schools would be equivalent to Raywid's Type I alternative schools. They were developed to provide a different setting and culture that nurtured the hearts and minds of the students within them. However, the resistance to change in the current educational environment is more geared toward a demographic of students that are considered at risk of not graduating from high school. These students are at risk not primarily because of their ethic group, but because of their life experience. Most of their experience in school can best be characterized as failure. They are viewed by educators in traditional settings as the disruptive children; those who do not have any interest in school and just come because they are required. Thus, the view among most traditional educators is that those students need to change, and they need to change in a different educational setting (Raywid, 1994).

Resultantly, Type II Alternative education has increased in this nation to address the growing issue with youth who exhibit behavior that is disruptive within public schools. Raywid (1994) describes Type II alternatives as schools that focus on discipline and aim to segregate, contain, and reform disruptive students. Students do not typically choose to attend these schools, but are sent for specified periods of time or until behavior and academic requirements are met. The alternative setting is in right alignment with the traditional setting's philosophy about the student changing. However, some alternative

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schools have taken the challenge of educating these students far beyond the focus of the student changing. The administration and staff of effective alternative schools are clearly aware that the organizational structure, human interaction, and symbolic meaning of the school must be of a nature that cultivates positive impacts on the lives of this demographic of students.

How do alternative schools determine effectiveness?

Making positive impacts on the lives of students should always be the goal of any effective school system. Assessment of student achievement and outcomes is a highlighted line of demarcation for effectiveness in the current educational environment. However, there has been some controversy over measuring success within the various types of alternative schools. Some of the controversy is directly related to school funding. Legislators must determine how to apportion funds to all schools in their state. Furthermore, their challenge is to make certain to fund fairly traditional and alternative education venues. Those decisions become more challenging when funds become directly connected to outcomes on high-stakes testing. There is much uproar within the traditional setting primarily because there is a sense of injustice among public school officials primarily in reference to high-stakes testing. The various alternative schools have not been held to the same level of accountability; resulting in skewed views of the actual performance of alternative schools in comparison to traditional public schools.

So, the question must be asked. How do Alternative schools assess their effectiveness? The National Dropout Prevention Center (NDPC) developed an alternative school evaluation instrument in 2003 entitled Essential Elements of Effective Alternative Schools. The instrument has ten major categories and over 200 indicators of effective

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practice. The instrument is based on a meta-analysis of the extant literature on alternative school evaluation and effectiveness. Each of the ten categories was derived from the literature which provided a foundation for determining best practice indicators. Reimer and Cash (2003) provide a great listing and description of those ten indicators. Following is a listing of the ten categories with a brief description as outlined in Reimer and Cash (2003).

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Indicators of Effectiveness

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Accountability Measures

Just as regular schools are being held more accountable for quantitative performance indicators such as test scores, dropout rates, and attendance rates, so are alternative schools. This category reports school success compared to specific benchmarks, from traditional data sets such as academic achievement on standardized tests, student and teacher attendance rates, suspensions, and expulsions, as well as program completion rates and student recidivism rates. It should be noted that because many alternative school students have a myriad of social problems, some would advocate that data be gathered regarding affective and health-related issues such as substance abuse, depression, suicide attempts, teen pregnancy, etc. (Kellmayer, 1995 as cited in Reimer and Cash, 2003). However, these are areas that schools have little or no control over; therefore, they should not be held accountable regarding their intervention success or failure.

Administrative Structure and Policies

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Indicators that look closely at the mission statement, objectives, and purpose of the school, along with the development and enforcement of written policies, are aimed at determining the effectiveness of the administrative support structure and how stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process. Written policies pertaining to discipline, attendance, and admission and exit procedures need to be examined for fairness and equity as well as alignment with the program philosophy and goals.

Curriculum and Instruction

An effective alternative school is built upon a strong academic program that is creative and flexible. Teachers are perceived as caring while providing rigor and high expectations regarding academic performance. Each student has an individualized education plan that includes behavior objectives as well as academic objectives. This plan should not be confused with an I.E.P. for special education students mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Academic and career education components are integrated and contextualized to provide students with a range of problem-solving and employability skills. The coursework is primarily hands-on, meaningful, and engaging to students. Class size is limited to approximately ten students per teacher, and the teacher has an assigned teaching assistant 50% of the day who works directly with students. Computers and appropriate software are readily available in each classroom, and teachers consistently integrate technology into the curriculum. The teaching and

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learning atmosphere is positive, where teachers are perceived as caring, and the classrooms are places where students feel confident and safe enough to learn. An organized structured mentoring program is in place that engages students one-on-one with a mentor at least one hour per week. Alternative methods of assessment are used to accommodate the differing learning styles of students and to provide rewards and incentives for academic excellence. There are educational options for students that include extracurricular activities, enrichment activities through service-learning, opportunities for accelerated learning, and work experience/career training opportunities. Distance learning is employed to provide relevant coursework for students needing courses outside the capacity of the school to provide on-site.

Faculty and Staff

In an alternative school setting, recruiting and selecting the right staff cannot be emphasized too strongly. Staff members with relevant experience and competencies, as well as deep commitment to work with students at risk, are vital to the success of the program. Teachers should be properly certified for the area(s) they teach, but it should be kept in mind that teachers can often overcome any academic handicaps by exhibiting a deep level of caring and concern for their students. Ongoing professional development is critical, and each teacher should have an individualized professional development plan. Sufficient funds for staff members to regularly attend and make presentations at conferences and workshops should be included in the budget.

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Facilities and Grounds

Alternative schools should have inviting, clean, and well-maintained facilities. They are often hampered in their quest to develop and maintain effectiveness by their location, their physical attributes, and their capacity to provide programs that meet the needs of their students. Every effort should be made to centrally locate the school within the school district in a safe environment, to build or secure a building that is attractive and inviting, to equip it with appropriate technology and equipment so that it is adequate for the services to be provided. Administrators should ensure that it meets local/state fire hazard codes. Finally, research has provided strong evidence to support the fact that school size should be limited to no more than 250 students (Morley, 2002; Public Schools of North Carolina, 2000; Schargel & Smink, 2001 as cited in Reimer and Cash, 2003).

School Leadership

Characteristics of successful school leaders include being a good manager of personnel and resources, reacting well in times of crises, being an effective and knowledgeable instructional leader, and possessing strong "political leadership" skills. In other words, he/she must be able to articulate a vision for the school and have the capacity to move the agenda forward through a myriad of obstacles that may include interference from within. This may be an area that sets alternative school leaders apart from their counterparts in "regular" schools. An effective alternative school leader has to be able to fight the "second-class citizen" syndrome to ensure the school is viewed as an important component of the

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district's mission to serve all children, and more importantly, to secure the resources needed to fulfill the mission of his/her school.

Student Support Services

Alternative schools typically suffer from innumerable social, emotional, family-related, and economic factors that are closely associated with their poor academic performance and antisocial behavior. These issues are the primary causes of poor academic performance and students dropping out of school. Effective alternative schools have a broad range of student support services that address citizenship, behavior, and social/health issues. Guidance and counseling are integral components of the curriculum and include effective parenting and child-care components as well as serving as a clearinghouse for family support services.

Learning Community

Performance indicators under this category are designed to assess the overall learning community support that includes family involvement, community involvement, student government, and communication issues between school and parents, school and community, administration and staff, and school students. Family and community involvement are fundamental to the success of any school, but even more so for alternative schools… Assessing strengths and weaknesses in this area will help to inform and guide the goals and objectives of the school. This assessment can foster closer ties with families and indicate the need to develop strategies to garner community support and resources.

Program Funding

Without an adequate budget to support program goals and objectives, the alternative school program is doomed to wither into obscurity and provide little or no impact on addressing the needs of those most at risk of school failure… Alternative schools cost more to operate, but …there is considerable evidence that alternative schools and programs, when funded sufficiently and organized effectively, can significantly improve students' academic achievement and behavior in school (Cash, 2001; Vandergrift,1992 as cited in Reimer and Cash, 2003). In 1997, the National Dropout Prevention Center surveyed alternative school leaders from across the nation (Duttweiler & Smink, 1997 as cited in Reimer & Cash, 2003). These leaders reported that a secure and stable source of funding was the greatest need in initiating/maintaining effective alternative schools. Indicators of effectiveness include the adequacy of the budget to fully administer the following: the instructional program; an effective discipline program; a comprehensive staff development program; the development and maintenance of technology; a comprehensive student support services program; student incentives; comprehensive student assessment in several domains; and a comprehensive annual evaluation, preferably by a third party.

School Climate

The intangible feeling of the school should be assessed for its performance regarding positive relationships between students and teachers; the safety of the environment; the degree of caring and concern on the degree of equity in terms of

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learning, and the degree to which staff, students, and parents are treated with respect and dignity.

Impact of Principal Leadership

The positive impact of school principals on student academic achievement has been the focus of many research studies. Marzano, Waters, and McNuity (2005) identified 21 categories of behaviors that they considered leadership responsibilities for positive results in relation to student achievement. Findings from this study and many like it reveal that leadership can impact student outcomes (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008; Barnett and McCormick, 2004). Furthermore, it is known that school leadership behavior can influence teacher practice and teacher expectations. Teacher practices and expectations have a direct influence on student behavior and outcomes. Thus, it is imperative to identify and understand the environmental factors that impact student behavior.

The environment of any school has a unique culture within its walls. Principals must have an accurate discernment of what is actually happening within their classrooms in relation to teacher interaction with students. Their expectations for their staff will directly impact the behavior of teachers which in turn impacts students.

Khalifa (2011) performed an ethnographic study in an alternative school for at-risk Black students. The purpose of his research was to determine why some teachers seemed to acquiesce, or make deals and 'give in' to student disengagement. After a two year study, he discovered that the White teachers within that school were more likely than the Black teachers to engage in deal-making with students. The result of the deal-making meant that Black students were allowed to academically and socially disengage.

However, a more insightful finding was the leadership posture of the principal of this school. This principal challenged the overt practices of the teachers by encouraging them to overcome their fear of engaging their Black students. Marzano et al. (2005) would describe that principal as a change agent because he challenged his White staff members to stop practicing a racially charged method of pedagogy, and to begin the process of engaging the Black students socially and academically. This principal was armed with a vision to combat racism and advocate for children, even the more challenging students within this alternative school.

It is clear from the research that the responsibilities of a building level principal, whether in a traditional setting or an alternative school setting, are comprehensive and at times complex. Marzano et al. (2005) discovered that 21 responsibilities characterize the job of an effective school leader. It is evident that this position requires a specialized set of skills. Moreover, these researchers were quick to emphasize an important reality about school leaders in general. Although, their conclusions to their meta-analysis identified 21 responsibilities, they acknowledged the fact that it would be "rare, indeed, to find a single individual who has the capacity or will to master such a complex array of skills. Their solution to this problem was for the principal to develop a strong leadership team which shifts the focus from a single individual embodying all 21 responsibilities to a team of people that can fulfill each responsibility.

This research team did note that in order for a principal to develop the kind of team necessary to fulfill the 21 responsibilities, he/she must craft the school into a "purposeful community". They defined purposeful community as "one with the collective efficacy and capability to develop and use assets to accomplish goals that matter to all

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community members through agreed-upon processes" (Marzano et al., 2005, p.99).

Alternative school principals are no different in their need to create an environment where the collective efficacy is such that all staff members believe they can make a difference in the lives of the at-risk students they serve. According to Marzano et al. (2005), it is necessary for a principal to have as a foundation to their personal leadership style nine of the 21 responsibilities. The nine responsibilities are as follows:

- Optimizer-Inspires and leads new and challenging innovations.

- Affirmation- Recognizes and celebrates accomplishments and acknowledges failures.

- Ideals/Beliefs- Communicates and operates from strong ideals and beliefs about schooling.

- Visibility- Has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students.

- Situational Awareness-Is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems.

- Relationships- Demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff.

- Communication-Establishes strong lines of communication with and among teachers and students.

- Culture- Fosters shared beliefs and a sense of community and cooperation.

- Input-Involves teachers in the design and implementation of important decisions and policies.

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Kelehear (2006) speaks of the struggle to "assign a single, fixed set of characteristics to leadership" (p.9). His approach to understanding leadership in the various career fields is to understand it from within "a constellation of attributes" (p.9). The previous responsibilities identified by Marzano et al. would be classified as attributes within the leadership constellation. Kelehear is clear to point out the abstract nature of leadership, but emphasizes the fact that certain concrete actions made by leaders are symptoms of leadership. However, they do not constitute leadership itself.

Kelehear (2006) embraces the idea of leadership as a concept. As a concept, leadership can be developed and understood by criterial attributes or non-criterial attributes. Criterial attributes are the essential properties that define a concept (Kelehear, 2006).Non-criterial attributes may be present at times to define a concept, but not always. He uses the example of the concept of a school. Within a school, you expect teaching and learning to occur. This attribute is essential to defining a school. However, the attribute that a school is in a certain type of building is non-criterial because schools can be virtual in nature (Kelehear, 2006). This fact reveals that this attribute is not always true about schools. Thus, this view of leadership as a concept opens the door to viewing leadership attributes as criterial or non-criterial.

Many of the various writers on leadership have all developed essential properties that they feel are criterial attributes that make effective leaders. Kelehear (2006) calls this the "constellation of attributes" (p.9). It has been noted earlier that Marzano et al. discovered 21 responsibilities that are essential for principals to have a positive impact on teachers and students. It is important to view what other researchers have discovered as essential attributes to being effective leaders. Some of the writers have done their

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research in other fields other than education. Yet, the results of their findings are applicable to principals in education.

Stephen M.R. Covey (2006) conveys the significance of building trust as a leader in *The Speed of Trust.* He listed five forms of trust a leader should cultivate as they seek to have a positive impact in the lives of their constituents. The five waves of trust are:

1. Self-Trust

2. Relationship Trust

3. Organizational Trust- The principle of alignment

4. Market Trust- The principle of reputation

5. Societal Trust- The principle of contribution

Jim Collins (2005) identifies a Level 5 leader among corporate executives as one who "builds enduring greatness through a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will" (p.20). According to Collins, these leaders are more focused on building a great company than building their egos. Their ambition is "first and foremost for the institution, not themselves" (p.21).

Creating a research base of 60,000 leaders and constituents, Kouzes and Posner (2002) studied people at all organizational levels. Their project encompassed both public and private organizations around the world. Their book *The leadership Challenge: How to Keep Getting Extraordinary Things Done in Organizations* (2nd edition) revealed five common practices for successful leaders:

1. Challenging the Process: Search for Opportunities, Experiment and Take Risks

2. Inspiring a Shared Vision: Envision the Future, Enlist Others

3. Enabling Others to Act: Foster Collaboration, Strengthen Others

4. Modeling the Way: Set the Example, Achieve Small Wins

5. Encouraging the Heart: Recognize Contributions, Celebrate Accomplishments

Bolman and Deal (2008), made a healthy attempt to provide managers and leaders with a new way of viewing challenges. Their work focused on helping leaders to view their organizations from four different lenses or frames. The frames are:

1. The Structural Frame: Getting organized, Structure and Restructuring, organizing groups and teams

2. The Human Resource Frame: People and organizations, Improving Human Resource Management, Interpersonal and group dynamics

3. The Political Frame: Power, Conflict, and Coalition, The manager as politician, Organizations as Political Arenas and Political Agents

4. The Symbolic Frame: Organizational Symbols and Culture, Culture in Action, Organization as Theater

In their work as researchers, they wanted to help managers understand why they had limited their effectiveness. According to Bolman and Deal (2008), the most effective leaders are the ones who have learned to master the Political Frame and the Symbolic Frame. Most managers are strong in the Structural Frame and the Human Resource Frame. Thus, they are many times frozen and not very effective if they do not know how to navigate the political waters of their organizations.

Another significant leadership researcher was Stephen R. Covey. His work in the *7 Habits of Highly Effective People* (1989) has been utilized as an effective leadership training tool across many professional arenas. His work has certainly made a significant impact on public education and continues to do so. He divided his leadership core value

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into two groups. The first set of attributes had a private dimension to it and focused on the individual and encouraged self-efficacy and betterment. The second group had a public focus. The leader is encouraged to develop healthy relationships with others around them. The following is a list of the leadership attributes/principles.

Private Focus

1. Be Proactive: Principles of personal vision

2. Begin with the end in mind: Principles of personal leadership

3. Put first things first: Principles of Personal management.

Public Focus

1. Think win/win: Principles of interpersonal leadership

2. Seek first to understand … then to be understood: Principles of empathetic communication

3. Synergize: Principles of creative cooperation

4. Sharpen the Saw: Principles of balanced renewal.

Behaviorism's Influence on the process of Behavior Modification in Schools

Alternative schools for youth who exhibit behavior that is disruptive have a primary purpose. They are designed primarily to receive youth who have committed offenses worthy of expulsion within the traditional educational setting (Reimer & Cash 2003; Raywid, 1994). These schools are then charged to modify disruptive student behavior to a degree so that the youths are able to return to their schools of origin. Thus, the schools engage heavily in behavior modification. Behaviorist theory has a huge influence on the practices of traditional and alternative school representatives. Positive

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behavior strategies tend to be rooted in the positive reinforcement processes of Behaviorism (Solomon, Klein, Hintze, Cressey, &Peller, 2012;Wright, 2012).

This section of the paper will define and describe behaviorism in order to better understand behaviorist theory's influence on the behavior modification strategies of schools. School-Wide Positive Behavior Intervention Support programs will also be examined to help situate behaviorist theory's relevance within current educational discipline strategies and procedures.

Cherry (2013) gives an accurate, concise definition and description of behaviorism.

The term behaviorism refers to the school of psychology founded by John B. Watson based on the belief that behaviors can be measured, trained, and changed… Behaviorism, also known as behavioral psychology, is a theory of learning based upon the idea that all behaviors are acquired through conditioning. Conditioning occurs through interaction with the environment. Behaviorists believe that our responses to environmental stimuli shapes our behaviors" (What is Behaviorism, para. 1, 2).

Behaviorists also place more credence on observable behaviors. They were less interested in studying internal or invisible aspects of the soul, such as emotions, cognition or moods because they considered those states to be too subjective. The term conditioning means learning (Huitt, & Hummel, 2006). Behaviorists studied basically two major types of conditioning. The description of the two types will help situate the behavior strategies within schools inside of behaviorist theory. The following

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descriptions are taken from Cherry (2013) and Huitt & Hummel (2006).There are two major types of conditioning:

Classical conditioning- is a technique used in behavioral training in which a naturally occurring stimulus is paired with a response. Next, a previously neutral stimulus is paired with the naturally occurring stimulus. Eventually, the previously neutral stimulus comes to evoke the response without the presence of the naturally occurring stimulus. The two elements are then known as the conditioned stimulus and the conditioned response.

Operant conditioning- Operant conditioning (sometimes referred to as instrumental conditioning) is a method of learning that occurs through rewards and punishments for behavior. Through operant conditioning, an association is made between a behavior and a consequence for that behavior.

A careful study of the discipline policies of traditional schools and alternative schools will reveal the influence of behaviorism. Most discipline policies are designed to correct inappropriate behavior by exacting some form of punitive action on the agent that commits the unwanted behavior. Thus, the foundation of most discipline policies is grounded in operant conditioning. Traditionally, educators have emphasized the punishment portion of operant conditioning with a clear desire to modify undesired behavior. However, researchers have noted that the emphasis on negative behavior without a corresponding emphasis on praise of good behavior tends to inhibit the correction of inappropriate behavior (Solomon, Klein, Hintze, Cressey, &Peller, 2012).

The concern to create violence-free school environments has heightened over the last three decades as we have seen an escalation of violent behaviors within schools (Chitiyo, May, &Chitiyo, 2012). The White house increased the nation's awareness of this need by issuing a 1998 mandate to create safe schools (Chitiyo et al., 2012). Unfortunately, most schools in this nation have used negative reinforcement principles from behaviorist theory to correct inappropriate or violent behaviors. According to

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Chitiyo et al. (2012), the traditional punitive and reactive practices of suspensions or expulsions have not been effective nationally to correct the problem. Thus, researchers were prompted to discover alternative ways to handle dangerous behavior in schools (Chitiyo et al., 2012).

The result of this search has been the use of school-wide positive behavior supports (SWPBS). SWPBS is a systems approach that derives from the principles of applied behavior analysis and behaviorist theory (Chitiyo et al. 2012;Reinke, 2012; Simonsen, Eber, Black, Sugai, Lewandowski, Sims, & Myers, 2012; Solomon et al., 2012). According to Chitiyo et al. (2012), the approach aims to establish a safe school environment and a positive school culture that supports positive behavioral and academic outcomes for all students (pp. 1-2).The use of SWPBS as a viable approach to address disruptive behavior gives significant relevance to behaviorist theory's influence on behavior modification within public schools.

Positive Behavior Supports (PBS) for individuals with disabilities was the initial intervention that created an environment for SWPBS to be developed as a comprehensive and preventive system approach for disruptive behavior for all students (Solomon et al., 2012). The stage was set in the late 1980's when federal funding was allocated for research and development to pursue a "technology of non-aversive behavioral support" (Solomon et al., 2012, p.106). This term was later coined "positive behavior supports". Moreover, Solomon et al. (2012) noted that the principles of applied behavior analysis were used as a foundation for developing PBS (p.106). PBS focused on operant conditioning. Furthermore, its focus was on positive reinforcement to support a student's performance of socially desirable target behaviors (Solomon et al., 2012). PBS attempts

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to sift out all behavior modification that focuses on aversive and exclusionary discipline strategies that have no focus on increasing the frequency of positive behavior (Solomon et al, 2012).

The success of PBS with individuals with disabilities caught the attention of policy makers. As a result, the 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) included new language requiring the use of positive behavioral intervention strategies and supports for any child in special education with emotional and behavioral problems (Solomon et al., 2012). Although PBS initially was for individuals in special education, over time its impact reached into regular education classrooms with the development of SWPBS. SWPBS had its initial developments in the late 1980's and early 1990's. Furthermore, over 14,000 schools in the United States have established systems for behavior modification using the SWPBS approach (Chitiyo et al., 2012; Solomon et al., 2012).

PBS and SWPBS are similar in that they both have a theoretical foundation in behaviorist theory. SWPBS is a developing model of prevention and intervention that continues to be refined through research (Solomon et al., 2012). Improving the implementation of evidence-based practices related to behavior and classroom management and school discipline systems is the primary design of SWPBS (Solomon et al. 2012). There are five common core components that help to distinguish SWPBS from PBS. Behavioral theory and applied behavioral analysis were the first and earliest influences on SWPBS (Solomon et al, 2012). Implementers of SWPBS are encouraged to use positive reinforcement and functional behavioral assessments to modify disruptive behavior and nurture socially approved behavior. Secondly, this is a system that focuses

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on prevention which is different from PBS. Third, practitioners are encouraged to connect their approach to instruction. Therefore, an instructional focus permeates the interventions and behavioral teaching practices that comprise SWPBS (Solomon et al., 2012). Fourth, SWPBS is an approach that focuses on being generalizable across the nation. Thus, practitioners draw from evidence-based behavioral practices to increase the likelihood of interventions being effective and generalizable (Solomon et al., 2012). Last, SWPBS is distinguished by its systems approach to dealing with behaviors. The approach makes use of existing school resources and structures to infuse the culture and practices of the school system with the SWPBS approach (Solomon et al., 2012).

Behaviorism has an intricate role in the process of behavior modification within the public education system. Its influence on current practices has evolved over time and continues to expand as researchers seek more effective ways to apply the principles of behaviorist theory. The extant research is clear that a systems approach to addressing behavior tends to be more effective than each educator developing their own way of doing things. There seems to be a thread of consistency which helps to reinforce the general discipline policy in a corporate manner instead of primarily on an individual basis.

Summary/Conclusions

The term alternative education has evolved over time, but its elusive definition does not negate its influence in public education. Alternative schools for students that exhibit at-risk behaviors have become highly important in the current educational environment because schools have seen an increase in violent behaviors among students. Thus, the need for behavior modification schools continues to increase. The trend of

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giving students an alternative other than expulsion has become a significant change in this current educational environment. School officials are no longer satisfied with expelling students. One of the reasons stems back to the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. This Act emphasizes having high graduation rates; thus, school officials are more pliable to given a behaviorally challenging student a second chance via an alternative educational placement. The placement into an alternative school gives the student the opportunity to continue toward fulfilling graduation requirements.

The leadership of principals in alternative schools is directly related to their student outcomes. Students will advance and improve as they are positively reinforced and challenged to do so. Behaviorist theory continues to play an important role in nurturing the kinds of social and academic behaviors desired for students who exhibit at-risk behaviors. Principals in alternative schools, like all principals, have the challenge of creating a culture of efficacy for teachers and students alike. The teachers need to feel like they can teach and impact the students in a positive manner. Moreover, the students need to feel like they can accomplish the expectations of their teachers. The principal is the instructional leader and visionary to help make this type of efficacy possible.

Finally, further research needs to be done in the area of alternative students transitioning back into their schools of origin. There is a huge need for a support system for the students who transition back into the traditional educational setting. School officials have not seen the true need for a systemic support program for their at-risk kids who return from alternative placements. Further, research should be done to discover the best kinds of supports that should be made available for these students when they transition back into their schools of origin.

Chapter III

Methodology

Given the existence of a variety of alternative school programs, many researchers, lawmakers and educators are seeking to better understand the potential effectiveness of alternative schools. In what ways are they producing positive results? Research has been conducted in order to produce assessment tools and strategies to determine the effectiveness of Type I alternative schools (Tobin & Sprague, 1999; Aron, 2003; Reimer & Cash, 2003). However, there is limited research available that helps to provide significant assessment strategies for Type II alternative schools.

Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to discover what two principals and their staffs considered to be the most effective components used in their behavior modification programs in two Type II alternative schools. Furthermore, this study explored the various ways the behavior modification strategies used by these alternative school educators were based on, or reflected, the current indicators of success identified by alternative school researchers. Reimer & Cash (2003) purported, that 10 essential elements comprise the current indicators of success. Those ten elements were: 1) student accountability measures, 2) administrative structure & policies, 3) curriculum & instruction, 4) faculty & staff, 5) facilities & grounds, 6) school leadership, 7) student support services, 8)

learning community(staff, students, parents, & community), 9) program funding, and 10) school climate.

Type of Study and Research Questions

The following primary research question helped to guide the study to discover what two leaders and their staffs considered to be the most effective components within the behavior modification programs in their Type II alternative schools:

What are the perspectives of two Upstate of South Carolina Type II alternative school principals and their staffs regarding the behavior modification program implemented in their schools and its effectiveness? The sub-questions were:

1. How do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs define effectiveness when assessing their school's behavior modification strategies?

2. What do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs consider to be the effective components of their school's behavior modification strategies?

3. How do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs cultivate the effective behavioral components of their schools?

4. In what ways are those components identified in the literature as essential for a "successful" alternative school program reflected in the participants' articulations about their programs?

A comparative case study was employed to explore the depths of the research question. According to Yin, "the case study method allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events such as individual life cycles, small group behavior, organizational and managerial processes, neighborhood change,

school performance, international relations, & the maturation of industries" (Yin, 2009, p.4). A comparative case study involves collecting and analyzing data from several cases and may be distinguished from the single case study that may have subunits or subcases embedded within (such as students within a school). By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can strengthen the precision, the validity and the stability of the findings (Miles & Huberman, 1994 as cited on Qualitative Case Study Research Method, n.d, para. 13). This type of study allowed me to explore the characteristics of the organizational and managerial processes of these alternative schools for youth who display behavior that is disruptive and helped determine how their administration assesses their school's effectiveness.

Moreover, comparing two schools with various differences and similarities helped me to discover those meaningful components of their behavior modification programs that were essential to effective implementation. The comparative case study approach was an excellent fit for this study because it allowed me to gain pertinent insight into the leadership behavior of the administrators, the behavior strategies of staff members who had important roles in implementing the behavior programs, and the student responses to those strategies.

I was not theoretically influenced to choose the case study approach and specifically the comparative case study approach. My choice was primarily based on the functionality of the methodological approach in relation to my intellectual goals. My goals were to discover how these administrators and their staffs implemented their behavior modification programs and uncover the answers to my research questions. I

believed this method could improve my chances of answering my research questions more effectively.

Situating the Approach

The Public Schools of North Carolina in conjunction with other state agencies such as the State Board of Education, the Department of Public Instruction, and the Office of Instructional and Accountability Services were legislatively mandated to evaluate their alternative learning programs in 1998. The evaluation was conducted by the Evaluation Section of the Division of Accountability Services of the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. The case study approach was utilized as the methodological strategy to acquire data. Ten schools were included in the studies and the primary purpose of the studies was to identify and report features and practices that appeared to make these programs more effective with students as well as to identify needs and issues that require resolution (Public Schools of North Carolina, 2000). This study, like my study, had a goal of discovering components within several schools that made them effective. The evaluation team chose to conduct ten case studies to accomplish their goal; thus, reinforcing the strength and significance of the case study approach to discovering effective components within alternative learning programs.

Role of the Researcher's Situated Knowledge

My relationship to this study was as a supporter of Type II alternative schools. Yet, as an administrator, I was uncertain of the long-term effectiveness of these programs on the behaviorally challenged student. As I studied the organizational structure, the leadership of the principals and the behavior modification program of the two schools, I was able to observe meaningful interactions that helped answer my research questions.

Currently, I am one of the administrators at my high school who determines if a student will be sent to the local Type II alternative school. This study had some autobiographical relevance because I had personally sent many students to the alternative school and I had allowed some students to return to our high school. Whenever a student was brought back to my school after attending the alternative school, I was reminded of the difference in academic rigor there in relation to my school. Students who return to our school after attending this alternative school frequently struggled to achieve and maintain academic success because they were not used to having homework. Over the years, I had seen many former alternative school students fail to make the adjustment back into the regular public school setting. There had been one or two successful graduates, but I had rarely seen an alternative school student complete his/her diploma requirements and graduate. I did not attribute that failure rate all to this Type II alternative school. That responsibility was shared between the student, my school, and the parents of the student. However, it was this obvious failure rate that led me to this particular study to discover how alternative school principals and their staffs determine the effectiveness of their school's behavior modification program. I also felt a specific "leading" from the Lord to pursue this endeavor. He was the one who initially inspired the idea to study this phenomenon.

Theoretical Framework

The ten essential components afore mentioned created a useful framework for thinking about a school's culture. In this study, culture was defined as the interaction between all ten essential research components as demonstrated within these two particular Type II alternative schools. Each component was defined and used as a guide

to determine the type of culture the principals developed and nurtured. Reimer & Cash (2003) argued that, across various studies, the research is clear that these specific categories must be in place and measured for an alternative school program to be considered 'successful' or 'effective' no matter how success is measured or what the mission of the school may be.

These essential elements helped to situate the development of the research questions that guided this investigation. I posed questions that focused on discovering the effective components within the behavior modification programs established by two alternative school principals and their staffs in the Upstate of South Carolina. Furthermore, those components were examined to discover if they matched or reflected any of the ten essential elements from the extant literature about effective alternative school programs.

Two primary theories were utilized in this study: Principal Leadership Theory and Behaviorist theory. Marzano (2005) addressed a central question in his book. He asked the question, "To what extent does leadership play a role in whether a school is effective or ineffective?"(p. 4). Marzano's question captured the essence of the principal leadership theoretical frame that was utilized to understand the findings from the study. The principal leadership lens helped me identify behaviors that were considered best practices for effective principals to produce effective behavior modification programs. According to Cotton, principal behavior has proven to affect student attitudes, student behaviors, teacher attitudes, teacher behaviors and dropout rates (Cotton, 2003). It was my desire to discover how each leader established and nurtured the essential components of their behavior modification programs. The research from Cotton and others like her

helped to identify important principal responsibilities that clarified their impact on teacher and student behavior.

The goal of using Behaviorist theory was to help bring understanding about the use of behavior strategies that were utilized in order to modify student behavior. In this comparative case study, the two principals' leadership behaviors as well as the behavior of their delegated staff members were the stimuli that influenced student behavioral outcomes. Moreover, behaviorist theory helped me understand the interactions between students and staff members as I observed the implementation of the behavior modification programs.

Research Methodology

Research Design and Rationale

The phenomenon I explored dealt with the practice of modifying the inappropriate behavior of students defined as behaviorally challenged within two Type II alternative education programs in the Upstate region of South Carolina. Data collected from these sites were analyzed to establish themes and patterns that informed me of the various ways these schools assessed the success of their behavior modification programs and nurtured the essential components in their programs. The comparative case study method fits my research goals because it allowed me to gather data comprehensively about the organizational system of the schools, the relational culture of the schools, and the leadership impact on both the students and the teachers of each school.

Site

Two sites were chosen to conduct the research study. The sites were two Type II alternative schools in the upstate of South Carolina. The sites were chosen using the

strategy of typical case sampling. According to Patton, "when the typical site sampling strategy is used, the site was specifically selected because it is not in any major way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual" (Patton, p. 236). This case was selected by using survey data and various statistical data that provided me with a set of common characteristics that identify "average-like" cases with regards to discipline within the schools, teacher/student ratios, enrollment reasons, and graduation rates (Patton, p. 236). In 2002, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) completed a national statistical analysis report of Public Alternative Schools and Programs for Students at Risk of Education Failure. According to the NCES, districts in the Southeast were more likely than those in the Northeast, Central, and Western regions to have alternative schools and programs for students that exhibit at-risk behavior (80 percent vs. 28 to 44 percent) (Kleiner, Porch, Farris-Westat, Greene, 2002). According to the South Carolina State Department of Education website, there are twenty-six districts in South Carolina with at least one Type II alternative school. One of those twenty-six districts actually has a total of three alternative schools. Thus, South Carolina has a total of thirty alternative schools that are recognized by the state department on their website. The percentage of alternative schools in South Carolina is dissimilar to the ratio purported by the NCES. Yet this state's percentage does not include the remaining southeast states' total of their alternative school programs. Moreover, South Carolina's increasing focus on alternative education was very evident because 32% of the 81 districts have some form of alternative education for students that display disruptive behaviors.

The NCES study discovered districts in the Southeast were more likely to have at least one alternative school to service students who struggle with behavioral issues. Of

the districts with alternative schools, they typically serviced students in secondary school and middle school. The schools and principals in my comparative study were typical samples of the kind of alternative schools reported in the NCES analysis of alternative schools. Moreover, these schools were excellent sites because they illustrated what was typical of Type II alternative schools in the southeast as well as in other regions of the nation. These sites revealed the key components that must be considered in any alternative school in order to determine effective behavior modification. Typical alternative school cases are based on the following criteria: alternative school location, enrollment process, re-enrollment to origin school process, behavior intervention strategies, curriculum, district enrollment, size, and minority enrollment.

The two schools in my comparative study had to be located in South Carolina. The schools needed an established process for enrolling students into their alternative schools and the schools needed to show a set of requirements students needed to accomplish to earn their way back to their schools of origin. Each school had to have some system of behavior modification in place that was implemented intentionally to modify student behavior to help them meet required re-enrollment goals. Each school needed an established curriculum that aligned with state requirements to help students complete core credits to acquire a South Carolina high school diploma. Each school had to be supported by districts that had an enrollment process for sending students to the alternative school. In accordance with alternative school research, the size of the schools had to range from 20 to 250 students per semester (Aron, 2006). Finally, each school needed to have a teaching staff capacity that was sensitive to the needs of the various minority students that were enrolled in their schools.

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One school site was located in an urban location in the Upstate, and served students from urban, suburban and rural areas. This school served multiple districts in the Upstate. Thus, its student population ranged from 70 to 300 students a semester. This alternative school program had a director over the entire alternative school program, one principal for the high school, and one principal for the middle school.

In contrast, the other alternative school was located in a rural town in the Upstate. Its location was not as visible to the community and there were not many street signs to help direct a person to the school as there was for the other school in this study. The other school was located next to an elementary school. This school was hidden off in a small low income neighborhood away from other schools in the district. The alternative school program shared a building with First Steps and a few other community agencies. The program was contained to one hallway in the building. There was a director over the school that also functioned as the principal of the high school and the middle school. Furthermore, the director, by choice, taught a class of high school English. The student population was smaller here than at the other alternative school. The student population ranged from 20 to 70 students a semester.

Participants

Twenty four people participated in this comparative research study. The participants were chosen based on criterion sampling. According to Patton (2002), the "logic of criterion sampling is to review and study all cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance…" (p.238). Thus, people were chosen based on

their role in implementing the behavior modification programs within the schools. Participants ranged from administration, guidance, student services, students and some of the teaching staff. These people had significant influence on the academic and behavior progress of the students at the alternative schools. Thus, I chose them because their key position gave them unique lived-experiences that shed significant light on the phenomenon I was pursuing. Student participants were limited to grades 8-12, and all students were enrolled at least one semester in their schools. Students were included in this study to discover how they perceived the effectiveness of the behavior modification strategies on their behaviors or attitudes toward education.

Three teachers were chosen from site one. There was a Character education teacher, an 8th grade Math teacher, and a High School English teacher. Each teacher had over fifteen years teaching experience. However, the high School English teacher was in her second year at the alternative school. She was from a traditional school within a district where she taught an at-risk population of students. Her training there prepared her for the culture of the alternative school.

Two high school guidance counselors and a Medicaid funded high school counselor were participants in the study at site one. Furthermore, I interviewed four students at this site, two boys and two girls. All students were enrolled at the alternative school for various reasons that ranged from truancy, fighting, and school disruption to drug activity.

The alternative school director and high school principal were the primary individuals I interviewed because principal leadership theory indicates that principal behavior indirectly impacts student behavior and directly impacts the success of schools.

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(Cotton, 2005) Moreover, the other participants provided their perspectives on the role of the leaders in helping them fulfill their duties. The leaders' staff also aided me in discovering current practices and procedures that have been established to serve their students that exhibit at risk behaviors.

Four teachers were participants from the second site. There was a high school social studies teacher who also taught middle school students. This teacher had 15 years' experience in traditional education, but was in her first year as an alternative education teacher. Three of the teachers functioned as Character education teachers, but also taught Math or English. Two of the four teachers team taught Math and Character Education. One of the teachers was the principal of the alternative school before the current director became the leader. She had over 30 years' experience as a traditional high school English teacher. She shifted into the alternative program after the district began the program. She was initially a teacher in the program when she first began. Then three years later, she was asked to be the director/ principal. She held that role until the current director came along. When the current director came along, this teacher remained on staff as an English teacher, orientation supervisor, and Character Education teacher.

There were six students who participated in this study from this school. I interviewed five male students and one female student. Two of the students were middle school students and four were high school students. Their enrollment reasons were similar to the other students at the first site; the reasons ranged from fighting, drugs on campus, and being sent to DJJ and returning to their home district's alternative school to finish the school year.

This particular school had a director/teacher as the leader. This leader made a choice to direct the entire program and teach a class of English because she thought it necessary to model for her teachers the appropriate way to deal with the students in their school. See Table 2 in the Appendix for a listing of participants by school.

Data-Gathering Methods

I acquired data from two information-rich sites via using typical case sampling. According to Patton, this strategy is used when the site is specifically selected because it is not in any major way atypical, extreme, deviant, or intensely unusual. The following data collection methods were employed in order to illuminate key issues that must be considered when assessing and nurturing alternative school effectiveness: interviews, focus groups, observations, and document analysis.

In addition, I recorded each interview using a digital recorder. The first interview was with the principals of each school. I took notes and asked many clarifying questions. Those interviews were done in the privacy of their offices. The leaders were able to speak freely and share the pertinent information needed to answer my research questions.

The teacher interviews were conducted after the principal interviews. I had the opportunity to speak one on one with the teachers at the sites. These interviews were also recorded digitally and notes were taken as I listened to their responses to my questions.

Focus group interviews were conducted on the same day I interviewed the students. The focus group interviews were digitally recorded and I was able to take notes as I listened to the various responses from each participant. In school one, the focus group participants included three teachers, three counselors, and one special education administrator. The focus group members in school two included two teachers.

The student interviews were digitally recorded also. I met individually with the students on both campuses. We were in a private location on each campus and the students freely shared their answers to my questions. The principals of each school gave various written materials for my analysis. I was given access to faculty handbooks, reports that were sent to the South Carolina Department of Education, and dress code descriptions.

Observations were also conducted at both sites. You will notice that my research questions did not explicitly or implicitly suggest that I would interview students or use observations in this comparative case study. However, the case study is one of the approaches that call for the use of multiple data collection methods. Though student interviews and observations may not be directly addressed in the research questions, the students' opinions and perspectives as well as my observations were still sought in order to provide a more contextualized understanding of what my primary participants, principals and staff, shared with me.

Various types of observations were conducted in this study. I sat in math, English, and social studies classrooms and watched teacher-student interactions. Student-teacher interactions were also observed in other areas on both campuses such as in hallways during class changes, and at lunch. Moreover, I observed director-student interactions in their offices, in classrooms, and in the hallways. Some of these observations were sporadic and unplanned. I would be in conversation with the directors and certain situations would arise with students that required their attention. As a result, I was able to observe how they resolved the issue or answered a student's question.

The classroom observations were conducted once at each school and the duration of time was 15 to 20 minutes. The other observations were conducted each time I entered the campus of both schools. I was on school one's campus more than school two's because I had students from my school that I checked on periodically. I was on that campus five times, but not always as a researcher. I was on school two's campus three times during the study and sat in various locations just to observe interactions. All of the observations were recorded into my I-pad notepad function.

Data Analysis

I used a thematic analysis strategy to organize my data. This is a process of coding and then segregating the data by codes into data "clumps" for further analysis and description (Glesne, 2011). The coding process involved sorting and defining my data. This defining and sorting process helped me physically separate out "labeled" material regarding a topic or subject. Comparisons were made easier as I performed this systematic mining of the data.

There were three possible ways to derive my codes: a priori, a posteriori, and in vivo. A priori codes were generated from my prior knowledge of the phenomenon before the study; such as, my research questions, concepts/theories embedded in the literature on alternative schools and principal leadership. A posteriori codes were generated from the knowledge I gained from the study. Moreover, in vivo codes were generated from the words and expressions used by my participants.

As I read the data, I looked for topics, key ideas, key terms and concepts. These helped me generate a useful codebook. The codes were applied to lines or passages that contained that topic, key idea, term or concept. Each code name was a representation of

the topic, idea, or concept that was meant to be expressed. Similar lines of text were coded the exact same way. When I created new codes, I added them to my codebook and provided a short definition with them. I created as many major codes as the data called for so that all of the information was coded, even the things that do not have a specific place in the organization of the study.

Eventually, I began to create an organizational framework for my data by putting like-minded pieces of data together into data clumps (Glesne, 2011) such as categories of codes and themes based on categories. Furthermore, this process helped to develop a framework for the chapters or sections of my dissertation.

My rationale for using these methods was based on prior training I obtained in utilizing methods of data analysis. I found these methods very rewarding during my prior training sessions and decided to use them in my pilot study to help me identify codes and themes. This process worked well for me in the pilot study. Thus, I decided to try these methods in my full study. I was not disappointed with my decision to use these methods because the rich language used by my participants made it easy to pinpoint codes and themes using the described methods.

This analysis process helped me answer my research questions in that I was able to identify essential phrases or code certain actions taken by my participants that were directly or indirectly related to my research questions. As I categorized different phrases, I began to establish themes that were consistently seen in both schools. The great thing about this process was that it allowed me to analyze the data in such a way that I was able to make connections about procedures, strategies, and processes that were somewhat different in both schools, but had the same primary goal.

My theoretical framework informed my analysis process by helping me keep my focus on behaviors, states of being, processes, and strategies that were essential to the implementation of these behavior modification programs. That focus helped me identify the influence of principal leadership theory, behaviorist theory, and the 10 indicators of success on the various components of each program.

Trustworthiness of Data and Ethics

To increase credibility or trustworthiness, four research strategies were utilized: triangulation, peer review and debriefing, clarification of research bias and member checking. Triangulation was used in the data collection process. I interviewed individual principals, conducted focus groups that consisted of teachers, guidance counselors, and student support service members. I also performed two observations and analyzed documents. The documents ranged from parent-student handbooks, director end-of – year evaluation forms, an application for funds to establish an alternative school program, and the alternative school programs overview from the state department. These various types of data collection were a form of triangulation because they provided rich information from several sources in the alternative school culture. According to Bryman, "triangulation refers to the use of more than one approach to the investigation of a research question in order to enhance confidence in the ensuing findings. Since much social research is founded on the use of a single research method and as such may suffer from limitations associated with that method or from the specific application of it, triangulation offers the prospect of enhanced confidence" (Bryman, nd, p. 1).

I shared my data and my interpretation of the data with fellow cohort members in my Ph. D program. This type of constructive criticism created great external reflection

and input on my work. Their perspectives helped me identify misconceptions I may have developed about the data. In addition, their perspectives confirmed my interpretation of the data. Along with peer review, I personally reflected upon my subjectivity and how I monitored it in the research. This is where I checked any prior criticisms of alternative education and made sure I was aware of those biases as I read through the interviews of the participants in my study. Moreover, I shared interview transcripts, and analytical thoughts, with research participants to make sure I represented them and their ideas accurately (Glesne, 2011). All my adult participants were emailed their transcripts prior to me coming to their schools for a final follow up session. They were asked to review the documents and be prepared to share with me their thoughts about their comments. My thoughts were also included in the interview transcripts about specific things they had spoken; they were written in red. I also asked my participants to respond to my thoughts about their statements. Regretfully, I was not able to meet with all my participants because of their schedules, so the ones who could not meet with me, emailed me their responses. There was only one participant from school two who did not respond, but I did get to briefly speak to her in passing and she promised to respond, but never did.

I met privately with the student participants who were still enrolled at both alternative schools. The students from school one met with me in a break room across from the school registrars' office. In contrast, the students from school two met with me in an empty classroom away from teachers and students. The transcripts were given to the students to read and I explained to them that I wanted to hear their feedback about what they said in our interview the previous semester. I also asked them to respond to my

thoughts in red about their statements. So each student took about ten minutes to read the documents and then responded to me.

Ethical Issues

Qualitative studies have a unique quality to them in the area of risks and benefits. Researchers cannot always anticipate risks for participants ahead of time. As a matter of fact, the risks are rarely the type reported in the risk-benefits analysis that Institutional Review Boards(IRB's) prefer. Rather, these risks are usually more emotional/ psychological in nature instead of bio-medical risks.

Schools are a prime location for the common practice of gossip. Thus, it was impossible for me to guarantee to my participants that their peers in the study would remain silent about their involvement in the study and what they discovered about other participants. This was more of an issue for the focus group interviews. So the team had to trust each other to maintain confidentiality.

My participants had to trust me to protect their confidences and preserve their anonymity if they chose to remain anonymous. I refrained from discussing with anyone the specifics of what I saw and heard. Furthermore, I was particularly aware of sharing information with people who would use my research information for political or personal agendas. Harm could come to these two alternative schools if I found out negative information and made it public. A consideration of the negative and positive impact on the reputation and educational standing in the community of the alternative schools needs to be made if I were to publish specific findings.

The benefits in my study were not monetary for participants. They were more geared toward them getting an in depth analysis of their current practices with the hopes

of helping them to improve upon them. If the study revealed that their practices equated to effective practices for successful schools then that information could help illuminate their efforts so that they can become more intentional in their educational processes.

Researcher Positionality

According to Dwyer & Buckle, whether the researcher is an insider, sharing the characteristic, role, and experience under study with the participants, or an outsider to the commonality shared by participants, the person-hood of the researcher, including her or his membership status in relations to those participating in the research, is an essential and ever-present aspect of the study (Bryan, 2011).

Thus, my positionality with the alternative school administrator at the first site was of significant importance. The relationship with this principal was a non-threatening one. He and I discussed me coming to the school and doing interviews with him and anybody else I desired to interview. He trusted that I was not out to ruin the reputation of the school or try to evaluate the school and find all the wrongs within their system. This made the process much more enjoyable as I began to navigate through the interviewing process. I noticed that I was less worried about this administrator altering his responses to cloak weaknesses in his school. He and the principal over the high school were open and ready to help with the research study. Our long standing working relationship laid a foundation of trust that Steven M.R. Covey said is essential to developing professional relationships and accomplishing significant goals. Trust was significant in my research study because it was the essential ingredient that gave me quick access to staff members, students, various classrooms, and other parts of the schools.

I functioned in more than one role when I studied this particular school. I was also an administrator who had to interact with that staff about students my school had sent to this alternative school. I was also a special education liaison for our school. Moreover, this role afforded me an opportunity to observe other parts of this alternative school program when I was not officially observing for research purposes. This unique position gave me a perspective of the special education program at the school. I had to make sure I was always aware of my feelings and judgments about certain aspects of the special education program as I saw it implemented. It would have been easy for me to be critical of some of the practices and compare them to what my district currently does.

Site two caused me to have more of an outsider role in relation to the teachers and other staff. I did not have a working relationship with this school and only met the principal in July of 2012. The result of that initial meeting revealed that we were both raised in the same region of South Carolina. So, I gained some insider positioning with that fact. The relationship with this director was also non-threatening. She welcomed me with open arms into her school. It was her desire to find out where others thought her school was in relation to other alternative schools. I felt like an insider because I was treated with great respect by this director. She and I were also of kindred spirit in relation to devotion to our God. So this commonality helped me relate to her and understand some of her motivations for decisions she made concerning her students and staff.

Chapter IV

Results

The purpose of this study was to discover what two principals and their staffs considered to be the most effective components used in their behavior modification programs in two Type II alternative schools. Furthermore, this study explored the various ways the behavior modification strategies used by these alternative school educators were based on, or reflected, the current indicators of success identified by alternative school researchers. Reimer & Cash (2003) purported, that 10 essential elements comprise the current indicators of success.

The following primary research question helped to guide the study to discover what two leaders and their staffs considered to be the most effective components within the behavior modification programs in their Type II alternative schools:

What are the perspectives of two Upstate of South Carolina Type II alternative school principals and their staffs regarding the behavior modification program implemented in their schools and its effectiveness?

Four sub-questions were used as the directing questions to answer the primary question to this study:

1. How do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs define effectiveness when assessing their school's behavior modification strategies?

2. What do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs consider to be the effective components of their school's behavior modification strategies?

3. How do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs cultivate the effective behavioral components of their schools?

4. In what ways are those components identified in the literature as essential for a "successful" alternative school program reflected in the participants' articulations about their programs?

Efforts were made to discover effective components and thus answer these questions from the perspectives of the alternative school principals, teachers, counselors, and students. Personal interviews and focus group interviews were used to acquire data that would help understand this phenomenon. This chapter will present the answers to these questions and provide greater insight into the inner workings of the behavior modification programs of these two Upstate alternative schools. The evidence for the questions will be presented in the form of statements made within personal interviews or focus group interviews.

Comparing and contrasting two alternative schools' behavior modification programs can become confusing for the reader if certain aspects about each school are not described on the front end of this results section. So, I decided to describe how a student formally enrolls and exits in both schools to distinguish certain aspects about each program that will be discussed later in this chapter.

School One's Enrollment and exit process

- Student is formally assigned to alternative school by origin school. Paper work is filled out and sent to alternative school by origin school guidance counselor.

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- Alternative school administration receives paperwork and forwards to their registrar for processing.
- Registrar contacts the parent(s) of the student and informs them of the next parent-student orientation day which usually occurs every Wednesday.
- Parent(s) and student participate in the 15-20 min orientation session and they both are given pertinent information about the school. They are usually in this session with several other families.
- Student is given a start date at the orientation session or before the orientation by the registrar when she makes contact to inform them of the orientation date.
- Students usually start on Monday in this alternative school. Every new student gets assigned to the week-long orientation class.
- This class uses a software called Ripple Effect that helps the teacher of this program create an individualized behavior modification tutorial specifically for each new student. Each student is given assignments on Ripple Effect that relate directly to the primary reason they were assigned to the alternative school.
- Students also engage in open discussion with the instructor about situations and scenarios that are potential triggers for disruptive behavior. He then attempts to teach the students behavior tools to help them make better decisions.
- Students are also taught the rules of the school and are able to experience the school in a more controlled setting before being released into the regular school environment.
- Origin school principals will receive communication about discipline issues that result in recommendation of expulsion and/or change in status due to fighting, drug and/or weapon violations. Principals are welcomed at any time to visit students and check on progress.
- Once students successfully complete the week-long orientation session, they are given their schedule and they then begin regular classes.

Exit procedures:

- Students can return to their origin school once they have shown improvement in three areas: grades, attendance, and behavior. The student must have a recommendation from the alternative school administration and staff. The final decision is made by the origin school principal.

School Two's Enrollment and exit process

- The origin school principal/designee informs parent/guardian(s) of a possible change of placement to the alternative school.
- The Assistant Superintendent of Pupil Services or his designee will contact parents and schedule an intake interview for the parent/guardian and student with the director of the alternative school. Intake interviews

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generally will be conducted on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays of each week, when possible. Parents/students will be given a handbook in this meeting.

- The director of the alternative school or her designee will meet with the parents/guardians and student to review the handbook and identify academic, attendance and behavioral goals for improvement. A start date is determined during this session.
- Once a student reports for class, the student's origin school is notified.
- That student is then placed in a three day orientation class and informed of the rules of the school again and given certain character education tools to help in modifying behavior and meeting his goals that were set in the orientation with the director or her designee.
- Along with core classes, students will participate in daily character education activities and/or service learning projects. Students will also participate in a level system to help students gauge improvements in academics, attendance and behavior.
- Origin school principals will receive communication about discipline issues that result in recommendation of expulsion and/or change in status due to fighting, drug and/or weapon violations.

Exit procedures:

- The director of the alternative school will contact the origin school principal/designee to arrange a conference for the student to present an exit portfolio/PowerPoint presentation of what he/she has done while attending the alternative school.
- The origin school principal will make the final decision. If student earns the privilege to return to the origin school, the origin school principal will inform the parent of the return date. If student does not return, the origin school principal will inform the parent/student as to the reason(s) why and what specific improvement(s) or goal(s) the students should focus on improving before the next conference.

Question 1: How do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs define effectiveness when assessing their school's behavior modification strategies?

The two sets of alternative school leaders were similar in their assessment of their programs. They both assessed their behavior programs by making sure behavior strategies or tools were implemented in a way to keep the students at school as much as possible. Each school had an orientation program that was designed to help orient students to the alternative schools and prepare them for a transition into the regular

culture of their schools. Both principals saw those programs as significant parts of their behavior modification programs. They both emphasized the need for teachers to have a well devised daily instructional plan. School two's principal went so far as to teach a class daily to demonstrate to her teachers an effective way of instructing and modifying student behavior. This director had frequent staff development discussions and training sessions. School one's principals were focused on hiring new candidates with strong teaching ability and who were capable of embracing their philosophy. Both sets of leaders also assessed their behavior programs by the type of reward programs implemented for students who demonstrated good behavior. Finally, the leaders assessed their behavior modification strategies by viewing the graduation rate of the students that were part of their programs.

On examination of the raw data, several themes were established that presented differently in each program. Some of the themes were also present in a previous pilot study performed at school one prior to the full study. The first identified theme was of **core values**. This was expressed by the emphasis on the orientation program in school one and the emphasis placed on the philosophy of the principal in school two. School one's orientation program was utilized as an intake transition program that was used to instill a better value system in the hearts and minds of the students. Many students came into the program with various levels of character development as determined by the incident(s) that resulted in their enrollment to the alternative school.

As a result, this school's staff had taken on the challenge of trying to renew the minds of these students by using their ripple effect software to challenge students' thinking and encourage them to make better decisions when they were faced with

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situations that triggered bad behavior. The orientation teacher focused on the main reasons students were sent to the alternative school. Some of the reasons ranged from drug possession, possession of weapons on campus, fighting, truancy issues, and academic failure. He built modules specifically for each student and then discussion groups were formed to discuss the behaviors and choices that impacted the students' enrollment to the alternative school. The principal and director of this school were very confident in the ability of the orientation teacher to challenge student thinking and provide them with strategies that required them to think differently about situations that may cause the students to respond with disruptive or violent behavior. According to the principal of school one, "… the orientation teacher focuses on whatever reason they are here and there are modules or pretty much almost like an IEP for the kid. An individual, maybe here because they have anger issues, or they're here because of gang issues or whatever it is, and he tailor makes that ripple effect program for them and they go on through those modules that have to do with that."

Another element of school one's program is the reality that this alternative school served multiple school districts. As a result, there was a diverse population of students who entered the doors of this alternative school from rural, suburban, and urban environments. Moreover, this school had the challenge of integrating students who exhibited at –risk behavior from these various environments. Thus, developing a culture in this school that was conducive for learning was one role of this orientation program. Moreover, the week-long orientation program gave the students an opportunity to transition into this school without the anxiety of being immediately placed in the regular school environment. The influence of the orientation teacher was a key component to the

strategy of imparting a core value system into the new students so that they would integrate better into normal day to day activity in the school.

The staff at school two demonstrated a different form of **core values**. This school was definitely the emerging brainchild of the current principal. Even though she did not establish the program from its initial beginnings; her strong foundational philosophy impacted every aspect of the school. The teachers of the school patterned their style of teaching and disciplining students after the daily performance objective model the principal set in the classroom. This principal spoke of the early days of the program when she first began the principal-ship. As a staff, they identified that they needed a discipline system. The teachers said, "We need to know your vision as a disciplinarian." So, the first thing she did was teach them her philosophy of what discipline is. She said in order to do that "I had to help them understand me." This principal taught them that her philosophy is not to "get rid of the student". Furthermore she said, "The difference in my philosophy in working with at- risk kids. … I need you here. And so the interventions I will employ more often than not, you will be here. For me to actually do something with you. You're gonna need the contact with me more, not less. If you are showing me that you are really in need of a transformation." She told her teachers that she does not suspend students unless she absolutely has to. They were told that the use of extreme profanity does not scare her and that unless a student is threatening life or limb then she will employ strategies that will keep them in school.

In essence this principal instilled her **core values** to her teachers and encouraged them to examine their own hearts to make sure they could embrace that type of core value system.

She expressed that,

> … the last couple of years, we've been struggling with or seeing who can handle
> that or who can't. And those that cannot, I had to say look. Instead of you getting
> upset with me, because I'm doing what I told you I was going to do. Which is
> keep the kid here. You have to make a decision and understand that you have a
> choice on this matter. I use it with the adults too. You don't have to be here. If
> you believe that the traditional setting is better for you. You need to go ahead and
> do that. But if you're gonna be here, this is what we're doing.

The second thing this principal did was find a behavior system that would give
the teachers something consistent to work with. She solved that problem by incorporating
the Professional Crisis Management system (PCM) to their behavior modification
program. The teachers received their PCM training from their district-level PCM trainers.
This system taught the teachers how to set up their classrooms to avoid crisis behavior. It
was a system founded on prevention instead of intervention. The teachers were
challenged to change their way of thinking concerning crisis behavior. As a result, the
teachers at this school were challenged to adjust and modify their paradigms in order to
rightly align themselves with their principal.

Flexibility was another theme that I established from this data. Moreover, just
like the previous core values theme, I identified this theme in the pilot study I performed
prior to the full study. In the pilot study, "the flexibility was seen primarily in the
curriculum... The school's leaders attempted to provide various alternatives to meet the
needs of students who were short a few credits of graduation. Computer assisted

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instruction was used for situations related to credit recovery or credit completion. Teachers provided a system of completing assignments, called packet learning that helped truant students maintain currency with their classes" (Scipio, 2011, p.26).

Normally, students had four ninety minute classes a day on a block schedule. They usually were enrolled in core academic classes such as math, English, social studies, or science. They also took electives such as PE or Character Education. The credit recovery or credit completion classes were given in one of those four classes to help students complete graduation requirements. The packet learning strategy was developed to help students who exhibited truancy behaviors to continue to make effective progress even after being out of school for several days.

In the full study, flexibility was identified in relation to teacher-student interaction. The philosophy of the principals of each school was to keep students in school and to not suspend them out of school unless they absolutely had to. To implement behavior strategies that fulfilled that core value required the teachers to be more flexible in their discipline of student behavior. Zero tolerance could not be the rule of thumb on behaviors such as profanity. School one's principal said, "We talk to the teachers ... You are going to have to be a little bit flexible. A lot of our kids will probably be classified as EH. A lot of them can be very explosive. A good many of them. So you got to know how to handle them. Whenever you single a kid out, and we've talked about this. When you call a kid out in the classroom, they're coming back at you. Cause that's all they know. I see it myself."

I was curious of how the staff at school two dealt with students using profanity toward teachers. So, I asked an English teacher to tell me what would happen if a student

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called a teacher a "mother fucker". She said, "The principal would call them in to talk to them with that particular teacher. She's going to hear the whole case. Usually we can talk it out. Uh, it is usually worked out to get the child to understand. You use that language wherever. You leave your street language at home and things like that. It usually works out very well. It works out." This intrigued me because I am use to students being referred for expulsion when they use profanity toward teachers. I then asked her what would happen if the student does not modify his behavior. She said, "if it continues then that's when the suspension comes in. You have your chance. If it continues. If you do the same thing, you're not improving at all. You need the time. And by the way, parents are called in. They may not be called in the first time."

It was evident to me that both sets of administrators had instructed their teachers to focus on methods that allowed the behaviors to be modified over a period of time. For example, profanity was not an approved behavior these administrators allowed students to use in their schools. However, they addressed the correction of that kind of behavior by authoritatively reminding the students that profanity is not accepted in that environment. Over time, students were encouraged to refrain from that type of communication while on campus. Students were granted grace to make the necessary mental adjustments. They were reminded verbally anytime they chose to communicate in an inappropriate manner. However, the schools did have a line of demarcation for when the flexibility began to tighten if certain students chose not to comply with the rule. The school would increase discipline measures from verbal admonitions to more punitive measures such as detention, out of school suspension, change of placement, or expulsion.

Question 2: What do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs consider to be effective components of their school's behavior modification strategies?

There were two focus group interviews conducted. I interviewed seven people in the focus group at school one. That group consisted of an English teacher, an 8th grade math teacher, two guidance counselors, one administrator; one Medicaid based counselor, and one Character education teacher. The focus group at school two was much smaller and consisted of two math teachers who also taught character education. The two focus group interviews revealed several similarities and some differences as to the essential components of their behavior modification programs. Each group spoke positively of the smaller setting that each school embodies. They felt their structure was more conducive for their population of students. Both programs had rules that students must follow in order to earn their way back to their origin schools. The students at school one only had to follow three rules: 1. Improve their attendance 2. Improve their behavior and 3. Improve their grades. If they followed those rules then they would have a greater opportunity to return to their school of origin. The students in school two had nine rules to follow that were designed to help the teachers determine if they earned points toward progressing up their behavior level system. The nine rules were: 1. Listen carefully and remain quiet 2. Raise your hand to speak 3. Complete your work on time 4. Follow directions the first time 5. Keep hands/feet/objects/opinions to yourself 6. Respect yourself and others 7. Uniform must be neat and in order 8. Cooperate with others, and 9. Put others first- service. Teachers scored students on how well they kept these rules and daily gave student points or deducted points for inappropriate behavior.

Each group spoke of being consistent in enforcing the rules established. One teacher from school one expressed how much better the rules were enforced at the alternative school in comparison to an inner city high school where she was previously employed. She said, "I taught in what was considered an inner city school. It wasn't the worst place in the world. It was a challenging environment. The difference is here, we actually have rules that are enforced. There, they were not enforced… There were rules, just not enforced." Furthermore, the staff at school two had a specific process they took the kids through to prove to their origin school administrators that they should return to their origin schools. This process included a PowerPoint presentation that was created by the students. The students would use the PowerPoint to display their progress in accomplishing the behavior and academic goals that were established in their intake meeting with the principal of the alternative school. This process happened for all students regardless of their behavior during the semester. The staff at school two also had a three- level behavior system designed to reward positive student behavior. It included a points system that helped teachers determine when a student should progress up the level system. Every student entered the program on level one. The students' uniform distinguished which level they were on. Level one consisted of a white collared shirt, black dress pants that fit without a belt. However, if the pants had belt loops then a belt was worn. The last component of the uniform was a pair of black leather shoes. Tennis shoes were not allowed. The uniformed changed to khaki pants and a white collared shirt on level two. The same basic components were a part of this modified uniform; the color was the distinguishing factor. If a student reached level three, then they did not have to wear a uniform anymore, and could wear regular street clothes. However, the clothes

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must meet a required dress code as designated by the principal of the alternative school. If a student reached level three, then he/she was very close to returning to their origin school.

Both schools were staffed with full-time certified teachers. The staff members in both focus groups emphasized the positive rapport developed among the teaching staff. Moreover, teacher collaboration about student issues was also expressed as a key component of the behavior modification program for both schools. The principal at school two also created a specific discipline team consisting of her fulltime certified teachers who met weekly, at around 7A.M. to discuss discipline strategies. This team had been trained through their district in crisis prevention methods through a system called Professional Crisis Management. This team took the course called Behavior Tools. The focus group at school one was more trained in awareness type topics, such as, gang awareness, poverty awareness, and drug awareness. This group did voice a greater need for professional development in areas related to educating students that exhibit disruptive behavior. However, they did make mention of a mentoring program for new teachers. The administration pairs new teachers with veteran alternative school teachers to help them make a smooth transition into their program.

Members of school one's focus group emphasized the importance of their week long orientation program for new students. This is a weeklong program that utilizes software called "Ripple Effect" to individualize a behavior awareness and modification program for each student that enters the alternative school. The teachers, administrators, and counselors spoke highly of the impact of the orientation week on student behavior. The teachers also used some of the topics discussed during the orientation week to teach

life lessons in class once students had transitioned to regular classes. For example, the high school English teacher in this focus group said,

> I think with the week-long orientation I think the teaching of respect is one of the major things that we do. Just as a classroom teacher there are a lot of times that we go off our lesson, our prescribed lesson, just to teach a life lesson for them to learn. I feel like my biggest goal here is to teach them how to function in a regular classroom. ...Um, with the week-long orientation as well, the Ripple Effect program. It's a spring board with the kids. A lot of times we can refer back to that with the kids in class. I say oh yea week zero we did blah, blah, blah.

Members of each focus group emphasized the importance of the guidance counselors in directing high school students toward fulfilling required graduation credits. They also spoke of the importance of the counselors helping students to plan for their futures after high school. High school teachers taught core classes that helped students complete graduation requirements and prepared them for state standardized testing. Moreover, the middle school in school one also did an academic assessment of the middle school students to determine the students' level of achievement. They grouped students according to reading levels.

Moreover, several members of school one's focus group emphasized the importance of their character education program. The character education teacher stressed the importance of the Medicaid counselor and the other guidance counselors to help with students that she may have trouble dealing with. She states, "I know he or she might get along better with Ms. H. and I can call and ask Ms. H. to talk to him. And we

do that. I think that helps a lot." Members of both focus groups spoke of the personal relationships with students being a key to student achievement and improved behavior. The character education teacher in focus group one made mention of the positive impact their administrators have had on their morale. She states, "What helps me is the administrators I think are great. They remind us. They give us little goodies in our mailbox. You know, little rewards and they thank us for the job that we do. And that helps me, personally."

As I examined this data further, I identified several themes embedded within the lived experiences of the participants. The following themes were established from the data: such as **transition, support, capacity building, and student-teacher relationship strength.** The **transition** theme was related to intake procedures and exit procedures. Both schools had a three to five day orientation intake process for students. That time spent in these programs helped the students to orient themselves to the alternative schools and helped deal with anxieties looming in the hearts of each student. According to an English teacher in school two,

> I strongly recommend the intake procedure. I definitely think that child needs to be comfortable. I don't think that child just needs to. … be thrown in with the others. You Know, I think someone needs to receive that child. I think it's good to make the child comfortable. That's what I am saying. On an individual basis or a small group basis. When he enters and is not there at the beginning of the school year. Make that child comfortable.

In the case of school one, the week-long orientation was a much needed transition piece because this school served multiple districts and thus the potential for

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conflict was higher because some students cause conflict with other students simply based on where they are from. Both schools had some students who entered into their programs with affiliations with gangs and the transition period gave the orientation teachers the opportunity to address those kinds of issues before the students were released into the normal school culture.

I saw the notion of transition also as a buffer. It buffered and protected two environments; the normal alternative school culture and the traditional school culture. In reference to the exit procedures, students at both schools had three main goals to accomplish. They had to improve their attendance, grades, and behavior. Each school assessed those items differently. School one primarily managed this information with the district and State student information system called PowerSchool. If referrals were created by teachers, then they would record the infractions in their PowerSchool data base. When the time came for staff members to make recommendations for students to return to their origin schools at the end of first semester and at the end of the school year, then the administration and guidance counselors would reference both discipline records and interactions they had with students in various counseling or group settings. Recommendations are made to the origin school administration to aid them in making decisions about transitioning a student back to their origin school.

In contrast, school two used a three- level behavior system that teachers managed daily and when the time came to make recommendations to the principal they would use the score from the level system to aid with that process. More significant to me in their exit procedures was the requirement placed on all students to review their own goals and develop a PowerPoint presentation to prove their worthiness to return to their schools of

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origin. This process of reflection was significant because it made the students have to look at the "brutal facts" as Collins (2001) would call them. Students who made the necessary changes were rewarded with the recommendation from the alternative school. However, all of the students got the chance to present to their origin school principal or designee. That whole process also buffered the alternative school staff from backlash from students who did not get recommendations from them. That happened because those students were able to look at their own progress and identify the areas where they needed improvement. Thus, the alternative school staff rarely received negative feedback from students who did not make the required changes. This was essentially because those students gained a greater understanding of why they did not receive the recommendation to return as they went through the exit procedure exercise.

Support was another theme that stood out to me. I saw this demonstrated in the services provided for students in both schools and the professional learning communities developed in the schools for teachers. One of the main goals of the guidance departments of each school was to help these students get back on track toward completing graduation requirements. So their efforts had strong emphasis on making sure students were in the correct classes to earn core credits for graduation. Career planning was also an important part of the counselors support process. The students in this environment many times lacked goals or the initiative to plan for the future. So, guidance worked on walking the students through the appropriate steps to get on track to accomplish their future goals.

Some of that support also came in the form of counseling students with emotional challenges or conflicts with other student or even teachers. The RBHS Medicaid counselor, the regular guidance counselors, and the character education teachers were

essential in providing the necessary intervention services to prevent crisis behaviors from being demonstrated by distraught students. Their services helped to maintain a culture of balance in an environment that had the potential to be extremely volatile if students did not have ways to express themselves in a healthy manner. For example, the director of school one said, "You know our counselors are very involved. They know every single kid. And they are very involved with these kids. They meet them and go through their credits with them. But they also, I heard Mr. T. tell a kid, 'Alright man. Let's have a good day. Don't let the same thing happen.' You know so they are always reminded. That if you need to talk to somebody, come talk to them. We also have our Medicaid counselor on campus too. And he helps a lot. Because if there's an explosive situation and I think we had one yesterday two kids. And he will deal with it. Very good, calm that situation down."

Teacher support services were seen in school one as I recognized the type of care and appreciation demonstrated to teachers and other support staff by the administrators. The administrators in school one's acts of kindness toward the staff helped to build a culture where the mode of the school was light-hearted and not overly burdensome. Their care of the teachers made them feel appreciated and thus supported.

School two created a discipline team among teachers that met regularly to discuss behavior strategies. These teachers shared struggles they were having with certain students and received counsel from each other of various options to address problem behaviors. They got to hear success stories from their fellow teachers and they were able to identify with some of the same challenges other teachers were having with some of the same students. This team used this time to reinforce their core values about discipline and

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strengthen each other with encouraging words. This was also a time to support the newer teachers to the alternative school and give them guidance in managing student behaviors. It is a fact that teaching in an alternative school can be very challenging at times. It wears on the body, mind and soul. Teachers can feel discouraged or even overwhelmed at times. This support group became a safe haven for these teachers to share concerns and to get recharged to press in to finish the year strong.

Instructional leadership from the administrators was also another form of support, but is classified with the theme of **capacity building.** Both sets of administrators made a point to provide teachers with various training opportunities to increase their knowledge base so that implementation of their pedagogy or the interactions with students would be improved. Administrators in school one provided primarily awareness training on topics such as poverty, gang activity, and drug awareness. These training sessions made teachers more vigilant and more discerning to identify the signs of these things in the lives of the students. I would also say the poverty awareness training from the Ruby Payne training materials helped the teachers make the necessary connections with students from poverty stricken environments. The paradigms of most public school teachers are that of middle-class citizens. This training helped the teachers relate to students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Those type trainings helped teachers empathize with students better and gave them an appreciation for their culture.

School two also provided professional development opportunities in the form of behavior tools training. Behavior tools' training is a crisis prevention training program that was done through the Professional Crisis Management system (PCM). I saw this training as a stronger training in terms of providing strategies for teachers to use in the

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classroom with students that demonstrate inappropriate behavior. These teachers were able to discuss the strategies in their discipline team meetings. Thus, they were able to grapple with the theory of the training in order to implement it into practice. According to these teachers, implementation is the difficult part because the behaviorist theory portion of the training required the teachers to emphasize positive behavior supports for the students. Most people are geared toward acknowledging the negative behavior students demonstrate, but struggle when they have to acknowledge even the slightest positive change in behavior to progressively or immediately modify student behavior. School Wide Positive Behavior supports (SWPBS) systems are spreading across this nation. Currently, over 14,000 schools in the United States have established systems for behavior modification using the SWPBS approach (Chitiyo et al., 2012; Solomon et al., 2012). This system of training aligns with the proponents of this new trend of behavior modification.

There seemed to be an intuitive tendency by these alternative school educators to seek to build strong relationships with the students. As a result, I witnessed the theme of **teacher-student relationship strength** emerge from the data. The small teacher to student ratio made that process easier to accomplish. I continually heard positive comments from students about the quality of their relationships with their alternative school teachers. Most of the students I interviewed favored their alternative school teachers over their origin school teachers. One reason for that was the ability of the teachers to give individual attention to students because of the small class sizes. Students raved about the care they felt from their teachers. That type of personal attention made them feel important and gave them inspiration to work for those teachers. This was not

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the case for all the students I interviewed, but 95% of the students interviewed were very positive about their relationship with their teachers.

The teachers and administrators understood the significance of gaining a foothold in the hearts of these students through relationship strength. This theme became the foundational behavior strategy for one of the new teachers in school two. Her PCM training emphasized the benefit of improving her relationships with her students. The better her relationships were then there would be a direct impact on student response to behavior modification within her classroom. Relationship strength takes time and must be intentional on part of the teacher. The principal of school one liked to tell teachers to use humor if possible to break through the tough veneer of some of these students' hearts.

Question 3: How do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs cultivate the effective behavioral components of their schools?

The results of the responses demonstrate that the administration and staff at school one felt the orientation program and the character education program are components that should be nurtured and maintained. The administrators believed strongly that parent involvement was a key to student success. The administration in this school also planned to maintain focus on instructional strategies for teaching on the 90 minute block schedule. They additionally planned to maintain meeting with teachers during their planning periods to address concerns or to receive feedback and input. Administrators will continue to encourage teachers to maintain flexibility when dealing with student behaviors and attitudes. These administrators will continue to hire teachers with the same philosophy. The counseling department will continue to have an impact on student

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planning for graduation and secondary education or career planning. Finally, school one will maintain a rewards based incentive approach to behavior modification.

School two, likewise, has an orientation process for the students that they plan to maintain. They also plan to maintain and nurture their character education program. The administrator will continue to provide a clean environment, a structure conducive for learning and top notch instruction. Moreover, she planned to keep pressing for more full-time staff to reduce the part-time teachers on staff currently. This administrator will also continue to fight to keep the lowest student-teacher ratio in their district. She will continue to remind district administrators about the expense of running an alternative school program. She will continue to give students and teachers the venue to share concerns and ideas about improving school conditions. Furthermore, their three-level behavior system will be maintained and modified to address other concerns that arise.

Moreover, this administrator will continue to hold her teachers accountable for following procedures and policies. She planned to maintain professional development for teachers in the area of behavior modification and will continue to allow the district behavior trainer to come to her school to help teachers solve issues with students. The high school guidance counselor will continue to support student academic achievement. The administrator will continue to allow her to be an advocate for the students at her school. Finally, this administrator and the administrators in School One will continue to encourage their teachers to build strong relationships with their students.

The nurturing process can be the make you or break you process within any organization. Bolman and Deal (2008) speak of the Structural and Human Relation frame. These are the main frames that need to be nurtured in an organization in order to

make sure procedures are being followed and people are doing the necessary things to help push the organization forward. As I reviewed these data, I began to see three other themes emerge. Those themes were centered on nurturing the structural frame and human resource frame. I called those themes **progress assessment, student empowerment, and positive reinforcement**.

Progress assessment was the process of assessing and reassessing the use of behavior strategies, instructional strategies, and internal transition procedures in the classroom and hallways. Teachers at both schools continually evaluated their practice to improve or fine tune their pedagogy. This was a normal part of the culture of these schools. It was a more intense assessment process in school two's culture. Their commitment to realign their own core values with that of the principal meant a constant evaluation of how teachers were implementing the established procedures to handle certain student transitions from place to place within the building. When disruptive behavior occurred such as a fight or a verbal altercation, the discipline team would assess their own behavior prior to the incident to make sure they were following procedures that were designed to prevent crisis behavior.

Thus, this constant progress assessment of procedures and practices reveals this principal's tenacity in making sure her staff is consistent and faithful to do things that help students trust their system of behavior modification. Teacher inconsistency or principal inconsistency destroys the credibility of your discipline program. Therefore, it is worth incorporating into your structural frame a progress assessment component to help with implementation of your behavior modification system. This only works when

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the administration has a clear vision of what needs to happen in the classroom and other various parts of the building.

Most people do not see the alternative school as a place where students need to be empowered. The data revealed that student choice within a school where they did not have a "choice" to decide if they were going to attend or not was a huge component to students gaining a sense of self-efficacy and citizenship. School two's administrator made it very clear to her students from the beginning that they still have choice within her building. She said to her students, "You still have empowerment. You still have power over what you do… I do not have that control. If you do let me help you. And what I mean by help is, I provide the support, I provide the structure. I provide that you're in a clean environment. I make sure that you have what you need and your teachers are giving you top notch stuff. If you don't believe that any of those things are happening, you can come to me. You can go to the teacher. You can say, I don't believe you are doing what you need to do by me. You have that choice." This embedded choice concept is woven deep into the system at both schools. The essential component was that the students had to be made aware that they still had choices. Students must feel like they are empowered with the ability to address issues when they occur. When students feel disenfranchised, there is a tendency to cast off restraint and do whatever they want to do because they do not feel the leaders of the school care for them. The orientation teacher in school one made it very clear to his students that they still had choices. His attempt was to give them behavior tools that could be used in the face of adversity or conflict that would empower them to make better decisions.

This sense of empowerment also prepared these students for re-entry back into their origin schools. The goal of these alternative schools was to help their students learn how to become more productive within the traditional setting. They do not want students to become "lifers" in their behavior modification program. Regretfully, that is not an uncommon thing for some students.

The data was clear that positive reinforcement modifies behavior in the right direction more so than punitive measures of reinforcement. This was evident from the interviews with the administrators and the teachers. For example the director of school one said, "They been punished enough. When they walk in that door, we don't bull whip them. We're structured and organized and they got to step in line. But we're not beating them with the bull whip. They've had enough of that. They've had enough of defeats. Let's see how they act when they win some. So the idea of just beating them to the ground, That ain't gonna work. That ain't gonna work. One thing too, and I know she's a big component to this is. Let's lean more on the reward system versus the punitive system. Let's reward the good stuff. We are starting to put in place a reward day."

This leaning toward positive behavior supports was discovered primarily from trial and error within the schools. Principals learned the hard way that punitive measures are less effective in addressing student behavior overtime. The principal of school two had 15 years of experience in teaching the at-risk population. She learned the hard way in her early days that punitive measures are less effective in modifying student behavior. Thus, her personal philosophy was to implement strategies that are not grounded in zero tolerance, or suspension only measures of behavior modification. The principal in school one also learned the hard way. In his program's earlier days, it was primarily a punitive

environment. They learned very quickly that punitive measures used as the chief means of implementing behavior change did not work.

So out of their lived experiences came a theme of **positive reinforcement.** These administrators were so impacted by their earlier experiences that they began to seek to establish positive behavior supports within their behavior systems. The administrators at school one got creative and began doing simple, but unexpected actions. If they saw students walking down the hall and their uniforms were worn correctly; pants pulled up, shirts tucked in, belts worn correctly, and proper shoes, then they stopped the students lined them along the wall and gave them candy. This was a simple gesture, but the students responded like they were given one million dollars. Moreover, these administrators had plans to establish an intramural sporting event for the students to give them a positive outlet while at school. These students usually do not have assemblies, so an event like this would be a major shift in the normal procedures of the day. The administrators hoped it will create a sense of excitement in the school culture.

The administrator in school two was approached by the students about some form of positive behavior support for the students who do what they are told. So her discipline team developed a three- level behavior point system that ultimately rewarded the students progressively with being able to wear a different uniform when on level 2 and they could wear regular street clothes on level three. This system of positive behavior supports helped to motivate many of the students to work toward a certain goal. The behavior point system, like all behavior strategies, was not a solution to all the challenging behaviors in this school. However, it increased positive support for students and helped to modify behavior by emphasizing positive reinforcement more than negative

reinforcement. The point system does have embedded within its implementation a punitive portion which was designed to remove student points or drop their level back down if they demonstrated inappropriate behavior.

Question 4: In what ways are those components identified in the literature as essential for a "successful" alternative school program reflected in the participants' articulations about their programs?

This study explored the various ways the behavior modification strategies used by these alternative school educators were based on, or reflected, the current indicators of success identified by alternative school researchers. Reimer & Cash (2003) purported, that 10 essential elements comprise the current indicators of success. Those ten elements were: 1) student accountability measures, 2) administrative structure & policies, 3) curriculum & instruction, 4) faculty & staff, 5) facilities & grounds, 6) school leadership, 7) student support services, 8) learning community(staff, students, parents, & community), 9) program funding, and 10) school climate.

The results of the comparison revealed that each school discussed in some way or had as an essential component some form of the ten elements. I discovered from the interviews and observations that these schools had components in place that reflected the ten essential elements. I used the word reflection because I did not learn from any of these administrators that they performed research on Type II alternative schools and found the ten essential elements and decided to base their programs on these elements. Their efforts to discover the best practices for implementing a Type II alternative school behavior modification program led them to establish components within their schools that seemed to reflect the ten essential elements.

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Several examples of reflection are seen in the data that confirm the reflective alignment with the ten essential components. For example Student Accountability Measures look primarily at "specific benchmarks, from traditional data sets such as academic achievement on standardized tests, student and teacher attendance rates, suspensions, and expulsions, as well as program completion rates and student recidivism rates" (Reimer & Cash 2003, p.25). Both schools prepared students to take the South Carolina High School exit exam known as the HSAP exam. Also, both schools prepared students for End of Course tests in Algebra I, English I, and United States History. Each school was responsible for maintaining data about student attendance and they tracked their completion rates yearly.

The Administrative Structure and Policies element identifies indicators that focus on the "mission statement, objectives, and purpose of the school, along with the development and enforcement of written policies. This element is aimed at determining the effectiveness of the administrative support structure and how stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process" (Reimer & Cash, p.25). This element was reflected in the written discipline policy that was developed by both schools. Both schools were diligent to enforce their rules consistently. School two even developed a discipline team of teachers that were integral in developing the three-level positive behavior supports component of their behavior modification system. Moreover, both schools had a written handbook that included their vision and mission of their school.

According to Reimer and Cash (2003), the Curriculum and Instruction element is based on alternative schools having a "strong academic program that is creative and flexible. Teachers are perceived as caring while providing rigor and high expectations

regarding academic performance. Each student has an individualized Education Plan that includes behavior objectives as well as academic objectives" (p.26). My interviews with students uncovered a strong teacher-student relationship dynamic within each school. Students continually expressed appreciation for the care their teachers displayed toward them. Furthermore, teachers set high expectations for students in relation to academic achievement and discipline. Both schools used flexible instructional methods in order to address the academic progress of students who were short credits or who desired to get initial credit for approved courses. Students in need of credit recovery or who desired to earn initial credit were allowed to participate in computer-assisted instruction in order to regain or gain the credit.

The same reflective pattern was discovered in relation to the remaining elements. Therefore, it was evident from the data that the essential components expressed by these two administrators did parallel the indicators of success discovered by researchers. So, I could conclude from this observation that the presence of these reflective elements within these schools positions them to be fairly successful if they continue to implement their programs efficiently and effectively. The following chapter will render a thorough discussion of the major findings and offer recommendations for action and future research.

Chapter V

Discussion and Major Findings

Part I: Introduction

This chapter presents a comprehensive summary of the study with important conclusions drawn from the data presented in Chapter IV. The sections are divided into four parts and each section covers pertinent information that builds a picture of the overall results of this study. The sections are divided as follows: Section two includes the Purpose of the study, review of literature, research questions and methodology, Section three includes major findings beginning with the emerging themes and the answers to the research questions, and section four includes implication of findings and recommendations for action and future research. This section also included final comments about the study.

Part II: Purpose of the Study

This study provided informative data about the phenomenon of type II alternative school education and contributed to the research base about the practical implementation of the essential components for an effective behavior modification program within these schools. The purpose of this study was to discover what two principals and their staffs considered to be the most effective components used in their behavior modification programs in two Type II alternative schools. Furthermore, this study explored the various

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ways the behavior modification strategies used by these alternative school educators were based on, or reflected, the current indicators of success identified by alternative school researchers. Reimer & Cash (2003) purported, that 10 essential elements comprised the current indicators of success. Those ten elements were: 1) student accountability measures, 2) administrative structure & policies, 3) curriculum & instruction, 4) faculty & staff, 5) facilities & grounds, 6) school leadership, 7) student support services, 8) learning community(staff, students, parents, & community), 9) program funding, and 10) school climate.

It was important to confirm that the components identified by administrators as essential elements to their behavior modification program were based on, or reflective of the ten elements identified by researchers. Thus, to help with this process, I have defined those ten elements in this section to aid in the confirmation process. The following definitions were based on the research conducted by Reimer and Cash (2003).

Accountability Measures

This category reports school success compared to specific benchmarks, from traditional data sets such as academic achievement on standardized tests, student and teacher attendance rates, suspensions, and expulsions, as well as program completion rates and student recidivism rates.

Administrative Structure and Policies

Indicators that look closely at the mission statement, objectives, and purpose of the school, along with the development and enforcement of written policies, are aimed at determining the effectiveness of the administrative support structure and how stakeholders are involved in the decision-making process. Written policies

pertaining to discipline, attendance, and admission and exit procedures need to be examined for fairness and equity as well as alignment with the program philosophy and goals.

Curriculum and Instruction

An effective alternative school is built upon a strong academic program that is creative and flexible. Teachers are perceived as caring while providing rigor and high expectations regarding academic performance. Each student has an individualized Education Plan that includes behavior objectives as well as academic objectives. This plan should not be confused with an I.E.P. for special education students mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Academic and career education components are integrated and contextualized to provide students with a range of problem-solving and employability skills. The coursework is primarily hands-on, meaningful, and engaging to students. Class size is limited to approximately ten students per teacher, and the teacher has an assigned teaching assistant 50% of the day who works directly with students. Computers and appropriate software are readily available in each classroom, and teachers consistently integrate technology into the curriculum. The teaching and learning atmosphere is positive, where teachers are perceived as caring, and the classrooms are places where students feel confident and safe enough to learn. An organized structured mentoring program is in place that engages students one-on-one with a mentor at least one hour per week. Alternative methods of assessment are used to accommodate the differing learning styles of students and

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to provide rewards and incentives for academic excellence. There are educational options for students that include extracurricular activities, enrichment activities through service-learning, opportunities for accelerated learning, and work experience/career training opportunities. Distance learning is employed to provide relevant coursework for students needing courses outside the capacity of the school to provide on-site.

Faculty and Staff

In an alternative school setting, recruiting and selecting the right staff cannot be emphasized too strongly. Staff members with relevant experience and competencies, as well as deep commitment to work with students at risk, are vital to the success of the program. Teachers should be properly certified for the area(s) they teach, but it should be kept in mind that teachers can often overcome any academic handicaps by exhibiting a deep level of caring and concern for their students. Ongoing professional development is critical, and each teacher should have an individualized professional development plan. Sufficient funds for staff members to regularly attend and make presentations at conferences and workshops should be included in the budget.

Facilities and Grounds

Alternative schools should have inviting, clean, and well-maintained facilities. They are often hampered in their quest to develop and maintain effectiveness by their location, their physical attributes, and their capacity to provide programs that meet the needs of their students. Every effort should be made to centrally locate the school within the school district in a safe environment, to build or secure a

building that is attractive and inviting, to equip it with appropriate technology and equipment so that it is adequate for the services to be provided. Administrators should ensure that it meets local/state fire hazard codes. Finally, research has provided strong evidence to support the fact that school size should be limited to no more than 250 students (Morley, 2002; Public Schools of North Carolina, 2000; Schargel & Smink, 2001 as cited in Reimer and Cash, 2003).

School Leadership

Characteristics of successful school leaders include being a good manager of personnel and resources, reacting well in times of crises, being an effective and knowledgeable instructional leader, and possessing strong "political leadership" skills. In other words, he/she must be able to articulate a vision for the school and have the capacity to move the agenda forward through a myriad of obstacles that may include interference from within. This may be an area that sets alternative school leaders apart from their counterparts in "regular" schools. An effective alternative school leader has to be able to fight the "second-class citizen" syndrome to ensure the school is viewed as an important component of the district's mission to serve all children, and more importantly, to secure the resources needed to fulfill the mission of his/her school.

Student Support Services

Alternative schools typically suffer from innumerable social, emotional, family-related, and economic factors that are closely associated with their poor academic performance and antisocial behavior. These issues are the primary causes of poor academic performance and students dropping out of school. Effective alternative

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schools have a broad range of student support services that address citizenship, behavior, and social/health issues. Guidance and counseling are integral components of the curriculum and include effective parenting and child-care components as well as serving as a clearinghouse for family support services.

Learning Community

Performance indicators under this category are designed to assess the overall learning community support that includes family involvement, community involvement, student government, and communication issues between school and parents, school and community, administration and staff, and school students. Family and community involvement are fundamental to the success of any school, but even more so for alternative schools… Assessing strengths and weaknesses in this area will help to inform and guide the goals and objectives of the school. This assessment can foster closer ties with families and indicate the need to develop strategies to garner community support and resources.

Program Funding

Without an adequate budget to support program goals and objectives, the alternative school program is doomed to wither into obscurity and provide little or no impact on addressing the needs of those most at risk of school failure… Alternative schools cost more to operate, but …there is considerable evidence that alternative schools and programs, when funded sufficiently and organized effectively, can significantly improve students' academic achievement and behavior in school (Cash, 2001; Vandergrift,1992 as cited in Reimer and Cash, 2003). In 1997, the National Dropout Prevention Center surveyed alternative

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school leaders from across the nation (Duttweiler & Smink, 1997 as cited in Reimer & Cash, 2003). These leaders reported that a secure and stable source of funding was the greatest need in initiating/maintaining effective alternative schools. Indicators of effectiveness include the adequacy of the budget to fully administer the following: the instructional program; an effective discipline program; a comprehensive staff development program; the development and maintenance of technology; a comprehensive student support services program; student incentives; comprehensive student assessment in several domains; and a comprehensive annual evaluation, preferably by a third party.

School Climate

The intangible feeling of the school should be assessed for its performance regarding positive relationships between students and teachers; the safety of the environment; the degree of caring and concern on the degree of equity in terms of learning, and the degree to which staff, students, and parents are treated with respect and dignity.

Research Questions

The following primary research question helped to guide the study to discover what two leaders and their staffs considered to be the most effective components within the behavior modification programs in their Type II alternative schools:

What are the perspectives of two Upstate of South Carolina Type II alternative school principals and their staffs regarding the behavior modification program implemented in their schools and its effectiveness?

The sub-questions were:

1. How do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs define effectiveness when assessing their school's behavior modification strategies?

2. What do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs consider to be the effective components of their school's behavior modification strategies?

3. How do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs cultivate the effective behavioral components of their schools?

4. In what ways are those components identified in the literature as essential for a "successful" alternative school program reflected in the participants' articulations about their programs?

A comparative case study of two alternative schools in the Upstate of South Carolina comprised this study. One school was located in an urban location in the Upstate, and served students from urban, suburban and rural areas. This school served multiple districts in the Upstate. Thus, its student population ranged from 70 to 300 students a semester. This alternative school program had a director in charge of the entire alternative school program, one principal for the high school, and one principal for the middle school.

In contrast, the other alternative school was located in a rural town in the Upstate. Its location was not as visible to the community and there were not many street signs to help direct a person to the school as there was for the other school in this study. The other school was located next to an elementary school. This school was hidden off in a small

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low income neighborhood away from other schools in the district. The alternative school program shared a building with Head Start and a few other community agencies. The program was contained to one hallway in the building. There was a director over the school that also functioned as the principal of the high school and the middle school. Furthermore, the director, by choice, taught a class of English. The student population was smaller than at the other alternative school. The student population ranged from 20 to 70 students a semester.

Part III: Major Findings

Research Question 1: How do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs define effectiveness when assessing their school's behavior modification strategies?

I answered this question by using the interviews of the principal and directors of each school. Their foundational philosophy was to implement behavioral strategies that would keep students in school. They both had three main goals in mind when measuring student achievement. Their primary goals were to 1. To improve student academic performance; 2. To improve student behavior, and; 3. Improve student attendance. I found that the alternative school principals were very interested in improving student academic achievement. They both emphasized academics over behavior. Behavior was secondary in the overall picture of assessment, but behavior modification was primary if they were going to accomplish the goal of improving student academic achievement. Both principals wanted to see their students fulfill graduation requirements and return to their origin schools to participate in graduation. That goal or the accomplishments of

earning a GED or identifying a career path were the major ways they assessed overall accomplishment. As a matter of fact, the director of school two said they had 20 students to graduate since she became director. They only had one before she came. I found that statement to be her personal assessment of the effectiveness of their behavior modification program.

It has been said that a well planned lesson can alleviate many of the behavior challenges that could potentially happen during instructional times. Thus, these administrators have decided to make the process of developing instructional strategies a major part of their behavior modification programs. They both worked intently with their teachers to guide them in making effective instructional plans for their lessons. I found this to be a way of preventing crisis behavior within the classroom setting. I am convinced that these administrators used this process to assess how effective teachers were being at managing their classrooms and helping their students understand what they expected from them in each class period. School two's administrator stressed the importance of the students knowing where the teacher was trying to take them academically. She stated, "I make sure that they see the big picture. Then we go back and say, this is how we are going to get to this point, but make no mistake. This is where you're going. For the global learner, they need to know that. Where are you taking me? The more you can tell them where we're going then show them how we're going to get there in small manageable steps, they'll go with you. But as long as they don't have a clue, to what it is you want, you're gonna struggle with them."

This statement embodied an internal instructional assessment that had the ability to prevent behavior challenges within classroom settings. It really was not much different

from the basic premise of educators in traditional settings. However, I feel it must be practiced more intentionally in alternative school settings because the potential for behavior interruptions are more likely when students cannot follow the teacher.

Research Question 2: What do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs consider to be effective components of their school's behavior modification strategies?

The extant research is clear that a systems approach to addressing behavior tends to be more effective than each educator developing their own way of doing things. There seems to be a thread of consistency which helps to reinforce the general discipline policy in a corporate manner instead of primarily on an individual basis. The results of my study supported this statement because both schools developed a behavior system that was centered on a core behavior program that influenced the practice of the entire staff of each school. School one used their orientation program as the major positive behavior tool to shift students toward appropriate behavior. Teachers even referenced items from the orientation week in lessons to help reinforce appropriate behavior and to prevent crisis behavior. School two used Professional Crisis Management (PCM) as a foundational strategy to empower teachers with behavior tools to first prevent crisis behavior and to address behavior in a positive manner that could potentially intercept crisis behavior.

According to Chitiyo et al. (2012), implementers of School Wide Positive Behavior Support systems (SWPBS) are encouraged to use positive reinforcement and functional behavioral assessments to modify disruptive behavior and nurture socially

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approved behavior. Secondly, this is a system that focuses on prevention. Third, practitioners are encouraged to connect their approach to instruction. All three of these conditions were evident within these schools. Both systems were connected to the curriculum and to instruction. I do feel like the PCM component in school two had a greater influence on teacher instruction because the training gives teachers various behavior modifying strategies to use within the classroom when they recognize behavior that needs to be altered. PCM strategies are grounded in behaviorist theory and emphasize positive reinforcement instead of negative reinforcement to modify behavior.

Choosing a behavior system that is positive and has a crisis prevention component instead of just a crisis response component is essential to building an alternative school culture that is safe and conducive for learning and top notch teaching. If an alternative school is primarily reactive and does not use behavior strategies and procedures to thwart crisis behavior then the culture of the school will be more intense and less conducive for learning. An alternative school can build such a culture that the students would rather choose to stay there than return to their schools of origin. This was the case in school two's culture. Students had begun to choose to stay at the alternative school because they felt they were being more successful in that environment. Furthermore, the attention and care of the staff surpassed the attention and care they received at their previous schools of origin. This aspect was true for both schools. Students from my interviews all agreed that their alternative school teachers were more caring and went the extra mile to make sure they understood their lessons.

Bolman and Deal (2008), described four organizational frames that managers needed to understand in order to be successful leaders. I feel the leaders of these schools

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grappled with the Structural Frame and the Human Resource Frame when establishing their behavior modification programs. The structures of their systems were set up primarily to influence the entire school and the nature of the programs was to be positive in essence instead of only punitive. Their programs did utilize punitive measures when appropriate; however, they made huge efforts to build into their systems a rewards-based program for students who did what they were asked to do.

Another component to the behavior modification program was the Human Resource frame. Teachers, counselors, administrators and various other support staff had a warming effect on the students of the schools. The students came into each program on guard, afraid, and not sure of what to expect. The ability of each staff to transition the students into their program effectively spoke of their system of relationship building. I continually heard the statement "you must strengthen the relationships". These educators understood that you cannot impact the lives of these students at-risk of dropping out of school if they do not feel staff members care for them. Moreover, the staff knew that behavior was dealt with more effectively if they had some sort of rapport with the students before a conflict emerged.

Research Question 3: How do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs cultivate the effective behavioral components of their schools?

Kelehear (2006) embraces the idea of leadership as a concept. As a concept, leadership can be developed and understood by criterial attributes or non-criterial attributes. Criterial attributes are the essential properties that define a concept (Kelehear, 2006).Non-criterial attributes may be present at times to define a concept, but not always.

He uses the example of the concept of a school. Within a school, you expect teaching and learning to occur. This attribute is essential to defining a school. However, the attribute that a school is in a certain type of building is non-criterial because schools can be virtual in nature (Kelehear, 2006). Thus, this view of leadership as a concept opens the door to viewing leadership attributes as criterial or non-criterial.

I wanted to capture the essence of this definition of criterial and non-criterial attributes and use it in reference to the essential components of an alternative school. The fact that every school is different and holds certain dynamics that are unique is true for traditional schools and alternative schools. However, it is evident to me that certain components are required in an alternative school setting and must be nurtured by the administration of these schools. The first and fore most criterial attribute of a Type II alternative school is the mission of the school. They are a second chance learning environment for students who have violated some type of policy within the traditional setting that would normally result in expulsion. Moreover, they serve students that demonstrate a lack of academic effort and have shown little initiative to attempt to progress through the traditional curriculum. Furthermore, these schools attempt to modify the truancy behaviors of students who just do not like to attend school.

Thus, the mission statement of a second chance alternative school will usually have within it several components that will address academic issues, behavior interventions, and citizenship. Thus, administrators are then charged to nurture a culture that will emulate their mission. The mission statement then sets the stage for the criteria and non-criterial attributes of an alternative school environment. As I listened to the interviews of my participants, a theme of flexibility began to emerge from both schools

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within the study. I soon began to make the connections and realized that the foundations of these schools are built on flexibility. Alternative schools have to be flexible in many aspects of their program. For example, both directors of the schools I studied held the philosophy of implementing behavior strategies that had an emphasis in keeping students in school as much as possible. To accomplish this goal, you cannot have a rigid discipline policy that does not allow you to work with students' behavior over time in order to modify it. The very nature of the student population demands a flexible, but very consistent discipline policy.

Not only should the discipline policy or program be flexible, but the teachers themselves have to embody a certain mindset of flexibility that helps them navigate the waters of the sometimes disruptive ways of an at-risk student population. Thus, principals and directors must provide the kind of training necessary to help teachers manage their learning environments and student relationships. School two's district seemed to be very keen on training their teaching staff in such a way that they were equipped with "behavior tools" to use in the classroom when student behavior did not meet behavior guidelines. I found it to be necessary to have teachers who feel confident with dealing with disruptive behavior in an alternative school setting.

I spoke to veteran teachers at the alternative schools who were veterans in the traditional setting for over ten years. They expressed a clear and bold line of demarcation between behaviors in traditional settings versus behaviors in alternative school settings. They were clear in expressing the importance of behavior intervention training. Moreover, administrators need to institute a support group or teams of teachers that have common students for the purpose of assessing academic and behavior strategies

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implemented with their students. This will develop a professional learning community that if nurtured well can also encourage teachers when they feel like their efforts are not paying off with certain students.

Another criterial attribute to alternative settings is student choice which is ironic because most of these students get sent to the alternative school against their wills. They are usually sent there because of inappropriate behavior and do not have a choice in the matter. However, administrators of alternative schools will serve these students well if they nurture an environment where the students have a sense of empowerment. One principal called it embedded choice within the curriculum. They need to feel like they have a voice within the school. Students must be able to approach teachers, administrators with concerns about school issues and effectively communicate their desire to see change in a certain arena. If the arguments are valid, administrators and teachers should seriously consider the points and work with students to make the necessary changes.

Finally, alternative schools should always maintain their "smallness". Researchers like Aron (2006) and Lange & Sletten (2002) report that the most successful alternative schools maintain student populations that do not exceed very far over the 250 mark. These programs tend to be expensive because of the low teacher-student ratio, but this ratio is a criterial attribute that makes it possible for the alternative schools to maintain their flexibility and gives teachers the ability to use behavior tools on at-risk students in a small classroom setting. The benefits begin to mount up as you realize the significance of the kind of care teachers are able to demonstrate to these students in that type of environment. One of the repeated statements from the students I interviewed was that

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their teachers in their origin schools probably did care for them, but could not give them the much needed time they desired because of large class sizes. So administrators of alternative schools need to fight to maintain their low teacher-student ratios.

Research Question 4: In what ways are those components identified in the literature as essential for a "successful" alternative school program reflected in the participants' articulations about their programs?

As I entered this research project, I was aware of the gap in alternative school research about best practices for implementing a behavior modification program within a type II alternative school for youth who exhibit behavior that is disruptive. Research did not disclose the best ways to nurture teacher capacity building for such an environment and it did not reveal the best strategies used by principals to implement their behavior modification programs.

So, I started this journey with this goal in mind. I would seek to discover how type II alternative schools implement their behavior modification programs in order to help their students modify behavior and improve academics. In my research of the topic, I discovered that researchers had identified ten essential elements that should be in alternative schools. Those elements were used by the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University to develop an evaluation tool that helped administrators of Type I alternative schools evaluate their programs. Reimer and Cash (2003) claimed that those essential elements were criterial to all types of alternative schools being successful. Their claim made me think that it was possible to also assess type II alternative programs using the same assessment tool used by type I alternative school principals.

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However, I was not certain that those same essential elements discovered by researchers would be considered essential by type II alternative school principals. However, to my surprise, those same elements emerged from the interviews and conversations with administrators, teachers, counselors, and students. Those elements emerged as essential components of the implementation process of modifying student behaviors. The emergence of these elements within this study concerning the implementation of a behavior modification program gave empirical data that seemed to provide evidence that those predictors have a strong relationship to student success within Type II alternative schools. This discovery added to the extant research in that it gave researchers another tool to use in order to assess the effectiveness of Type II alternative school programs. Principals of these programs will also be able to do their own self-assessments of their programs and make comprehensive adjustments based on the results of the assessment.

Part IV Recommendations for Action

1. Implement Behavior Tools training

   Teachers in alternative schools need to develop the capacity to effectively manage behavior within these schools. This fact is true for veteran teachers who transition to the alternative school from traditional settings as well as neophyte teachers to education. One way to build teacher capacity is to provide crisis **<u>prevention</u>** training. Many times the first thought that comes to mind when people think of behavior training is crisis **<u>intervention</u>**. Intervention is needed only after extreme behavior has been demonstrated. I want teachers to prevent extreme behavior by recognizing the signs and diffusing behavior before it moves from moderate to

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extreme. This requires a paradigm of prevention not just a paradigm of intervention. Thus, I recommend alternative school principals consider providing professional training in the Professional Crisis Management system (PCM). According to Adams (2013), PCM is "a comprehensive and fully integrated system of procedures designed to 1) prevent crisis situations and de-escalate pre-crisis behaviors, 2) contain and decrease aggressive, disruptive, and self-injurious behaviors, 3) provide staff with a range of personal safety techniques, 4) transport individuals and reintegrate them into existing treatment and academic settings, and 5) conduct post-crisis intervention and analysis" (p.16). Furthermore, it is a program that lines up with the School Wide Positive Behavior Supports movement (SWPBS). SWPBS is a behavior system that encourages educators to embed their behavior program into their curriculum across the school. PCM is a system that is attached to the curriculum. Teachers are trained how to communicate with students in such a way that they begin to create a culture of honor within their classrooms and ultimately that behavior saturates the entire school.

Furthermore, I recommend a consistent evaluation process of the behavior modification program that includes teachers in designated groups. These teams need to evaluate how their peers are implementing behavior strategies with students. This type of professional learning community will challenge teachers to become more intentional in their strategies and make them develop a paradigm of prevention. Ultimately, these teachers will experience an increased sense of self-

efficacy because they will witness a maturity in their ability to handle crisis

behavior and prevent crisis behavior.

2. Establish a new student orientation week

Both schools in this study had a set number of days in which they took the time to

orient new students to their school before releasing them to the general

population. This process of orientation tended to decrease anxiety for students

because it gave them time to become familiar with the school's rules and

expectations. School one also established a behavior modification program within

that week orientation that required students to examine their behavior and

discover the trigger points that caused the behavior. Students were assigned to

complete a module on software called "Ripple Effect". This software helped to

equip students with strategies they possibly could use when faced again with the

triggers of their bad behavior.

3. Create student Incentives

The alternative school setting is usually seen as a punitive environment for

students who have committed offenses in the traditional setting. The decision to

send a person to the alternative school is a punitive measure by the administrators

of the origin schools. However, the alternative school does not have to develop a

culture that is primarily punitive towards students. Students need to experience a

system that is rewards-based and responsive to students who do what they are

told. There should be a positive behavior system established that helps students

experience a sense of accomplishment as they achieve certain goals needed to return to their origin schools or goals they need in order to graduate.

4. Nurture teacher appreciation and morale building

    It is essential that administrators intentionally recognize the efforts of their teachers and support staff within alternative schools. Their jobs can be extremely hard at times and burnout is a possibility if there are not embedded morale boosters that come directly from the leaders of the school. Bolman and Deal (2008) would call that the Symbolic Frame. This is that part of the organizational culture that adds significant meaning to what the staff does on a daily basis. It is the "color in the rainbow" that helps to reinforce their resolve to keep pressing toward excellence.

5. Create a transition process to get back to the origin school

    The process to get back to the origin school is usually based on three primary goals: Attendance, Grades, and Behavior. Students should be given an opportunity to prove their "conversion" to the origin school administrators or their designee. The process should include a self-evaluation of their attendance, grades, and behavior. It will be good for them to develop a power point presentation and deliver their speech before the origin school administrators. This will give the administrators another way to determine if these students have earned their way back to the origin school.

Recommendation for Future Research

The impetus of this entire study was based on my role as an administrator at an Upstate high school who was partly responsible for sending students to the alternative school. I saw them go and return, but I did not experience the blessing of seeing many of these students graduate from high school. I blamed much of the problem on the students and some on the alternative school. But, I did not fully consider the fact that may be our support system for reintegrating these students was not strong enough to help these students transition back into our school and be successful.

The results of this study focused primarily on the implementation of behavior modification programs at alternative schools. A study on the implementation of a transition/reintegration program at the origin schools would add the other dimension to my study and bring clarity to the essential components needed in transition/reintegration programs at the origin schools. Moreover, a study should be done to examine the perception of origin school administrators about their responsibility to provide supports for students that transition back into their schools.

A study to get the perception of students who returned to their origin school, but were sent back to the alternative school would help researchers understand what things should have been in place to prevent these students from returning to the local alternative school. Another aspect to future research would be to study the perception of parents about the transition supports their child received at the origin school upon reintegration.

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Further research should be done with the parents of students who have participated in alternative school programs. Researchers could study their perception of the alternative school's behavior modification program on their child's behavior. Finally, a study that looks at the impact of a mentoring program as a component to a transition/ reintegration program could help researchers understand more clearly the type of relational support needed for students as they fully reintegrate into the traditional setting.

Concluding Remarks

Appreciation is the word that came to my mind as I thought about words to use in order to conclude this study. I have a greater appreciation for the work of our alternative school administrators, teachers, and support staff in South Carolina. Their efforts many times go unnoticed and are oftentimes undermined. I want to take this opportunity to thank every alternative school staff member in the Upstate of South Carolina. They have committed their lives to serving our state's children in excellence and with love. This study was personally rewarding for me because it opened my eyes to the various components within type II alternative schools that make them special and unique. Furthermore, I am more keenly aware of the needs of at-risk students than I was before I began this process.

This new found awareness was also an inspiration to me because it made me realize the huge gaps we had in our transition/reintegration program at my high school. As a result, I began a Personal Leadership Mentoring Academy at our school that was primarily developed to help transition students from alternative placements back into the origin school. Moreover, I was impacted by the sheer determination of the administrators

of these two type II alternative schools. Their willingness to demonstrate instructional leadership and model appropriate interactions with students and teachers spoke volumes to me of their commitment to nurture success in their schools. I considered them to be "warrior principals" because they daily battled the negative perceptions of their schools in the community and they proactively worked at changing those perceptions by effectively serving students.

Additionally, these principals had many discussion sessions with district administrators about educational programs needed to position students to take advantage of career and vocational training opportunities. They also fought to maintain staff members that were highly qualified and assigned to work full time at their alternative schools. This determination is the crucial component within the make-up of alternative school principals that will ultimately create success in their programs.

In conclusion, the pathway to success for the at-risk student population has many challenges that originate from various environmental sources. An essential element to these special students overcoming their obstacles is the development of an environment of support around them. They need an educational and relational system that can serve their needs and build in them a sense of identity and purpose. The relational aspect of the system needs to develop healthy relationships which initiate and facilitate learning, healing and growth, ultimately developing great leaders who impact family, school, and community for good. Thus, type II alternative schools are an important component to the "web" of support. They are a foundational tool to begin both the educational and relational support that will ultimately transform students and impact families.

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Consent Form

Title of Study: Alternative Education: A Comparative Case Study of the Behavioral Modification Program of two South Carolina Alternative Schools for Disruptive Youth

Principal Investigator: Timothy Scipio

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by **Timothy Scipio**. I am a doctoral candidate in the Educational Leadership Department at the University of South Carolina. I am conducting a research study as part of the requirements for my PhD. degree in Educational Administration, and I would like to invite you to participate. The purpose of the study is to analyze how the behavior modification program at the alternative school in which you work is implemented and to discover the components within the program that help improve student behavior so that they can be more successful within school. My desire is to have eight people from the two schools within the study for a total of sixteen participants. This form explains what you will be asked to do if you decide to participate in this study. Please read it carefully and feel free to ask any questions you like before you make a decision about participating.

If you decide to participate, I will perform the study by conducting recorded interviews and focus group interviews in a secure location on campus. After the interviews, I will type up the responses to the questions. I will return to speak to you to ask follow-up questions based on the previous interviews. This may happen 2-3 times because I will check my interpretation of your answers with you to make sure I am accurate in my understanding. This study will be performed over one semester and your time commitment will be minimum. You will commit about 2-3 hours of your time over a semester to participate in this study.

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified to you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. Your responses will not be linked to your name in any written or verbal report of this research project. A number will be assigned to each participant at the beginning of the project. This number will be used on project records rather than your name, and no one other than the researcher will be able to link your information with your name. Study records/data

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will be stored in locked filing cabinets and protected computer files at my home office. The results of the study may be published or presented at professional meetings, but your identity will not be revealed.

There are no known risks associated with participating in this research except a slight risk of breach of confidentiality, which remains despite steps that will be taken to protect your privacy.

Taking part in this study is not likely to benefit you personally. However, this research may help us understand how to more effectively implement behavior modification programs within alternatives schools for disruptive youth. Furthermore, the results may aid educators in identifying best practices for program implementation.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You are free not to participate or to withdraw at any time, for whatever reason, without negative consequences. In the event that you do withdraw from this study, the information you have already provided will be kept in a confidential manner.

If you have any questions about the study, please ask me. You can contact me later about other questions at 864-921-0681. If you have any questions or concerns about your participation in this study, call Thomas Coggins, Director of the Office of Research Compliance, at (803) 777-7095. You may also contact my program advisor, Dr. Lynn Harrill at (803) 777-3091.
I have read (or have had read to me) the contents of this consent form and have been encouraged to ask questions. I have received answers to my questions. I give my consent to participate in this study, although I have been told that I may withdraw at any time without negative consequences. I have received (or will receive) a copy of this form for my records and future reference.

_____
Printed Name of Participant

_____ _____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____ _____
Signature of Investigator   Date

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UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHCAROLINA.

College of Education

PARENTAL CONSENT FOR THE PARTICIPATION OF MINORS

Title of Study: Alternative Education: A Comparative Case Study of the Behavioral Modification Program of two South Carolina Alternative Schools for Disruptive Youth

Your (**son/daughter**) is invited to participate in a study that will analyze how the behavior change program at the alternative school he/she attends is used to help improve student behavior so that they can be more successful within school. My name is **Timothy Scipio** and I am a doctoral student at The University of South Carolina, Department of Educational Leadership. This study is the final requirement of my PhD. program. I am asking for permission to include your (**son/daughter**) in this study because his/her involvement will give me a better understanding how the behavior change program is impacting student behavior and achievement. I expect to have 16 participants in the study.

If you allow your child to participate, I will perform the study by conducting a recorded interview with the student in a secure location on campus. After the interview, I will type up the responses to the questions. I will return to speak to the student to ask follow-up questions based on the previous interview.
Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with your
(**son/daughter**) will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission. His or her responses will not be linked to his or her name or your name in any written or verbal report of this research project.

Your decision to allow your (**son/daughter**) to participate will not affect your or his or her present or future relationship with The Whitlock Flexible Learning Center. If you have any questions about the study, please ask
me. You can contact me about questions at 864-921-0681. If you have any questions or concerns about

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your (**son/daughter**)'s participation in this study, call Thomas Coggins, Director of the Office of Research Compliance, at (803) 777-7095.
You may keep a copy of this consent form.
You are making a decision about allowing your (**son/daughter**) to participate in this study. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information provided above and have decided to allow him or her to participate in the study. If you later decide that you wish to withdraw your permission for your (**son/daughter**) to participate in the study, simply tell me or communicate with the student's principal and he/she will inform me.

You may discontinue his or her participation at any time.

_____
Printed Name of (son/daughter)

_____ _____
Signature of Parent(s) or Legal Guardian Date

_____ _____
Signature of Investigator   Date

I have read the description of the study titled Alternative Education: A Comparative Case Study of the Behavioral Modification Program of two South Carolina Alternative Schools for Disruptive Youth, and I understand what the procedures are and what will happen to me in the study. I have received permission from my parent(s) to participate in the study, and I agree to participate in it. I know that I can quit the study at any time.

_____ _____
Signature of Minor   Date

Interview Guides

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Protocol

Project: Alternative Education: A Comparative Case Study of Two Upstate of South

Carolina Alternative Schools for Disruptive Youth

Position of Interviewee: Teacher /Counselor

Questions:

1. How has the behavior modification program impacted student behavior?

2. What type of training/professional development have you received in order to

effectively carry out your behavior modification program?

3. How do you assess a student's behavior and determine if he/she should receive a

recommendation to return to their home school?

4. What is the role of guidance in your behavior modification system?

5. What is the role of your intervention specialist? Role of Character education/RBHS

teachers?

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- Is the Medicaid program paperwork intensive? How does that impact your ability to counsel students effectively?

6. How has the neatness/cleanliness of this school impacted how students think about the Alternative school?

ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Protocol

Project: Alternative Education: A Comparative Case Study of Two Upstate of South Carolina Alternative Schools for Disruptive Youth

Position of Interviewee: Principal/Administrator

Questions:

1. How long have you been the principal of the SCAS and what events led you to this position?

2. What type of disciplinary system do you have in place?

3. What type of training do you provide your staff in order to effectively carry out your discipline program?

4. How do you assess a student's behavior and determine if he/she should receive a recommendation to return to their home school?

5. What is the role of your intervention specialist? Role of Character education/RBHS teachers?

6. What is the role of guidance in your behavior modification system?

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ALTERNATIVE SCHOOL STAFF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Interview Protocol

Project: Alternative Education: A Comparative Case Study of Two Upstate of South Carolina Alternative Schools for Disruptive Youth

Position of Interviewee: Student

Questions:

1. What high school did you attend? -What was it like for you there at that school?

2. Why are you here at the alternative school?

3. How has the behavior change program impacted your behavior?

4. What kind of relationship do you have with your teachers here at the alternative school?

5. Have you participated in any kind of character education program? How has that helped?

6. How has the neatness/cleanliness of this school impacted how you think about the Alternative school?

Participants by School

Table C.1 *Participants by School*

School One	School Two
One Character Ed Teacher	One high school Social Studies teacher who teaches both high school and middle school
One 8th Grade Math Teacher	Three teachers that taught Character ed and taught math or English
One high school English teacher	One of the three teachers was the principal of this alternative school at one time. She has 30 years' experience as an English teacher.
Two high school Guidance Counselors	One director who is also the principal of the high school and middle school. The director also teaches an English class.
One Medicaid Based Counselor	Six students
Four Students	
One special education administrator	
One high school principal	
One director	

APPENDIX D

Research Question Data Source Matrix

Table D.1 *Research Question Data Source Matrix*

	Data Source	Data Source
Primary Question: What are the perspectives of two Upstate of South Carolina Type II alternative school principals and their staffs regarding the behavior modification program implemented in their schools and its effectiveness	**Interview with Principals** **Document Analysis**	**Teacher Interviews** **Focus groups**
Sub-question 1: How do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs define effectiveness when assessing their school's behavior modification strategies?	**Interview with Principals**	**Teacher Interviews** **Focus groups**
Sub-question 2: What do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs consider to be the effective components of their school's behavior modification strategies?	**Interview with Principals** **Document analysis**	**Teacher Interviews** **Focus groups**
Sub-question 3: How do these Type II alternative school principals and their staffs cultivate the effective behavioral components of their schools?	**Interview with Principals** **Student interviews**	**Teacher Interviews** **Focus groups**

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Sub-question 4: In what ways are those components identified in the literature as essential for a "successful" alternative school program reflected in the participants' articulations about their programs?	**Interview with Principals** **Student interviews**	**Teacher Interviews** **Focus groups**