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DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS: WAYS OF IMPROVEMENT

by  
Teresa McGaney-Guy

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the  
Master of Arts Degree  
of  
The Graduate School  
at  
Rowan University  
April 29, 2002

Approved by \_\_\_\_\_  
Professor

Date Approved May 16, 2002

## Abstract

Teresa R. McGaney Guy

Discipline Problems: Ways Of  
Improvements  
2002  
Dr. Kathy Sernack  
Master Of Arts

The purpose of this study was to discover new ways of assisting students that have behavioral problems and the teachers of those students.

The subjects in this study were four teachers and their first and second grade students. The teachers were three females and one male. Two of the female teachers teach first grade and the others teach second grade.

The research tool used in this study was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was developed to gain knowledge about the effectiveness of the discipline strategies. The questions were used to collect general information about the respondent and the discipline strategies.

The major findings in this study were how the teachers were able to use the strategies in their classrooms to create positive outcomes. The teachers implemented individual behavior plans to reduce and eliminate discipline problems.

## Mini-Abstract

### Statement Problem

Leeds Avenue Elementary School has an overwhelming number of students that are experiencing discipline problems. The teachers and students are in need of more strategies to reduce or eliminate behavioral problems.

### Summary of Conclusion

The discipline strategies produced positive outcomes for four teachers at Leeds Avenue School. The teachers that implemented the strategies experienced a reduction of behavioral problems in their classrooms.

## Acknowledgments

Giving honor to God for he is first in my life and has provided me with what I need and exactly when I need it. He has blessed me with family and friends who contributed to me completing this thesis. Special thanks to my husband Jensyl Guy for being there for me, Aunt Tom who listened to me and helped me when I became frustrated, my son Jabryl Guy who gave me strength when I needed it most. I am grateful to my mother in-law and stepfather in-law for their invaluable help and support. Lakecia Hyman, thank you for your valuable help.

“Granny” Almateen McGaney, thank you for your wisdom  
and encouraging me to seek knowledge.

I love you and miss you.

Rest in peace.

My beautiful mother Shelva Jean Pee,

“I did it.”

Thank you for giving me life and the incentive

to be who I am today.

I love you and miss you.

Rest in peace.

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## Chapter 1

### DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS AND WAYS TO IMPROVE

#### Introduction

Currently, at Leeds Avenue School, there are an overwhelming number of students that are referred to the Family Support Team that are experiencing discipline problems. The cause of this overwhelming number could be that numerous students need help in various areas. Thus, there must be a change in how help is pursued. The school community is in need of more options to help these students. The school community depends on the Family Support team to provide information to help improve students' behavior.

The Family Support Team helps parents to ensure the success of their children by focusing on parent education, parent involvement, attendance, and student behavior. This team is composed of existing or additional staff such as parent liaisons, social workers, counselors, and vice principals. The team's goal and responsibility is to provide strategies, provide services, and adapt traditional school structures to meet the needs of students who may not make the progress the school community would like to see due to attendance, family, or discipline problems. The Family Support Team endeavors are to work with the teacher and family to assure that the child is provided with enough support to be successful in school.



### Purpose of the Study:

The purpose of the study was to learn new ways of assisting students who have discipline problems, and who are referred to the Family Support Team. The intent was to compile a list of strategies to assist students that have discipline problems, and to share that information with the Family Support Team through an in-service workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to improve the effectiveness of how the Family Support Team by teaching members of the team how to use the various discipline models. In addition, the intern changed how the team offers help to these students and teachers.

### Significance of Study

The significance of this study was grounded in the belief that students with discipline problems in the classroom disturb not only their learning, but also the learning of others. By discovering more ways to assist students with discipline problems and the teachers of these students, the Family Support Team will become more effective in the process of improving student behavior.

This study is extremely important to the intern due to her own teaching experience and of observing other classes with significant discipline problems that disrupted the learning process of other students. The class comprised of 13 boys and 6 girls ages 6 and 7. The intern changed seating arrangements, researched information about discipline problems, contacted parents, collaborated with colleagues and administrators, lectured students, and met with Family Support to reduce or eliminate

discipline problems. Needless to say, the intern was disappointed that she did not receive the help that she needed to help the students. The intern realized that she had to find better functional techniques in managing the students' behavior. From this experience, the intern was drawn to researching different ways of managing students with discipline problems.

#### Organization of the Study:

The groundwork for this study was laid in September 2001. The new strategies will be implemented in December 2001.

Information was collected during September 2001 to provide the Family Support Team with more options to offer teachers during the family support meetings. Data regarding the implementation of the discipline strategies was collected from those meetings held in December through February. In February the data was analyzed to determine the effectiveness of the new strategies. The findings were presented to family support team in March.

The focus of the second chapter reviews the literature that was relative to discipline problems in classrooms. The third chapter addresses four areas related to the research design used for this study. The intern provides a description of the design used to conduct the research and instruments used in the study. In the fourth chapter the intern gives a description of the interviews used. A description of what type of evidence was gathered to learn that the study had an impact on the discipline at the school and if so,

what kind of impact. The conclusion and implications will be highlighted in the last chapter.

Setting of the Study:

The school in this study is located in the city of Pleasantville, which is located 5 miles west of Atlantic City. Pleasantville is located in southeastern New Jersey. It is an urban city conveniently located near highways, airports, bus, and rail lines. Founded in 1888, Pleasantville is a city united by strong community business relations.

Pleasantville has a proud heritage that is built on a firm foundation of cultural and business diversity. The business diversity mix is comprised of retail, professional, and light industrial businesses. Combining the two forces together have created an economic expansion along with a renewed sense of community spirit.

In 1994 the entire community of Pleasantville became an Urban Enterprise Zone due to the economic downslide. The city became and UEZ community based on need for economic development, high unemployment rates, and the number of families receiving welfare and the potential benefits shown by the application. The Urban Enterprise Zone Authority was established under N.J.S.A 52.27H-60et sef. in 1983. The major purpose of the UEZ plan is to draw flourishing businesses to the city to boost its economy. Incentives are given to businesses that are willing to relocate to urban districts. The incentives include purchasing items without paying sales tax, subsidized unemployment insurance costs, corporation tax credit and other perks.

Pleasantville is lead by an active mayor and city council government. Ralph Peterson is the current mayor of Pleasantville. He has been the mayor of Pleasantville since 1992. Mayor Peterson is the first African American to hold this office. The community features full-time police and fire departments, a public library and a large recreation center. The city's comprehensive municipal services include public sewer and water, electric, natural gas and cable television.

In 1998 the reported crime rate per 1000 for Pleasantville was 65.2 and the violent crime rate per 100 was 12.4. In 1998 the FBI reported the number of crimes during 1997. The crime rate in Pleasantville poses a moderate risk. The majority of the crimes in the city are committed against property. See table 1 for the number of crimes.

Pleasantville housing is diverse and includes single, duplex, and multi-family homes, apartments and condominiums. There are total of 6601 households in the city of Pleasantville. The family structures consist of 63% family households and 37% non-family households. There are a total of 498 households that receive public aid and 1,601 households that receive social security.

The median family income is 41,465. The median age of a Pleasantville citizen is 32.8. Table 2 shows the economics and housing for the city of Pleasantville. The population of Pleasantville for the 2000 census was 19,012 and 9,043 of these people are in the Civilian Labor Force. The unemployment rate and people dependent on assistance

from the federal government is moderately high for the people of Pleasantville. See tables 3, 4 and 5 for more information about the people of Pleasantville.

**Table 1**

**Number of Crimes**

Violent crimes .....	281
(murder, rape, robbery and assault)	
Property crimes.....	1040
(burglary, larceny, and auto theft)	
Murder .....	3
Forcible rape .....	15
Robbery .....	92
Aggravated assault.....	171
Burglary .....	339
Larceny-theft.....	596
Motor vehicle theft .....	105
Arson.....	15

**Table 2**

**Economics and Housing**

Median home value .....	\$115,300
Home value appreciation.....	11%
Percentage Homeowners .....	6%
Percentage Renters .....	60%
Job growth in the past year .....	-1.7%
Projected job growth through 2010 .....	13.1%
Sales tax .....	6%
Property tax in dollars per \$1000 value...	\$27.40
Income Tax.....	2.4%

**Table 3**

Diversity/Ethnic Culture

Race, 2000

White .....	4,755
Black.....	10,969
American Indian .....	54
Asian.....	371
Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian .....	5
Other Race .....	2084
Two or more races, 2000.....	774
Hispanic Origin 2000 .....	4,158

**Table 4**

People

Education Levels

Less than grade 9 .....	10%
Grade 9-12 .....	16%
High School .....	39%
Some College.....	15%
Associate degree .....	5%
Baccalaureate degree .....	12%
Graduate degree.....	3%

**Table 5**

Labor and Employment

Total civilian labor force, 1990.....	8,499
Employed persons 16 years over by occupation, 1990:	
Mgrs. & professionals.....	1,392
Technician, sales, & Admin. Support.....	2,003
Service occupation.....	2,841
Farming, fishing, & forestry.....	28
Precision prod., craft, & repair.....	581
Operators, fabricators, & Laborers.....	923
Self-employed person, 1990.....	193
Total civilian labor force, 1998.....	9,093
Unemployment rate, 1998.....	12%

The Pleasantville community is provided with a variety of family services. Some of those services are specifically designed to help students. Atlantic County Division Of Intergenerational Services/Juvenile Family Crisis Center is an early intervention program which assists families with children between the ages of 10 and 17 who are experiencing difficulty managing the behavior of their adolescent children. Community Justice Institute/Mediation Services provides mediations services, which include: truancy, peer, child, custody, victim/offender and conflict resolution is provided. Family Service Association/Pleasantville Family Center provides various services at the Pleasantville Community Center for all children and their families who reside in Pleasantville. There are many more community services that are offered to the citizens of Pleasantville. These organizations play a vital role in providing services to the school community.

Pleasantville School District consists of levels Pre K-12. Pleasantville has a high school, middle school, and four elementary schools. Pleasantville School District enrollment is 4,000 students. (NJ Municipal Data Book p. 402) The student transience rate is 32.3%.

Pleasantville received 13% of its 2001-2002 school budget from the local taxes, 3% from federal source, 4% from other sources and more than 80% from the state.

The school in this study is Leeds Avenue School. Leeds Avenue School is one of four elementary schools in the Pleasantville district that service Pre-Kindergarten through Fourth grade. The school's population is comprised of 90 staff members and 510



students. The school's professional staff is comprised of 45 percent African Americans, 52 percent Caucasian, and 3 percent Hispanic. The school's support staff is comprised of 85 percent African American, 10 percent Caucasian, 3 percent Hispanic, and 1 percent other. The school's population is comprised of 82 percent African American, 3 percent Caucasian, 14 percent Hispanic and 1 percent other. The average class size at Leeds Avenue School is 18 students. Eighty percent of the students participate in the school's free or reduced lunch and breakfast program; a program developed exclusively for low income families.

Leeds Avenue School is equipped to meet the special needs of students who are physically and developmentally disabled, and the building is handicapped accessible. The school houses a morning and after-school K.E.Y.S (Keeping Every Youth Safe) program to better accommodate families' needs. The K.E.Y.S. program is available to the students who require childcare services before and after school.

Currently, the school is experiencing a Whole School Reform using the Success For All reading, math, science, and social studies curriculum. Success For All is a comprehensive restructuring for elementary schools. It emphasizes the use of specific research-based instructional materials and programs in all grades.

The Whole School Reform is part of the state's plan to get Pleasantville students on parity with other districts. The state decided to create the opportunity to achieve a

thorough and efficient education for the students in Abbott School Districts through the use of Whole School Reform.

Reading is usually the first program to undergo change in every Abbott district. Success For All Reading program was implemented in the 1998-1999 school year. The program focuses heavily on cooperative learning. Success For All's reading curriculum is based on research and effective practices in beginning reading and an appropriate use of cooperative learning.

Success For All MathWings was implemented in the 1999-2000 school year. Math skills are presented to the students with a constructive approach. Students are actively engaged in the learning process because Success For All programs is based on student discussion, problem solving and the use of manipulatives. Students are given the opportunity to establish a solid foundation in math through exploration, sharing, and practicing.

Leeds Avenue implemented the Successful For All World Lab curriculum in the 2001-2002 school year. The World Lab component of the Success For All program consists of thematic, integrated science and social studies units. It is a laboratory where students apply and enhance the skills they learn in other academic areas. World Lab is a design, which promotes an understanding of interdependence of economic, political, biological, and physical systems. The curriculum encourages students to problem solve and use higher-level thinking processes.

Leeds Avenue has a Site-Based School Management Team. The School Management Team is a collaborative planning team which coordinates the development, implementation and evaluation of the Quality Assurance Annual Report (QAAR) for school and school level plans. The committee members include administrators, teachers, staff members, and parents who meet at least once monthly. The goals of the committee include both the activities and budget concerns of the school in addition to overseeing faculty selection, develop curriculum and instruction design, design a program of professional development, and prepare a school-based budget in accordance with the requirements of the Abbott Law.

Leeds Avenue School is located in an Abbott District that entitles students to the most comprehensive set of educational rights for urban children in the nation. Under Abbott, urban students have the right to an education based on New Jersey's Core Curriculum Content Standards. Leeds Avenue School is issued school funding at the spending level of successful suburban school districts, or "parity funding". The children are offered intensive preschool and other supplemental programs to wipe out disadvantages. Abbott is a Court order to dramatically improve the academics urban school district.

During the 2000-2001 school year, Leeds Avenue School did not meet the overall State objectives for Math, Language Arts, or Science. Based on the ESPA test in Math the percentage of students rated proficient and advanced proficient decreased from 31%

in 1999 to 29% in 2000, to 27% in 2001. The literacy area measured by ESPA showed an increase in the percentage of students scoring proficient from 11% in 2000 to 71.6 % in 2001 but the overall objective was not attained. The overall objective in Science was not met but, the percentage of students passing the objective for 2001 was 71.1 % as compared to 71.5 % in 2000 and 64% in 1999.

The majority of the State objectives were not met due to various reasons. The intern thinks that the transition of students in and out the school causes students not to be in the Success For All programs for the entirety. These students are not in the program for the duration, which has an affect on the results of the ESPA test.

Leeds Avenue School will continue to work on full attainment of the Language program through the continued implementation of the Success For All Reform model as well as district writing and language programs. Leeds Avenue School will also continue to use the Success For All Math Wings Program to help meet the state objectives. The implementation of the Success For All World Lab Program will help increase the percentage of students passing the objectives in Science.

## Chapter 2

### Review of Literature

#### Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to present a review of the literature on discipline problems and methods and techniques to improve discipline problems in elementary students. Extensive research has shown discipline problems consume learning time. Many factors are combined to diminish a teacher's ability to manage discipline problems. Parents and society do not give teachers the respect they used to give in previous years. The intern will highlight some to reduce discipline problems in the classrooms in order to produce positive changes.

The first section discusses discipline problems. The next section focuses on factors that contribute to discipline problems while the last section focuses on ways to reduce discipline problems.

#### Discipline Problems

Discipline, in its truest form is designed to manage rather than control student behavior with preventive and intervention strategies. Discipline problems are one of the major problems facing students in schools. Discipline is consistently a major concern for all educators, regardless of subject or grade level taught. Buck (1992) suggests that student behavior in general appears to be getting worse: increased gang violence, vandalism, drug abuse, and a general disrespect for authority are having a profound

impact on many of the nation's classrooms. Discipline has been pointed out to be one of the most important issues in education today. Students are faced with many obstacles at home that create discipline problems that hinder the learning process in school.

#### Factors That Contribute To Discipline Problems

The high divorce rate and separations of parents affect many children. They often cause the students to exhibit inappropriate behaviors as their parent's struggle with pain. Young children often worry about the welfare of their parent who is not at home. With the increasing number of broken homes, poverty, emotional and physical neglect and abuse, children are not being disciplined at home.

Teachers face chronic problems in the classroom that are caused by students' lack of discipline. The amount of learning that takes place is determined by the manner in which the problem is handled. Geiger (2000) states the most frequent discipline problems are talking-whispering, out-of-seat, fidgeting, and inattention was found to be similar throughout the grades.

According to Gausta (1992) school discipline has two main goals: (1) to ensure the safety of staff and students, and (2) to create an environment conducive to learning. The most common discipline problems do not involve any criminal behavior. Even though the most common discipline problem negatively affects the learning environment, they do not threaten personal safety. Learning time is lost because disruptions interrupt

lessons for all students. According to Henley (1997) many teachers today spent thirty percent of their instructional time on discipline.

When a child's poor behavior cannot be explained or justified as a short-term stage, we need to observe the child's behavior and think about the reasons behind the child's behavior.

A child that is experiencing problems with discipline should be assessed for skill deficits (Gable and Quinn 1998). An assessment of discipline problems might indicate that the student has a skill deficit and does not know how to perform desired skills. Students try to escape or avoid a situation for which they lack the appropriate skills or appropriate alternative skills by engaging in inappropriate behaviors.

Discipline problems can be deceptive. Discipline problems are not always the problem of a chaotic classroom. It is sometimes the type of instructions. Some school reforms may need to be put on hold while schools deal with discipline problems.

In some classrooms student are frustrated because activities and tasks are too difficult for them. These students show their frustration by acting out or aggressive or withdrawn behavior. The lack of understanding assignments also results in lowering students' self-esteem. Some students simply give up trying to meet academic and social expectations that they perceive as unattainable.

Low self-esteem causes a lot of behavior problems. A child's behavior is affected by low self-esteem. Children who are disciplined with only negative talk may learn to

behave, but they often do it with a grudge against their parents or teachers and with little internal self-esteem.

Some schools' characteristics contribute to discipline problems. Rules are sometimes unclear or perceived as unfairly or inconsistently enforced. Students occasionally do not believe in the rules, which make them difficult to enforce. The teachers-administrators are not familiar with some of the rules. Teachers and administrators disagree on the proper responses to student misconduct. Teacher-administration cooperation is sometimes poor or the administration is inactive. Some teachers tend to have punitive attitudes; misconduct is ignored; and rules become unimportant causing discipline problems to rise.

Students misbehave for a variety of reasons, and knowing the underlying cause of a student's misconduct helps the teacher to determine which intervention strategies may or may not be successful. Buck (1992) suggested boredom is a common reason for discipline problems. Some lesson activities require students to sit idly for long period of time that may result in misbehavior.

Some discipline problems continue because sometimes teachers and administrators fail to provide new rules. When a new problem surfaces, a new rule often has to be invented. This does not mean that rules must always nor does it mean that the basic ground rule is shifting. It simply indicates that the basic ground rules are shifting. New rules have to be created due to the change of the circumstances.



Sometimes there are rules that just do not fit the discipline problem.

Consequences should have something to do with the broken rule and major punishment should not be handed down for minor broken rules. Many punishments are shortsighted or ineffective. Punishments are most effective when they are reasonable consequences of the behavior.

Research shows effective administration and personal examples play important roles in establishing school discipline. Principals that walk around can informally monitor discipline problem areas.

Oswald and Murray (1995) discovered that previous studies of discipline problems in junior and primary schools have indicated that the majority of behavior management problems both inside and outside classrooms can be attributed to relatively small numbers of children who persist in difficult-to-manage behavior.

There is a continuing concern about the understanding and management of discipline problems in schools. Experts and popular opinions state their ideas to the measures of how to reduce discipline problems.

The most important factor in developing a successful program for students with behavior problems is the establishment of educational environment in which positive behavior is reinforced and where appropriate social skills are taught as forthrightly as academic skills.

A structured environment for learning can reduce discipline problems. Planned seating arrangements reduce opportunities for misbehavior. Alternating the seating of disruptive and nondisruptive students also keeps disruptive students away from each other.

The school climate plays a big role in how discipline problems are reduced or eliminated in a school. Noticing the students who behave is critical to establishing a positive school climate. According to Rosenberg approximately 10% of students in a school, those who chronically misbehave, tend to receive 90% of the attention. In some case there is a subset of students engaging in appropriate behavior notice the attention misbehaving students receive and begin to act negatively to receive that attention. When students are not being validated for their positive behavior, discipline problems sometimes grow.

#### Ways to Reduce or Eliminate Discipline Problems

There was a rapid succession for behavioral theorist in the 1960's and 1970's. These theorists helped classroom environments and student behavior.

Glasser's Reality Therapy stressed the use of choice as the cause of behavior, good or bad, and thus instructed teachers to direct student toward making value judgments, students would come to realize the importance of "good" choices in behavior and continue to make them again in the future.

Wolfgang and Glickman (1986) stated that Glasser believes every student has the capacity to be rational and responsible. The Reality Model encourages students to be successful. If the student misbehaves the teacher confronts the student to look at the behavior that prevents him or her from succeeding. The teacher makes future plans by asking the student to make a commitment to prevent the behavior that causes him or her to be unsuccessful. The student must be confronted with “what” questions and must be pressed for a plan. (Wolfgang and Glickman (1986). The student is responsible for the success or failure of the plan, not the teacher. According to Tauber (1990) there are eight steps to Reality Therapy.

1. Secure Student Involvement- Be Personal. Teachers show students that they care and help students to see school as a good place.
2. Identify the Problem Behavior. Teacher should ask the student to identify his own misbehavior.
3. Call for Value Judgments. Introduce cause and effect to the student. It is easier for a child to understand how his or her behavior affects others, himself, or herself. Avoid making moral judgments. Moral judgments are made when a student’s misbehavior is connected to something about his or her character.
4. Plan a New Behavior. By now the students has the ability to assume responsibility for his or her misbehavior and develop a plan to change

the behavior. If the child misbehaves ask him or her for their plan.

The teacher may suggest a few plans for the students to make a choice if he or she is new to the responsibility of planning.

5. Get a Commitment. The student should make a commitment in writing or seal the commitment with a handshake.
6. Accept No Excuses. Reality Therapy deal does not deal with the past therefore does not allow any excuses.
7. Do not punish. A broken plan for new behavior cannot be fixed through punishment. Punishment, or even the threat of punishment, destroys the warmth, the trust, and the feeling that school is a good place- all necessary for Reality Therapy to work.
8. Never Give Up- Be Persistent. You decide how long is never.

According to Wolfgang and Glickman (1986) Dreikurs stated that there are four subconscious goals that motivate misbehavior. 1) Attention Getting 2)Power and Control 3) Revenge 4)Helplessness. We must understand that behaviors are forms of communication. Often students use inappropriate actions to get attention, or escape a situation, which gets their needs met. Proactive, preventive plans help students learn new ways of communicating and getting their needs met. Too often we react to students who have behavioral difficulties only after they have engaged in inappropriate behavior.

Some students strive to get attention through negative means instead of receiving recognition through productive work. Teacher must avoid giving students attention when he or she acts out. The teacher plays into the student's plan when the attention is given to him or her. The student should be given a period of time to receive the attention he or she craves by reading a story to the class or sharing, telling a joke or sharing an item.

There are some students that seek power and control by acting out because they feel that they do not measure up to the expectation of others or self. The teacher should not engage in a revenge struggle with a student. Teachers who engage in a power struggle with students usually continue the excitement and challenge for the student. Wolfgang and Glickman (1986) gave the following examples of a teacher disengaging from a power struggle: When the student defies the teacher merely says, "I cannot force you to do this. If you will not work on your paper, then choose to do something else that is quiet. Later, you can tell me when you will get your work done (at recess, at home, in the morning, and so forth)." Give the student power by allowing him or her to be the lunch monitor, take messages to the office, collect homework, or be the group leader.

There are times when students act out by seeking revenge. Students often use revenge as a goal when he or she is hurting and are unable to gain attention or power. The student may want to retaliate because he or she feels hurt. It is important to have special moments with a student that seeks revenge. Arrange to let the child eat lunch

with you or set aside time to have a friendly conversation and try to find out why the child is hurting.

Some students that misbehave operate with a goal of helplessness or inadequacy. The student operating with this goal feels like a nobody therefore, he or she gives up on being a member of group. The key in helping the student who shows inadequacy or helplessness is patience. The teacher must attempt to show the child that he or she is capable. Wolfgang and Glickman (1986) suggested the following practice that might help a helpless student: Allow the student to bring in a favorite project or hobby from home that he or she can work on in school. Respond to a despairing student who throws his or her paper, pencils or books by saying, “You are trying hard and it is difficult to learn to write (spell, add, and so forth). I know that you are going to improve and learn. Let’s pick up these papers and try again.

Dreikurs uses natural/logical consequences and the process of encouragement instead of using punishment, negative reinforcement or praise (positive reinforcement). A natural consequence happens as a result of a student’s behavior. A logical consequence is arranged and is related to the preceding behavior. For example if a student gets in front of another student in line, remove that student and place him or her at the end of the line.

When a general classroom discipline plan is not effective, a general individualized discipline plan is needed (Canter and Canter 1992,p. 227). Individualized discipline

plans are designed to help teach the student how show responsible behavior. It also helps the teacher make develop a positive relationship.

Canter and Canter (1992) support the idea that one or two of the difficult student's most critical problems should be included in the individualized discipline plan. The consequences that are included in the plan must be firmer and balanced with increased positive recognition.

The individualized discipline plan should include three important factors. First the plan must state the specific behaviors that are expected of the student. The teacher should select one or two behaviors to work on at a time. The teacher must choose behaviors that he or she believes are most important to the child's success.

The second factor is the consequences. The consequences must be meaningful if the student does not make a choice to engage in the appropriate behavior. There are times when difficult students will not respond to the basic consequences used in a discipline hierarchy. Some difficult students may need consequences that are not listed on a classroom discipline hierarchy.

The third factor includes meaningful positive recognition. The teacher must give the student positive recognition when he or she behaves appropriately. There must always be a balance between consequences and positive recognition. Once the individualized plan has been implemented the teacher should look for opportunities to recognize the student's appropriate behavior.

The individual plan must be presented to the student in firmly and empathetically. The plan usually works if the teacher's responses to the student are assertive.

Token Economy is another behavior modification plans used in many classrooms. Selecting a targeted behavior is the basic rule for establishing a token economy. The teacher can present the targeted behavior to the student or group once the selected target has been identified. It is a well-known fact that an emphasis on "what you do" is more palatable to children than an emphasis on "what you cannot do." The teacher must post the rules and review them frequently.

The teacher must select an appropriate token and establish reinforcers for which tokens can be exchanged. The rewards must be presented as a menu. The token economy should be introduced on a limited basis initially. Start the system with a small token and build on firm understanding. Children must be given clarity and preciseness of the system.

Provide immediate reinforcement for acceptable behavior. The process for obtaining the tokens should not take more effort than the desired reward because the children will lose interest in the program. The reward must be dispensed at the proper time. Gradually change from a continuous to a variable schedule of reinforcement. The program can be destroyed if there are quick unpredictable or premature changes in the reinforcement schedule.



The teacher must provide time for the children to exchange tokens for rewards. If the token economy is legitimate class program, time during the school day should be made available for the exchange. Time should not be taken from the children's recess, lunch, or free time. Finally, revise the reward menu frequently to avoid the students from becoming bored.

With the recent school community concerns regarding the discipline problems of students, it is my belief that every school needs to evaluate how help is offered to students, parents, and teachers. The school community must look at the impact discipline problems have on the learning process. It is with great hope that through the interns' investigation that a recommendation can be made to Leeds Avenue School to reduce discipline problems.

## Chapter 3

### Design of the Study

The changes in our society and family structure have sent administrators and teachers out to rediscover and discover discipline strategies to improve discipline problems in schools. The school's curriculum is presently based on a whole school reform model, Success For All, which includes a Getting Along component. The Getting Along component is designed to promote students' ability to think critically, to solve problems non-violently and to work in teams effectively. Schools are faced with various behavioral problems that result from the lack of social skills. The Getting Along program is used to develop and improve social skills. The intern researched discipline strategies that could effectively work with the Getting Along Curriculum to improve students' behavior.

The research examined discipline strategies that focused on the needs of individual students. The strategies focused more on the students' needs and not only their behavior. The strategies were chosen due to data gathered from teachers. The teachers shared information about individual students that have discipline problems. The majority of the student' discipline problems needed individual attention. Therefore, individual discipline strategies were highlighted in this study.

This research study was qualitative in nature. The internship setting was used to conduct the action research project. An instrument was developed which collected

information from teachers about the discipline strategies implemented in their classrooms. The instrument also gathered information about the students' discipline problems. The development of the instrument was based on the intern's knowledge of the discipline problems at Leeds Avenue School. The two general areas of discipline are to identify the problem and recognize the strategy to use to reduce or eliminate discipline problems.

The intern's research instrument was a questionnaire. For various reasons the intern chose to utilize questionnaires to collect data. Due to no contract in the school district the intern would best be able to collect information that would not consume teachers' preparation or planning time. The questionnaire used was formatted with open-ended questions. Open-ended questions were developed to encourage personal and real responses. The usage of the first question on the questionnaire was used to collect some general information about the respondent. The other questions focused directly on discipline problems and strategies. The questionnaire was developed to gain knowledge about the effectiveness of the discipline strategies.

Prior to distributing the questionnaire to the teachers, the intern met with the teacher to discuss the questions. The intern explained to the teachers that purpose of the questionnaire was to see the effectiveness of the discipline strategies. The teachers were given two weeks to complete the questionnaire. When all the questionnaires were completed, each teacher received a note of appreciation for participating in the study.

All teachers from the grade levels did not participate in implementing the discipline strategies in their classroom. The participants' teaching experiences range for 1-23 years. Two of the participants teach first grade and the other two teach second grade. The participating teachers volunteered to implement discipline strategies in their classroom. Each teacher relied on his or her personal experience in disciplining students and the data provided by the intern.

Teacher A is a first year teacher that is experiencing difficulties managing discipline problems in the classroom. Teacher A possesses a wealth of knowledge regarding discipline strategies because he is presently enrolled in a class that focuses on discipline problems.

Teacher B has eight years of teaching experience. This is her first year teaching in the public school system. Teacher B is having difficulties managing the behavioral problems in her classroom. She needs assistance to improve her classroom management skills.

Teacher C has twenty-three years of teaching experience. She has good classroom management skills. She teaches a group of students with severe behavioral problems.

Teacher D has 4 years of teaching experience. She has an exceptional amount of classroom control and has received excellent ratings for her classroom management skills.

The intern conducted meetings to discuss the researched discipline strategies. The focus of the meetings was to familiarize teachers with the strategies researched by the intern.

The data collection approach did not adhere to the scheduled time frame. The time frame was extended because the participating teachers did not implement the strategies in the classrooms within the scheduled time. The data collected from the questionnaire gave the intern an insight on which strategies the teachers used were effective in their classroom. The intern gained knowledge of why the teachers thought other strategies could not improve or eliminate discipline problems in their classroom. There also was data collection on other strategies that the participants used that were not researched by the intern. That data created a need for further research.

The intern collected the questionnaires and collaborated with the teachers to make sure the information collected was reliable.

This case study utilized qualitative research in its data analysis plan. The data was organized by the similarities in words, phrases, or events that stand out. Then the intern created codes for the patterns. Once the data was coded and summarized, the intern looked for relationships among the categories and pattern that may suggest generalization. The categories were used to organize the data. Organized data was summarized. The intern interpreted the data and drew inferences to make recommendations for the use of the strategies for the remainder 2002-2003 school year.

## Chapter 4

### Presentation of the Findings

The discipline strategies to improve behavioral problems at Leeds Avenue Elementary School were implemented in November 2001. Data was collected before and during the 2001-2002 school year. Qualitative research was completed using questionnaires and pre and post meetings.

According to meetings held in the beginning of October, teachers and the family support team agreed that more discipline strategies needed to be implemented. The data concerning the teachers' impression on discipline strategies was gathered using questionnaires and meetings.

The meetings were held to gain knowledge about some of the students' behavioral problems. The teacher acknowledged that they were in need of various strategies to help the students.

Collecting and analyzing data allowed the intern to develop data summary themes. In analyzing the data three categories emerged (a) significant discipline problems (b) strategy/or strategies implemented (c) effect of the strategies on the students (e) other strategies implemented. Each category was unique in term of how it addressed the problem.

According to the questionnaire the most significant problem teachers have in their classroom is related to students following direction. Teachers expressed how these students disrupt the educational setting. Instructional time is reduced when teachers repeatedly go over directions such as put the pencil down or have a seat.

However when the teachers discuss the most significant problem they also included the “ Getting Along Curriculum” as a problem. They noted that the students that have discipline problems have difficulties responding to the active listening sign. The active listening sign is used to encourage students to stop all actions. It helps to students to follow the rules. It does produce the outcome that teachers need to create an atmosphere that conducive to learning.

The teacher implemented individualized behavioral plans to help those students. Three of the teachers implemented Canter and Canter. Canter and Canter are an individualized discipline plan that included three important factors. The specific behaviors that are expected must be stated. The teacher must create meaningful consequences for inappropriate behaviors. Positive recognition is also included in the plan. The data from the strategy reflected a pattern that the students were in need of individual attention to help reduce or eliminate their discipline problems. In a post meeting, after the participants completed the questionnaire they revealed how important it was for the students to know the expected behavior and consequences that was listed in their plan. The students were taught to take ownership for their behavior. The plan

reduced and eliminated some of the discipline problems because the students became accustomed to receiving attention as a result of good behavior. Two of the teachers mentioned how students often “acted out” just to receive individual attention.

The participants expressed how the individualized plan helped them build positive relationships with the students. It was noted that one of the students was very excited about the plan because it allowed her to have conversation with the teacher one on one. The student was anxious for her mom to get a good report about her behavior. The plan helped the teacher learn about the student’s interest. Overall the Canter and Canter Strategy brought positive changes in the classrooms.

The participants in this study used other discipline strategies in their classroom to provide students with choices to reduce or eliminate behavioral problems. Teacher A implemented a combination of the Glasser’s Reality Therapy and Harry K. Wong’s major concepts of an Effective Teacher. Glasser’s Reality Therapy stressed the use of choice as the cause of behavior, good or bad, and thus instructed teachers to direct students making value judgments, students would come to realize the importance of “good” choices in behavior and continue to make them in the future.

According to teacher A helping students with behavioral problems is based on an effective teacher guiding students toward making good choices. A combination of the two strategies challenges students to be cognizance of their behavior and the choices for the behavior.



Teacher A continues to use the strategies to improve student's behavior. He stated that not having enough time is always a factor in implementing discipline strategies that work. These strategies could work for the majority of the students but the school's schedule is so rigid. Therefore, he uses the strategies with the students that are having the most significant problems.

Teacher B uses a daily incentive chart. Teacher B said: Each child starts the day with two circles. One is removed for every infraction. Children may earn circles back throughout the day. Once the day is over, the circles remain off for the week. Any child with five or more circles at the end of the week may pick a prize.

Teacher B continues to use the incentive chart with her students. She stated that she would continue to use the chart as long as it helps her students. She also stated that it is time consuming but it produces positive results in her classroom.

Teacher C said she uses a discipline plan that involves sending students away from the group for ten minutes. If the students misbehave again, the student is sent to another classroom for time out. Finally the student must write a note to his or her parent to tell how he or she misbehaved. The teacher must really be consistent to get this plan to work.

Teacher C express how the really works because it does not take too much time away from the students that are on task. It does not work if the parents are not willing to support the plan.

The discipline strategy used by teacher D was a simple plan that gives the students a set of rules in the beginning of the school year. The teacher must be consistent in enforcing those rules on a daily basis. The consequence and rewards must be clear.

Teacher D said that the sets of rules work for the majority of the students. The teacher must review the rules as often as once a week.

In an effort to implement and enforce discipline strategies, one must first understand the strategies. I met with the teachers to make sure that they were clear of the strategies. All the teachers had a good level of understanding the discipline strategies.

To receive the maximum benefits of the discipline strategies, everyone including teachers, students, parents, and administrators must work to enforce them. Teachers agreed that the researched discipline strategies are sometimes implemented in various ways. I discovered that the first action teachers must take in enforcing the discipline strategies is to be consistent.

Students must have a full understanding of what the teachers expect of them. In my opinion the schools' expectation and the parents' may often vary. Teachers must not only inform the students of the discipline strategies, but the parents must also be well informed.

The data collected informs the participants that teachers must continue to research, discuss, and alter the various discipline strategies in order to reduce or eliminate the behavioral problems in our school.

There are discipline strategies available that can help our students and school community with discipline problems. Educators must not continue to use strategies that do not improve discipline in the classroom.

In the post meeting the participants discussed how often teachers do not participate in the research to solve discipline problems. The researched strategies were helpful to all participants. This project actually encouraged teachers to engage in further research of discipline strategies

The focus of the post meeting was to encourage students to make the right choice. The participants discussed the effectiveness of the researched strategies. The strategies are designed to give students choice. The student's behavior improved, when they were presented with the strategies that involved them in the decision making process.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions, Implications and Further Study

This intern researched various discipline strategies that could improve and eliminated various discipline problems at Leeds Avenue School. To provide teachers with discipline strategies to help students, the intern researched the causes of various behavioral problems.

The conclusions were clear. The discipline strategies produced positive outcomes for four classes at Leeds Avenue School. The strategies may not have directly improved the effectiveness of the family support team but they reduced behavioral problems in some classes. Due to the reduction of some problems the family support team meetings were reduced in the area of discipline. This resulted in allowing more time for the family support team to deal with other problems.

Introducing new ways of assisting students who misbehave in school was an interesting experience. The intern's vision for this project was to gain the participation of the entire school population. The response was not as positive as the intern thought it would be. With all of the problems that the teachers had regarding the planning time and contract issues their attention to the information was not fully focused. They basically felt that they would need to devote some of their time after school to commit to this project. At the time of the study the union agreed not to work past the contractual time. The intern worked with the four teachers that were willing to participate.

To receive the maximum benefits of the discipline strategies, everyone, including teachers, students, parents, and administrators must work to implement them. The teachers acknowledged that the school needs more options in dealing with discipline problems in the school. The teachers agreed that the discipline strategies could be interpreted in several ways. This is why it is extremely important to meet and discuss new ideas.

The intern discovered that handing out the discipline strategies in meetings appeared to be the best means of dissemination. Explanations were given directly from the intern and all questions were answered directly. This left little room for uncertainty.

It is good to implement new strategies, curriculum, and policies in schools but one must understand what they are expected to implement. Schools must make sure that there are in-service workshops to explain the expectations of any new program or project. In working with a small group of participants the level of understanding was easily accomplished.

The teachers that participated expressed appreciation for the information. The survey responses from the teachers were helpful. The teachers were creative with the information to achieve positive outcomes from their students. The positive outcomes were that the students' behavior improved.

The school has a discipline policy but it needs to be accompanied by a set of strategies to help the students. It is easy to use standard expectations to govern schools.

The intern learned it to be more of a challenge to examine those expectations according to the needs of the individuals within the setting. The intern took a proactive approach in this research. The organizational change affected the four teachers that participated in the study and the Family Support Team. The participants were able to implement the strategies in their classrooms without going to the Family Support Team. As a leader the intern provided teachers with information that would improve their day-to-day role as a disciplinarian. The teachers were presented with literature that helped them reduce or eliminate behavior problems. Teacher must continue to research the education field and discover and rediscover information that improves the day- to -day operation of a classroom. The intern encouraged the participants to reach out in the teaching profession and conduct research to gain knowledge to help students to become better learners. When students are taught to display appropriate behavior at school, they become better learners.

In my research, I discovered that some teachers are frustrated with repeated discipline problems. They are frustrated because of how discipline policies address problems. Some of the recommendations for repeat offenders must include ways to help them improve their behavior.

There is a tremendous need for further study. There are an overwhelming amount of strategies that are available to help teachers, parents, and students with the behavior of students in schools. The further study of this project needs to involve the entire school

body. The way to solve problems is to educate the people that deal with the problems. A Discipline Strategy In-Service Workshop for the school would be very useful in reaching out to inform the school community. The school could later form a committee to have regular meeting to discuss the strategies and recommendations of how to implement the strategies.

The research would have been more successful if the teachers did not have contract issues to resolve and if the project was implemented in the beginning of the year. Some people were not willing to change their routine from the beginning of the year whether it is to their advantage or disadvantage.

This study could continue next school year to involve the entire school community. This study provides information that helps the school to focus on some of the changing needs of our students.

It is recommended that a committee of a building administrator, teachers, students and parents develop a policy for discipline strategies. The formation of such a committee would allow the school community to compile more strategies to help the students that are having discipline problems.

It is also recommended that at the beginning of each school year the administrator provide a brief workshop about the discipline strategies. Each teacher and the parents of all the students should receive a copy of the compiled list of discipline strategies.

A few other questions resulted from the intern's research. The questions are relevant for further research in the area of implementing discipline strategies in the classroom:

1. Could parental involvement in the discipline strategies increase the effectiveness?
2. How could staff development workshops that address the discipline strategies affect behavioral problems?
3. What professional services are available for students who are frequently misbehaving?



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Appendix A  
Research Instruments

## Discipline Strategies Questionnaire

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. What is the most significant discipline problem in your classroom?  
TELL ME ABOUT IT.
3. Tell me about other discipline problems in your classroom.
4. Which one of the discipline strategies did you implement in your classroom?  
Describe the way you implemented it.
5. What effects did the strategy have on the student's behavior?
6. Tell me about other discipline strategies you use in your classroom?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

## Biographical Data

Name	Teresa McGaney-Guy
High School	Mullins High School Mullins, SC
Undergraduate	Bachelor of Science Business Administration Morris College Sumter, SC  Bachelor of Arts Liberal Arts Stockton College Pomona, NJ
Graduate	Master of Arts School Administration Rowan University Glassboro, NJ
Present Occupation	Elementary Teacher Leeds Avenue School Pleasantville, NJ