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PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT AS A TOOL
TO LOWER REPEAT SUSPENSION
OFFENSES

By
Steven W. Price

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
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Approved
by _____
Professor

Approved _____
Date April 10, 03

Abstract

Steven W. Price

Parental Involvement
As A Tool To Lower
Repeat Suspension Offenses
2003
Dr. Ted Johnson
School Administration

Parental involvement in educational has been sought after for decades. The purpose of this study was to involve parents in the discipline process and thereby reduce repeat discipline offense. The intern offered the opportunity for involvement to the parents of tenth grade students who received their first out-of-school suspension. The study took place during the first semester of the 2002-2003 school year. Parents were asked to participate in this study by answering a short survey and by discussing the incidence with their child at home.

The sample population included all of the tenth grade students. A limited sample included all the students whose parents voluntarily participated in the study. A comparison was conducted to show the effectiveness of the parental involvement. Suspension and repeat suspension rates were compared for the same time periods during the 2001-2002 and 2002-2003 school years.

The results of the study showed a significant reduction in the repeat offense rate in the limited sample. The involvement of parents in the limited sample also produced a reduction of repeat offenses in the total sample. The limited parental

involvement even resulted in lower repeat offense rate for the entire school population.

Mini-Abstract

Steven W. Price

Parental Involvement
As A Tool To Lower
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2003
Dr. Ted Johnson
School Administration

As educators take on more of a parenting role, schools must try to involve parents in the educational process. In this study the intern attempted to involve parents in the discipline process. The research proved that parental intervention could be an effective tool to reduce suspensions.

Acknowledgements

It was only through the support and encouragement of many people that this study was possible. Dr. Christy Thompson, Mr. Steve Saul and Dr. Kyrie Evrenoglou were the administrators at Millville Senior High School who supported the idea of this study and allowed me the resources to complete my project. The most important encouragement and patience came from the four people who mean the most to me, Kathy, Alex, Erin and Samantha. Thank you all.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Focus of the Study

The role of an educator has changed dramatically over the last few decades. The schools, and teachers in particular, have taken on more of a parenting role. More and more both parents are working or parents are divorced and the children end up spending more time with educators than parents. This fact is more pronounced with at-risk students. In both cases, the school has taken on more of the actual parenting. It would seem profitable to involve parents in the educational process. How then do educational leaders involve parents?

In this project, the Intern attempted to include parents in the educational disciplinary process. Would school discipline be more effective and productive if the school and family worked together? This program offered parents the opportunity to interact with school leaders and their children the first time the students committed a suspendable offense. And by including the parents in the process, the project was seeking to lower repeat suspension offenses of the students involved.

Success was determined by the amount the repeat offenses were lowered in the context of the entire sophomore class for the duration of the project. The rate of repeat suspension offenses for the same time period during the previous school year (2001-2002) was used as the comparison number.

Purpose of the Study

The Intern wanted to determine the effectiveness of immediate parental intervention on reducing the repeat suspension offenses for students in tenth grade, which is their first year at the senior high level. The purpose of this study was to measure the effects of parental intervention and involvement on lowering the repeat suspension incidences in tenth grade students using quantitative analysis. The study resulted in a report to the discipline committee showing the effectiveness of parental intervention as a viable practice for lowering suspension rates.

This study was useful in determining the parental role in affecting student behavior at school. Many times the school is called on to replace the parent in providing life skills. This study was intended to rekindle the cooperation and joint effort of the school and family. Not only did it show the students that their parents were interested in how they perform at school, but could also be used as a springboard for other parent/school initiatives.

In too many discipline situations parents are involved after the fact. In most minor incidences the parents are notified of a student's suspension after the decision to suspend has been made by the school administrator. It was the design of this study to involve the parents in the process itself in order to facilitate finding a lasting solution to repeat suspension offenses.

Definitions

The Intern - the person conducting this study and the one responsible for implementation and analysis.

Rif - Reduction in Force. Those positions eliminated to save money or meet changing population needs.

At-risk - Those students and/or parents from minority ethnical groups and/or lower socio-economical households.

This Project/program - speaks to the work to be done, and the manner of so doing, to complete this study.

Educational Leaders - Any school personnel in a position to make decisions or effect change.

Suspendable Offense - any behavioral infraction that warrants out-of-school suspension.

School Administrator - Any school personnel who handles the dispersion of disciplinary actions.

Parental Involvement - Any action taken by a parent in advocacy of the student's best interest and support of the educational institution functioning.

Limitation of the Study

This study inherently involved several limitations. The number of students suspended could not be controlled. Also, while the parents of all suspended tenth grade students were contacted, there was no way to insure or predict parental interest and/or involvement. There was also no guarantee that those parents who did agree to be interviewed were following through with the intervention at the home. Therefore, the study was limited to the cumulative effect on the entire study population of the number of students for which the parents were willing to be actively involved. Therefore the

outcomes were limited to the results of the total population effected by the involved subjects.

Setting of the Study

The study took place at Millville Senior High School. Millville Senior High is a comprehensive high school. The high school is a tenth through twelfth grade building. The building houses 1,400 students. The total population is multi-ethnic. The percentage breakdown is approximately 40 percent Caucasian, 35 percent African-American, and 25 percent Hispanic. The study included the sophomore class that was made up of 492 students. Students in the tenth grade are involved in a variety of curriculums. They include college prep, vocational, special services and fine arts.

The school had a student to administrator ratio of 145:1. That was well below the state average of 185.1:1. The student to teacher ratio was 12.2:1 which was slightly above the state ration of 11.8:1. The recent percentage of advanced degrees among the administration and staff was 70 percent have a BA/BS, 28 percent had a MA/MS and 2 percent had a PhD/EdD. Seventy-three percent of the 2001 graduating class pursued higher education degrees at two or four year colleges.

The Millville school district is an Abbott district and therefore was in the midst of whole school reform. The senior high school selected *The Coalition of Essential Schools* as the reform model. While being an Abbott district has monetary benefits, budgeting remained a problem.

The district has been forced to use zero-based budgeting and was still experiencing some growing pains as it formulated its methodologies and procedures. Departments continued to find shortfalls in resources due to unexpected expenses. Also, there have been well-documented discrepancies between the Abbott districts and the New Jersey State Department of Education regarding the yearly state aid figures. This particular year Millville was forced to Rif over 300 positions and subsequently lost over 20 positions for the 2002-2003 school year. Along with budgeting problems the district received little community voter support for yearly budgets. The voter community continued to have a poor turnout rate for school board and budget elections. The voter turnout rate was consistently below 50 percent. The local school budget had not been voter approved for seven years.

Organization of the Study

The Remainder as follows:

Chapter 2 - Review of Literature

Review of the Problem

Review of Major Concepts Related to the Problem

Chapter 3 - Design of the Study

General Description of the Research Design

Development and Design of the Research instrumentation

Description of the Sampling

Description of the Data Collection Approach

Description of the Data Analysis Plan

Chapter 4 - Presentation of Findings

What Data was Collected

What did the Data Indicate

Chapter 5 - Conclusion, Implications, and Review of the Study

Conclusions and Implications

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

The idea of parental involvement in the educational setting is not a new concept. Marge Scherer (98), in a review of a lecture given by Vivian Gussin Paley, shared the idea that while the benefits of parental involvement in the educational setting are hard to measure, research has proven that home behavior (helping with home work and reading to children) has a more powerful influence on the students' in-school performance than parental participation at school. The idea of involving the parents in the discipline process can be implemented and nurtured in many ways. The following is a look at some of the practices and theories that have been tried, and found to be successful, in getting parents to take an active role in supporting the school in many facets of their children's educational lives.

Review of the Problem

As we have moved away from a home-oriented society, schools have become more of a parental unit. Educational leaders have been forced to find ways to involve parents in a more active role since the 1980's. Higher divorce rates and an astonishing number of families in which both parents have been forced to seek employment have driven that movement. In 1981 the National Association of Secondary School Principals issued a legal memorandum entitled *Some Alternatives to School Discipline: Parental Liability and Restitution* which states, "School administrators should always make efforts to

involve parents in discipline problems.” The American Education Coalition addressed the issue of parental involvement in school discipline in 1983. The Coalition published *A Blueprint for Classroom Discipline* in which they stated, “The Plan calls for participation and cooperation of parents, teachers, administrators, the school board and the students,” and noted, “Parents are primarily responsible for instilling discipline in their children and should cooperate with the school administration and teachers in maintaining firm discipline.” The Chicago Public School District thought enough of parental involvement that in 1984 they published and distributed *Not Just Punishment: Discipline in Schools That Works: A Handbook for Chicago Parents*. The handbook explained clear rules and high expectations for the students and the role parents should play. It offered chapters on how to evaluate a school’s discipline plan and sample questions for parents to ask their children about discipline offenses.

One major problem in improving parental involvement has been that the parents you most need to involve are inaccessible. Many of the students who have habitual discipline problems are at-risk students. By definition, most of the parents of these students are also at-risk. Judith A. Vandergrift and Andrea L. Greene (92) wrote, “Improving parental involvement, particularly among the at-risk population, is one of the most challenging tasks facing educators today.”

Historical references show that we are not dealing with a new issue. How then do we know that parental intervention is worthwhile? Multiple sources state that parental intervention and involvement are essential components of promising programs (Dusenbury et al., 1997: *Drug Strategies*, 1998: Minnesota Department of Education, 1992). In fact,

some studies have shown that it is potentially the most promising type of intervention thus far (Wilson-Brewer, 1995; Tolan and Guerra, 1998).

Review of Major Concepts Related to the Problem

Parental involvement has been a major issue for schools over the past 2 decades. Some vital concepts have been dealt with which provided insight for this program. Issues to be covered include Parents' Feelings, Parents vs. School Responsibilities, Contacting Parents and What We Need from Parents.

Parents' Feelings

Alison Smith, Judith Kahn and Iris Borowsky recently completed a study for the Minnesota Department of Education entitled *Best Practices in Reducing School Violence* (02). In the report the authors wrote, "With more and more parents working outside the home, students are very aware that it is difficult for school officials to contact their parents, and that even if they do, their parents often refuse to respond. Parents may refuse to come to the school when they are asked if a child has been in trouble repeatedly because they are tired of dealing with the child's problems, they believe the school is at fault, or they believe there is nothing they can do to control the child." We must understand where the parents' feelings come from and how to alleviate them before we can have an open working relationship with the parents.

Where does the research place the origins of these negative feelings? Smith, Kahn and Borowsky went on to suggest, "Sometimes parents do not respond because they were unsuccessful in their own school experiences; they view the school as a hostile

environment.” Charlene C. Giannetti and Margaret M. Sagarese reported their finding, “Parents of middle schoolers often feel left out,” in their article *Turning Parents from Critics to Allies* (98). They went on to state what they believed fostered those negative feelings, “Teachers often only contact a parent to talk about a student’s unruly behavior, unsatisfactory performance, or poor attitude. Nowadays more and more parents instantly take their child’s side and blame the teacher.” Vandergrift and Greene (92) stated their findings this way, “For many parents, school brings back memories of their own failure. Some feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, and even guilty when they walk into a school. Others do not feel valued by the schools. Feelings of inadequacy, shyness or resentment, longing or fear.... Every parent has his or her own story to tell. Terry Hatcher Quindlen, in an article entitled *Reaching Minority Students* (02), touched on another source of this problem. The author related that parents who speak foreign languages often refuse to come into school because of embarrassment or fear based on their linguistic inadequacies.

Understanding the trepidations that kept parents from getting involved is a starting point to begin improving parental involvement. There must also be a clear statement of responsibility for both the parents and the school.

Parent-School Responsibilities

Giannetti and Sagarese (98) put a great light on the situation in schools today. They succinctly stated, “Teachers today are expected to play more roles than ever before— instructor, disciplinarian, therapist, mediator. Now teachers also have to be turnaround tigers, capable of transforming uncooperative, wary, or disinterested parents into educational partners.” Parental unit could be added to that list of teacher’s duties. While

that role is correctly stated, a quote stated earlier cannot be forgotten, “Parents are primarily responsible for instilling discipline in their children and should cooperate with the school administration and teachers in maintaining firm discipline.” (A.E.C. 83) Parents must remain as the focal point of child rearing. The schools also have responsibilities in this process.

Paula Short, in her book *Rethinking Student Discipline: Alternatives That Work*. (94), offered some thoughts on the schools responsibility in providing an environment that makes parent-school relationships effective. She suggested that schools must provide a school climate that is supportive in nature and provides clear and positive parent-teacher expectations. Quindlen (02) reiterated that thought in relationship to schools’ responsibilities. She suggested that schools provide discipline-training sessions and invite parents so that expectations are clearly understood. Quindlen offered that it can help the climate immensely, because students, and parents, understand that their choices have consequences. In order for a dialogue to begin, the school must open the line of communication with the parents.

Contacting Parents

“Many principals say that connecting with individual students, building relationships with them and their families, and expecting good performance are key elements in reaching minority students,” (Quindlen, 02). Vandergrift and Greene (92) suggested we focus on the unsupportive families first citing, “Parents who are unsupportive are obviously the most difficult to reach, but perhaps the most important

group on which to focus efforts to improve communication.” Will simple communication solve the problem? Researchers have found that, while not alleviating the problem completely, communication is a great place to start and can be effective in opening the door for parental involvement.

Vandergrift and Greene (92) reported that initial efforts to build support through improved communication with parents ultimately resulted in more involvement. They shared that simple communications made the parents feel that they belonged in the school working in a supportive way with the educators. One urban parent stated after being invited into the school, “I never felt so wanted.” Giannetti and Sagarese (98) found that simple communications were all that was needed. They suggested that parental inclusion needn’t be frequent to be effective. They suggested not letting the report card be the first line of communication, that educators should show a positive side of their child, that you empathize with the parents that they have a tough job raising children and that you convey shared values like fairness, honesty and hard work. Vandergrift and Greene (92) added one final element, “ The success of any one parental involvement strategy depends on how well it matches with an individual parent’s needs. The secret is to know who your parents are and to have in a school’s repertoire as many options for involvement as possible.”

What We Need From Parents

“Parents are spending 40 percent less time with their children than mothers and fathers did in 1960. Because so many working parents are out of touch, and because students try to keep it that way, you have a golden opportunity,” Giannetti and Sagarese (98). Parents are aware of their situation and, given the opportunity, would like to feel

they are providing for their children's educational needs. Scherer (98) shared a story recounted to her by Vivian Gussin Paley, "It took me 20 years to ask a parent for guidance about a classroom situation." Enlisting them to help solve student problems forever changed the way she taught. In a study entitled *Views of Students and Parents Regarding Important Discipline Problems, Influences, and Corrective Actions: A Follow-up Study* (81), Janet R. Handler found that parents have ideas for handling discipline problems involving their children. The parents in her study felt that their ideas were more appropriate methods than the methods they perceived the school to be using. Did this mean the parents know better than the teachers? No, not necessarily. But, it did show that the parents have an opinion and we, as educators should encourage them to voice that opinion in a constructive way.

Working together, in supportive roles, parents and educators can provide what today's students need. Arnold F. Fege surveyed public groups for his article *Parents Rights: Yes! Parental Rights Legislation: No!* (97). He found that the public shared the same viewpoint. He wrote, "The public believed that parents and schools, working together at the local level closest to the needs of the child, made the best decisions for *all* of the children and that public institutions existed to support parents in their primary role as caregivers, educators, health providers, nurturers, disciplinarians, and character builders." Fege added his own thoughts, "Parents are not a monolithic block. They represent different values, beliefs, backgrounds, and experiences. They use different languages, are at different stages in their understanding about schools, and have different

ideas about school reform. School leaders must take the initiative and begin encouraging community discussion and interaction around difficult issues.”

Vandergrift and Greene (92) identified the type of parental involvement that today’s schools need. They believe we need involved parents who are first supportive. Also, they need to encourage their children through sympathy, reassuring and understanding. Second, parents need to be visibly active in the school setting. They stated, “This combination of level of commitment and active participation is what makes an involved parent.”

Conclusion

It is that same involvement which this project was striving for. Through understanding expectations and the role each party has to play, parental involvement can be effective in lowering repeat suspension rates. Communication has been proven to be key in any effective program and was the first step in this project. Based on successful patterns from previous studies, this project was seeking to involve the primary caregivers and disciplinarians (the parents) in confronting an ongoing problem in schools today.

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to measure the effects of parental intervention and involvement on lowering the repeat suspension incidences in tenth grade students. This chapter will introduce the types of data that were collected during this study as well as discussing how that data was analyzed. It will describe how the Intern used said data to prove, or disprove, the stated objective of this study; lowering repeat-suspension rates through parental intervention. The Intern will also discuss the sampling of the students selected for this study and the design of the research instruments.

General Description of the Research Design

In too many discipline situations parents are involved after the fact. In most minor cases the parents are notified of a student's suspension after the decision to suspend has been made by the school administrator. It was the design of this study to involve the parents from the beginning of the process in order to facilitate finding a lasting solution to repeat suspension offenses.

Tenth grade students who incur their first out-of-school suspension were used as the primary sample group for this study. Parental participation was voluntary, therefore further limiting the sampling. Parents were contacted following a determination to suspend and then invited to take part in this study. Incentives for inclusion included,

but were not limited to, one-on-one counseling for the student, ongoing peer mediation for future problems, open lines of school-to-home communications and possible time-out privileges.

Development and Design of the Research Instrumentation

This study required research instruments for quantitative record keeping, qualitative surveys and interview records as well as comparative analysis based on past records. The Intern formulated original instruments to meet the specific needs of this particular study.

The research instruments used in this study were fairly simple in design. The intention was to rekindle the cooperation and joint effort of the school and family. Because this study was the first of its kind in the Intern's school district, the instruments were all created specifically for this study. The instruments included a simple overview statement of the program to introduce the concept to the parents (see Appendix A). If the parents were interested in being involved in the study, a short survey and interview followed.

A short survey and a short list of discussion-leading questions for the interview process were developed by the Intern and the Discipline Committee, (see Appendix B). A record-keeping chart for students involved in the study was also developed (see Appendix C).

Description of the Sampling and Sampling Techniques

This study used the tenth grade population. The entire tenth grade had the potential to be involved. Therefore a stratified system of sampling was to be used. All tenth grade students who were suspended out of school were included in the total sample, however only the students whose parents volunteered to take part were included in the limited sample. The limited sample was made up of the tenth grade students' whose parents took part in the program. The number of tenth grade suspensions and the number of parents willing to become active participants could not be predetermined. Therefore the intern analyzed the effects of the parental involvement in two ways. First, what was the repeat suspension rate in the limited sample and how did that compare to the total repeat rate from the previous school year? Second, did the involved parents have an effect on the total sample population in respect to the previous school year repeat rate? Simply, what was the change in percent of repeat offenses from before this program to its conclusion?

Description of Data Collection Approach

The Intern used different types of data collection to attempt to prove the objective of this study. The Intern used review of historic records, interviews and surveys to determine the effectiveness of this study.

Interviews were the primary approach to garnish parental involvement. The first contact with the parents of suspended students was the most critical and had to be done on a personal level. The interviews were used in connection with the surveys.

The surveys added enlightenment to processes in the home and school that were affecting the students' behavior. Both collections approaches offered valuable information for the study and a chance for personal contact with a parent.

Historic records provided a basis for quantitative and comparison analysis. To determine effectiveness, the Intern attempted to show that parental involvement would lower repeat offenses. To show that to be effective, reports of past and present discipline records were needed.

Description of the Data Analysis Plan

A quantitative analysis, at the end of this study, was used to show the effectiveness of the program. If the percentage of repeat offenses decreased from the 2001-2002 school year to the 2002-2003 school year the program would be proven to be effective. The level of effectiveness was based on the actual percentage of change.

The quantitative analysis was done in two parts. First, the Intern determined the effects of parental involvement on the students actively included in the study group. The percentage was analyzed with the general school population of suspended tenth grade students from the 2001-2002 school year. Second, the intern determined the effects of selective parental involvement on the entire sample of suspended tenth grade students. It was the Intern's belief that, while the greatest effects would be on the students whose parents became involved, parental involvement at any level would effect the entire school population.

Chapter 4

Presentation of Research Findings

Introduction

Was the American Education Coalition correct when they stated, “Parents are primarily responsible for instilling discipline in their children and should cooperate with the school administration and teachers in maintaining firm discipline.”(83)? Do we need to go as far as Quindlen (02) suggested when she wrote that schools should provide discipline-training sessions and invite parents so that expectations are clearly understood? The intern looked to the research findings in this chapter to provide some insight and direction on the idea of parental involvement in, and its impact on, student discipline.

The intern wanted to find out if parental intervention could be used as a tool by the school district to impact the students’ behavior. If parental intervention was a possible means of impacting students’ behavior, the intern wanted to show its effectiveness. The results and findings of the six-month study have been detailed in this chapter.

The Effectiveness of Parental Intervention on Lowering Repeat Suspension Offenses

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the parental intervention used in this study the intern first analyzed the data collected during the six months of the project. The intern also compared the outcome data with similar data from the previous school year. It was in the comparison that the intern found his answers.

The sample population for this study was tenth grade students who were suspended out of school during the first two marking periods of the 2002-2003 school year. Out of a total of 551 tenth grade students, 88 students were suspended. Of the 88 students who were suspended, 22 had repeat offenses. There was a 25 percent repeat suspension rate among the sample population. There were a total of 123 suspensions issued to the sample population during the study of which 35 were repeat offenses. The data showed that 28 percent of all the suspensions given out to the population were repeat offenses. There were an average number of 1.6 repeat suspensions issued to repeat offenders.

Out of the sample population of 88 suspended tenth grade students, a limited sample was created by parents willing to participate in this study. There were 31 students in the sample group who had parental participation in the project. Only 6 students in the limited sample had repeat offenses. That represented a 19 percent repeat offense rate. There were a total of 31 suspensions issued to the limited sample of which 6 were repeat offenses. A total of 19 percent of suspensions issued to the limited sample were repeat offenses. There was an average number of 1 repeat suspensions issued to repeat offenders in the limited sample.

The same sample population was used in collecting data for comparison. Data from the 2001-2002 school year, during the same two marking periods, was gathered. Out of 490 tenth grade students 101 were suspended. Of the 101 suspended students 31 had repeat offenses. That represented a 43 percent repeat suspension rate among the

sample population. There were a total of 206 suspensions issued to the sample population of which 105 were repeat offenses. 51 percent of suspensions issued were repeat offenses. There was an average number of 2.44 repeat suspensions issued to repeat offenders.

While there was a large differential in the number of suspensions issued, a comparison can be made between the percentages (see chart below).

Comparison of Suspension Percentages for the Sample Population

<u>School Year</u>	<u>Sample</u>	<u>% of Repeat Offenders</u>	<u>% of Repeat Offenses</u>
2001-2002			
	Total Sample	43%	51%
2002-2003			
	Total Sample	25%	28%
	Limited Sample	19%	19%

The intern also wanted to show how affecting the sample population might effect the total school population. Therefore, the following data was collected. For the school year 2002-2003 there was a total of 172 students suspended from grades 10-12. Out of the 172 students suspended 40, or 23 percent, had repeat offenses. There were 229 total suspensions issued out of which 57, or 25 percent, were repeat offenses.

For the school year 2001-2002 there was a total of 235 students suspended from grades 10-12. Out of the 235 students suspended 95, or 40 percent, had repeat offenses. A total of 437 suspensions were issued out of which 202, or 46 percent, were repeat offenses. A comparison can be seen in the chart below.

<u>School Year</u>	<u>% of Repeat Offenders</u>	<u>% of Repeat Offenses</u>
2001-2002	40%	46%
2002-2003	23%	25%

Further information was gathered during the survey portion of this study. The intern found a few items that may be helpful in answering the questions formulated into this study. Students in the limited population whose parents stated they did not feel suspension was a deterrent for their child had an 83 percent repeat offense rate. Out of the limited sample 52 percent had parents who offered that they administered some form of further discipline at home because of the suspension. Out of that 52 percent only 15 percent had a repeat offense. The intern then used this gathered data to address the initial questions.

Before the data could be used to prove effectiveness, effectiveness itself had to be defined. The intern along with the Vice Principal in charge of discipline, and the school discipline committee, discussed what would constitute effectiveness in lowering repeat suspension rates. It was agreed that the primary role of the school was to provide a safe, friendly and constant educational environment. In order to assure that the students have that constant setting we must keep them in school. Therefore any decrease in the number

of, and repeated, suspensions would constitute a significant and effective result. It was agreed that the larger the change in percentages the greater the beneficial influence of the parental involvement.

The data collected in the surveys depicted two forms of parental intervention. First, as stated above, some parental involvement included additional discipline of some form administered at the home. This type of intervention produced the greatest effectiveness. Suspended students in this group had a repeat offense rate of only 15 percent. That constituted a 28 percent reduction in the repeat rate from the previous school year. Second, the remaining parental intervention simply included discussion of the incident, explanation of the parents' and school's expectations for the tenth grade student and encouragement to refrain from like behaviors to avoid recurrence. While this rate reduction was a little lower than the previous intervention type, it was still found to be significantly effective in lowering repeat offenses. Students in this grouping had a repeat offense rate of 22 percent showing a 21 percent reduction in repeat instances from the previous school year. The cumulative effect of the two types of intervention produced a total reduction in repeat occurrences of 24 percent. The reduction in offenses translated into 21 less suspension incidences, or 21 periods of missed in-school instruction for students, over the first two marking periods. These combined intervention strategies were deemed to be highly effective.

While this study focused on students whose parents participated, the intern found an interesting point about the students for whom parents did not participate. Of the 57 suspended students who did not have parental intervention as part of this project 31 had

repeat offenses. That represented a 54 percent repeat offense rate. This point also offered proof that the parental intervention that did take place had a positive effect on the entire sample and school community populations as a whole.

The effects of the relatively small limited sample impacted the total school population. During the time of the study there was a 15 percent reduction in repeat offenses for the entire school population. This was also seen as a significantly positive result. That roughly translated to 26 students that were not suspended a second or third time during the duration of the study. While 26 students out of 1450 may not seem significant, 26 students not missing from one to nine days of their educational process is significant to said students and their parents.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications and Further Study

Introduction

The data proved that parental intervention could be an effective tool to lower repeat suspension rates. What other scholastic areas might be impacted by improved parental involvement? Is there a way to further involve parents in the educational process and possible discipline reform models? This chapter will address the effective results found in this study and further implications brought about by those findings.

Parents as Effective Tools to Lower Repeat Suspension Offenses

All persons involved in this study agreed that if we kept one student in school one extra day then this study held potential. The findings listed in chapter four proved that parental intervention, working in conjunction with the school administrators, could produce tremendously positive outcomes. The intern never expected the impact to be as significant as it proved to be.

The intern concluded that parents and administrators working together could positively impact the in-school behavior of students significantly more than either influence working alone. In the context of this study, parental involvement was garnished by nothing more than personal contact and an explanation of the expectations and standards the school held for tenth grade students. Probably more significant to the parents,

the intern expressed to them the need of parental assistance in manifesting behavior that best provided for the successful realization of the expectations of the students and parents for positive educational outcomes.

The beneficial effects of this study impacted the whole school and not just the sample population. That implied that further inclusion of parents from all grade levels would only increase the positive effects of the study. The intern concluded that parental involvement is a must and a mainstay for future discipline reform. In an educational climate that is trying to reconnect families and schools, positive outcomes such as the ones found in this study may prove to be a navigational tool for future studies into different aspects of parental involvement.

Implication of the Study on Leadership Skills

This study proved that administrators must maintain parental contact. With the increasing parental role forced upon educators, it only makes sense that we continue to reach out to parents and forge bonds that produce shared visions for the students we share. If the communication lines between families and schools were well-founded and open, the communication lines between communities and school would be easier to access and increase the potential benefits.

The intern also found that teachers were interested in the outcomes of this study. The results may prove to be an example for more teacher-to-parent communication. If the administrator can expend his or her repertoire of cooperative work with families, the

teachers may follow suit. The results of this study were made available to the teachers in the intern's district in hopes of nurturing district relationships with the parents and community.

The parents also benefited from their participation in this study. Many of the parents involved in this program had behavioral difficulties of their own while in school. This project gave them a positive experience inside the educational institution. It also gave parents a personal contact within the school organization with which to address future concerns. Parents that have positive experiences related to the school system are much more likely to get involved in future endeavors.

Implications of the Study on Organizational Change

The parental involvement in this study opened a positive pathway to change the current perception of shared educational visions. In the past, parents had not been a part of the disciplinary process at the intern's school. The administration has seen the benefits parents can bring to the educational organization. The reduction of suspension offenses noted in this study convinced the school leaders to plan further ways to involve the parent. Working together, parents and school leaders were able to bring about a shared desired outcome from which the students benefited.

Further Study

The collected data and effective results of this project point to further possible studies. The intern recognized two future studies in the area of discipline and countless possibilities for parental inclusion and involvement.

Two important factors appeared in the data concerning suspensions. First, the intern showed that students who received discipline at home related to incidences at school are less likely to have repeat offenses. That point alone deserved study. If the parents and school leaders worked together to produce a system that disciplined the students as a team, what positive effects might be realized? The second point dealt with the idea that suspensions were not a deterrent for some students. Students in the limited sample whose parents stated they did not believe suspension to be an effective discipline for their child showed an 83 percent repeat offense rate. A study could have been done to explore alternate discipline actions that would keep students in school and still bring about a behavioral change. Once again parental input and support would be both insightful and irreplaceable.

Parental involvement should not be limited to discipline. As shown in this study, parents are important allies in the educational arena. Their involvement and input should be sought in all areas of education. As the roles of the teacher and parent take on more and more similar characteristics and duties, the roles should be discussed, shared and supported. The possibilities for further research and study in this area are needed and endless.

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Appendix A
Parental Lead-in

Parental Lead-in

Student's Name:

Parents' Name(s):

Phone Number:

We are starting a new program that involves our tenth grade students. We are trying to limit the repeat suspension offenses by involving the parents. Would you be willing to discuss the situation regarding _____'s suspension with me in hopes of limiting further discipline actions in the future?

Appendix B
Parental Interview

Parental Interview

Sophomore Intervention

Millville Senior High School

1. May I ask you some questions concerning your son/daughter?
2. Have you discussed the incident with your son/daughter?
3. Do you understand the policy that called for a suspension?
4. Do you have any questions regarding the discipline?
5. Do you feel suspension is a deterrent for your child? Why/Why not?
6. Are you imposing any further discipline at home?
7. Do you think a conference with myself and your son/daughter discussing school Expectations would be helpful?
8. Have you noticed any significant changes in his/her behavior this year?
9. If so, do you have any idea why or ways that we can help?

Appendix C
Suspension Log

Date: _____

	A	B	C	D	E	F
1	NAME	YEAR	REASON FOR SUSP.	DATE SUSP.	DATE RETURNS	PARENT CONTACT
2						
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4						
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36	x					
37						
38						
39			X			

Biographical Data

Name	Steven W. Price
High School	Walton Central School Walton, New York
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