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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A DISCIPLINE PLAN ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

by
Wendy Ann Carman

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
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at
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Approved by

Professor

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ABSTRACT

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THE EFFECTIVENESS OF A DISCIPLINE PLAN ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT
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Dr. Johnson
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The purpose of this study was to improve student behavior and increase student achievement at West Avenue School by developing a discipline plan that would create an orderly and respectful environment. The study involved students in the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade during the first marking period of 2003 and 2004 school year. Teacher surveys and discussions were analyzed, and it was evident there was a need for a new discipline plan. Report card grades and discipline referrals, written by the teachers, from the first marking period of 2003 were compared to the report card grades and discipline referrals from the first marking period of the 2004 school year. The report card grades showed an overall increase in student achievement. The ability for a teacher to administer an after school detention was implemented into the discipline plan. The number of discipline referrals decreased dramatically from the first marking period of 2003 to the first marking period of the 2004 school year. The new discipline plan proved to be successful. An increase in achievement occurred for most of the students, and discipline problems declined for the fifth through eighth grade students at West Avenue School.

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CHAPTER 1 Introduction

Focus of the study

The focus of this study was to determine if creating an effective discipline plan for grades five through eight at West Avenue School would increase student achievement and improve student behavior. West Avenue added grades six to eight in September of 2003, and as a result, a discipline plan was needed for these grades. The existing discipline plan was only for grades kindergarten to fifth. Since the addition of these students, a more detailed and useful plan was needed in order to deal with the discipline issues concerning the older students at West Avenue School.

Purpose of the study

The purpose for this study was to increase student achievement and improve student behavior at West Avenue School by developing a discipline plan that would create an orderly and respectful environment. This plan was designed to promote positive behaviors and reduce inappropriate student actions.

Definitions

Discipline, according to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English language, refers to both prevention and remediation. It can be “training that is expected to produce a specified character or pattern of behavior” or “controlled behavior resulting from such training”; but it can also be “punishment intended to correct or train.”

Discipline policy is guidelines developed by the Board of Education to maintain order in the school and promote a safe atmosphere conducive to learning.

IEP stands for individual education plan. Each classified student has an IEP based on tests results, interviews and information about the child. Each teacher must follow modifications and information contained in the child's IEP.

Inclusion is a generic term that means to integrate a student with disabilities into a regular class. It can mean a minimal time in class or complete integration.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is an important education law that was designed to make changes in teaching and learning that will help our students achieve more in school.

Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study were the small group of students who attended West Avenue School in grades five through eight. There were approximately 52 students in grade five, 31 students in grade six, 36 students in grade seven, and 34 students in grade eight.

The intern wanted the plan in effect at the beginning of the school year, but due to the limited amount of time to implement the plan, this did not happen. There was not enough time to survey the teachers, get their input, devise a plan and have it ready by the opening of school.

The surveys the intern administered to the teachers did not come back to the intern in a timely fashion. Some teachers were given the survey twice because they misplaced the original. Other teachers failed to complete the survey.

Setting of the study

The setting of the study was West Avenue School in Bridgeton, New Jersey. Bridgeton is a city located in Cumberland County. As of the 2000 census, there were 22,771 people living in Bridgeton. The racial makeup of the city was 40.84% African American, 30.88% White, 20.30% Hispanic, 1.19% Asian, 0.09% Pacific Islander, and 6.70% from other races. There were 6,182 households out of which 36.1% had children under the age of 18 living with them, 35.5% were married couples living together, 26.3% had a female householder with no husband present, and 32.4% were non-families. The median income for a household in the city was \$26,923, and \$30,502 was the median income for a family. Males had a median income of \$28,858 versus \$22,722 for females. In Bridgeton, 26.6% of the population and 22.7% of families are below the poverty line.

Bridgeton provided and maintained recreational activities for children and adults in the city park. The school and city council worked together to offer a variety of organized sports and activities for children and others. The city park also includes a zoo. Sunset Lake provided residents and others the opportunity for swimming, fishing, boating, and picnicking. The city has many historic sites that attracted visitors and played host to concerts and activities next to the Cohansey River.

The city's lack of tax ratables and other socio-economic factors led to its designation as an "Abbott" school district. The problems normally associated with a poor urban setting impacted on the district's educational program and the performance of many of its students.

The Bridgeton School District consisted of seven schools. Six schools are elementary, serving pre kindergarten through eighth grade. Bridgeton High School served

ninth through twelfth grades. These schools serviced approximately 4,245 students. Preschool was available to all four-year-old children. Kindergarten was all day, and there was a developmental kindergarten program available in one school. Most class sizes were under 25 students. There were 374.4 classroom teachers. The student to teacher ratio was 11.3. There were 865 students with IEP's, and there were 450 summer migrant students.

In twelfth grade, there was a college-level English class offered in cooperation with Cumberland County College in Vineland, New Jersey. Also in conjunction with the college was a technology preparation program for high school students who will be accepted into the college upon graduation.

For students with special needs, there were classes for the disabled, supplementary instruction in basic skills and an alternative high school program.

The district's five elementary schools have a student mobility rate ranging from 27% to 44%, indicating a lack of family stability resulting in children receiving disjointed and incongruent instruction in a home environment that could be characterized as insecure.

There are about 500 students attending West Avenue School, and 85% of these students receive free or reduced lunch. The ethnicity diversity of the children is 56% African American, 32% Hispanic, 10 % White , 1% American Indian , and 1% Asian.

About 15% of the students have a learning disability and an Individual Education Program. These children are placed in an inclusion or self-contained classroom, or receive basic skills instruction.

The number of faculty with a B/A or B/S degree is 92%, a MA/MS degree is 8 % and there are no faculty members with a PhD/EdD degree.

Significance of the study

The results of my research will be useful in obtaining information dealing with student achievement and behavior. The greatest emphasis placed on teachers and administrators is that of student achievement, especially with the implementation of No Child Left Behind. An improved discipline policy at West Avenue School will hopefully raise students' test scores, report card grades, and improve the overall climate of the school.

Relationship of the study to the ISSLIC

The ISSLIC standard that relates mostly to my research is Standard 3. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. The administrator has knowledge and understanding of the facilities and school safety. Staff and students must feel safe and secure in a school in order for learning to take place. The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to management decisions for the enhancement of teaching and learning and a safe environment. The administrator facilitates and engages in activities ensuring that there are effective organizational and operational procedures for student learning and the achievement of the vision and mission. The administrator ensures that there is a safe and clean school environment for all staff and students.

ISSLIC Standard 2 also relates to my research: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. The administrator believes in, values and is committed to

student learning for all as a fundamental purpose of learning, and in order for this to occur, a safe and supportive learning environment must exist within the school. The administrator facilitates and engages in activities ensuring that there is human dignity and respect; all students and staff feel valued and important. High expectations for student and staff performance and accomplishments are recognized and celebrated. The school culture and climate must be assessed regularly.

Another standard that relates to my research is ISSLIC Standard 5: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner. The administrator believes in ethical decision-making and its responsibilities and consequences. He believes in a caring and diverse school community. The administrator facilitates and engages in activities ensuring that there are modeling of personal and professional ethical behavior; treatment of others with dignity and respect.

The next standard that correlates to my research is ISSLC Standard 1: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision that is shared and communicated by the school community. The administrator believes in, values and is committed to educability of all students and has high expectations for teaching and learning, staff development, and organizational performance. The administrator facilitates and engages in activities ensuring there is a shared vision that shapes the programs, plans, and actions for the school. The vision, mission, goals, objectives, and strategies are clearly articulated and communicated to all stakeholders through multiple strategies. It is important that the contributions to achievement of the

vision and mission achievement are recognized, celebrated, and communicated to all stakeholders.

Another standard that goes along with my research is ISSLC Standard 4: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources. The administrator has knowledge understanding of community relations and identifying and using community resources. An understanding of successful models for school and community partnerships is important. The administrator believes in, values and is committed to collaboration and communication with informed and caring families and community; involvement in partnership with shared decision-making. The administrator facilitates and engages in activities ensuring that there are comprehensive, active, visible, and mutually serving school and community relations; outreach to and partnerships with all segments of a diverse community. It is also important to have equity and respect for all stakeholders.

ISSLC Standard 6 also relates to my research: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal and cultural context. The administrator has the knowledge understanding of the political, social, economic, legal, and cultural contexts that impact public education. The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to equitable representation and shared participation. Diversity in ideals, values, and cultures. The administrator facilitates and engages in activities ensuring that there is a school environment that focuses on students and learning. Collaborative communication among all stakeholders is also important.

Organization of the study

The rest of the study was organized in the following manner: Chapter Two was a review of the literature, Chapter Three was a design of the study, Chapter Four was the presentation of the research findings, and Chapter Five were the conclusions, implications, and further study.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

Academic standards and school discipline are two areas of major concern in public education today. This study focused on school discipline and student achievement. A school's discipline policy can help control and prevent behavior problems by coordinating the school's disciplinary procedures, and by informing students what types of behavior are expected of them and what types of behavior are prohibited. By enforcing discipline within the school, and therefore creating a safe and positive school climate, the intern believes that student achievement will increase.

In a recent study, Wenglinsky (1999) observed that a lack of school discipline erodes not only the school environment, but also the learning process for all students. Wenglinsky studied the impact of violence and discipline on academic achievement. A major finding of the report was that academic achievement in math, reading, science, and social studies diminishes greatly when discipline problems arise.

The study examined many different types of offenses. The offenses included drugs, bringing weapons to school, and physical fights. Other infractions, that were not as serious, were being late to class, and copying homework. There were more than 13,000 high school seniors included in the data, and all were found to have negative effects on student achievement. Addressing the full range of discipline problems could mean a 15 percent rise in test scores, Wenglinsky (1999, ¶ 4) told one audience, "even for nonserious offenses—when students are late to class or talk back to teachers, it really adds up."

Between 1991 and 1997 his research observed the trends in discipline. Major increases were seen in student tardiness, absenteeism/class cutting, drug use and trafficking on school grounds, and verbal abuse of teachers. The most serious problems reported by principals in 1997 were tobacco use, absenteeism/class cutting, and tardiness. School policies were also studied at this time. "Schools that have the full repertoire of punishment available, from detention to expulsion, see a decline in offenses," Wenglinsky (1999, ¶ 5) reported, and this decrease is seen across all categories.

Security arrangements, such as hall passes and keeping students in the building during the day, seem to be associated with lower levels of less serious offenses, as does school size, with smaller schools having less serious offenses.

Therefore, a sound disciplinary policy is a prerequisite for a sound academic policy. As the nation focuses on improving the academic achievement of students, it is more important than ever to stress the significance of maintaining a safe and orderly environment within our school.

A case study conducted at Northern Elementary School in Fayette County, Kentucky, drastically changed from one of the worst schools in the county to one of the best. During the 1999-2000 school year, Soler, Spurlock, Scantlebury, and Tandy (2004) found that 15 % of the students were reading at grade level. The next year this increased to 32 %, to 48 % the next, to 62.5% in 2002, and to 81% in 2003, which was the highest increase of all. The suspension rate also dropped substantially during this same time period.

The reason for this dramatic change can be attributed to a combination of factors. Outstanding leadership, a different vision for students based on the adoption of core values, and a team of administrators and teachers with a passion for instructing students who had experienced repeated failure in school. The school discipline program carefully combines old-fashioned techniques with modern methods of providing child and family support programs.

The program also focuses on preventive discipline. The following mechanisms of preventive discipline are identified in the research of Lasley and Wayson (1982); and Smedley and Willower (1981).

- Commitment, on the part of all staff, to establishing and maintaining appropriate student behavior as an essential prerequisite of learning. Well-disciplined schools tend to be those in which there is a school wide emphasis on the importance of learning and intolerance of conditions which inhibit learning.
- High behavioral expectations. In contrast to poorly disciplined, staff in well-disciplined schools share and communicate high expectations for appropriate student behavior.
- Clear and broad-based rules. Rules, sanctions, and procedures are developed with input from students, are clearly specified, and made known to everyone in the school. Researchers have found that student participation in developing and reviewing school discipline programs creates a sense of ownership and belongingness. Widespread distribution of clearly stated rules and procedures, moreover, assures that all students and staff understand what is and is not acceptable.

- Warm school climate. A warm social climate, characterized by a concern for students as individuals, is typical of well-discipline schools. Teachers and administrators take an interest in the personal goals, achievements, and problems of students and support them in their academic and extra-curricular activities.
- A visible, supportive principal. Many poorly disciplined schools have principals who are visible only for “official” duties such as assemblies or when enforcing school discipline. In contrast, principals of well- disciplined schools tend to be very visible in hallways and classrooms, talking casually with teachers and students, speaking to them by name, and expressing interest in their activities.
- Delegation of discipline authority to teachers. Principals in well-disciplined schools take responsibility for dealing with serious infractions, but they hold teachers responsible for handling routine classroom discipline problems. They assist teachers to improve their classroom management and discipline skills by arranging for staff development activities as needed.
- Close ties with communities. Researchers have generally found that well-disciplined schools are those that have a high level of communication and partnership with the communities they serve. These schools have a higher-than-average incidence of parent involvement in school functions, and communities are kept informed of school goals and activities.

All of these elements are commonly found in safe, orderly, well-managed schools.

It makes sense that a school that has all of these components would be one of few discipline problems and high student achievement.

There are some major findings from a national study of teachers and parents. Discipline and behavior problems in public schools are serious, persistent, and compromising student learning. They are also driving an enormous number of teachers out of the profession. Teachers agree that while only a small amount of troublemakers cause most disciplinary problems, “the tyranny of the few” leads to a distracting and disrespectful atmosphere.

Teachers complain about the willingness of some students and parents to challenge teacher judgment and threaten to bring legal action against them or the school. According to a report by a nonpartisan, nonprofit opinion research organization, Public Agenda, many times teachers must operate “in a culture of challenge and second guessing” that is affecting their ability to maintain order and teach. Nearly 78 % of teachers said that students are quick to remind them that they have rights or that their parents can sue. About 49 % of teachers surveyed said they have been accused of unfairly disciplining a student, and 55 % said that districts backing down from assertive parents causes discipline problems in the country’s schools.

Some solutions suggested by teachers and parents include stricter enforcement of existing rules of conduct, alternative schools for the chronically disruptive students, and limiting parents’ ability to sue schools over disciplinary decisions. Teachers believe that as the pressure to raise standards and improve student performance increases, it is apparent that much time and opportunity to learn is being lost.

The American Federation of Teachers has conducted numerous polls on school safety, discipline, and student achievement. Educators realize that other efforts to improve schools will not be effective without an orderly and safe learning environment.

Disorderly schools severely compromise a child's education and the opportunity to learn. Teachers cannot teach and students cannot concentrate. The teachers polled believe that if disorder and disrespectful behavior are tolerated, they will spread among other students. What one student is allowed to get away with, another will soon try. Over time, expectations of what constitutes acceptable behavior are redefined. Teachers gradually tolerate more and more disruption, until what was once unacceptable behavior becomes the new norm, and a disorderly and unsafe environment is created.

Certain children that are in special need of a teacher's attention and academic help are particularly harmed by the time lost to disruption and disorder. A disruptive environment makes finding the proper time or place to meet the child's needs impossible. When disorder prohibits this type of exchange from happening, negative emotions and feeling may occur, and these students become behavior problems themselves or drop out of school entirely.

Based on the experience of school staffs throughout the country, and the research conducted by the AFT, seven essential elements have been developed that will assure schools are safe and orderly. They are as follows:

- Endorse district wide discipline codes
- Inform students how to follow the discipline code and ensure that the code is fairly enforced
- Implement effective classroom management procedures
- Implement programs to modify student misbehavior
- Create alternative placements for chronically disruptive students
- Develop school safety plans

- Support the work of families, religious institutions and communities in developing sound character in children

These fundamental practices, if implemented properly, will improve discipline, create a safe and orderly learning environment, and increase student achievement.

There is mounting evidence that the physical condition of schools has a direct impact on achievement and discipline. In 1991, a study of the District of Columbia schools found that standardized tests scores among students in buildings that were in poor condition were 6 % lower than schools in fair condition and 11% below schools that were in excellent condition.

Two different studies of Virginia high schools also discovered direct correlations between school conditions and student achievement. In a 1993 study of rural schools, it was determined that student scores on achievement tests, adjusted for socioeconomic status, were up to five percentile points lower in schools with low-quality ratings. Poor achievement was associated certain factors such as substandard science facilities, air conditioning, classroom furniture, and graffiti. In the second study, which was conducted in 1996, on urban schools student achievement was found to be as many as 11 percentile points lower in substandard schools as compared to above-standard schools.

There is a great deal of evidence that shows the relationship between building conditions and achievement. Even though the percentile differences may be small, anything that helps is crucial to a principal looking for ways to improve student achievement. School officials can't control a child's home life, parental involvement or socioeconomic status, but officials can control whether or not students are in a safe, functional and efficient building.

In a study conducted in 1995, Earthman found a higher incidence of suspensions, expulsions, and violence and substance abuse in substandard buildings. He also discovered that the better-maintained schools had more reported discipline incidents, which he believes may be due to a lower tolerance for disrespect and disorder.

The Schenectady City School District located in Schenectady, New York, has addressed discipline and student achievement along with collecting and reviewing baseline testing results as part of their data to determine strengths and weaknesses within the district and improve students' test scores.

A committee was formed to address the need to reduce suspensions and improve behavior. Suspension rates are periodically checked and made available to administrators. By providing alternate programs, motivating students and decreasing discipline referrals, student suspensions will decrease so that students will be able to meet the state's demanding new standards, as having good attendance is critical to being successful. Decreasing the suspension rate increases students' time on task ensuring greater academic achievements.

According to Short (1988) research on well-disciplined schools indicates that a student-centered environment, incorporating teacher student problem solving activities, as well as activities to promote student self-esteem and belongingness is more effective in reducing behavior problems than punishment.

All of these studies have shown a direct connection between discipline and student achievement. High expectations and high standards bring out the best in students and schools. Safe schools are a necessity for learning. Families, communities, and school personnel must work together to establish guidelines and standards for safe schools and

disciplined student behavior. When teachers and children feel safe in their schools, teaching and learning are significantly improved.

CHAPTER 3 The Design of the Study

Description of research design

The study involved students in the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade during the 2003-2004 school year and students in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grade for the 2004-2005 school year. The design compared report card grades and discipline referrals from the first marking period of 2003 to the first marking period of 2004. The study determined if the discipline plan had increased student achievement and decreased the amount of discipline referrals. There were 23 students in the sixth grade, 22 students in the seventh grade, and 26 students in the eighth grade for the first marking period of both the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school year. The sixth grade consisted of 14 males and 9 females. The seventh grade had 9 males and 13 females. The eighth grade contained 13 males and 13 females. These students were selected for the research because they attended West Avenue School during the 2003-2004, and 2004-2005 school year.

A survey was also distributed to the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers to determine their feelings towards the discipline at West Avenue School. These teachers were selected because they are the teachers of the fifth through eighth students, and the discipline plan would impact them and their students. Ten surveys were given out and six were returned.

There were many discussions between the intern and the teachers to ascertain the feelings of the teachers concerning discipline. These discussions also proved to be valuable to the study and the development of the discipline plan.

Focus on research instruments

The research instruments used to gather the intern's information were teacher surveys and discussions, report card grades, and discipline referrals from the first marking period of 2003 and the 2004 school year. The intern believed that these instruments would measure student achievement and student discipline.

The survey consisted of five questions, three of them single answer responses and two open-ended concerning the discipline at West Avenue School. The teachers were asked to take the survey during their team meetings.

There were many informal discussions with the teachers about the discipline at West Avenue School, which took place at team meetings, during lunch, and after school. It was evident from these discussions that change needed to occur within the discipline policy. Teachers were not satisfied with the way the discipline was being handled by the administrators, and the fact that they had no type of punishment to administer to a student. The report card grades this individual used were grades from math, language arts, science and social studies. These subjects were the core subjects of the curriculum and weigh the most when determining whether a student passes or fails for the year. The discipline referrals were students referred by teachers to the principal and vice-principal. A teacher is expected to utilize classroom management and solve problems within their own classroom. When students show extreme behavior problems, and the learning of other students is affected, a teacher must write up a referral to the administration and the vice-principal determines the punishment for the offense.

Sample and sampling technique

A sampling of 23 students in the sixth grade, 22 students in the seventh grade, and 26 students in the eighth grade that attended West Avenue School in both the 2003-2004 and 2004-2005 school year were used for the intern's research. The intern distributed ten surveys to the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers. The fifth grade has four teachers; two in the sixth grade, two seventh grade teachers, and three eighth grade teachers make up the upper grades at West Avenue School. The intern received six surveys back from the teachers.

Data collection approach

The intern collected the data by obtaining report card grades in math, language arts, science and social studies from the same students who attended West Avenue School in the first marking period of 2003 and the first marking period of the 2004 school year. These subjects were chosen because they were the core subjects that weigh the most to determine if a student passes or fails for the year.

The intern gathered all the discipline referrals from the first marking period of 2003 and 2004 school year. This gave the intern a quantitative view of individual students, the offense the student committed, and the action taken by the administrator. The first marking period began in September and ended in October for both school years.

The intern collected all of the surveys from the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers and took notes during the discussions with the teachers. The intern explained to the teachers that the note taking was for the use of her research and wrote down concerns of teachers, ideas and suggestions on discipline at West Avenue School. The teachers were comfortable with the intern taking notes of their discussions.

Data analysis plan

The intern reviewed the surveys that were administered to the teachers and it was evident that a discipline plan needed to be implemented for the students in the upper grades at West Avenue School. The teachers indicated the lack of authority they felt with the current discipline plan. There were reports of students not responding to authority and teachers not having any recourse to this behavior. The administrators were the only staff that could administer any discipline action. Teachers wanted this to change and be able to offer some type of discipline action. The teachers felt as though they had no punishment to give a student since all the authority was given to the administration as to what discipline action the students would be given. Teachers wanted to be able to administer a teacher detention for students who misbehaved in the classroom.

The intern compared the number of A's, B's, C's, D's and F's for each student in grades five, six, seven, and eight for the first marking period of the 2003-2004 school year to the same students in grades six, seven, and eight for the first marking period of the 2004-2005 school year. The intern also compared the students' grades in math, language arts, science, and social studies for each marking period. The intern wanted to see if student achievement had increased due to the discipline plan.

The intern also compared the amount of discipline referrals from the first marking period of 2003 to the first marking period of 2004 for grades six, seven and eight. The intern obtained information on the reasons the referrals were written and the action taken by the administrator. The intern wanted to see if the amount of referrals and number of suspensions decreased from the year 2003 to 2004 after the implementation of the

discipline plan. There was a substantial decrease in discipline referrals for the first marking period of 2004 from that of the first marking period of the 2003 school year.

What type of evidence can be gathered to prove that the project does have an impact?

The teacher surveys, numerous discussions, report card grades, and the amount of discipline referrals from the first marking period of 2003, all proved that West Avenue School needed to develop a discipline plan that would increase student achievement and improve the discipline.

The teacher surveys indicated that the current discipline plan at West Avenue School was ineffective. The teachers surveyed believed that teachers instruct students on behavioral rules and classroom routines in much the same way that they teach instructional content. They also said that teachers should take an interest in the personal goals, achievements, and problems of students. These beliefs are important when it comes to being an effective teacher and having good classroom management. The area of concern with the discipline plan was that clearer expectations of behavior in hallways, fire drills, and classrooms needed to be implemented in order to make the discipline more effective at West Avenue School. The need for a detention plan, central detention, peer-mediation or in-school suspension was also stated several times on the surveys. The informal discussions among the teachers about the lack of discipline and the need for changes also showed that a new discipline plan needed to be developed.

The report card grades from the fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade students were also reviewed as part of the research. The intern examined the first marking period grades of the 2003-2004 school year and the 2004-2005 school year. The core subjects, math, language arts, science and social studies were chosen because these are the subjects

that determined if a student is promoted or retained for the school year. There was an increase in the amount of A's, B's, and C's from the students for the first marking period of 2004 from the first marking period of the 2003 school year. This showed that student achievement increased at West Avenue.

The amount of discipline referrals, offenses students committed, and the punishment given to the student by the administrator was analyzed for the research. There was a significant decrease in the amount of referrals for the first marking period of 2004 from the first marking period of the 2003 school year. This indicated improvement of student behavior at West Avenue School.

CHAPTER 4 Presentation of the Research Findings

What information was found?

The researcher had many discussions with the teachers, studied surveys distributed to the teachers, and analyzed report card grades and discipline referrals.

The teacher surveys (Appendix A) indicated a need for a discipline plan for the fifth through eighth grade students. West Avenue School added grades sixth through eighth in September of the 2003 school year. Before this time, the administration had never dealt with older students. Teachers stated that the current discipline plan was ineffective for the older students. The main area of concern was that clearer expectations of behavior needed to be identified and implemented in order to make the discipline more effective. The same methods to deal with the younger students were not as effective with the older ones. The teachers indicated a need for classroom detention, central detention, in-school suspension, or peer mediation to be part of the discipline plan. The teachers believed that they instruct students on behavioral rules and classroom routines in much the same way that they teach instructional content. This was important because in order for learning to take place within the classroom, there must be structure, good classroom management, and procedures in place for students to follow. Teachers should also take an interest in the personal goals, achievements, and problems of their students. This showed the students that their teacher does care about them and it also exhibited a feeling of respect. In return, the students would show their teacher the same respect.

The intern was able to implement a teacher detention, detaining the student after school for one hour, into the discipline plan at West Avenue School. Teachers were not allowed to administer a detention for students. The only power the teacher had was to write a discipline referral and have the vice-principal or the principal decide what punishment the student would receive. The intern created a detention form (Appendix B) for the teachers to use as needed. Teachers would be able to have the authority and some say in the punishment of certain students. The implementation of a teacher detention would also eliminate the need for teachers to write a discipline referral every time a student misbehaved. The amount of discipline referrals would decrease by teachers giving their own detentions instead of writing referrals.

Discipline referrals from the first marking period of the 2003-2004 school year and the 2004-2005 school year were analyzed. The offenses the students committed and the punishment administered by the administrator was reviewed as part of the research. There was a significant decrease in the amount of referrals from the first marking period of 2003 to the first marking period of the 2004 school year. For the fifth grade the amount of referrals decreased from four in 2003 to zero in the 2004 school year. The sixth grade decreased dramatically from 40 in 2003 to 15 in the 2004 school year. The amount of referrals declined for the seventh grade from 25 in 2003 to 15 in the 2004 school year. The referrals for the eighth grade lessened from 31 in 2003 to 17 in the 2004 school year.

The offenses the students committed and the punishment the students received were recorded to examine what types of misbehaviors were occurring and what action the administrators were taking at West Avenue School. The most common offenses the students committed were behaviors such as being disrespectful to teacher,

insubordination, refusing to follow directions and fighting with another student. The actions taken by the administrators were a verbal warning to the student, a mandatory conference with the parent before the student could return to school, or a suspension. The administrators determined the punishments based on the students' behavior. They must also adhere to board policy when administering punishments. All of the discipline referrals from the first marking period of 2003 are shown in Table 1, and Table 2 represents the discipline referrals of the first marking period of the 2004 school year. Also represented on the tables are the grade levels, amount of referrals, offenses committed by the student, and the action taken by the administrator

TABLE 1

FIRST MARKING PERIOD REFERRALS OF 2003

GRADE	AMOUNT	OFFENSE	ACTION TAKEN
5th	4	Threatened student Fighting Rude/defiant to teacher	Warning Suspension
6th	40	Back-talking Disrespectful Verbal altercation with student Throwing food in cafeteria Tripped student Insubordination Refuses to follow class rules Laser light brought to school Refused to participate in gym class Hit student Touching student inappropriately	Warning Must return to school with parent Suspension
7th	25	Verbal exchange with student Shook student Refused to take test Throwing paper	Warning Must return to school with parent

TABLE 2

FIRST MARKING PERIOD REFERRALS OF 2004

GRADE	AMOUNT	OFFENSE	ACTION TAKEN
6 th	0	0	0
7 th	15	<p>Drew explicit picture Threw agenda at student Continuous conflicts and instigation Refused to sit out at gym Refused to leave field during gym</p> <p>Horseplay in hallway Rolled bowling ball at students during gym Slapped student in face</p> <p>Shoved student on stairs Stole key from student Fighting Touched two girl in an inappropriate manner Screaming at teacher</p>	<p>Warning given</p> <p>Must return to school with parent</p> <p>Suspension</p>
8 th	17	<p>Refused to sit at lunch table Fights threatened and words exchanged</p> <p>Harassing another student Disrespectful, foul language Refused to sit in seat Throwing worms at students in gym class</p> <p>Disrespectful, defiance, insubordination Harassment of student Threatened to smack teacher</p>	<p>Warning</p> <p>Must return to school with parent</p> <p>Suspension</p>

Report card grades were used as part of my research to determine if student achievement would increase with the implementation of a new discipline plan at West Avenue School. The grades for the core subjects of math, language arts, science, and social studies were recorded for the students who attended West Avenue School during the first marking period of 2003 and the first marking period of 2004. I compared the amount of A's, B's, C's, D's, and F's for each student in grades five, six, seven, and eight for the first marking period of the 2003-2004 school year to the same students in grades six, seven, and eight for the first marking period of the 2004-2005 school year. Table 3 shows this information.

TABLE 3 First Marking Period Report Card Grades 2003 - 2004

MP GRADE SCHOOL YEAR	A's	B's	C's	D's	F's	MP GRADE SCHOOL YEAR	A's	B's	C's	D's	F's
MP 1 5 th '03	11	19	24	33	9	MP 1 6 th '04	20	37	25	10	4
MP 1 6 th '03	27	29	9	3	3	MP 1 7 th '04	20	31	12	8	11
MP 1 7 th '03	8	21	36	18	17	MP 1 8 th '04	12	28	22	21	05

The students' grades in each subject were also compared to see if student achievement had increased due to the discipline plan. The students in grade five for the first marking period of 2003 increased their number of A's and B's in grade six of the 2004 school year. They also decreased their number of D's and F's. This indicated there was an increase in student achievement from the fifth to the sixth grade. However, the same does not hold true for the students in the sixth grade of the first marking period of 2003 to the seventh grade of the 2004 school year. The number of A's and B's decreased and the number of D's and F's increased. The students in the seventh grade of the first marking period of 2003 to the eighth grade of 2004 had an increase of A's and B's and a decrease of F's. Overall there was an increase in student achievement from the first marking period of 2003 to the first marking period of the 2004 school year. Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6 represents this information.

TABLE 4 First Marking Period Report Card Grades 2003 – 2004 By Subject

SUBJECT GRADE SCHOOL YEAR	A's	B's	C's	D's	F's	SUBJECT GRADE SCHOOL YEAR	A's	B's	C's	D's	F's
MATH 5 th '03	3	5	7	8	1	MATH 6 th '04	6	10	7	1	0
LANG. 5 th '03	2	7	7	7	1	LANG. 6 th '04	4	10	8	1	1
SCI 5 th '03	3	3	4	11	3	SCI 6 th '04	3	5	7	6	3
SOC. ST. 5 th '03	3	3	4	11	3	SOC. ST. 6 th '04	3	5	7	6	3

TABLE 5 First Marking Period Report Card Grades 2003 – 2004 By Subject

SUBJECT	A's	B's	C's	D's	F's	SUBJECT	A's	B's	C's	D's	F's
GRADE						GRADE					
SCHOOL YEAR						SCHOOL YEAR					
MATH 6 th '03	9	6	3	2	1	MATH 7 th '04	2	7	6	5	2
LANG. 6 th '03	8	9	4	1	0	LANG. 7 th '04	5	8	4	3	7
SCI. 6 th '03	14	6	1	0	1	SCI. 7 th '04	6	12	1	0	2
S.S. 6 th '03	9	8	4	0	1	S.S. 7 th '04	7	4	1	0	0

TABLE 6 First Marking Period Report Card Grades 2003 – 2004 By Subject

SUBJECT	A's	B's	C's	D's	F's	SUBJECT	A's	B's	C's	D's	F's
GRADE						GRADE					
SCHOOL YEAR						SCHOOL YEAR					
MATH 7 th '03	1	7	10	1	6	MATH 8 th '04	1	6	3	6	3
LANG. 7 th '03	5	2	10	3	4	LANG. 8 th '04	5	5	5	8	5
SCI. 7 th '03	1	7	8	6	3	SCI. 8 th '04	2	8	7	4	4
S.S. 7 th '03	1	5	8	8	4	S.S. 8 th '04	4	9	7	3	3

What did it mean?

The researcher concluded that a new discipline plan (Appendix C) would create a better learning environment, and give teachers more authority over their students and discipline issues. Within a more structured atmosphere, more learning would be able to take place, therefore increasing student achievement.

The comments the teachers wrote on the surveys and the answers to the questions clearly indicated that a new discipline plan was needed for the students in the fifth through eighth grades at West Avenue School. The teachers wanted to be able to have some authority over the students' behavior. The only recourse a teacher had if a student misbehaved was to write a discipline referral. The vice-principal or the principal would then determine the student's punishment. The intern implemented and developed a detention form for teachers to use to administer an after school detention for certain students. Teachers would be able to administer their own punishment for their students. This gave the teachers more power, authority, and control over their students and classroom. The ability to give students detention would also decrease the amount of discipline referrals written by the teachers.

The amount of discipline referrals written by the teachers decreased dramatically from the first marking period of 2003 to the first marking period of 2004 school year. In the first marking period of 2003 the fifth grade students had four referrals, the sixth grade had 40, the seventh grade had 25, and the eighth grade had 31. For the first marking period of 2004 the sixth grade students had zero, the seventh grade had 15, and the eighth grade had 17 referrals. The amount of referrals written by the teachers decreased along with the amount of serious offenses students committed for the first marking period of the

2004 school year. The decrease in referrals written by the teachers indicated that the new discipline plan was effective. The increase in the amounts of A's and B's from the first marking period of 2003 to the first marking period of 2004 and the decrease in D's and F's of the sixth and eighth grade students indicated an increase in student achievement.

CHAPTER 5 Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study

Conclusions and their implications

There was a need for a new discipline plan at West Avenue School. This need was indicated by the teachers numerous times on the teacher surveys and informal discussions that took place after school and during team meetings. The teachers desired some authority of their own when it came to discipline. Teachers' being able to give a student a detention was an effective measure to administer a punishment other than a referral written to the administrator. The decrease in the amount of the referrals written by the teachers from the first marking period of 2003 to the first marking period of 2004 indicated that the implementation of teacher detentions were an effective way to deal with certain student behaviors.

The report card grades were an indicator of the increase in student achievement of the students analyzed during the first marking period at West Avenue School from 2003 to the 2004 school year. There was an increase in the amount of A's and B's and a decrease in the amount of D's and F's from the same students in grade five in 2003 to grade six in 2004 of the first marking period. There was also an increase of A's and B's and a significant decrease in the number of F's from the same students in grade seven in 2003 to grade eight in 2004 of the first marking period.

This information indicated an increase in student achievement for most of the students in grades six through eight for the first marking period of 2004 and a decrease in student discipline at West Avenue School. The implementation of a new discipline plan

was successful. There was an increase in student achievement and improvement in student behavior.

Some implications to consider are the other factors that could attribute to student achievement and discipline problems. These factors are the curriculum, teachers, and the students' home environment. The implementation of the new discipline plan may not be the reason for student success or failure. The curriculum of a subject may be too difficult for some students. The rapport the students have with their teacher is another measure of student success or failure. The teaching style and classroom management of the teacher affects a student's learning. A student's home life also contributes to their performance at school, both academically and behaviorally. A child's home life plays a major role in their success at school. Research has proven that a child's parental involvement at home and with the school is one of the most important factors of a child's success in school. Many students who display negative behaviors in school and are low achievers have a poor home life. The decrease in the amount of A's and B's and the increase of the D's and F's with the students from the sixth grade in 2003 to the seventh grade in 2004 may have been due to one or more of these factors.

How did this study affect your leadership growth per the dictums of the ISSLC Standards?

The research conducted and the information analyzed affected the intern's growth as a leader. The ISSLC Standards were represented and came into play many times during administrative duties and the research that was conducted for the study.

Throughout the research the ISSLC Standards were examined and taken into consideration as the discipline plan was developed. There were many components relating to these standards that were used as part of the research, but the most important ISSLC Standard that related to the research was ISSLC Standard 3. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. In order for any learning to occur, staff and students must feel safe and secure. The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to management decisions for the enhancement of teaching and learning and a safe environment.

Another ISSLC Standard that related closely to the research was ISSLC Standard 2. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth. The administrator is committed to student learning for all as a fundamental purpose of learning, and assures the learning takes place in a safe and supportive learning environment.

The researcher gave the staff more authority over their students by implementing the teacher detention into the discipline policy, and this made the teachers feel more valued and important.

During the researcher's study the ISSLC Standards were used and enforced many times. With each decision made and all the dealings with the teachers and administrators, the use and implementation of the ISSLC Standards were vital to the new discipline plan's success.

How did it change the organization?

West Avenue School was a school that only housed kindergarten to grade five. Only the principal or the vice-principal handled discipline issues. The classroom teacher could deal with a minor classroom infraction by preventing a student from participating in recess, or some other small punishment geared to the younger students. This type of discipline was not appropriate for the older students.

In 2003, the school introduced grades six through eight. The addition of these students created a need for stricter discipline measures. West Avenue School has changed the way it deals with the discipline of students. The teachers have an opportunity to handle discipline problems on their own without the need to always write a discipline referral to the administrator. The teachers can now give students an after-school detention. This has given the teachers more authority within their classrooms. The power to administer a punishment of their own, without relying on an administrator, makes for better classroom management. In addition, the students are more likely to display less behavior problems knowing that they could be retained after school and forced to do work as punishment for choosing not to follow the classroom rules or misbehaving. It is also better for the administrators to have fewer students to deal with about discipline issues, and more time to devote to their other administrative duties.

What further study is needed?

There needs to be further study in the area of student achievement. The development of a new discipline plan seems to have increased student achievement for grades sixth and eighth at West Avenue School. More research should be conducted to determine what other factors contribute to student achievement. Research could be

conducted to examine the home environment of the students to determine if it has impact on their achievement or lack of achievement at school. Parental involvement at home and school could be analyzed with these students as well. Other ways to measure student achievement should also be analyzed such as standardized test scores and progress made throughout the entire school year to include all four marking periods.

The same could hold true for students with discipline problems. Their home life and the amount of parental involvement in and out of school could be analyzed to determine its effect on the way the child behaves in school. The child may be having problems at home that could be impacting their learning or their ability to learn. This would involve a more detailed study.

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APPENDIX A
TEACHER SURVEY

ADMINISTRATIVE INTERNSHIP SURVEY

1. Do you believe effective teachers instruct students on behavioral rules and classroom routines in much the same way they teach instructional content?

_____yes _____no

2. Teachers should take an interest in the personal goals, achievements, and problems of students.

_____agree _____disagree

3. What are some suggestions you have to make our discipline plan more effective?

4. What are some activities you would like to see implemented in order to address the discipline issue at West Avenue School (i.e. peer mediation, assemblies, etc.)?

5. The discipline plan at West Avenue School is effective.

_____agree _____disagree

APPENDIX B
DETENTION FORM

West Avenue School Classroom Detention Notice

51 North West Avenue, Bridgeton NJ 08302
856-455-8030 Ext. 8000

Roy Dawson
Principal

Kriston Matthews
Vice Principle

Dear Parent,

Your child, _____ has been assigned a classroom detention
for _____

His/her detention will be served on _____ and will last until _____ pm.

Please be advised that there will be NO BUS transportation. Please sign this form and return it to me by _____. Students are expected to follow classroom and school rules at all times.

Please feel free to call me with any questions or concerns at 856-455-8030 / ext. 8000

_____ Date _____
Teacher's Signature

Date Sent Home _____

Date Parent Contacted _____

_____ My child will be picked up by _____

_____ Date _____
Parent's Signature

APPENDIX C

WEST AVENUE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE POLICY

West Avenue School Discipline Policy

Our Philosophy Statement:

We believe the school community, including students, parents, teachers, and administrators, must work together to provide a safe supportive environment that promotes teaching and learning. We shall establish clear guidelines for academic and social behavior and use discipline in a positive, supportive, and consistent manner.

Discipline Procedures:

Elementary pupils committing the offenses listed below may be subjected to administrative action that may include, but may not be limited to the following: detention, assignment to a time-out room, parent conference, suspension. Gang-related behavior shall result in immediate parental contact and disciplinary actions shall be taken which may result in suspension and police contact. Teachers' actions may include, but may not be limited to the following: teacher directed discipline, parent conferences, anecdotal records and referral to the administrator. If the pupil's behavior may be due to a learning disability, the pupil may be referred to the Child Study Team. Once an administrator has determined that a criminal act has been committed, Zero Tolerance shall be applied, and the steps below shall be implemented.

1. carrying weapons or explosives: Any pupil possessing a weapon shall be suspended from school for a minimum of seven (7) days.
2. gang or pair fighting
3. narcotics (use of, carrying or supplying to sell)
4. leaving school property without permission
5. constant classroom disruptions
6. simple and/or aggravated assault
7. defacing school property
8. continued and willful disobedience
9. excessive tardiness
10. biting
11. breaking and entering
12. sex offenses
13. vandalism
14. stealing or extortion
15. disrespect for authority
16. smoking
17. profanity or obscenity
18. truancy

Zero Tolerance Steps

1. The police will be contacted to remove the pupil from the premises and a complaint will be signed. A recommendation may be made to crisis intervention authorities to confine the pupil to the detention center until a court hearing.

2. The parents will be notified by the school and police at the time of the complaint. The pupil shall be suspended from school for a minimum of seven (7) days.
3. The pupil shall be excluded from extracurricular activities for thirty (30) school days.
4. Prior to returning to school, the pupil must complete the district's conflict resolution program.
5. Before returning to school, the pupil will have a parent conference with the appropriate administrator and other staff the administrator deems appropriate.
6. A pupil committing a Zero Tolerance offense shall appear before the BOE's Discipline Panel before returning to school.

Detention:

A 24-hour notice of detention must be given to parents of students held for after school detention. Students who are transported by bus must be allowed to return home by bus, unless other arrangements are made with the parents.

Suspension:

It is the responsibility of parents to keep an out-of-school suspended pupil on home premises and away from school. If the student is picked up on school premises, he or she will be charged with trespassing and any other charge deemed appropriate by the principal and his/her designee.

No student may return to school from suspension without a parent contact.