

**AN EXAMINATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' OFFICE DISCIPLINE
REFERRALS**

by

Erin L. McClay

B.S., Robert Morris College, 1991

M.Ed., University of Pittsburgh, 2000

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
School of Education in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

University of Pittsburgh

2018

UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

This dissertation was presented

by

Erin L. McClay

It was defended on

July 27, 2018

and approved by

Dr. William Bickel, Professor Emeritus, Administrative & Policy Studies

Dr. Maureen McClure, Associate Professor, Administrative & Policy Studies

Dr. Charlene Trovato, Associate Professor, Administrative & Policy Studies

Dr. Michael W. Valenti, Research Coordinator, Pressley Ridge

Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Mary Margaret Kerr, Administrative & Policy Studies

Copyright © by Erin L. McClay

2018

**AN EXAMINATION OF PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' OFFICE DISCIPLINE
REFERRALS**

Erin L. McClay, M.Ed.

University of Pittsburgh, 2018

School discipline is a concern at the forefront of educators' minds. Students and teachers deserve to learn and work in safe environments that are conducive to learning. One common method of school discipline has been to suspend students from school. However, this method is considered highly punitive, ineffective at changing behavior, and counter-productive to academic progress.

The participating elementary school in this descriptive study had the highest rates of suspensions among Kindergarten through third grades of all the elementary schools in the district during the two years prior to this study. Therefore, the purpose of this student was to examine the behavior referrals in these grades over the course of three school years. Specifically, the intention was to identify patterns in the referrals such as referring teacher, location, and infraction types in order to determine the types of evidenced-based interventions identified through the literature review that may be effective at reducing the behaviors and ultimately the rate of suspensions. The results indicated that the most commonly referred behaviors were coded as disruption of school and aggression in the form of assaults and/or fighting. Consequently, further review of potential evidenced-based interventions specifically to target these particular behaviors was conducted.

The results of this study provide a launching point not only for potentially effective interventions but also for areas where professional development opportunities may be needed for teachers in terms of classroom management. Furthermore, because the setting of this research was an urban school that recognizes a significant achievement gap, it would be interesting to analyze the data according to gender, race, and IEP status in order to foster culturally inclusive environments and pedagogical strategies. Finally, future opportunities to expand this research include implementing an evidence-based intervention and tracking the effects of the intervention on the rate of referrals and suspensions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE.....	XI
1.0 INTRODUCTION.....	1
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW.....	3
2.1 STUDENT DISCIPLINE IN AMERICA	4
2.2 SUSPENSIONS IN AMERICA	6
2.3 EVIDENCE-BASED PREVENTION APPROACHES	8
2.3.1 School-Wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports	8
2.3.1.1 Program origination	9
2.3.1.2 Supporting research.....	9
2.3.2 Safe & Civil Schools	12
2.3.2.1 Program origination	12
2.3.2.2 Supporting research.....	13
2.3.3 Behavior Education Program.....	15
2.3.3.1 Program origination	16
2.3.3.2 Supporting research.....	16
2.3.4 Restorative Practices	18
2.3.4.1 Program origination	18
2.3.4.2 Supporting research.....	18

2.4	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	20
3.0	METHODS	23
3.1	STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	23
3.2	RESEARCH AIM, QUESTIONS, AND METHODS	24
3.3	SETTING	25
3.4	ETHICAL SAFEGUARDS	26
3.5	METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH	26
3.6	DATA COLLECTION	27
3.6.1	Office Discipline Referral (ODR)	28
3.6.2	Office Discipline Referral e-Schools PLUS Database Base	30
3.6.3	Data collection steps for this study	34
3.7	DATA ANALYSIS	34
4.0	RESULTS	37
4.1	WHAT ARE THE IDENTIFIED BEHAVIORAL INFRACTIONS FOR YOUNG STUDENTS IN K, 1ST, 2ND, AND 3RD GRADE?	37
4.2	WHAT ARE THE IDENTIFIABLE PATTERNS BY GRADE, FOR THE ODRS OF YOUNG STUDENTS IN GRADES K, 1ST, 2ND, AND 3RD GRADES?	43
4.3	WHAT ARE THE IDENTIFIABLE PATTERNS, BY PLACE, FOR THE ODRS OF YOUNG STUDENTS IN GRADES K, 1ST, 2ND, AND 3RD GRADES?	47
5.0	DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS	51
5.1	DISCUSSION	51
5.1.1	What are the identified behavioral infractions for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade?	51

5.1.2	What are the identifiable patters by grade, for the ODRs of young students in K, 1st, and 3rd grades?	53
5.1.4	What are the identifiable patterns, by place, for the ODRs of young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades?	54
5.2	WHAT TYPES OF EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTION PROGRAMMING ARE SUGGESTED BY THE DATA ANALYSIS?	56
5.2.1	Promoting Alternate Thinking Strategies (PATHS)	59
5.2.2	Coping Power Program (CPP)	60
5.2.3	Good Behavior Game (GBG).....	61
5.2	LIMITATIONS	63
5.3	IMPLICATIONS	65
	BIBLIOGRAPHY	67

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. <i>Incident Detail List</i>	32
Table 2. <i>Location Codes</i>	33
Table 3. <i>Data Analysis Table</i>	36
Table 4. <i>2014-2015 School Year Behavior Infractions by Percentage</i>	38
Table 5. <i>2015-2016 School Year Behavior Infractions by Percentage</i>	40
Table 6. <i>2016-2017 School Year Behavior Infractions by Percentage</i>	42
Table 7. <i>2014-2015 School Year Referrals by Grade/Percentage</i>	44
Table 8. <i>2015-2016 School Year Referrals by Grade/Percentage</i>	45

LIST OF FIGURES

<i>Figure 1.</i> Office Discipline Behavior Referral	29
<i>Figure 2.</i> 2014-2015 Behavior Infractions/Occurrences by Number	37
<i>Figure 3.</i> 2015-2016 Behavior Infractions/Occurrences	39
<i>Figure 4.</i> 2016-2017 Behavior Infractions/Occurrences	41
<i>Figure 5.</i> All Years – Behavior Infraction.....	42
<i>Figure 6.</i> 2014-2015 Referrals by Grade.....	43
<i>Figure 7.</i> 2015-2016 Referrals by Grade.....	44
<i>Figure 8.</i> 2016-2017 Referrals by Grade.....	45
<i>Figure 9.</i> All Years – Grade	46
<i>Figure 10.</i> 2014-2015 Location/Number of Referrals.....	47
<i>Figure 11.</i> 2015-2016 Location/Number of Referrals.....	48
<i>Figure 12.</i> 2016-2017 Location/Number of Referrals.....	49
<i>Figure 13.</i> All Years – Location.....	50

PREFACE

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my father, Joseph, who regrettably did not live long enough to see me earn it. However, I'm confident that from his comfortable place in eternity, his spirit walked beside me and played a supportive role in the successful completion of this accomplishment. I hope that I have made him proud.

This process has provided me with a learning experience that spans far beyond the collegiate walls in which it was earned. In addition to the knowledge acquired from the content of the research, I have learned a number of life lessons related to confidence, perseverance, grit, and determination. My hope is that I have set a good example for both of my children, Abbey and Brady, to learn by.

There are a number of people who I would like to acknowledge and thank for their unrelenting support throughout the process. First, I would like to thank my mom who, in the most unorthodox way, inspired me to pursue this level of education. I would like to thank my family-- Jeffrey, Abbey, and Brady--- not only for their support but also for the sacrifices they have endured as a result of this process. I would be remiss if I didn't acknowledge and specially thank my "study buddy," Abbey, who spent countless evenings and weekends sitting across from me as we worked on our academics. She truly did put the wind in my sails. I would like to thank all of the professors at the University of Pittsburgh who brought me to this point. However, in particular, I would like to thank my doctoral committee, Dr. Mary Margaret Kerr,

Dr. Charlene Trovato, Dr. Maureen McClure, Dr. Michael Valenti, and Dr. William Bickel. Without the advice, expertise, and encouragement from these professors, this body of work would not exist. Finally, I would like to thank my friend and colleague, Dr. Virginia Hill, who never ceased to offer words of encouragement. Perhaps no person but her was truly able to empathize with me, and for that I am eternally grateful.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Students, teachers, and communities deserve school environments that are safe and conducive to teaching and learning. However, according to data from the Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC), the number of students losing critical learning time due to out-of-school suspensions is staggering. Over 3 million students are suspended or expelled every year (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Furthermore, of the school districts with children participating in preschool programs, 6% reported suspending out-of-school at least one preschool child (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). Further evidence suggests that out-of-school suspensions are associated with negative student outcomes such as low academic performance, decreased academic engagement, and future disciplinary exclusion. Finally, there is no evidence to suggest that suspensions help to improve or change students' behavior (Skiba, Shure, Middleberg, & Baker, 2011). Creating a supportive school climate and decreasing suspensions requires close attention to the social, emotional, and behavioral needs of all students (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

The aforementioned statistics prompted an interest for this researcher to conduct a descriptive study to examine one urban elementary school's office discipline referrals. The first step in this descriptive case study was to review current literature that identified positive behavior interventions proven effective in reducing behaviors that lead to out-of-school suspensions. The guiding question to frame the literature review was: What evidence-based

behavior interventions have research proven to be effective at reducing disruptive school behaviors and reducing suspensions in elementary school settings?

The findings from the literature review led to the formation of the research design and questions. This descriptive study analyzed the office behavior referrals in an urban elementary school, specifically, those referrals written for students in Kindergarten through third grades. Through the careful analysis of behavior referral patterns over a three-year period, the investigator then collected data that would inform the implementation of appropriate behavior interventions.

The following research was completed because the school had the highest rate of discipline referrals leading to suspensions of all the elementary schools in the school district. Furthermore, the school has been declared a high needs school because of the lack of academic progress. The focus of the research was on behavioral referrals written on behalf of Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade. The research questions for this study were:

- RQ 1: What are the identified behavioral infractions for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade?
 - RQ 1.1: What are the identifiable patterns, by grade, for the ODRs of young students in grades K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades?
 - RQ 1.2: What are the identifiable patterns, by place, for the ODRs of young students in grades K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades?
- RQ2: What types of evidenced-based intervention programming are suggested by the data analysis?

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

Students who demonstrate aggressive, disruptive, defiant behaviors or academic disengagement are highly concerning to educators. Not only are their behaviors disruptive to the classroom environment, but these students are also at increased risk for subsequent behavior problems and academic failure (Masten et al., 2005). Appropriate school-based behavior intervention is a vital ingredient for academic success. Students learn to the best of their abilities in an orderly, safe, and engaging environment. If behavior is not taken into consideration, the school environment will be dangerous and the education process and attainment will be disrupted (Mothata & Squelch, 1997).

This literature review examines four current, research-based behavior interventions that have proven effective. The parameters for selecting behavioral interventions to research was that they be whole school, proactive, preventative, and have an evidence base suggesting that suspension rates were reduced in elementary schools as a result of their implementation. The review begins by providing an overview of student discipline in America. It details the traditional use of out-of-school suspension and its detrimental effect on academic and social outcomes.

Next, the literature review provides information about School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS), The Behavior Education Program (BEP), Safe & Civil Schools (SCS), and Restorative Practices (RP). A description of each program, origination of

the program, and supporting research for each program are provided. The closing offers a summary and concluding remarks about the results of each intervention.

2.1 STUDENT DISCIPLINE IN AMERICA

Today's schools demand more than teaching reading, math, science, arts, and other academic content. Educators must be able to accommodate students with significant learning and antisocial behavioral problems. Antisocial behavior is defined as "recurrent violations of socially prescribed patterns of behavior" (Gersten, Langler, Eisenberg, Simcha-Fagan, & McCarthy, 1976, p. 7) usually involving aggression, vandalism, rule violations, defiance of authority, and violation of the social norms and mores of society (Mayer, 1995).

Before we can devise effective strategies to prevent antisocial behavior, we must first understand what causes antisocial behaviors. A number of factors contained within the home, community, and school are related to antisocial behavior (Mayer, 1995). A factor that cuts across all three of these areas is an aversive or punitive environment. An aversive or punitive environment is one that addresses undesirable behavior by using unpleasant or punishing stimuli as a technique of behavior modification. Research has taught us that aversive or punitive environments predictably promote antisocial behaviors such as aggression, violence, vandalism, and escape (Mayer, 1995). Furthermore, many teachers find themselves teaching in communities that are unable to support the school, and working under conditions that are often counterproductive to teaching and learning. For example, a student, after being punished by a teacher, may fight back by destroying school property or fighting with others. However, not all students respond to a punitive environment with aggression or retaliation. Some attempt to

escape by being tardy, truant, or by tuning out in a class and other students simply comply. The impact of these conditions is felt in schools, neighborhoods, and families in a variety of ways (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). For example:

- According to a 2014 U. S. Department of Education report, 49 million students were enrolled in public schools during the 2012 school year. Of these students, 3.5 million students were issued an in-school suspension, 3.45 million were issued out-of-school suspensions, and 130,000 were expelled (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014).
- Young students who are expelled or suspended are as much as 10 times more likely to drop out of high school, experience academic failure and grade retention, hold negative school attitudes, and face incarceration than those who are not (Lamont et al., 2013).
- Out-of-school suspensions may enhance or negatively affect mental health outcomes for youth by creating increases in student alienation, anxiety, rejection, and breaking healthy adult bonds (Reynolds & Kamphaus, 2004).
- If disruptive behavior is not changed by the end of 3rd grade, it should be treated as a chronic condition; it cannot be cured, but must be managed with the appropriate supports and interventions (Walker, Colvin, & Ramsey, 1995).

Therefore, overly punitive environments and the use of punitive consequences in schools must be minimized. These facts emphasize that preparing students to succeed is a significant challenge for schools. Lack of student self-regulation and how best to manage it is a matter of increasing concern for administrators and teachers.

2.2 SUSPENSIONS IN AMERICA

Traditionally, schools have resorted to out-of-school suspensions, in-school suspensions, and detention to address disruptive student behaviors at school. However, the use of these strategies to manage disruptive school behavior has come under great scrutiny because of its correlation with negative academic outcomes. Threats to a student's own safety or to the safety of others are some of the underlying reasons for out-of-school suspension. However, research suggests that out-of-school suspension may exacerbate academic deterioration when students are provided with no immediate educational alternative (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). According to the UCLA Civil Rights Project, during the 2009-2010 school year, over three million children, K-12, were estimated to have lost instructional time due to out-of-school suspensions (Losen & Gillespie, 2012). Furthermore, suspensions are also a predictor of students' risk for dropping out. Every student dropout costs society hundreds of thousands of dollars over each student's lifetime in lost income. Studies show that high school graduates typically obtain higher employment and earnings. It is estimated that if the current dropout rate can be reduced by just half, it would yield almost 700,000 new graduates a year and would benefit the economy by close to \$90 billion for each year of success or nearly \$1 trillion after 11 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Children who are suspended are often from a population that is the least likely to have supervision at home. According to the U.S. Census, children growing up in homes near or below the poverty level were more likely than others to be suspended (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). Children with single parents were between two and four times more likely to be suspended from school than children with both parents at home. Additionally, while it is true that suspensions affect all students, evidence also suggests that suspensions disproportionately impact students of color. Many reports and studies have highlighted the racial disparities in school suspensions and

expulsions as well as their negative impact on student achievement. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2014), for the first time in history, the majority of babies born in the U.S. were babies of color. It is projected that by 2050, about 50 percent of the U.S. population will be African American, Latino, or Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Not only do out-of-school suspensions influence student achievement and progress, but research also suggests that out-of-school suspensions influence various characteristics of the school and personnel (Iselin, 2010). For example, schools with high suspension rates have more negative and hostile student relationships such as fights than schools with low suspension rates. Schools with high suspension rates have been shown to have unfavorable ratings in terms of the school's appearance such as cleanliness, building conditions, and order. In addition, administrators believe there is a relationship between high suspension rates and the need to increase family involvement (Iselin, 2010). Finally, Iselin's research supports the notion that negative and hostile student and staff relationships are characteristics found in schools with high suspension rates.

Clearly, these statistics and research results illustrate that out-of-school suspensions contribute to poor academic performance and achievement of students. Furthermore, such suspensions are not effective in changing undesired behavior, and perhaps cause further deterioration in school culture. Schools need to investigate and implement alternative discipline interventions. Decreasing suspensions in elementary schools requires a proactive, preventative, multi-tiered approach to support student behavior. Research suggests that comprehensive school-wide changes that address student- and school-level characteristics through proactive prevention and the reinforcement of positive behaviors are related to lower suspension rates. When implemented, these programs reduce discipline referrals and ultimately the use of

suspension. Evidence shows that elementary schools that incorporate positive, consistent, collaboratively regulated, and culturally sensitive comprehensive school-wide practices are more likely to have lower rates of suspension than elementary schools without such practices (Skiba & Sprague, 2008). Furthermore, schools that incorporate such comprehensive policies are more likely to enhance their students' current and future academic achievements as well as their life successes (McKevitt & Braaksma, 2008).

2.3 EVIDENCE-BASED PREVENTION APPROACHES

Let us turn now to an analysis of four elementary school-wide preventative approaches signaled in the research as producing positive outcomes at reducing the number of out-of-school suspensions. The approaches detailed in this article are School-Wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (SW-PBIS), Safe & Civil Schools (SCS), Behavior Education Program (BEP), and Restorative Practices (RP). The review describes each program, how/where the program originated, and where the program has been used successfully.

2.3.1 School-Wide Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports

School-Wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (SW-PBIS) is a comprehensive and preventative approach to promoting positive behavior. The goal of SW-PBIS is to decrease problem behavior in schools and classrooms and to develop support systems for students and adults at student-, classroom-, and school-wide levels.

2.3.1.1 Program origination

SW-PBIS is rooted in behavioral theory and its applications are steeped in applied behavior analysis (Baer, Wolf, & Risley, 1968). Initially developed to support people with significant intellectual disabilities and severe behavior problems, SW-PBIS organizes around three main themes: prevention, multi-tiered support, and databased decision-making. Prevention involves defining and teaching a set of positive behavior expectations, acknowledging and rewarding expected behavior, and establishing and using consistent consequences for problem behavior. Multi-tiered support is a process of systematically documenting the performance of students as evidence of the need for additional supports after making changes in the classroom. Typically, the tier levels are Tier 1-universal, Tier 2-targeted, and Tier 3-intensive. Databased decision-making involves continual progress monitoring of implemented interventions to determine next steps. The aim of SW-PBIS is to establish a positive school climate, in which expectations for students are predictable, directly taught, consistently acknowledged, and actively monitored.

SW-PBIS schools and classrooms have a common set of expectations posted, and teachers develop classroom-level rules and reinforcement systems consistent with the school-wide plan. Teacher-managed versus administrator-handled problems are clearly defined, and data on patterns of behavior are regularly summarized and disseminated to staff to support decision-making and consistency within the program.

2.3.1.2 Supporting research

The degree to which SW-PBIS programs are effective varies among schools. However, a significant amount of research evidences decreases in suspensions ranging between 20% and 60% (McCurdy, Mannella, & Eldridge, 2003). A 5-year longitudinal, randomized, controlled effectiveness trial of SW-PBIS was conducted by Bradshaw, Mitchell, and Leaf (2010) in 37

elementary schools in Maryland to examine the impact of training in SW-PBIS on implementation fidelity as well as student suspensions, office discipline referrals (ODRs), and academic achievement. There were approximately 12,000 participants in the study. The sample of students was almost evenly distributed across gender, race, and socio-economic status. Approximately 90% of participants were represented in regular education programs and 10% were represented in special education. A randomized controlled effectiveness design was employed in the study. Analysis involved collecting teacher's ratings of student's behavior and concentration problems, social emotional and prosocial behavior as well as office discipline referrals and suspensions over the duration of the study. While the results did indicate statistically significant effects on behavior and concentration problems as well as on social-emotional functioning and prosocial behavior, there was not a statistically significant effect on suspension rates. However, it bears mentioning that students in SW-PBIS schools were 33% less likely to receive an office discipline referral than comparison schools, which is the traditional origination of a suspension. Finally, the strongest effects were found in students exposed to SW-PBIS from Kindergarten.

In 2003, McCurdy et al. conducted a 3-year case study with an elementary school in a large urban area district in the northeastern United States. Specifically, the principal of the school requested a consultant from a behavioral health care provider to address faculty concerns regarding student behavior. The consultants suggested the implementation of a SW-PBIS model. The experimental design was case study. The Systems-Wide Evaluation Tool (SET) was administered at the beginning of the second year of program implementation to assess the degree to which changes implemented during Year 1 of the project carried over to the second year (Lewis & Sugai, 1999).

Consistent with case study methodology, multiple sources of information were collected. ODRs were obtained as a measure of program effectiveness because of their standardized format, convenience in collection, year-to-year stability within school, and the fact that they serve as a good index of teacher-reported student behavior because, in most cases, they are completed close in time to the actual incident. Forms for ODRs contained standard information about each separate offense: student's name, grade, nature of offense, staff member's name, and disciplinary action taken. ODR data were gathered monthly for the 2 years of project implementation (i.e., 1999-2001). In addition, for comparison purposes, archival ODR data were obtained for the school year prior to project implementation (i.e., 1998-1999). After planning, staff training, and implementation of the SW-PBIS model, results indicated that a 46% reduction occurred in ODRs by the end of the second year of the SW-PBIS project.

Netzel and Eber (2003) engaged in a 2-year case study of the Illinois Positive Behavior & Supports System. Specifically, the research documents the experience of an urban district in Illinois consisting of 15,000 students. The district's goal in implementing SW-PBIS was to reduce incidents of behavior that led to detention, suspensions, expulsions, and a high rate of referrals to special education. Once district approval was granted to implement SW-PBIS, an elementary school was selected as the pilot because of the high level of suspensions among its approximately 600 students. The sample of 600 students in grades K-5 was 96% minority status and 68% of whom were eligible for free and reduced lunch. During the 1998-1999 school year, 9.8% of students received at least one suspension, totaling 117 documented incidents of out-of-school suspensions. Upon completion of training and implementation after the first year, the elementary school experienced a 22% reduction in overall suspensions.

2.3.2 Safe & Civil Schools

Safe & Civil Schools (SCS) is a collection of SW-PBIS materials designed to help school staffs improve safety and civility across all school settings. The Safe & Civil Schools (SCS) model was designed to improve students' social and academic outcomes, and to support staff in their endeavors to teach appropriate behavior and correct misbehavior through a comprehensive multimedia program that guides staff through the process of designing a positive and proactive school-wide discipline plan. Program implementation includes a variety of resource materials to help schools address specific objectives coupled with ongoing multiyear professional development services (Piscatelli & Lee, 2011). The materials empower school staff with techniques to help all students behave responsibly and respectfully.

2.3.2.1 Program origination

Positive behavior support is a generic set of terms and describes ideas rooted in research from studies on behavior and how to influence behavior. The Safe & Civil Schools program is also based in and developed from the same bodies of research around behavior. However, Safe & Civil Schools is proprietary and utilizes different approaches. Safe & Civil Schools was developed by Randy Sprick in the 1980s. Safe & Civil Schools offers programs spanning from computer assisted instruction, training for playground and transportation workers as well as training for teachers and administrators. The program was designed to help guide schools through the process of implementing the SW-PBIS model. The SCS is a multifaceted program intended to help schools simplify SW-PBIS adoption decisions, improve likelihood of SW-PBIS implementation with fidelity, maximize reach to all students within a school, and maintain SW-

PBIS practices over time. The program takes a team-based and data-driven approach by providing materials, training, site visits, coaching, and support to school staff.

2.3.2.2 Supporting research

More than 5,000 schools in 25 states have implemented the SCS model since 1985. Feuerborn and Tyre (2012) conducted a 2-year case study in an urban elementary school in Western Washington. The sample of 389 students in grades K-5 consisted of 40% Latino, 21% Caucasian, 13% African American, 7% Asian, 6% Pacific Islander, and 2% American Indian. Of the total population, 58% were male, 76% received free or reduced lunch, 31% were recorded as transitional bilingual, and 18% received special education services.

Specifically, the school established a leadership team consisting of nine teachers. The school administered school climate surveys. The team used the results of the surveys to assess school needs and to guide the planning process. Planning included meeting to analyze office discipline data, determine school-wide behavior expectations, and create lessons to teach students the school-wide behavior expectations. Staff were trained prior to the implementation of the school-wide reform effort. The measures that were used to assess the implementation and behavior outcomes included fidelity of implementation, behavioral violation, and detentions/suspensions. Rates of in-school and out-of-school suspensions were tracked before and during the intervention period.

During the baseline year, 378 ODRs were issued, or an average of 2.1 ODRs per day. During the first year of implementation, 303 ODRs were issued, or an average of 1.7 ODRs per day. Overall, there was a 20% reduction in the number of ODRs issued during the first year of implementation. During the baseline year, 60 out-of-school suspensions were issued. During the implementation year, 34 out-of-school suspensions were issued. The change from baseline to

implementation years amounted to a 43% reduction in annual totals of out-of-school suspensions.

Ward and Gersten (2013) conducted a randomized 2-year evaluation of the SCS model at elementary schools in a large urban school district. The sample of 33 elementary schools were randomly assigned to treatment and control groups by assigning schools a random number. Seventeen schools were assigned to Cohort 1, the treatment group, and 15 schools were assigned to Cohort 2, the wait-list control group. Participating schools had high concentrations of students receiving free or reduced priced lunch, about 90%. Approximately 87% of the population were minority students. The differences between Cohort 1 and Cohort 2 schools were not statistically significant.

During the first year of the study, a leadership team was trained by a SCS consultant. A train the trainer model was used and eventually the leadership team trained the staff in PBIS. The study measured fidelity of implementation. On average, the first year of implementation reduced the incidence rate for suspensions by 17% and the incidence rate for suspended days by 22%. The second year of implementation reduced the incidence rate for suspensions by 23% and the incidence rate for the number of days suspended fell by 26%.

After the 2013 study, Smolkowski, Strycker, and Ward (2016) extended the study by evaluating the implementation of the SCS program in an applied setting across time. The purpose was to examine the implementation beyond the controlled research setting of the earlier study. The study evaluated effectiveness and maintenance of SCS in a scale up with elementary and secondary schools. This study aimed to determine how long-term implementation led to improvement in student suspension and behavior. The study included 17 of the 32 elementary schools that had participated in the previous study. Concerning suspensions, the results indicated

that following SCS training, students were less likely to be suspended and were suspended for fewer total days. In the years prior to SCS implementation, the suspension rate across participating schools had been increasing. Over the course of four years, the overall suspension rate decreased across schools by 17% after training and implementation of SCS.

2.3.3 Behavior Education Program

The Behavior Education Program (BEP), or “Check-in, Check-out,” is a Tier 2 structured intervention around a daily check-in and check-out system. As a reminder to the reader, a particularly important feature of behavior supports or Response to Intervention (RTI) is an emphasis on prevention, which occurs at three levels:

1. Primary tier 1 prevention: All students are exposed to a core social behavior curriculum to prevent the development of problem behavior and to identify students whose behaviors are not responsive to that core.
2. Secondary tier 2 prevention: Supplemental social behavior support is added to reduce the current number and intensity of problem behavior.
3. Tertiary tier 3 prevention: Individualized and intensive behavior support is developed to reduce complications, intensity, and/or severity of existing problem behavior.

This three-tiered prevention logic has direct application to both academic and social behavior supports (Cagel, 2017).

The students begin the school day by checking in with the BEP coordinator and return in the afternoon for check-out. During check-in, the coordinator ensures that the students have the required daily materials, homework, and daily progress report, and spends time with the child to review daily goals and behavior expectations. During check-out, the coordinator calculates the

student's points earned for the day, provides praise and encouragement, and gives the student a small reward such as a sticker or small snack based on the student's performance. The student takes a copy of the behavior sheet home for a parent signature. Behavior support team members meet weekly or every two weeks to evaluate student progress and to determine if the program needs to be modified or if students are ready to transition from the BEP to a self-monitoring program.

2.3.3.1 Program origination

Approximately 5-15% of the student population will need additional behavior support that can be provided by a secondary level or Tier 2 intervention such as additional social skills training or a check-in, check-out intervention (Miller, Dufrene, Sterling, Olmi, & Bachmayer, 2014). The BEP originates from SW-PBIS as a Tier 2 intervention.

2.3.3.2 Supporting research

Empirical evidence suggests that the BEP has been successful in supporting students who engage in more severe problem behavior.

A study conducted by Hawken, MacLeod, and Rawlings (2007) evaluated the effects of the BEP on problem behaviors with elementary school students. Specifically, the study was conducted in an urban elementary school with 655 students in grades K-6. Students participated in a daily check-in check-out system. The results of the study indicated that the BEP intervention was associated with reductions in the average number of office discipline referrals leading to suspensions per month across all groups of participants. Specifically, the four participating groups in the study averaged 3.59 ODR's per month during baseline data collection. Upon completion of the study, all four groups reported reductions in ODR's per month. The

reductions varied from 25% to 51% from original baseline data collection. Of the students who received the intervention, 75% showed reductions in average referrals per month.

Filter et al. (2007) conducted a quasi-experimental study to evaluate post-implementation, the fidelity of implementation, and the effectiveness of the BEP to reduce problem behavior and office discipline referrals. Specifically, the participants in the study included faculty, administrators, and students in three elementary schools in the Pacific Northwest. Students participating in the evaluation were selected because they had been in the school for at least six weeks without behavior support during the 2002-2003 academic year, were nominated by their faculty to receive behavior support, had been participating in the BEP for at least six weeks during the same year, and consented to participate in the study.

Data were collected on the extent to which the BEP was implemented with fidelity, the extent to which the program was related to the reduction of formal office discipline referrals (ODRs), and how the faculty perceived the program's effectiveness and efficiency. Specifically, ODRs were collected to compare the rates of problem behaviors before and during participation in the program.

The results indicated that when all ODRs were combined for the participants, a significant decrease in ODRs per week was found when students were participating in the BEP as compared to their ODRs before participation. When students were participating in the program, they averaged one ODR every 8.47 days compared to an average of one ODR every 5.59 days when not participating in the program.

2.3.4 Restorative Practices

Restorative Practices (RP) is a social science that studies how to build social capital and social discipline through participatory learning and decision-making. In contrast to Restorative Justice (RJ), RP's goal is prevention of a problem rather than reaction to a problem.

2.3.4.1 Program origination

Restorative Practices has its roots in Restorative Justice, a way of looking at criminal justice that emphasizes repairing the harm done to people and relationships rather than only punishing offenders (Zehr, 1990). In the modern context, Restorative Justice originated in the 1970s as a mediation between victims and offenders. In 1974, probation officer Mark Yantzi arranged for two teenagers to meet directly with their victims following a vandalism spree, and they agreed to restitution. The positive response by the victims led to the first victim-offender reconciliation program in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada with the support of the Mennonite Central Committee and in collaboration with the local probation department (McCold, 1999). The concept subsequently acquired various names such as Victim-Offender mediation and Victim-Offender dialogue as it spread through North America to Europe through the 1980s and 1990s. In 1994, Marg Thorsborne, an Australian educator, was the first to use RP in a school (O'Connell, 1998).

2.3.4.2 Supporting research

During the 2012-2013 school year, Anyon, Wiley, Yang, Pauline, and Grapentine (2016) conducted a study in the Denver Public Schools. At the time of the study, the district served over 90,000 students and consisted of 180 schools. Denver Public Schools served predominantly low

income students. Furthermore, 2% of their population was homeless and 12% received special education services.

The study followed a discipline reform policy that aimed to reduce the use of exclusionary discipline sanctions as well as to eliminate racial disparities in suspension. The aim of the study was to examine whether receiving RP intervention during the first semester was associated with lower rates of disciplined students receiving additional out-of-school suspension in the second semester.

Specifically, two types of training were provided to staff. The first was an introductory training that was four hours long and focused on preventative RP such as classroom community building circles. The second training was two days long and emphasized RP in response to discipline incidents. At the end of the training, participants were provided with a handbook that detailed all of the content from the training. On-site coaching and support from the district was also available following the training. Results from the study revealed that first semester participants in RP had lower rates of discipline referrals and suspensions in the second semester. However, the suspension gap between black and white students persisted.

For over a decade now, the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) has been implementing Restorative Practices throughout the district at their elementary, middle, and high schools. Specifically, in 2005, OUSD started the Whole School Restorative Justice Program (WSRJ) and the Peer RJ program. The focus of the program was to gain a better understanding of the implementation of RP across schools and the effectiveness of RP on suspension and academic outcomes for those schools with RP versus schools without RP programs. The district tested whether the association between RP intervention and suspensions over time was significant and whether the effect of RP interacted with race.

There were no set criteria for selection of schools to implement RP. Schools were generally selected to participate based on (1) strong interest, (2) low academic performance, (3) high suspension and expulsion rates, and (4) high number of students reentering from the Juvenile Justice System.

Implementation in 2005 began with one school and by the 2013-2014 school year had grown to 24 schools. The district hired an RP program manager, two RP specialists, and several RP coordinators who provided training to staff and who helped ensure the successful implementation of RP.

There was a considerable reduction in suspensions among RP schools compared to a sample of non-RP school sites. Specifically, the most significant decline in suspensions was for African Americans suspended for disruption and willful defiance, a 40% decrease in one year. The percent of WSRJ participants who were suspended dropped by half, from 34% in 2011-2012 to 14% in years two and three.

2.4 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This literature review discussed the deteriorating state of discipline in United States schools. It also provided evidence suggesting that the traditional method of corrective action, out-of-school suspension, is detrimental to academic and social outcomes and reflects limited change, if any, in student behavior.

Next, the literature review examined evidence-based approaches implemented in elementary schools that have proven successful at reducing the number of out-of-school suspensions. The specific interventions discussed were School-Wide Positive Behavior System,

Safe & Civil Schools, The Behavior Education Program, and Restorative Practices. All of these interventions are school-wide interventions. The discussion of each intervention provided a description of the program, the program's origination, and supporting research of the program's effectiveness. The supporting evidence suggests that when implemented with fidelity, the programs can have positive impacts on the reduction of behaviors leading to office behavior referrals resulting in out-of-school suspension. One resounding theme in each intervention is the idea of teaching children how to behave appropriately through positive approaches as opposed to punitive approaches.

The evidence clearly indicates that punitive approaches to managing undesirable behaviors in schools are failing at alarming rates, have detrimental effects on student outcomes, and permeate society with deleterious effects. To be effective, each of the interventions discussed requires a shift in thinking and practice for professionals working in schools. Schools are important settings for working with students academically and behaviorally. Schools are unique because they are the one place that teachers and students spend a significant amount of time together in both structured and unstructured context creating numerous, intervention-related opportunities.

Developing and implementing behavioral interventions in schools requires knowledge, skill, sensitivity, and tact. Building effective behavioral interventions demands attention to establish effective systems of school-wide positive behavioral interventions (Sugai, Horner, & Gresham, 2002). Effective strategies utilize procedures that prevent behavior problems as compared to those that rely on aversive consequences to punish or otherwise deter problem behavior.

School-wide behavior intervention programs must include a positively stated purpose, clear expectations backed up by specific rules, and procedures for adherence to and discouraging violations of the expectations (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). Implementation of the model involves three tiers of behavior intervention – primary, secondary, and tertiary – with the intensity of intervention intended to match the intensity of the problem behavior (Lewis & Sugai, 1999). The most important parts of a successful school-wide behavior intervention must include training for staff and ongoing data collection and progress monitoring of implementation fidelity.

In closing, a poignant quote from Tom Herner (1998), National Association of State Directors of Special Education former president, provides a point for consideration towards managing student behavior more positively and effectively:

If a child doesn't know how to read, we teach.

If a child doesn't know how to swim, we teach.

If a child doesn't know how to multiply, we teach.

If a child doesn't know how to drive, we teach.

If a child doesn't know how to behave, we...

teach? punish?

After thorough analysis of the data collected in this study, this literature review will potentially inform the researcher of possible interventions and preventative measures that could be implemented in order to teach students the behavior expectations and ultimately reduce the number of behavior referrals leading to out of school suspensions.

3.0 METHODS

This descriptive study is designed to analyze the behavioral referral patterns in an urban PreK-5 school. First, we begin by reviewing the statement of the problem, the aim of the study, and the research questions addressed by the analysis. This chapter then articulates the setting, methodological approach, data under study, as well as the procedures to be followed.

3.1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As summarized throughout the aforementioned literature review, elevated public awareness and perceptions of violence have increased schools' reliance on suspensions and other exclusionary discipline practices. However, suspensions can have serious, detrimental academic implications. Specifically, during the past two years, the school examined in this study had the highest rate of suspensions among the elementary schools in its district. Therefore, the problem studied in this research is the high rate of out-of-school suspensions for students in the school.

3.2 RESEARCH AIM, QUESTIONS, AND METHODS

The aim of this descriptive case study is to analyze the school's ODRs from Kindergarten to grade 3 over a three-year period. While the school does include grades 4 and 5, the analysis of this study did not include those grades. The rationale for not including these behaviors was two-fold. First, the suspension data for the school indicated that the highest rates of referral and out of school suspensions were occurring for those students in Kindergarten through 3rd grade. Second, research gathered through the literature review indicate that behavior modification and intervention is most successful and has a lasting effect when it is introduced in the younger grades. Through careful analysis, the objective was to identify the specific patterns of the referrals. The analysis involved answering the following questions:

- RQ 1: What are the identified behavioral infractions for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade?
 - RQ 1.1: What are the identifiable patterns, by grade, for the ODRs of young students in grades K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades?
 - RQ 1.2: What are the identifiable patterns, by place, for the ODRs of young students in grades K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades?
- RQ 2: What types of evidenced-based intervention programming are suggested by the data analysis?

Once analysis of the ODR data was completed, interventions were identified to prevent or deter future infractions.

3.3 SETTING

The setting of this descriptive case study was comprised of one urban elementary school in a Mid-Atlantic state. The school consists of two campuses serving Pre-K through fifth grade. One building serves Pre-K and Kindergarten and the other includes first through fifth grade students. Departmentalization occurs in the first through fifth grades. In Kindergarten through fifth grade, students receive instruction in literacy, math, social studies, and science. Students also participate in physical education, general music, library science, and visual arts classes. Students also have the opportunity to elect to participate in an instrumental and/or choral program.

The school serves a range of student demographics and includes a diverse population according to race and socioeconomic status percentages. The school receives Title I funds from the state and is identified as a “high needs focus” school due to consistently low academic performance on state assessments. The school has experienced a steady decline in enrollment for the past five school years at each grade level. During the two school years prior to the study, the school had the highest rates of out-of-school suspension of all the elementary schools in the school district. Specifically, according to a Safe Schools report issued by the state board of education where this school is located, the average school enrollment was 254 students. During the past two school years, the school averaged 48 serious behavioral incidents committed by an average of 32 students. Of these violations, 42% involved simple assault on students/teachers and 32% were incidents of fighting. However, it is important to mention that in addition to these offenses, there were also reported incidents of harassment, verbal threats, and disorderly conduct that were also considered in the data analysis.

3.4 ETHICAL SAFEGUARDS

There were no human participants for this descriptive case study. Rather, data from office behavioral referrals will be analyzed. While the office behavior referrals were written about students, no part of the study identified any student or staff member. Student and staff identifiable information was kept in strict confidence. This research received the approval of the participating school district and the University of Pittsburgh's Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects.

3.5 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This researcher employed a descriptive case study method. Yin describes the case study research method as, “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 2017). The main characteristics of descriptive case study research are that it is narrowly focused, provides a high level of detail, and is able to combine both objective and subjective data to achieve an in-depth understanding. Case Studies answer questions of how or why. They are commonly used to collect data in a natural setting where the researcher has little or no control over the events and there is a real-life context (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010).

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

Data for this descriptive study were collected from a student information database system known as E-Schools Plus. While this student information system stores all student information, access was granted to this researcher to query de-identified suspension data.

The data collection steps were as follows. First, all office discipline referrals leading to out-of-school suspensions during the 2014-2015 school year were printed by student. The process of harvesting office discipline referral data leading to out-of-school suspensions was also completed for the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years. Next, each individual office discipline referral was coded according to grade level, incident detail, location code, and referring teacher.

3.6.1 Office Discipline Referral (ODR)

This section explains the Office Discipline Referral (ODR), from which data are entered into the database, and the data base format. The ODR that was used during the years being analyzed in this descriptive case study appears in Figure 1.

Name _____ Homeroom _____ Grade _____ Date _____
 Referring staff _____ Period _____

Location: Classroom _____ Hallway Bathroom Cafeteria
 Gym Library Auditorium Special event/ Field trip Other _____

Problem Behavior (check most intrusive)

<input type="checkbox"/> Abusive language	<input type="checkbox"/> Undesirable group activity
<input type="checkbox"/> Racial/Ethnic harassment intimidation	<input type="checkbox"/> Possession or use of a Weapon (specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Threats	<input type="checkbox"/> Severe disrespect or defiance
<input type="checkbox"/> Sexual harassment	<input type="checkbox"/> Repeatedly non-compliant
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic dishonesty	<input type="checkbox"/> Harassment
<input type="checkbox"/> Possession/Use of alcohol or drugs	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff assault
<input type="checkbox"/> School or private property violation	<input type="checkbox"/> Student assault
<input type="checkbox"/> Classroom Disruption	<input type="checkbox"/> Bullying
<input type="checkbox"/> Fighting	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Description of incident, including all students involved:

Triggers	Possible Motivation	Prior Action Taken
<input type="checkbox"/> Adult request of student <input type="checkbox"/> Redirection <input type="checkbox"/> Unstructured setting <input type="checkbox"/> Transition <input type="checkbox"/> Peer provoked <input type="checkbox"/> Frustration with difficult task <input type="checkbox"/> No direct adult attention <input type="checkbox"/> Communication difficulty <input type="checkbox"/> Prior agitation <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Attention from peer <input type="checkbox"/> Attention from adult <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid peer(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid adult(s) <input type="checkbox"/> Avoid task or class work <input type="checkbox"/> Obtain items or activity <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown	<input type="checkbox"/> Severe – Immediate referral to administration <input type="checkbox"/> Verbal warning <input type="checkbox"/> Spoke to student privately <input type="checkbox"/> Change students work setting <input type="checkbox"/> Re-teach expectations <input type="checkbox"/> Removal of privileges <input type="checkbox"/> Time-out <input type="checkbox"/> Behavior contract <input type="checkbox"/> Parent notified <input type="checkbox"/> Detention

Action Taken By Administrator:

<input type="checkbox"/> Student conference	<input type="checkbox"/> Referral to CORE/SAP Team
<input type="checkbox"/> Loss of privileges _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent meeting
<input type="checkbox"/> In School Suspension	<input type="checkbox"/> Suspension _____ day(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> Lunch detention	<input type="checkbox"/> Time out of class
<input type="checkbox"/> Mediation	<input type="checkbox"/> Parent phone call

Date: _____ Administrator's Signature _____

Figure 1. Office Discipline Behavior Referral

The referral form was a standard district-wide form. Specifically, the paper referral was completed by the referring staff member. Staff members were required to complete as much information as possible in each of the six sections of the referral. The first section of the referral form included the following information: (1) name, grade, and homeroom of offender; (2) date,

class period, and location of the offense; and (3) name of referring staff member. Section Two of the referral form required the teacher to choose a classification of the offense (i.e., classroom disruption, abusive language, fighting) as well as to provide a detailed description of the incident. Section Three was the final section the referring staff member was required to complete. In this section, the referring staff members was asked to make a determination of possible triggers and motivation, as well as indicate any previous action, that may have been taken prior to writing a referral. The final section of the referral was completed by the administrator and indicated the type of action taken against the offender.

Once the paper referral was complete, the referring staff member submitted the referral to the principal. Upon a thorough investigation of the referral, consideration of previous behavior interventions, and review of the student code of conduct, the principal made a decision to issue either an out-of-school suspension, in-school suspension, or another consequence as a result of the behavior infraction. If the principal issued an out-of-school suspension, the school's student data specialist entered the suspension into the school district's e-Schools Plus database. Once the student data specialist entered the required information into the database, a copy of the ODR was filed in a locked file cabinet in the principal's office.

3.6.2 Office Discipline Referral e-Schools PLUS Database Base

The database used to warehouse ODR data for this study was called e-Schools PLUS. The database is a comprehensive K-12 student information system developed by Powerschool. The system includes a number of capabilities such as registration, gradebook, scheduler, and attendance components. However, for purposes of this research, only the behavior tracking

system was utilized. The behavior system provided various reports for tracking behavior incident information.

Once a behavioral referral was written and the principal investigated the incident and decided on an appropriate course of action, the student data specialist entered the details of the incident in the e-Schools PLUS database immediately. A complete incident detail list is included in Table 1. A complete location list is included in Table 2 following the incident detail list.

Table 1. *Incident Detail List*

CODE OF STUDENT CONDUCT – Incident Detail List

1. Disruption of school	30. Bomb Threat
2. Damage, Destruction or Theft of School Property	31. (no incident listed in database)
3. Assault on a school employee	32. Possession of Firearm
4. Assault, Simple employee	33. (no incident listed in database)
5. Assault, Simple student	34. (no incident list in database)
6. (no incident listed in database)	35. Possession of Controlled Substance
7. Drugs	36. Sale of Controlled Substance
8. Repeated Violations	37. Sale, Possession, Use, Transfer of, Under influence of alcohol
9. Unauthorized Presence	38. Other
10. Tobacco Use	39. Domestic Violence
11. Possession of Pagers or other telecommunication devices	40. Hate Related Crime
12. Academic Dishonesty	41. Assault, Aggravated-Student/Other
13. Sexual Harassment	42. Theft
14. Computer/Network Misuse	43. Assault, Aggravated-Employee
15. Undesirable Group Activity	44. Rape
16. Fighting	45. Involuntary sexual deviant intercourse
17. Racial Intimidation	46. Sexual Assault
18. All other forms of Harassment/Intimidation	47. Aggravated, Indecent Assault
19. (no incident listed in database)	48. Indecent Assault
20. Sexual Offenses	49. Bullying
21. (no incident listed in database)	50. Possession of a handgun
22. Threatening a school official/student	51. Possession of a shotgun/rifle
23. Reckless Endangering	52. Possession of other firearm
24. Robbery	53. Possession of a knife (type)
25. Burglary	54. Possession of cutting instrument (razor, box cutter, etc.)
26. Arson	56. Possession of Explosive(s)
27. Vandalism	57. Possession of BB/Pellet gun
28. Rioting	58. Possession of other weapon
29. Disorderly Conduct	59. Possession of other weapon

Table 2. *Location Codes*

Code Number	Location
1	School property/grounds-other
2	Alternative Placement facility
3	School-Sponsored Event in Schools Jurisdiction
4	Off School Grounds-Jurisdiction of another school (e.g. Another school's play)
5	Off School Grounds-Jurisdiction of the school (e.g. Visit to a museum)
6	District Provided Transportation to/from school
7	District Provided Transportation to/from an event
8	Off school grounds-while enroute to/from school
9	Off School Grounds-Truancy ONLY
10	School Property/Grounds – Hallway
11	School Property/Grounds – Bathroom
12	School Property/Grounds – Cafeteria
13	School Property/Grounds – Gym
14	School Property/Grounds – Library
15	School Property/Grounds – Auditorium
16	School Property/Grounds – Classroom

While the complete lists were extensive, the required information included school building, type of behavior incident, date, reporting staff member, name of offender, time, description of incident, and the corrective action being taken. If a suspension resulted from the behavior incident, a suspension letter was generated and issued to the student. Additionally, a

copy of the letter was mailed home. Finally, a phone call was made to the parent/guardian of the offender notifying them of the incident as well as the consequence.

3.6.3 Data collection steps for this study

Several different data sets were collected and analyzed for this study. The first data set was all out-of-school suspension data for grades K, 1, 2, and 3 for each of the years being studied: 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017. The second set of data collected was teacher referral count separated by the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017 school years. To examine the data further, referral counts were separately categorized by the location and infraction type.

Specifically, all data were harvested from the e-Schools Plus database. Once the data were extrapolated from the database, an Excel spreadsheet file containing separate sheets for each set of data were created. Furthermore, from these worksheets, bar graphs were created. Using the school district student information system, the principal investigator queried office discipline referrals for Kindergarten and grades 1, 2, and 3 that led to out-of-school suspensions. The collection of data included three years of office discipline referral data. The three years of data examined were from the 2014-2015, 2015-2016, and 2016-2017 school years.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

In this descriptive case study, the researcher used an Excel spreadsheet to organize the data for eventual analysis. Because this study focuses on early grade office discipline referrals, a

separate Excel file was created for each grade included in the study: K, 1, 2, and 3. What follows is a breakdown of how the referral data were entered for each grade's analysis.

Within each spreadsheet file, are separate tabbed worksheets. The individual worksheet names were as follows: overall OSS, teacher, infraction, and location. After collecting and categorizing the data into spreadsheets, the researcher then analyzed the data to determine patterns and trends among all of the various data sets. The analysis involved determining the referring teacher, student grade level, and location of the behavior infraction. The analysis for each grade answered the questions identified in Table 3.

The data analysis from this study concluded with a school profile as it relates to discipline data and offered potential intervention recommendations based on the evidence from the literature review.

Table 3. *Data Analysis Table*

Research Question	Data Examined	Analysis
RQ 1: What are the identified behavioral infractions for young students in K, 1 st , 2 nd , and 3 rd grades?	Office Discipline Referrals (ODRs) sorted by behavior infractions for young students in K, 1 st , 2 nd , and 3 rd grades	Description of the highest and lowest occurring behavior Infractions
RQ 1.1: What are the identifiable patterns, by grade, for the ODRs of young students in grades K, 1 st , 2 nd , and 3 rd grades?	ODRs graphed by individual grade	Identification of patterns of ODRs at each grade level
RQ 1.2: What are the identifiable patterns, by place, for the ODRs of young students in grades K, 1 st , 2 nd , and 3 rd grades?	ODRs graphed by location codes	Identification of locations throughout the building where behaviors are occurring most frequently
RQ 2: What types of evidence-based intervention programming are suggested by the data analysis?	All ODR data produced from the results of the study.	Identification of interventions to implement

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 WHAT ARE THE IDENTIFIED BEHAVIORAL INFRACTIONS FOR YOUNG STUDENTS IN K, 1ST, 2ND, AND 3RD GRADE?

Figure 2 provides a graphical representation of the behavior infractions that led to suspension during the 2014-2015 school year for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade. Specific information relating to the behavior infraction codes will follow the graphs.

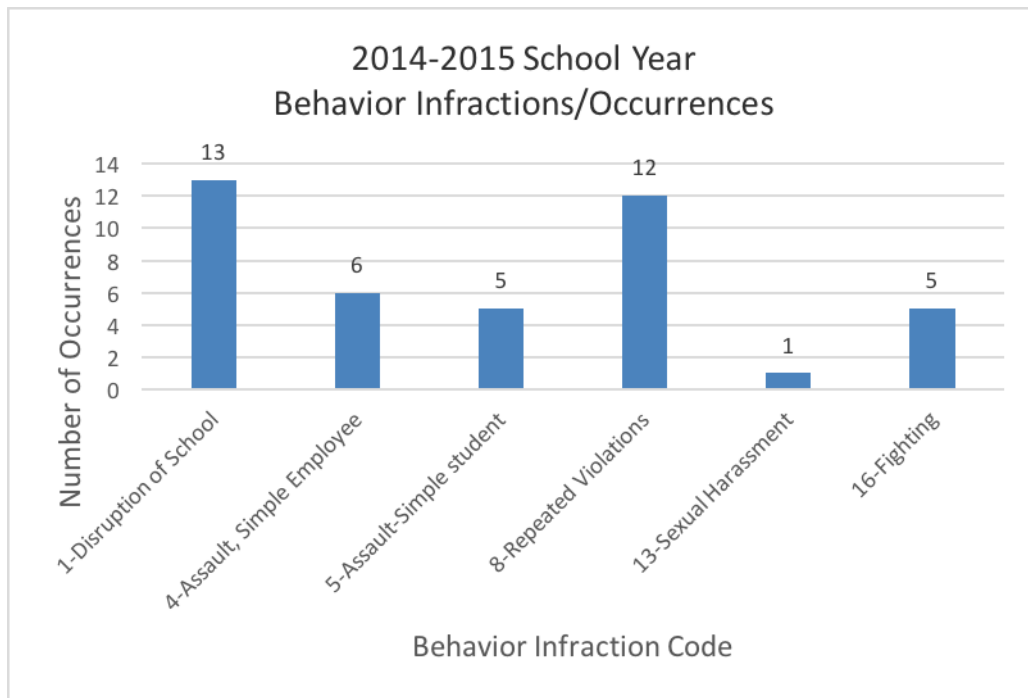


Figure 2. 2014-2015 Behavior Infractions/Occurrences by Number

In total, during the 2014-2015 school year, 42 behavior infractions resulted in suspensions recorded in the E-Schools Plus database.

Table 4 identifies the behavior infractions that occurred during the 2014-2015 school year by percentage for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade.

Table 4. *2014-2015 School Year Behavior Infractions by Percentage*

Infraction Code	Description of Code	Number of Occurrences
01	Disruption of School	30%
04	Assault, Simple Employee	14%
05	Assault, Simple Student	11%
08	Repeated Violations	28%
13	Sexual Harassment	2%
16	Fighting	11%

Figure 3 provides a graphical representation of the behavior infractions that occurred during the 2015-2016 school year for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade.

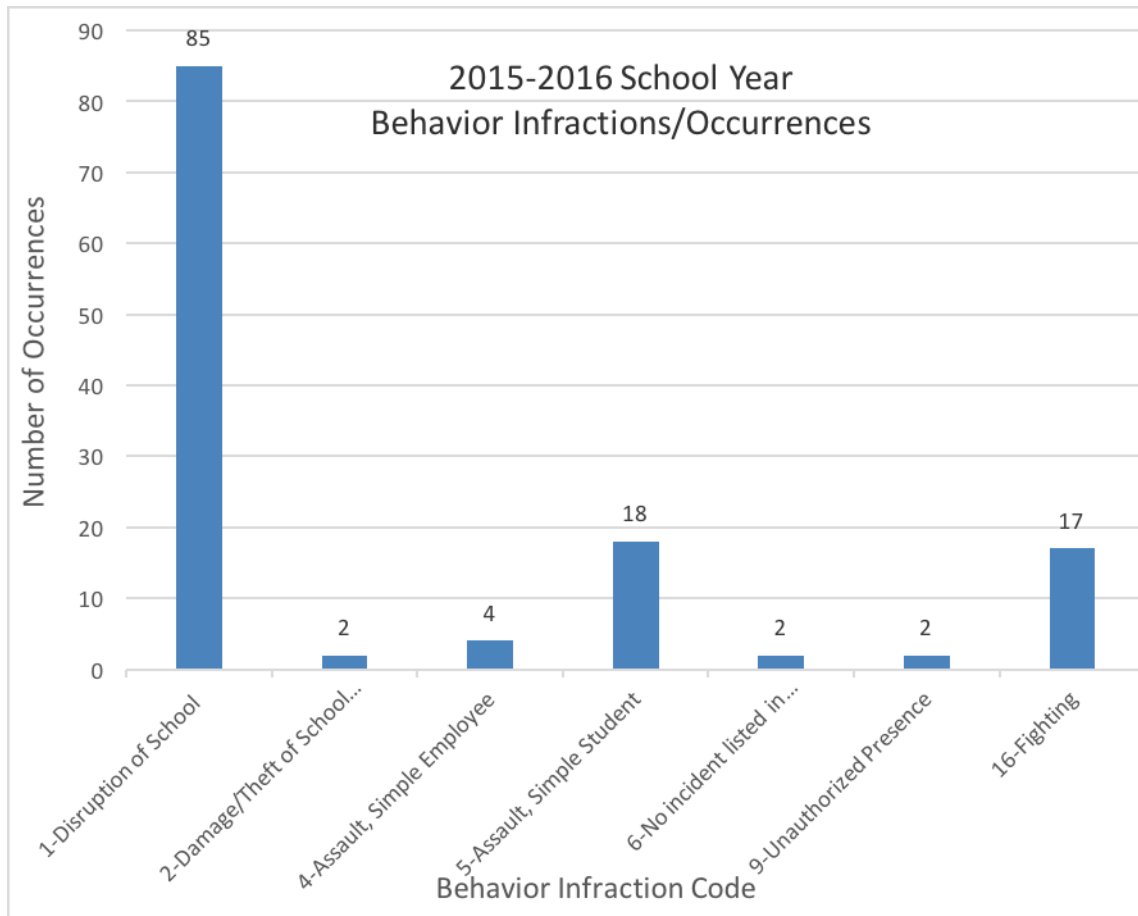


Figure 3. 2015-2016 Behavior Infractions/Occurrences

In total, during the 2015-2016 school year, 130 behavior infractions resulted in suspension recorded in the E-Schools Plus database. The data clearly illustrate that this year yielded a significantly higher amount of behavior infractions than the other years in the study. This will be further explained in the discussion chapter of this dissertation.

Table 5 identifies the behavior infractions that occurred by percentage during the 2015-2016 school year for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade.

Table 5. 2015-2016 School Year Behavior Infractions by Percentage

Infraction Code	Description of Code	Percentage of Occurrences
01	Disruption of School	65%
02	Damage, Destruction or Theft of School Property	1%
04	Assault, Simple employee	3%
05	Assault, Simple student	13%
06	No incident description listed in database	1%
09	Unauthorized presence	1%
16	Fighting	13%

Figure 4 provides a graphical representation of the behavior infractions that occurred during the 2016-2017 school year for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade.

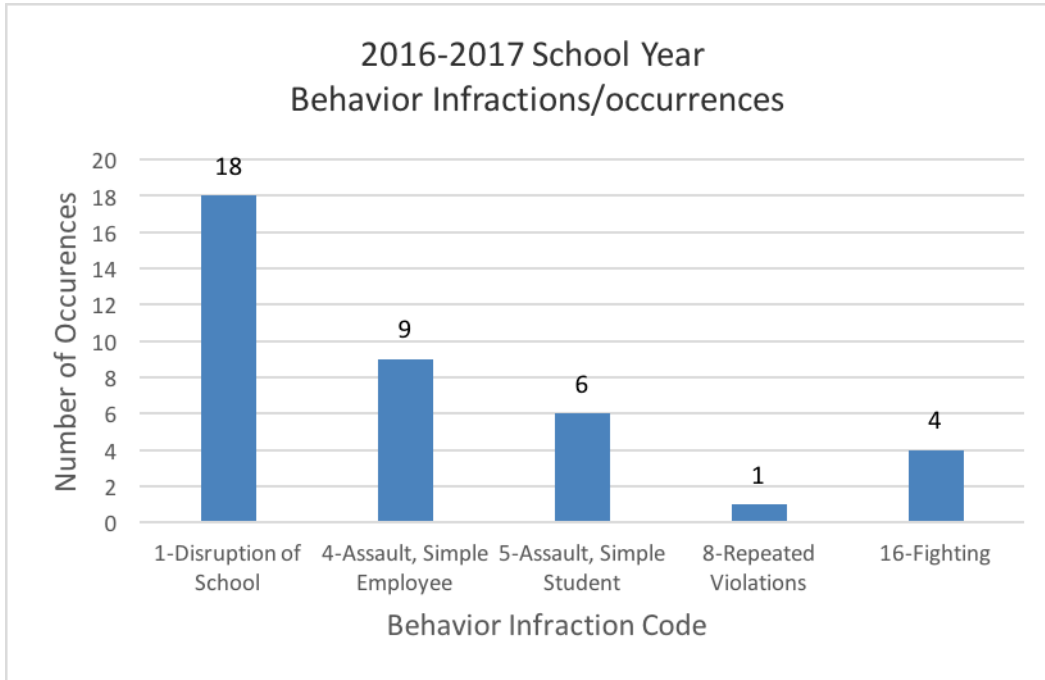


Figure 4. 2016-2017 Behavior Infractions/Occurrences

In total, during the 2016-2017 school year, there were 38 behavior infractions resulting in suspension recorded in the E-Schools Plus database.

Table 6 identifies the behavior infractions by percentage that occurred during the 2016-2017 school year for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade.

Table 6. 2016-2017 School Year Behavior Infractions by Percentage

Infraction Code	Description of Code	Number of Occurrences
01	Disruption of School	47%
04	Assault, Simple employee	23%
05	Assault, Simple student	15%
08	Repeated violations	2%
16	Fighting	10%

Figure 5 compares behavior infractions across all three years of the descriptive study.

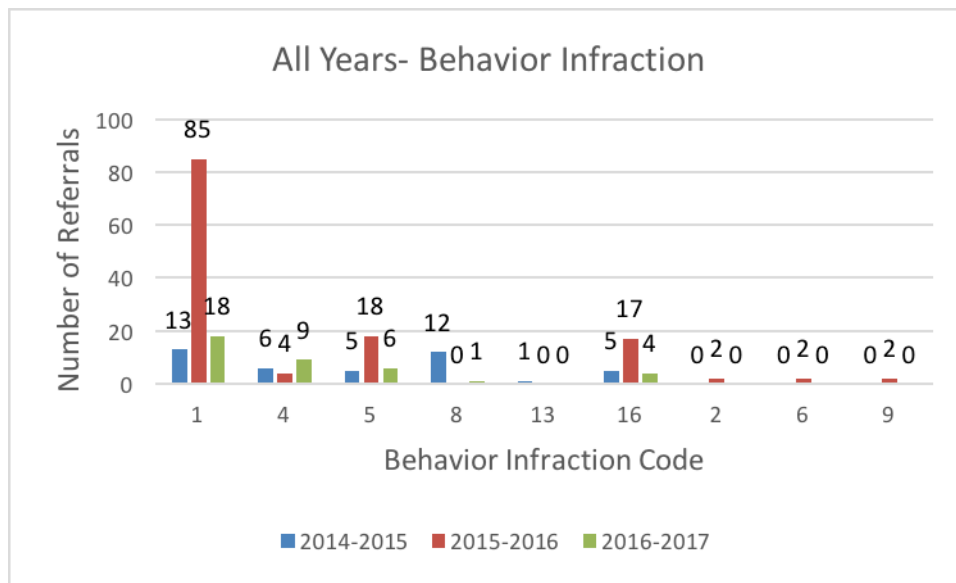


Figure 5. All Years – Behavior Infraction

4.2 WHAT ARE THE IDENTIFIABLE PATTERNS BY GRADE, FOR THE ODRS OF YOUNG STUDENTS IN GRADES K, 1ST, 2ND, AND 3RD GRADES?

This section details the identifiable patterns by grade for the ODRs of young students in grades K, 1, 2, and 3 for each of the years being examined in this study.

Figure 6 provides a graphical representation of the the numbers of referrals written at each grade level during the 2014-2015 school year for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade.

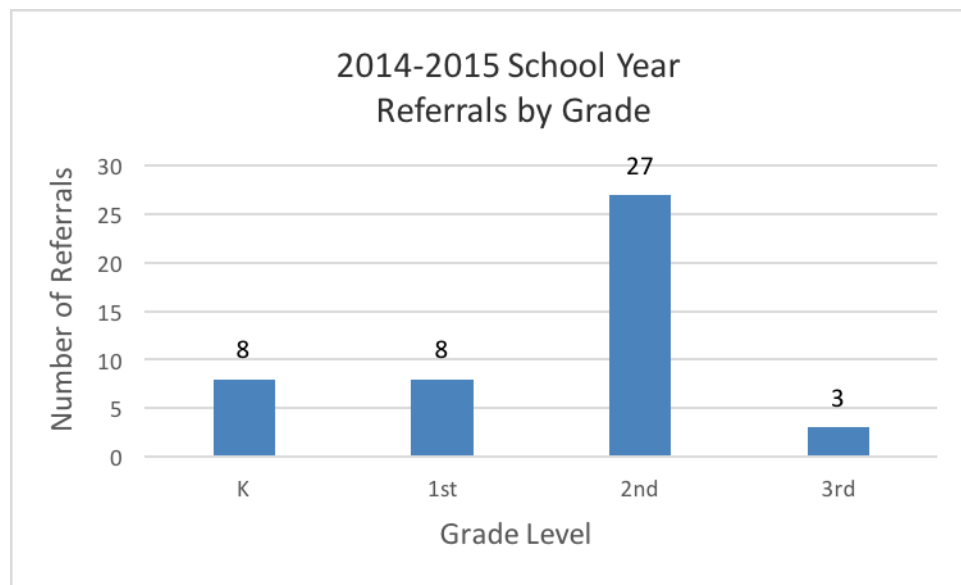


Figure 6. 2014-2015 Referrals by Grade

Table 7 identifies the percentage of ODRs written by grade that led to out-of-school suspension during the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 7. 2014-2015 School Year Referrals by Grade/Percentage

Grade Level	Percentage of Referrals
K	17%
1	17%
2	58%
3	6%

Figure 7 provides a graphical representation of the the numbers of referrals written at each grade level during the 2015-2016 school year for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade.

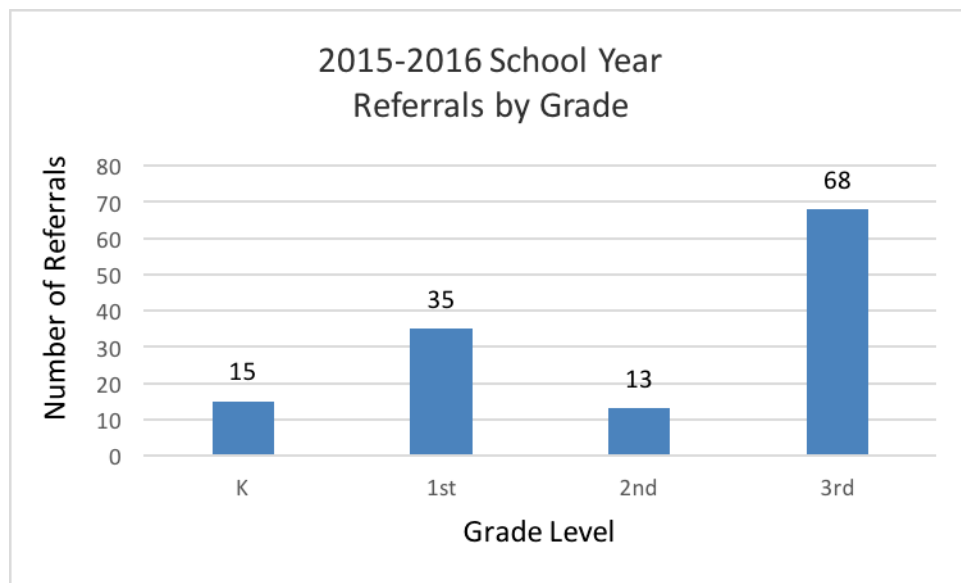


Figure 7. 2015-2016 Referrals by Grade

Table 8 details the percentage of ODRs written by grade that led to out-of-school suspension during the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 8. 2015-2016 School Year Referrals by Grade/Percentage

Grade Level	Percentage of Referrals
K	11%
1	26%
2	9%
3	51%

Figure 8 provides a graphical representation of the the numbers of referrals written at each grade level during the 2016-2017 school year for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade.

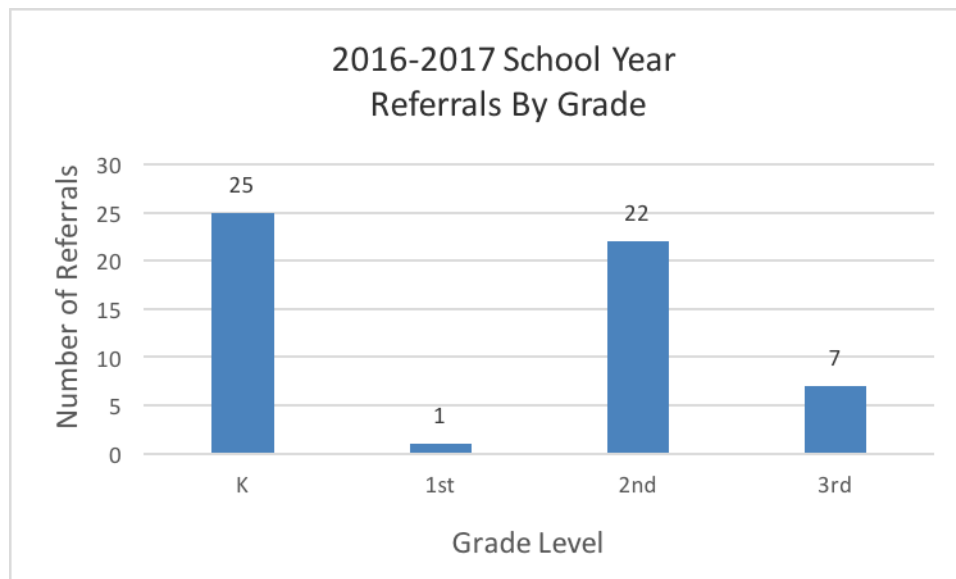


Figure 8. 2016-2017 Referrals by Grade

Table 9 details the percentage of ODRs written by grade the led to out-of-school suspension during the 2016-2017 school year

Table 9. 2016-2017 School Year Referrals by Grade/Percentage

Grade Level	Number of Referrals
K	45%
1	1%
2	40%
3	12%

Figure 9 compares referrals by grade across all three years of the study.

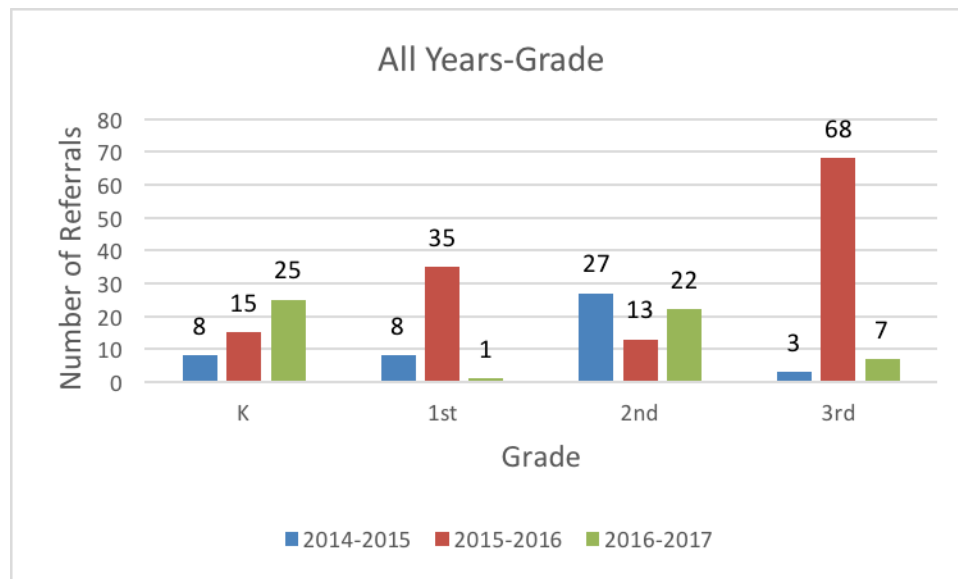


Figure 9. All Years – Grade

4.3 WHAT ARE THE IDENTIFIABLE PATTERNS, BY PLACE, FOR THE ODRS OF YOUNG STUDENTS IN GRADES K, 1ST, 2ND, AND 3RD GRADES?

This section details the identifiable patterns by place for the ODRs of young students in grades K, 1, 2, and 3 for each of the years being examined in this study.

Figure 10 provides a graphical representation of the the numbers of referrals written at each place on the school campus during the 2014-2015 school year for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade.

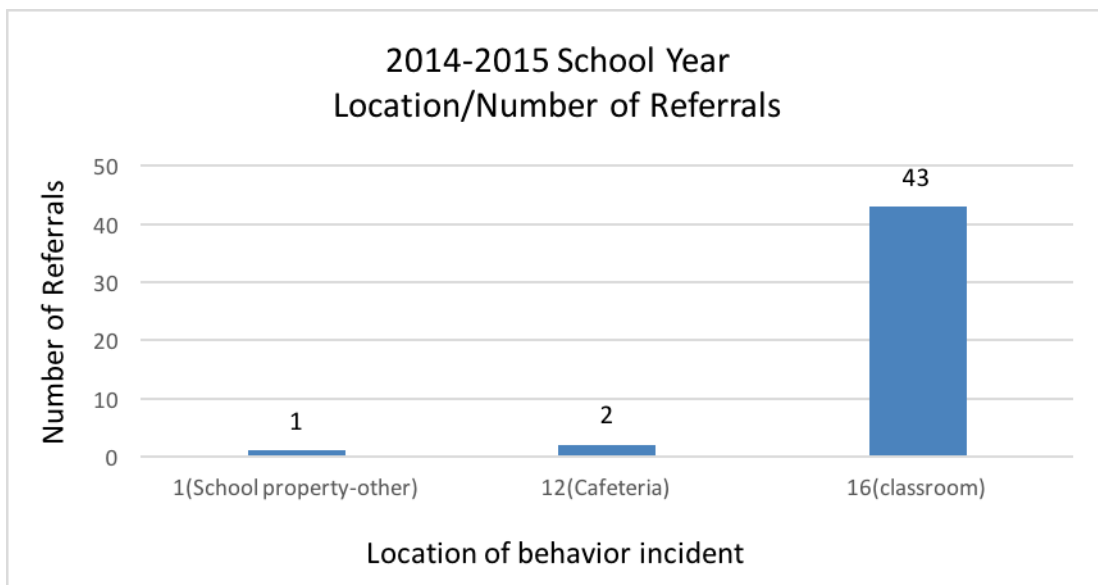


Figure 10. 2014-2015 Location/Number of Referrals

Table 10 identifies the percentage of ODRs written by place the led to out-of-school suspension during the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 10. 2014-2015 School Year Referrals by Place/Percentage

Location of Offense	Percentage of Referrals
1 (school property-other)	2.1%
12 (cafeteria)	4.2%
16 (classroom)	91.4%

Figure 11 provides a graphical representation of the the numbers of referrals written at each place on the school campus during the 2015-2016 school year for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade.

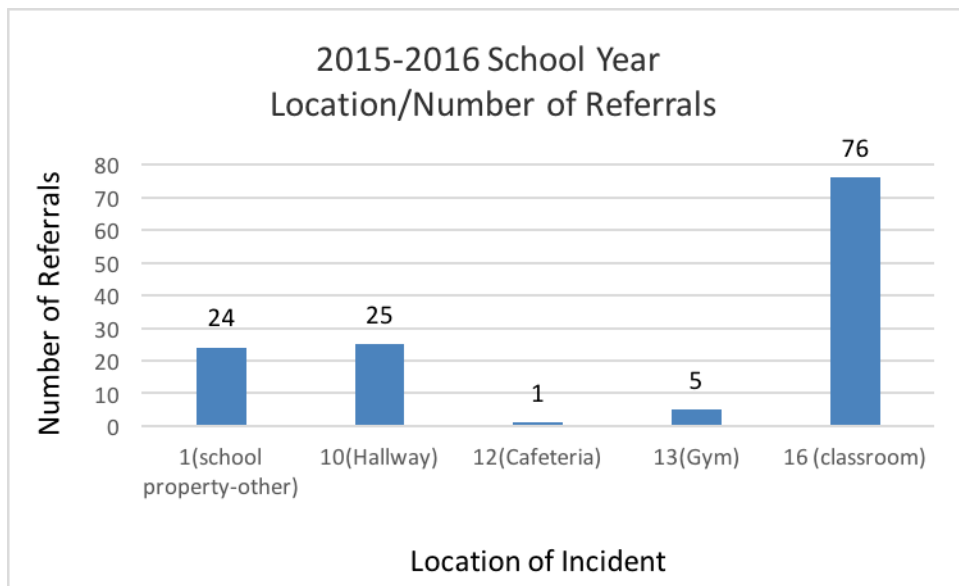


Figure 11. 2015-2016 Location/Number of Referrals

Table 11 identifies the percentage of ODRs written by place the led to out-of-school suspension during the 2015-2016 school year.

Table 11. 2015-2016 School Year Referrals by Location/Percentage

Location of Offense	Percentage of Referrals
1 (school property-other)	18.3%
10 (hallway)	19%
12 (cafeteria)	.77%
13 (gym)	3.8%
16 (classroom)	58%

Figure 12 provides a graphical representation of the the numbers of referrals written at each place on the school campus during the 2016-2017 school year for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade.

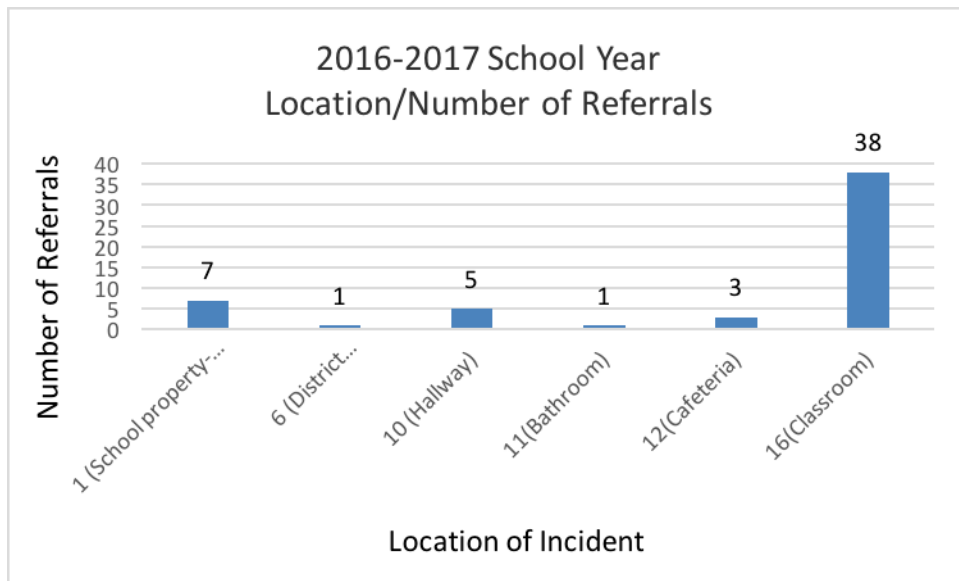


Figure 12. 2016-2017 Location/Number of Referrals

Table 12 identifies the percentage ODRs written by place that led to out-of-school suspension during the 2016-2017 school year.

Table 12. 2016-2017 School Year Referrals by Place/ Percentage

Location of Offense	Percentage of Referrals
1 (school property-other)	12.7%
6 (district transportation)	1.8%
10 (hallway)	9%
11 (bathroom)	1.8%
12 (cafeteria)	5.5%
16 (classroom)	69%

Figure 13 compares the location of referrals across all three years of the study.

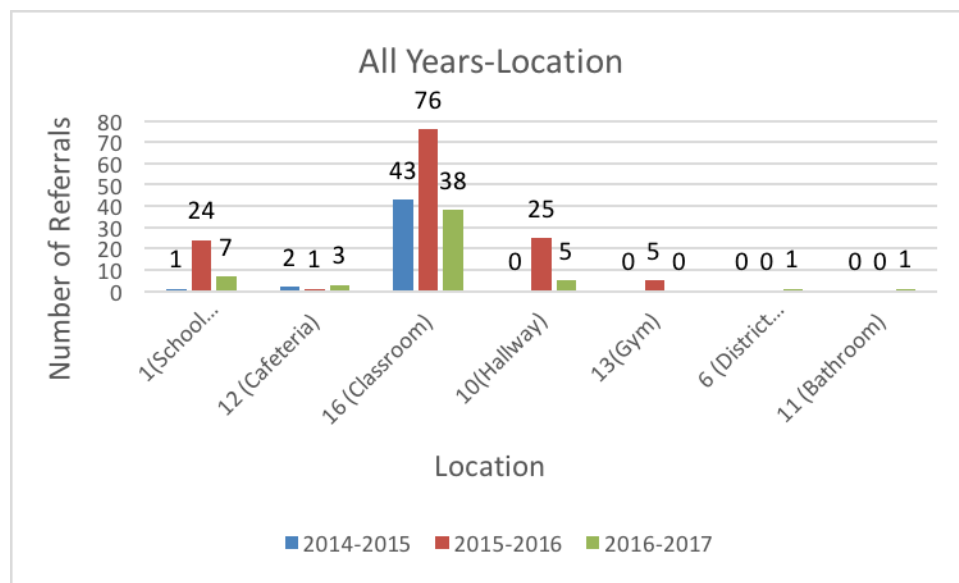


Figure 13. All Years – Location

5.0 DISCUSSION, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The literature review in this dissertation provided evidence that student behavior and methods of intervention to address undesired student behavior significantly influence student outcomes both academically and socially. However, in order to provide students with the most efficient and effective interventions, this study analyzed various patterns of referral data across three years in an urban elementary school. This chapter will begin by offering a discussion of the results of this descriptive case study. Then, the limitations of the study will be detailed. Finally, the chapter will close by offering potential implications of the research findings and future areas of potential research areas to expand on this body of information.

5.1 DISCUSSION

5.1.1 What are the identified behavioral infractions for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade?

For this descriptive study, the results indicated that the most frequent behavior infraction for young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade over the duration of the study was coded as disruption of school. This infraction was referred 116 times or 55% of the time over the course of the three-year study. This is a difficult code to interpret, as it is quite broad. The only definitive

explanation of what these behaviors may look like is that the behaviors did not align with any of the other infraction codes. Further analysis of referrals written using this code is necessary in order to determine the nature of the behaviors and the necessary behavior interventions to implement. However, examples of these behaviors may include but are not limited to excessive talking in class, failing to follow teacher directions, tardiness, out of assigned seat, using materials inappropriately, and elopement of the classroom. The next most frequently occurring behavior infraction codes were simple assault on a student and fighting. Both of these codes represent behaviors that are presentative of aggression. There are at least two possible explanations for these high referral rates. First, during the years that this study was conducted, there was not a clear delineation between the differences in the two behavior violations. Specifically, the referring teacher had the autonomy to decide which code would be assigned to the offense. However, recent district policy changes now require teachers to code a behavior incident as a fight when two or more parties are both engaged in physical aggression towards other participants. An assault on a student is now representative of an offender and a victim behavior infraction.

A second explanation for the high referral rates of aggression could be that during the years of this study, the school had no formal curriculum addressing social emotional learning and many students lacked the skill set to manage their emotions, resolve conflicts, and make responsible decisions.

The second year of the study, 2015-2016, yielded the highest rate of referrals and this referral rate represented a significant increase from the previous year of the study. This spike in referrals may be explained by the fact that during this year of the study, the school transitioned from self-contained classrooms in grades 1-5 to departmentalized classrooms. This change

contributed to increased transitions in the hallways as well as students being exposed to more than one classroom teacher throughout the school day. If expectations for transitions are not clearly articulated to students, they present an opportunity for behavior infractions to occur. Furthermore, if all teachers have not established consistent behavior expectations throughout the school, then students may experience difficulty adjusting or may simply be confused by varying teacher expectations and thus exhibit behaviors that can result in behavior referrals.

5.1.2 What are the identifiable patterns by grade, for the ODRs of young students in K, 1st, and 3rd grades?

For this descriptive study, during the 2014-2015 school year, the highest number of referrals of all types was generated by second grade students. The second grade had a total of 27 referrals during the 2014-2015 school year. Interestingly, during the 2015-2016 school year that same group of students who were promoted to third grade had the highest number of referrals totaling 68. It is important to consider that this particular cohort of students also had the largest population of students with identified special needs. The absence of clear, consistent behavior expectations as well as possible frustrations with academics, is a viable explanation for the high referral rates among this cohort of students. Furthermore, during the 2015-2016 school year, when the referrals spiked from 27 to 68, regrettably this group of students were exposed to a teacher who was on a formalized employee improvement plan. As such, the students were exposed to below average teaching as well as extremely sporadic attendance on the part of their teacher. These circumstances could explain the growing rate of referrals during the second year of the study. During the 2016-2017 school year, both K and 2nd grade had the highest rates of referrals with 25 and 22 respectively. Of similar interest, during the 2015-2016 school year, the

1st grade students accrued 35 referrals and as second grade students during the 2016-2017 school year continued to reflect elevated referrals numbers. In the school district where this study was conducted, there are two separate student information systems (SIS). One SIS contains information for students in grades K-12 and the other contains information for pre-school students enrolled across the district. This researcher was only granted access to the K-12 SIS for purposes of this study. It would have been useful to have had access to the pre-school SIS because a determination could have been made regarding how many of the Kindergarten students actually attended pre-school. Knowing this information, could explain the referral rate for Kindergarten students during the first year of the study. If students did not attend pre-school and Kindergarten was their first formal exposure to school and the academic demands and behavior expectations of being a student, this could potentially explain the high rate of referrals in Kindergarten.

5.1.4 What are the identifiable patterns, by place, for the ODRs of young students in K, 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grades?

For this descriptive study, during the 2014-2015 school year, 43 of the 46 referrals were written for behavior infractions that occurred in the classroom. Similarly, during the 2015-2016 school year, the highest number of referrals were written for behaviors occurring the the classroom. This number of referrals equated to 76. During the 2016-2017 school year of the study, the highest number of referrals was written for behaviors occurring in the classroom. The number of referrals during this final year of the study was 38. While students do spend the majority of their school day in the classroom, this consistently high number indicates that professional

development around classroom management may be needed as well as a universal system of behavior expectations.

An additional consideration is the ability of the teaching staff to recognize, understand, and appreciate the cultural differences of students as well be able to address their needs. While the U.S. and student populations have changed dramatically in terms of diversity, the teaching population is very homogeneous. In fact, the teaching force seems to be decreasing in racial and ethnic diversity (Cartledge, Gardner, & Ford, 2009).

Culture is a complex concept and the behaviors and attitudes associated with culture are not always easily discerned, nor is the degree to which the child's background influences classroom learning easily determined. For many children, however, the gaps need to be bridged so that schools do not become foreign places for students but instead become inviting, nurturing entities where students learn and thrive. To accomplish the goal of providing an appropriate education for all children, educators must build bridges between home and school, the two most important environment for children. (Cartledge, Gardner, & Ford, 2009, p.56) .

To that end, it would be important to determine the competency levels of teachers at this school to infuse multiculturalism into their practices and then provide the appropriate support and professional development around this issue.

5.2 WHAT TYPES OF EVIDENCE-BASED INTERVENTION PROGRAMMING ARE SUGGESTED BY THE DATA ANALYSIS?

The most frequently referred behavior over the course of the three-year study was *disruption of school*. With regard to students in the classroom, disruptive behavior has been defined as behavior that is inappropriate (Bloom, 2009) and interferes with the learning of other students in the class (Sida-Nicholls, 2012). Disruptive student behavior diverts the teacher's focus from teaching and redirects it to managing the classroom, thus having a negative impact on student learning (Basch, 2011).

Various examples of disruptive behavior have been presented in the literature. These behaviors are extensive and include but are not limited to calling out, disturbing others, failure to follow directions, obscene language, and inappropriate use of materials. However, for this study upon completion of the data analysis and discovering the high rate of referrals for disruption, the principal researcher was not able to determine the specific nature of what types of behaviors constituted disruption because the E-Schools Plus program from which data were harvested did not delineate disruption in terms of specific behaviors.

The second most frequently referred behaviors over the course of the study were fighting and assaults on both teachers and students. These are acts of aggression and certainly need to be addressed. Disruptive behavior and aggression are the most common form of maladjustment in school age children (Dishion & Patterson, 2006).

The World Health Organization defines aggressive behavior as follows:

Aggressive behavior is defined as intentional use of physical force or power, threatened or actual, against oneself, another person or against a group or community, that either

results in or has a high likelihood of resulting in injury, death, psychological harm, maldevelopment or deprivation. (Krug et al., 2002, p. 5)

Aggression is a complex and multi-dimensional phenomenon. It varies by type, reactive and proactive, relational, or bullying and by degree-violence, aggression, and rough playing (Reese, Horne, Bell, & Wingfield, 2008). Moreover, many non-aggressive students support aggression in an active or passive way (Samivalli, Lagerspetz, Bjorkqrist, Osterman, & Kakianinen, 1996). Classmates have a particularly strong impact on aggression in the classroom because they may serve as a source of protection for victims or they may join the aggressor and abandon the victim to secure or gain social status (Espelage & Holt, 2000).

Normative levels of aggressive behavior typically decline when children are between 4 and 9 years old (Campbell, Spieker, Burchinal, & Poe, 2006), for a small group of children (5% to 11%) the aggressive behavior remains stable and becomes problematic (Prinzle, Onghena, & Hellinckx, 2005). This is especially true for children with elevated aggression at the start of elementary school (Broidy et al., 2003). Several developmental trajectory studies indicate that stable aggressive behavior in elementary school places children at risk for future difficulties such as rejection by peers, school failure, and more serious externalizing problems (Patterson, Reid, & Dishion, 1992). Over time, these children also have increased risk of developing diagnosable psychopathology (e.g., oppositional defiant disorder and conduct disorder), substance abuse, and delinquency in adolescence (Broidy et al., 2003). Further, in an 18-year longitudinal study of 10-year-old children, it has been demonstrated that costs to society are 10 times higher for children with elevated levels of aggressive behavior compared to children without elevated levels (Scott, Knapp, Henderson, & Maughan, 2001). Given these findings, there is a strong need for effective preventive interventions designed to interrupt the developmental trajectory towards

more serious behavior problems for elementary school-children with aggressive behavior problems (Buckley, 2009).

A SW-PBIS program would provide a structure and common language in which students can learn the school-wide behavior expectations through instruction that focuses on specific behavior expectations and potentially be recognized in a positive way for complying with the behavior expectations. Support for a SW-PBIS program with other evidence-based interventions could specifically focus on disruptive and aggressive behavior in the school.

A review of research suggests that there are a wide range of evidence-based interventions to address disruption and aggression in the school setting. School-based prevention interventions have been heralded as an efficacious and cost effective way to decrease prevalence of antisocial behavior among students (Jenson, 2006). Schools are an ideal arena for targeting difficult child behavior. School-based interventions provide frequent opportunities for teaching and reinforcing skills. School-based interventions typically are divided into four groups based on their general service formats. The four intervention formats are universal programs, selected/indicate programs, special schools or classes, and comprehensive multimodal programs (Saxena, Jane-Llopis & Hosman, 2006). Universal programs are delivered in classroom settings to all students in the classroom. In other words, children are not selected individually for treatment but rather receive it simply because they are in a program classroom. Universal programs are often used in low socioeconomic status and/or high crime neighborhoods and thus, the children in the programs may be considered at risk by virtue of their socioeconomic background (Wilson & Lipsey, 2007). The literature provides a number of evidence-based universal programs of prevention and intervention for consideration. Specifically, the following interventions were examined. The criteria for selecting interventions was two-fold. First, the interventions needed

to have an evidence base of effectiveness at the elementary school level. Second, the intervention needed to target aggressive behavior in the classroom setting.

5.2.1 Promoting Alternate Thinking Strategies (PATHS)

PATHS is a comprehensive universal school-based social and character development program for promoting emotional and social competencies and reducing aggression and behavior problems in young children. PATHS as a preventative intervention aims to decrease risk factors and increase protective factors with the goal of altering children's trajectories toward positive outcomes and away from negative outcomes (Crean & Johnson, 2013). PATHS is the universal component of the Fast Track Project. Fast Track pairs universal prevention services, PATHS, with more intensive individualized intervention services for those at highest risk (CPPRG, 1999).

A number of randomized clinical trials with a number of differing samples of young children, including deaf/hearing impaired students, regular education students, and special education students have demonstrated the effectiveness of the PATH curriculum. Specifically, three randomized clinical trials have been conducted spanning one year of PATHS training with relevant data collected at pre, post, and follow-up (Greenberg, Kusche, & Mihalic, 2002). In all three trials, PATHS was found to increase children's ability to recognize and understand emotions, understand social problems, develop effective alternative solutions, and decrease the percentage of aggressive solutions. Furthermore, teachers reported increases in children's self-control, emotional understanding, ability to tolerate frustration, and to use effective conflict resolution strategies. Finally, in both year one and year two follow-ups, PATHS slowed the rate of teacher reported behaviors (Kam, Greenberg, & Kusche, 2004).

5.2.2 Coping Power Program (CPP)

The Coping Power Program is an evidence-based prevention intervention that has yielded positive intervention effects on children's aggressive behavior and problem solving skills (Lochman & Wells, 2003). The CPP is based on a social-cognitive model of intervention and was adapted from the Anger Coping school-based intervention. The program may be implemented individually or in group formats. Coping Power includes 34 lessons for children and 16 for parents. The child component allows teacher to devote more time to coaching children in emotional awareness, relaxation techniques, goal setting, and the management of peer pressure (Powell et al., 2011).

The effectiveness of the CPP has been well-documented in several randomized control trials. One study found that children who received either the child component alone or with both parent and child components demonstrated fewer delinquent acts and greater teacher reported behavioral improvements after one year as compared to children who did not receive the intervention (Lochman & Wells, 2004). This research laid the groundwork for an effectiveness study that investigated whether nesting an indicated intervention for aggressive children within a universal intervention would enhance intervention effects (Lochman & Wells, 2002). Results from this body of research indicated children who received CPP plus the universal intervention demonstrated lower rates of teacher reported aggression and higher levels of perceived social competence and teacher reported prosocial behavior relative to children who did not receive this intervention. Children in all intervention conditions showed positive gains and effects were maintained after one year (Lochman & Wells, 2002). A final study reviewed set out to determine the extent to which a preventative approach to using the CPP is capable of decreasing aggressive behaviors and improving social and emotional competencies when delivered as a

universal classroom based prevention intervention. Findings in this study showed a significant reduction in overall problematic behaviors such as aggression and hyperactivity (Muratori et al., 2016).

5.2.3 Good Behavior Game (GBG)

The GBG is a classroom management strategy that has been used and studied for more than 40 years. The GBG is an easy implemented group contingency procedure that includes identifying target behaviors, posting rules, identifying rewards, dividing a class into at least two equal teams, identifying rule violators and stating their infractions, debiting the offending team for infractions or awarding points for meeting expectations and awarding daily and weekly prizes to the team with the fewest infractions or most points earned for prosocial behavior (Barrish, Saunders, & Wolf, 1969; Elswick & Casey, 2012).

In its initial empirical evaluation, researchers used the GBG to decrease out of seat and talking out behaviors in elementary students. Since that initial investigation, the GBG has been applied numerous times to test its effects on a variety of behaviors including but not limited to disruption, off task, aggression, talking out, inappropriate social interactions, and swearing. Specifically, five studies were conducted between 1993 and 2013 that examined aggressive behavior. The definition for aggression in these studies included hitting, kicking, tapping, tripping, pinching, throwing objects in the classroom, and destroying the property of others. The researchers who conducted the studies suggested that the GBG was a moderately to highly effective intervention for reducing aggression (Flower & McKenna, 2014).

Generally speaking, choosing the appropriate intervention for any school or group of students should be based on a thorough review of data specific to the school or groups of

students. The aforementioned interventions have an evidence based that suggests they have been successful at reducing acts of aggression and teaching students how to manage their frustrations that lead to acts of aggression. Specifically, for the school in this study, in addition to implementing a universal school wide behavior intervention, it is recommended that perhaps an adoption and implementation of the Coping Power Program would be a beneficial intervention. This program also offers a parent component, which could prove to be helpful in bridging the home to school connection.

5.2 LIMITATIONS

There were a number of limitations in this study. One significant limitation was that disruption of school was an extremely broad description inhibiting the researcher's ability to determine specifically what these behaviors looked like. However, commencing during the 2017-2018 school year, the school district did implement a newly written code of student conduct, which offers more descriptive language around disruption of school. Going forward, this revision will greatly benefit administrative teams in the analysis of referrals and infraction types.

A second significant limitation is the generalizability of the results of the study. Specifically, the results do not represent a sample of students from various schools but rather, the results are reflective of one school during one time period. However, this is not to say that the procedures and analysis process implemented could not be replicated by other school leadership teams or researchers to examine suspensions in their particular settings and determine the best potential interventions.

A third set of limitations surfaced around the coding of behaviors and how they were entered in the E-Schools Plus database. The behaviors are coded using very broad language. For example, disruption of school is open for interpretation. Referring teachers may use the code disruption of school while others choose to code an incident as repeated violations, particularly, if the teacher handled the classroom disruption in other ways such as a student conference or parent phone call prior to writing a referral. Furthermore, each teacher may have a different

standard of behavior that, if violated, constitutes them writing a referral for disruption of school. A second example of coding behavior that is confusing is fighting and student assault. Potentially, a teacher could refer two students for fighting and another teacher's interpretation is that they assaulted one another.

A fourth set of limitations that surfaced was around data analysis. For example, the locations where the behaviors occurred do not include what type of behavior was being referred. This limited view of the data was perpetuated by a fifth set of limitations. Specifically, at the time of this study, the school district where this research was conducted only had technology for storing referrals. This technology served as a data warehouse and did not have analysis capabilities. Therefore, all of the data had to be harvested from the system and manually entered into an Excel spreadsheet by the researcher for analysis.

5.3 IMPLICATIONS

Disruptive student behavior is a common problem in schools. Classroom disruptions interfere with student learning. One method for dealing with disruptive students is to remove them from the classroom or school. This is evidenced by the high rates of suspensions in the US. The U.S. Department of Education has indicated that over 3 million students are expelled every year (U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, 2014). When students are removed from the classroom or from the school entirely, they miss instruction, which can be detrimental to their academic success.

The participating elementary school in this descriptive study had the highest rates of suspensions among Kindergarten through third grades of all the elementary schools in the district during the two years prior to this study. Therefore, the purpose of this student was to examine the behavior referrals over the course of three school years. Specifically, the intention was to identify patterns in the referrals such as referring teacher, location, and infraction types in order to determine the types of evidenced- based interventions identified through the literature review that may be effective at reducing the behaviors and ultimately the rate of suspensions. The results indicated that the most commonly referred behaviors were coded as disruption of school and aggression in the form of assaults and/or fighting. Consequently, further review of potential evidenced-based interventions specifically to target these particular behaviors was conducted.

The results of this study provide a launching point not only for potentially effective interventions but also for areas where professional development opportunities may be needed for teachers in terms of classroom management. Furthermore, because the setting of this research was an urban school that recognizes a significant achievement gap, it would be interesting to analyze the data according to gender, race, and IEP status in order to foster culturally inclusive environments and pedagogical strategies. Finally, future opportunities to expand this research include implementing an evidence-based intervention and tracking the effects of the intervention on the rate of referrals and suspensions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Anyon, Y., Wiley, K., Yang, J., Pauline, M., & Grapentine, J. (2016). *Spotlight on success: Changing the culture of discipline in Denver Public Schools*. Retrieved from <https://assets.documentcloud.org/documents/3022172/Spotlight-on-Success-Changing-the-Culture-of.pdf>
- Baer, D. M., Wolf, M. M., & Risley, T. R. (1968). Some current dimension of applied behavior analysis. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 1*, 91-97.
- Barrish, H., Saunders, M., & Wolf, M. (1969). Good behavior game: Effects of individual contingencies for group consequences on disruptive behavior in a classroom. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis, 2*, 119-124.
- Basch, C. E. (2011). Aggression and violence and the achievement gap among urban minority youth. *Journal of School Health, 81*(10), 619-625.
- Bloom, L. A. (2009). *Classroom management: Creating positive outcomes for all students*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill/Pearson.
- Bradshaw, C. P., Mitchell, M. M., & Leaf, P. (2010). Examining the effects of school-wide positive behavioral supports on student outcomes. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 12*(3), 133-147.
- Broidy, L. M., Nagin, D. S., Tremblay, R. E., Bates, J. E., Brame, B., & Dodge, K. A. (2003). Developmental trajectories of childhood disruptive behaviors and adolescent delinquency: A six-site, cross-national study. *Developmental Psychology, 39*, 222-245.
- Buckley, J. A. (2009). Introduction to this special issue: Implementing evidence-based interventions in elementary schools for students with and at risk for severe behavior disorders. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorder, 17*, 195-196.
- Campbell, S. B., Spieker, S., Burchinal, M., & Poe, M. D. (2006). Trajectories of aggression from toddlerhood to age 9 predict academic and social functioning through age 12. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 47*, 791-800.
- Cartledge, G., Gardner, R., & Ford, D. (2009). *Diverse learners with exceptionalities*. Boston, MA: Pearson.

- Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group (CPPRG). (1999). Initial impact of the fast track prevention trial for conduct problems: Classroom effects. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 67*, 648-657.
- Crean, H. W., & Johnson D. B. (2013). Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) and elementary school aged children's aggression: Results from a cluster randomized trial. *American Journal of Community Psychology, 52*, 56-72.
- Dishion, T. J., & Patterson, G. R. (2006). The development and ecology of antisocial behavior in children and adolescents. *Developmental Psychopathology, 3*, 503-541.
- Elswick, S., & Casey, L. B. (2012). The good behavior game is no longer just an effective intervention for students: An examination of the reciprocal effects on teacher behavior. *Beyond Behavior, 21*, 36-46.
- Espelage, D., & Holt, M. (2000). Bullying and victimization during early adolescence: Peer influences and psychosocial correlates. *Child Development, 74*, 205-220.
- Feuerborn, L. L., & Tyre, A. D., (2012). Establishing positive discipline policies in an urban elementary school. *Contemporary School Psychology, 16*, 47-58.
- Filter, K. J., McKenna, M. K., Benedict, E. A., Horner, R. H., Todd, A., & Watson J., (2007). Check in/Check Out: A post-hoc evaluation of an efficient, secondary-level targeted intervention for reducing problem behaviors in schools. *Education and Treatment of Children, 30*(1), 69-84.
- Flower, A., & McKenna, J. W. (2014). Effects of the good behavior game on challenging behaviors in school settings. *Review of Educational Research, 84*, 546-571.
- Gersten, J. C., Langler, T., Eisenberg, J., Simcha-Fagan, O., & McCarthy, E. D. (1976). Stability and change in types of behavioral disturbance of children and adolescents. *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology, 4*(2), 111-127.
- Greenberg, M. T., Kusche, C. A., & Mihalic, S. F. (2002). *Blueprints for violence prevention: Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS)*. Boulder, CO: Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence.
- Hawken, L. S., MacLeod, S. K., & Rawlings, L. (2007). Effects of the behavior education program (BEP) on office discipline referrals of elementary school students. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 9*(2), 94-101.
- Iselin, A. M., (2010). *School suspension: Research and policy options*. Retrieved from <https://childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/>
- Jenson, J. M. (2006). Advances and challenges in preventing childhood and adolescent problem behavior. *Social Work Research, 30*, 131-134.

- Kam, C. M., Greenberg, M. T., & Kusche, C. A. (2004). Sustained effects of the PATHS curriculum on the social and psychological adjustment of children in special education. *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, 12*, 66-78.
- Krug, E.G., Dahlberg, L. L., Mercy, J. A., Zwi, A.B., & Lozano, R. (2002). Paper presented at the World report on violence and health. Geneva: World Health Organization.
- Lamont, J. H., Devore, C. D., Allison, M., Ancona, R., Barnett, S. E., Gunther, R., . . . Young, T. (2013). Out-of-school suspension and expulsion. *Pediatrics, 131*(3), e1000-e1007.
- Lewis, T., & Sugai, G. (1999). Effective behavior support: A systems approach to proactive schoolwide management. *Focus on Exceptional Children, 31*(6), 1-24.
- Lochman, J. E., & Wells, K. C. (2002). The coping power program at the middle school transition: Universal and indicated prevention effects. *Psychology of Addictive Behavior, 16*, 40-54.
- Lochman, J. E., & Wells, K. C. (2003). Effectiveness of the Coping Power Program and of classroom intervention with aggressive children: Outcomes at a 1-year follow-up. *Behavior Therapy, 34*, 493-515.
- Lochman, J. E., & Wells, K. C. (2004). The coping power program for preadolescent aggressive boys and their parents: Outcome effects at the 1-year follow-up. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 72*, 571-578.
- Losen, D., & Gillespie, J. (2012). *Opportunities suspended: The disparate impact of disciplinary exclusion from school*. Retrieved from <https://www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu/>
- Masten, A. S., Rosiman, G. I., Long, J. D., Burt, K. B., Obradovic, J., & Riley, J. R. (2005). Developmental cascades: Linking academic achievement and externalizing and internalizing symptoms over 20 years. *Developmental Psychology, 41*, 733-746.
- McCold, P. (1999). Restorative justice practice: The state of the field 1999. *International Institute of Restorative Practices, 10*, 2010.
- McCurdy, B. L., Mannella, M. C., & Eldridge, N. (2003). Positive behavior support in urban school: Can we prevent the escalation of antisocial behavior? *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 5*(3), 158-170.
- McKevitt, B. C., & Braaksma, A. D. (2008). Best practices in developing a positive behavior support system at the school level. *Best Practices in School Psychology, 44*(3), 735-747.
- Miller, L., Dufrene, B., Sterling, H., Olmi, J. D., & Bachmayer, E. (2014). The effects of Check-In/Check-Out on problem behavior and academic engagement in elementary school students. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions, 17*(1), 28-38.

- Mills, A. J., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (2010). *Encyclopedia of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications Ltd. doi: 10.4135/9781412957397
- Mothata, W., & Squelch, J. (1997). *Eight keys to effective school management in South Africa*. Gauteng, South Africa: Southern Book Publishers.
- Muratori, P., Bertacchi, I., Giuli, C., Nocentini, A., Ruglioni, L., & Lochman, J. E., (2016). Coping Power Adapted as universal prevention program: Mid-term effects on children's behavioral difficulties and academic grades. *Journal of Primary Prevention*, 37, 389-401.
- Netzel, D. M., & Eber, L. (2003). Shifting from reactive to proactive discipline in an urban school district: A change of focus through PBIS implementation. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 5(2), 71-79.
- O'Connell, T. (1998, August). *From Wagga Wagga to Minnesota*. Paper presented at the First International Conference on Conferencing, Minneapolis, MN. Retrieved from <https://www.iirp.edu/eforum-archive/4216-from-wagga-wagga-to-minnesota>
- Patterson, G. R., Reid, J. B., & Dishion, T. J. (1992). *Antisocial boys*, Eugene, OR: Castalia.
- Piscatelli, J., & Lee, C. (2011). *State policies on school climate and bully prevention efforts: Challenges and opportunities for deepening state policy support for Safe and Civil Schools*. National School Climate Center. Retrieved from https://www.schoolclimate.org/themes/schoolclimate/assets/pdf/policy/policy_brief.pdf
- Powell, N. P., Boxmeyer, C. L., Baden, R., Stromeyer, S., Minney, J. A., Mushtaq, A., & Lochman, J. E. (2001). Assessing and treating aggression and conduct problems in schools: Implications from the coping power program. *Psychology in the Schools*, 48(3), 233-241.
- Prinzle, P., Onghena, P., & Hellinckx, W. (2005). Parent and child personality trait and children's externalizing problem behavior from age 4 to 9 years: A cohort-sequential latent growth curve analysis. *Merrill-Palmer Quarterly*, 51, 335-366.
- Reese, L. E., Horne, A. M., Bell, C. D., & Wingfield, J. H. (2008). Counseling aggressive boys and adolescent males. In M. Kiselica, M., Englar-Carson, & A. Horne (Eds.), *Counseling troubled boys* (pp. 191-217). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Reynolds, C. R., & Kamphaus, R. W. (2004). *Behavior assessment systems for children* (2nd ed.). Circle Pines, MN: American Guidance Service.
- Samivalli, C., Lagerspetz, K., Bjorkqvist, K., Osterman, K., & Kakianinen, A. (1996). Bullying as a group process: Participant roles and their relations to social status within the group. *Aggressive Behavior*, 22, 1-15.

- Saxena, S., Jane-Llopis, E., & Hosman, C. (2006). Prevention of mental and behavioral disorders: Implications for policy and practice. *World Psychiatry, 5*, 5-14.
- Scott, S., Knapp, M., Henderson, J., & Maughan, B. (2001). Financial cost of social exclusion: follow up study of antisocial children into adulthood. *British Medical Journal, 323*, 191-194.
- Sida-Nicholls, K. (2012). *What if it happens in my classroom? Developing skills for expert behavior management*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Skiba, R., & Sprague, J. (2008). Safety without suspension. *Educational Leadership, 66*(1), 38-43.
- Skiba, R. J., Shure, L. A., Middelberg, L. V., & Baker, T. L. (2011). Reforming school discipline and reducing disproportionality in suspension and expulsion. In S. Jimerson, A. Nickerson, M. Mayer, & M. Furlong (Eds.), *The handbook of school violence and school safety: International research and practice* (2nd ed., pp. 515-528). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Smolkowski, K., Strycker, L., & Ward, B. (2016). Scale-up of Safe & Civil Schools' model for school-wide positive behavioral interventions and supports. *Psychology in the Schools, 53*(4), 339–358. doi: 10.1002/pits.21908
- Sugai, G., Horner, R., & Gresham, S. (2002). Behaviorally effective school environments. In M. Shinn, H. Walker, & G. Stoner (Eds.), *Interventions for academic and behavior problems II: Preventive and remedial approaches*. Washington, DC: National Association of School Psychologists.
- U.S. Census Bureau. (2014). *U.S. interim projections by age, sex, race, and Hispanic origin: 2000-2050*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/population/international/>.
- U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights. (2014). *Civil rights data collection: Data snapshot (school discipline)*. Retrieved from <https://ocrdata.ed.gov/downloads/crdc-school-discipline-snapshot.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2012). *School climate and discipline report*. Retrieved from <https://www2.ed.gov>
- Walker, H. M., Colvin, G., & Ramsey, E. (1995). *Antisocial behavior in school: Strategies and best practices*. Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks-Cole Publishing.
- Ward, B., & Gersten, R. (2013). A randomized evaluation of the Safe & Civil Schools model for positive behavioral interventions and supports at elementary schools in a large urban school district. *School Psychology Review, 42*(3), 317-333.

- Wilson, S. J., & Lipsey, M. W. (2007). School-based interventions for aggressive and disruptive behaviors: Update of a meta-analysis. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 33, 130-143.
- Yin, R. K. (2017). *Case study research and applications: Design and methods*. Thousand Oaks CA: Sage Publications.
- Zehr, H. (1990). *Changing lenses: A new focus for crime and justice*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press.