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TRACKING STUDENT DISCIPLINE REFERRALS AND PROVIDING  
ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO STUDENTS IN ORDER TO DECREASE STUDENT  
DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

by  
Katherine Jasmin Keramidaris

A Thesis

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

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## ABSTRACT

Katherine Jasmin Keramidaris  
TRACKING STUDENT DISCIPLINE REFERRALS AND PROVIDING  
ADDITIONAL SUPPORT TO STUDENTS IN ORDER TO DECREASE STUDENT  
DISCIPLINE PROBLEMS

2004/05

Dr. Ted Johnson  
Master of Arts in School Administration

The purpose of this study was to track student discipline referrals throughout the school year in order to provide additional support to those students who exhibited a pattern of having discipline issues. Students were identified based on the number of infractions they had and then they were targeted and received additional support from the researcher. The researcher compiled a list of the students and met with them regularly in order to establish a relationship with them. Through such a relationship, some student's discipline referral write-ups decreased; others continued to break the school rules. However, all students benefited from such a relationship since the relationship was not one of student-disciplinarian; instead, it was one of student-mentor.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Without my parents, I wouldn't be here. Your unconditional love has saved me.

Without my sister, I would still be looking for a true friendship. But I've had it all along!

Without Joseph, I would still be wandering around in a daze, looking for the meaning of things. You have given me everything that I was looking for.

I love all of you more than words can express.

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### Focus of the Study

The focus of this study was to track student discipline referrals throughout the school year, with the ultimate purpose of providing additional assistance to those students who exhibited a pattern of violating school rules consistently.

There was a need in the school for such tracking due to the fact that the school had been labeled an “unsafe” school by the state. This labeling had occurred for the 2004-2005 school year and the conditions were to be re-evaluated at the end of the school year.

The school had been labeled as such due to the process that the previous assistant principal followed when reporting the discipline infractions to the state. This assistant principal documented every infraction and reported every single one to the state. Due to this procedure, the school was labeled an unsafe school.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to track student referrals to assess the need for change throughout the school year and decipher specific issues that specific students had in grades 5-8. This study resulted in identifiable issues that led to the discipline referrals in the first place. The referrals were tracked all year, checking in with the vice-principal’s office weekly to retrieve the names of those students who had violated school rules. These students were targeted and given additional assistance in an effort to devise various strategies for improvement.

## Definitions

*Student discipline referrals* Teacher descriptions of student infractions. Referrals were the last step in the assertive discipline plan that the school followed. The teacher had to show that she had followed all other steps before writing a referral on a student. Severe situations warranted a referral immediately.

*Tracking* Following specific students throughout the year and their discipline referrals in order to provide more assistance to them.

*ISS* In-school suspension.

*OSS* Out-of-school suspension.

*ISLLC Standard* Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards.

*GEPA* Grade Eight Proficiency Assessment

*Terranova A* a standardized test given to grades 5 and 6.

*PTO* Parent-Teacher Organization

## Limitations of the Study

The limitations of the study were that only those students whose last names began with the letters M-Z were tracked and given extra assistance in order to make it more manageable to track students efficiently and consistently. Therefore, not all student discipline referrals were tracked. Also, this specific group of students was targeted and the study was not random. The selection procedure for this study was not random. Data was collected by examining and organizing the discipline referrals by last name and documenting the specific infraction of the student. Informal meetings were conducted with the individual students of the targeted group and informal and formal meetings were conducted with the teachers who turned in the discipline referrals.



## Setting of the Study

The setting of the study was Vineland, NJ. Vineland was the largest city in area in New Jersey. The overall population of the city was Caucasian, but with a growing number of Hispanic people. The city was an agricultural and rural city; however, industry was still a large means of income for the people of Vineland. There was a large migrant population in Vineland who worked on the farms. In return, there was a need for an ESL program in the Vineland Public Schools.

Vineland came into existence by a man named John Landis who built the town to be a Methodist dry camp. This was when the Welch's company came to Vineland who took the grapes and used them in an unfermented fashion. However, Italian immigrants soon came to Vineland, bringing with them their love of wine.

There was a large population of Jewish people in Vineland who originally came to Vineland to cultivate chickens and eggs. Since there was a large population of Jewish people, Vineland housed a Jewish food production company.

Vineland had few industries so many people who lived in Vineland worked elsewhere.

The setting of the study was D'Ippolito Intermediate School in Vineland, NJ. This school housed 900 students in grades 5-8. There was one principal and one assistant principal. There were 90 staff members, including teachers, security, teacher's assistants, secretarial staff, and guidance staff. The school student population was equally Hispanic and Caucasian, along with a large population of African-American students. The staff was primarily Caucasian, with a small population of Hispanic and African-American staff members. The Vineland School District itself was a low-income Abbott school district.

Students at D'Ippolito, almost 60% of them, received a free or reduced lunch. D'Ippolito School was also a Category I school and had been for three years. The GEPA and Terranova scores were below proficiency levels. D'Ippolito School had also been named one of the most dangerous schools in New Jersey. The school was in need of great financing and major improvements. The teachers however, were not apathetic; they were very concerned and tried various ways to improve the school. The school did have a PTO; however, it was not very active.

#### Significance of the Study

This study impacted the school in a positive way. This study assisted in erasing the labeling of "unsafe" school by assisting in the discipline process of the school. Additional assistance was provided to those students who exhibited a pattern of breaking the school rules. The study paved the way for a more effective discipline process in the school.

#### Relationship of the Study to the ISLLC (Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium) Standards

This study encompassed all of the ISLLC Standards.

Standard 1 stated that a leader shall promote the success of all students by implementing a school vision that is shared by the school community. The researchers of the study implemented various research methods (1.a.4) and communicated the goals clearly to all members involved (1.a.5). They abided by the philosophy that all students were educable (1.b.1) and that a continuous improvement of these students would occur (1.b.3). They also shared the vision of the school (1.c.1), identified the barriers to certain student's achievement (1.c.3), modeled the core beliefs of the vision and mission of the

school (1.c.5), and progressed towards achieving the mission and the vision of the school (1.c.7).

Standard 2 stated that a leader shall promote the success of all students by advocating a school culture that is conducive to student learning. The researchers assisted in student growth and development (2.a.1) and applied learning and motivational theories to the study (2.a.2). They also assisted in improving the discipline process (2.a.8). They recognized that there were multiple ways students learned (2.b.2) and that they must be able to learn in a safe and supportive environment (2.b.5). They treated all members involved with dignity and respect (2.c.1), held high expectations for all students (2.c.6), and assessed student learning regularly (2.c.13).

Standard 3 stated that a leader shall promote the success of all students by ensuring a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment. The researchers perpetuated this belief by taking risks and accepting the responsibility of those risks (3.b.2), assisted in providing a safe environment (3.b.4), and held high expectations for all (3.b.5). Also, they depended upon current research to make decisions (3.b.3) and held all student records confidential (3.b.9).

Standard 4 stated that a school leader shall promote the success of all students by collaborating with other members in order to respond to the diverse needs of the students and the school community. The researchers investigated the current research on schooling (4.a.1), acknowledged and worked with the diversity in the school population (4.b.2), and treated all members involved in the study fairly and equitably (4.c.4).

Standard 5 stated that a school leader shall promote the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner. The researchers established

ethical frameworks (5.a.2) and understood the diverse school community (5.a.4). They also took into consideration the rights of the students (5.b.1) and responded to situations ethically (5.b.2). They modeled professional and ethical behavior (5.c.1) and made sure to apply and abide by all school laws and policies (5.c.7).

Standard 6 stated that a school leader shall promote the success of all students by understanding and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context of the school. The researchers abided by school law (6.a.3) and acknowledged the issues that affected learning (6.a.6). They recognized that education was the key to opportunity and social mobility (6.b.1) and were intent on protecting students' rights (6.b.5). They also assisted in facilitating a school environment that focused on student learning (6.c.1). They did this in an ethical and caring manner (6.c.3).

#### Organization of the Study

This study was organized in various stages. Each chapter reviewed a certain aspect of the study in great detail. Chapter 1 introduced the study and its significance to the school. Chapter 2 reviewed the literature pertinent to the nature of the study. Chapter 3 discussed the design of the study in detail. Chapter 4 presented the findings of the research. And Chapter 5 presented the conclusions and implications of the study.

The actual study was organized in an orderly and thorough fashion. Each week, data was collected from the assistant principal's office. This data was the student referrals that teachers wrote and sent to the assistant principal when all other steps of the discipline plan had been exhausted. This data was collected each Friday. The last names of the students that began with M-Z were examined and a record was kept for each of these students. As soon as a pattern became evident and some students were continuous

offenders, a plan was put into place. A member of the school community, along with the assistant principal and the guidance department, examined the exact infractions of the student and provided extra assistance to that student. This inevitably showed a decrease in the student referrals, since the students that broke the school rules were guided even further.

## Chapter 2

### Review of the Literature

There were several school discipline models that a school district could choose to employ. The Vineland School District chose to employ the Assertive Discipline model developed by Lee Canter. This model was based upon the dictionary definition of “assert”. Assert meant “to state or affirm positively, assuredly, plainly, and strongly” (Canter, p. 14). In the Canter model, the teacher was the leader of the classroom. She relayed the rules to the class in order for her own teaching needs to be met. She sent a “very clear message” to her students and she was completely empowered. She was however positive and her top priority was her students.

Canter was very specific in how he laid out his discipline plan. He said the first thing a teacher needed to do was explain why there was a need for rules. Then, the teacher had to teach the rules. The teacher also had to check and see if any students had questions about the rules. After that, the teacher had to explain what happened when the rules were followed. Canter said that the teacher should say “You’ll notice this year that I’ll be on the lookout for students who follow the rules, and I will let you know that I appreciate your efforts.” (Canter, p. 112) The teacher then explained why there were consequences to actions. These consequences also had to be taught. Again, the teacher needed to check for understanding. Canter suggested that the classroom procedures become routine so that students knew what was expected of

them at all times (Canter, p. 124). The same went with discipline. It had to be communicated clearly and it had to be consistent so that students knew the expectations at all times.

Canter suggested that the teacher use praise as a tool of maintaining class order. He stated that praise had to be very specific to what the student was doing correctly and it should not be vague. If a student was in line correctly, then that had to be stated in the praise. Praise was a means of keeping students on task; "The best way to build responsible student behavior is to continually provide frequent positive recognition to those students who are on task" (Canter p.146). Praise also had to be consistent and not sporadic.

D'Ippolito Intermediate School employed Canter's Assertive Discipline model. The consequences to student actions were laid out very clearly in the classrooms. The first time a student broke a rule, he received a verbal warning. The second time he broke a rule, he was warned again, his name was written down, and a phone call was made home. The third time a rule was broken, the student received a detention and another call was placed home. Any severe infractions constituted security being called to the room for student removal. Also, the student was referred to the assistant principal if he was misbehaving in an uncontrollable manner. If the student did not stay for the teacher-assigned detention, then the teacher referred the student to the assistant principal. These rules were reviewed by the teachers in their classrooms and the teachers were reminded of the assertive discipline plan the first day of school. Teachers could also choose to be placed on a rotation, where they took turns staying for teacher detentions. This was voluntary. Other teachers simply chose to hold their own detentions.

If a student was referred to the assistant principal's office, several things occurred. He received an administrative detention (this was an hour detention instead of the teacher-assigned half hour). He was placed in ISS (In-School Suspension) or he was even placed in OSS (Out-of-School Suspension). This depended upon the severity of the infraction. The student was also referred to the guidance department. Randall S. Sprick, Ph.D., offered some suggestions for consequences for assistant principal referrals. He recommended that a "discussion" take place. However, he said that discussions should only take place for first minor offenses. Discussions were to be used to "determine whether the student's misbehavior is in part caused by an inability to handle work in the classroom." (Sprick, p. 120) Procedures were also implemented "that will guard against the possibility of students sitting in the office waiting to see the person in charge of discipline". He suggested that someone be "on call" so that the student could speak to someone right away without having to wait around. If a consequence was ISS, the student had to be in isolation. He had to "remain silent, stay seated" and use the restroom only during designated times. If there was assigned work, he could ask for assistance two times each hour (Sprick, p. 121). ISS had to be extremely structured. Saturday school could also be a consequence to student referrals. If Saturday school was set up, the administrator had to be the one to handle it and written guidelines had to be stated clearly, explaining which misbehaviors led to Saturday school.

Canter's Assertive Discipline model was widely criticized. Curwin and Mendler summed up Canter's model like this: "Behave or else!" (Curwin and Mendler, p. 83). Canter repeatedly stated that assertive discipline was proven to work and proven to reduce student misbehavior by 80 percent. However, no evidence was found suggesting



that assertive discipline was effective (Render, Padilla, & Krank, p. 72). Curwin and Mendler also stated that assertive discipline was nothing but an “attractive, well-marketed behavior modification program in which one person (teacher or administrator) has all the power to define the rules while offering group and individual rewards for compliance and administering punishments through public disclosure” (p. 83). Students were not allowed any input in the formulation of the rules. They were not viewed as “capable critical thinkers or decision makers.” (p. 83) Canter’s model seemed to view the student as the cause of all problems, alleviating any blame from others in the school system. Alfie Kohn stated that assertive discipline was “a matter-of-fact demand for mindless obedience.” (Kohn, p. 14)

Zero tolerance was another form of discipline that several schools around the US employed. Zero tolerance was more “harsh” than the assertive discipline model. On the other hand, three dimensional discipline, was the least harsh of all the models.

Zero tolerance originated from the federal drug enforcement policies of the 1980s. Eventually, the zero tolerance mentality shifted into the schools. In 1994, the federal government joined zero tolerance with the Gun-Free Schools Act. This act expelled students who brought a firearm to school. Zero tolerance then meant exactly that; no misbehaviors were tolerated and the consequences were the same across the board. However, “increasingly broad interpretations of zero tolerance have resulted in a near epidemic of suspensions and expulsions for seemingly trivial events.” (Skiba and Peterson, 1999b, p. 26) Zero tolerance did not allow for administrative discretion. It also did not take into consideration that “one size does not fit all.” (Gorman and Pauken, p. 27)

On the other hand, three dimensional discipline encompassed three dimensions. The first dimension was the prevention dimension. This was what the teacher could actively do to deal with classroom disruptions. Next was the action dimension. This was what action the teacher could take to prevent discipline actions. Finally, the resolution dimension was what the teacher could do to resolve problem with the out-of-control students (Curwin and Mendler, p. 33). The three dimensional plan asked that teachers became aware of how they presented themselves to their students. If they wanted to be liked and they were soft-spoken and their posture was non-commanding, then it shouldn't have been a surprise when students did not listen. Teachers also had to be aware of sending mixed signals. Mixed signals led to confusion and agitation. (p. 35) Teachers and students had to be able to express their feelings. Teachers also had to be willing to try creative approaches to discipline.

Middle school students were slightly more aggressive than elementary school students and even slightly more aggressive than high school students. Aggressive attitudes predicted aggressive behavior. In a study conducted by David W. McConville and Dewey G. Cornell, students with aggressive attitudes were more likely to be identified as bullies by other students and their teachers. Also, students with aggressive attitudes had more referrals written on them than their peers. These students were "prone to engage in multiple forms of noncompliant behavior, ranging from bullying classmates to committing various school discipline infractions." (p.185) Students in the study were given a survey. The questions on the survey ranged from "it makes me angry when a kid is bullied" to "it feels good when I hit someone". The results of the survey were analyzed and the researchers concluded that students with aggressive attitudes did indeed have

more aggressive behavior. Also, students who did not exhibit aggressive behavior easily identified the behaviors that bullies exhibited.

The aim of assertive discipline, zero tolerance, and three dimensional discipline was the same-all aimed to reduce school discipline problems. However, these methods tried to reduce school discipline problems in vastly different ways. Also, studies that were conducted showed that aggressive attitudes did indeed indicate aggressive behaviors. This was not profound; those who exhibited aggressive attitudes were logically more inclined to cause some kind of discipline problems. How did all these methods check to see if they were working within the school? One way was that they monitored the data within the school. They monitored the amount of discipline referrals that were sent to the assistant principal's office. One specific study, the "Evaluation of a Comprehensive Behavior Management Program to Improve School-Wide Positive Behavior Support", used discipline referrals to measure whether or not the discipline plan they implemented was working. The study actually showed that "discipline referrals were significantly decreased for 7<sup>th</sup> graders". This study discussed a middle school in Oregon that implemented the Effective Behavior Support program. They brought in a consultative team that worked with teachers and staff to reduce discipline problems within the school. The Effective Behavior Support program was based upon five principles: "a) increasing positive reinforcement for appropriate social behavior, b) active teaching of appropriate social behavior, c) clear communication of a small number of rules, d) the consistent provision of corrective consequences for rule violation, and e) ongoing monitoring of data about student behavior to provide feedback on progress and to pinpoint settings in which further attention is needed." (Metzler et al, p. 450) Lessons

were taught to the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> graders, “Tiger Tickets” were distributed for pro-social behavior, and a “Good News Bureau” was established. The first year was simply the implementation year and the following years were considered the maintenance years.

This study aimed to track student referrals within D’Ippolito school, provide extra assistance to the “repeat offenders”, decrease student referrals in grades 5, 6, 7, and 8, and contribute to a more positive and more disciplined school environment.

## Chapter 3

### The Design of the Study

#### Description of Research Design

The research design incorporated various procedures.

The students were tracked because there had been a notable increase in the amount of student referrals that the assistant principal's office was receiving. Also, the school had been designated a "dangerous" school by the state so it was paramount to decrease the amount of discipline problems and referrals that the school was encountering.

The students that were tracked were those whose last names began with the letters M-Z. This was done in order to make it more manageable for the researcher to track the students. If the researcher used the entire alphabet, it would have posed a problem. There would have been too many students to track.

The researcher looked over the attendance sheet daily in order to compile a list of students who had received out-of-school suspension or in-school suspension. The researcher then visited the assistant principal's office weekly and retrieved each student's discipline referral. The researcher documented each student's specific infraction, paying close attention to the pattern that some students began to exhibit.

The researcher continued this process for three months in order to generate a list of students who exhibited a pattern of having discipline problems. These students had been written up more than three times in three months. The researcher compiled this list

of students who exhibited a pattern of discipline issues in order to identify those students who would need further assistance.

After the list was compiled, the researcher began to meet with each student. The researcher introduced herself and informed the students that she would be there to assist them with their discipline problems. The researcher called these students to the office, talked with them, got to know them, and established a relationship with them. The researcher then expected to see a difference in their behaviors and a decrease in the amount of times they were referred to the assistant principal's office.

Finally, the researcher tracked this group of students by checking the attendance sheet daily to see if any of these students had received in-school or out-of-school suspension. The researcher also communicated with the assistant principal's office weekly to check the behavioral progress of these students. The data gathered from these sources was examined and then the researcher took appropriate steps to further assist the students. If the researcher noticed that some students were still having discipline issues, she would meet with those students and further discuss the problems. If some students' behavior had improved, she would still meet with them and encourage them to continue the behavior.

#### Focus on Research Instruments

The research instruments that were used in this study included daily attendance sheets, discipline referrals, informal meetings with students and teachers, written communication with the assistant principal's office, and personal visits to the assistant principal's office to conduct research.

The daily attendance sheets were used to track students who had been included in in-school or out-of-school suspension. They were used as a method of data collection to determine whether or not the researcher was having a positive and sustaining impact on the students. If their names did not appear on the list, they may have been positively influenced by their visits with the researcher. If their names appeared on the list, they may need to be seen more frequently.

The informal meetings with teachers were conducted in order to gain a better understanding of the infraction that the student committed that led to the discipline referral. These meetings were conducted in the hallways, in the teacher's classroom, in the faculty room, or at the end of the school day on the way out of the building. Regular education and special education teachers were approached that taught a variety of subjects, grade levels, and students.

Written communication and personal visits to the assistant principal's office was sustained in order to assist the researcher with the research. Written communication included notes requesting some information regarding a student. Personal visits were conducted regularly. The assistant principal's office was the key to the entire research project. The discipline referrals were housed in that office and the assistant principal was the one that had the most direct contact with the students.

#### Sample and Sampling Technique

The sample of the student population that was used in the study was not random. Instead, students were selected by the letter of their last names. Only those students whose last names began with M-Z were included in the study. These students were included in order to make the study more manageable to conduct. Including all the

students would not have allowed the researcher to get to know each of them closely and personally.

The sample included male and female students in grades 5-8. Students were in regular education classes, self-contained special education classes, behavioral disorder classes, and special education classes. Students varied in grade level, classification, and in gender. This diverse population was selected because it represented the make-up of the school.

#### Data Collection Approach

The data collected came from various sources within the school environment.

The researcher held informal meetings with the students. The data collected from these meetings was paramount to the study. The researcher spoke to the students individually, getting to know them and forming a relationship with them.

The researcher held informal conversations with the assistant principal's secretary. The secretary was very informed about all the students. She provided valuable information regarding a student's discipline problems, their personalities, and the specific reasons they had been in the office.

The researcher spoke with the teachers that had written-up some of the students. The researcher found out the specific reasons that led up to the discipline referrals. The teachers narrated the incidents in much detail.

The researcher spoke with the guidance department in order to gather some data from there as well. Many of the students in the study had also been to the guidance department for various reasons. In some instances, these reasons were directly correlated



to the reasons that they had been referred to see the assistant principal's office in the first place.

#### Data Analysis Plan

Data was analyzed weekly. The researcher visited the assistant principal's office every week and gathered data. This data consisted of student's discipline referrals. The researcher was then able to establish a list of students that seemed to have a pattern of breaking school rules consistently. Once the list was formed, the researcher began to hold informal meetings with the students on the list. The researcher held these meetings in an attempt to familiarize herself with the students. These targeted students were then tracked; the researcher continued to gather data by reviewing the daily attendance sheets to see whether a student had been disciplined through in-school suspension or out-of-school suspension.

What type of evidence can be gathered to prove that the project is having an impact?

The researcher held informal meetings with the students, the teacher, and the assistant principal. The researcher measured whether or not these meetings were effective with the students by viewing the attendance sheets. If the student's name appeared on the attendance sheet and the student received in-school or out-of-school suspension, then the meetings may not have been that effective. However, if the students showed no signs of being disciplined by the assistant principal's office, then the meetings were deemed effective.

## Chapter 4

### Presentation of Research Findings

What information was found?

The researcher was able to establish a list of students that exhibited a pattern of discipline problems. The researcher then provided additional assistance to these students.

The researcher compiled the list of students who had been written up (via discipline referral) more than three times in one month. These students were R.R. (grade 6), R.C. (grade 6), V.A. (grade 6), V.M. (grade 7), W.C. (grade 6), V.J. (grade 8), R.S. (grade 5), N.J. (grade 8), R.J. (grade 5), R.R. (grade 5), and M.T. (grade 5).

R.R., who was in the sixth grade, was in a regular education classroom. He was in a regular Math and English class and he followed the same schedule as all regular education sixth graders.

During the initial meeting with R.R. (that took place in the waiting area near the front office), the researcher spoke to R.R. regarding some things that R.R. liked to do. R.R. loved playing football outside with his friends and he also liked boxing. R.R. attended a boxing school but he clearly stated that he was not allowed to use his boxing skills to fight. R.R. elaborated by saying that boxers were not allowed to use their skills just to get into a fight; these skills were solely for self-defense and for fighting in the ring. R.R. was very clear about boxing and he seemed to know that he was not to use those skills for fighting in school. Ironically, R.R. was not written up for fighting; he was mostly disrespectful to teachers and he had a hard time listening to authority. The

researcher found that to be odd since boxing is a sport that teaches discipline and self-control. R.R. though seemed to lack that with his teachers.

The researcher then walked with R.R. to her classroom and informed him that he could come to the classroom at any time if he needed to talk to someone. The researcher informed him that her role was to help him and not discipline him. R.R. seemed to understand and asked to go back to class.

R.C., who was in the sixth grade, was in a regular education classroom. He was in regular Math and English and he followed the same schedule as all regular education sixth graders.

The researcher met with R.C. in the front office waiting area. R.C. seemed to be a bit popular. The security guards recognized him and one security guard said, "You should adopt this one." The security guard said this very sarcastically and when the researcher met up with him later on in the day, the researcher asked him what he meant by his comment. He said that R.C. was very rambunctious and got into a lot of trouble.

The researcher found out that R.C. was an Eagles fan. They spoke about the Eagles during almost every meeting.

R.C. also had problems with teachers and he said that they "got on his nerves". He said that teachers always told him what to do and that some of them were quite mean to him. They got on his nerves when they told him what to do and most of the time R.C. said he didn't listen to them. The researcher assured R.C. that she would try not to get on his nerves and that she was there to help him. R.C. asked the researcher what she did in the school. The researcher answered R.C. by saying that she was a teacher in the seventh grade and that her other role was to help students and not discipline them. This student

was one of the few who seemed curious to know something about the researcher. The researcher was pleased when he asked about her and it led her to think that he may actually be interested in her and how she could help him.

As soon as R.C. left down the hallway to return to class, a teacher walked by and said to the researcher “R.C. has misplaced leadership qualities.” The researcher spoke with the teacher later and asked her to tell her what she meant by her comment. She said that she thought that R.C. had a lot of potential to succeed but instead, he used all his energy the wrong way. The researcher felt as though she may be able to help R.C. focus that energy in a more positive way.

V.A, who is in the sixth grade, was in a regular education classroom and followed the schedule of all other regular education sixth graders.

The researcher had actually heard of V.A. many times by simply being in the faculty room and listening to the sixth grade teachers’ talk about him. He had a very bad reputation and none of the sixth grade teachers wanted him as their student. The teachers said that he talked back, caused havoc in the classroom, and did absolutely no work.

When the researcher met with V.A., she found out that he was a big Chicago Bulls basketball fan. When she asked V.A. about his grades, he said that he did well and did all his work. After speaking with a few of his teachers, it was clear that V.A. did not do well academically or socially and that he did not do his work. He admitted that he talked back to teachers a lot but could not give the researcher a reason why. V.A. seemed receptive to the researchers efforts and spoke openly with her regarding school. When the researcher told him that she knew he didn’t do well in class, he got very defensive and said that this was a lie. The researcher told him that she spoke with his teachers and that

they said that he wasn't passing for the year. This upset him and he then said that he didn't want to fail for the year. The researcher assured him that she would help him with his grades and his behavior and he seemed to want to accept her help.

V.M. was a seventh grader. She attended regular education classes but had a one-on-one aide by her side at all times. She had many emotional needs. She used foul language all the time, hit other students, and she was very disrespectful to others.

The researcher saw V.M. around the hallways and V.M. always said hello to the researcher. When the researcher approached V.M. outside of room C-16, V.M. knew who the researcher was but not by name. The researcher introduced herself and V.M. was very smiley and very receptive. V.M. seemed to like the attention. V.M. was also getting a lot of attention from her one-on-one aide this year. She did not have the aide last year. She was doing a lot better this year with an aide by her side. The aide seemed to give her some stability and attention that V.M. lacked at home. V.M.'s home life was a disaster. She was living with a grandmother that could barely control her.

V.M. was called down to the assistant principal's office a lot last year for her obscene behavior. She would curse at the students, teachers, and other staff. She would physically attack other students and once, she urinated all over the toilet seat on purpose while she was in in-school suspension for the day.

W.C., who was a sixth grader, attended regular education classes. W.C. had been recommended all year for special education services but his mother refused to sign the paper work that would allow the school to serve W.C. in that way.

The researcher met with W.C. outside of his Math class. The researcher approached the Math teacher and asked to see W.C. The Math teacher said, "Please keep

him all period.” The researcher discussed that comment with the teacher and he said that W.C. was out of control, did no work, and no one, not even the kids, wanted to be around him.

W.C. was very talkative and said that he did not like his Math teacher. He said that his Math teacher always yelled at him. He also said that he had a hard time with all of his teachers and that when he got mad at them, he would go see Mrs. Cast, his guidance counselor. Mrs. Cast actually said that she had to turn W.C. away sometimes because he was constantly in her office.

W.C. finally got classified as a special education student and began receiving several different services, along with being in a self-contained special education classroom.

V.J., who was in the eighth grade, was in regular education classes. He was the researcher’s student last year so the researcher already had a good rapport with him.

V.J. seemed to have had problems last year that began after basketball season was over. The researcher had attended a few of V.J.’s games and noticed the change after the season was over. This year, V.J.’s name was heard over the loudspeaker many times, calling him down to the assistant principal’s office.

V.J. was invited to the researcher’s classroom. V.J. was very quiet during the initial meeting and seemed repentant. He said that he had been getting in trouble partly because “I can’t keep my mouth shut”.

V.J. decided to tell a teacher that she was “on the rag” and that is why she was yelling at him. This was not the first time that V.J. spoke to a female teacher in this manner. When the researcher confronted him of this, V.J. acknowledged that he was

wrong in saying that but that the teacher should not have yelled at him. The researcher informed V.J. that comments of that nature were inappropriate, regardless if a teacher was yelling at him or not.

R.S. was in a self-contained B.D. (behavioral disorder) classroom. This was the first year the school had such a class.

The researcher had heard of R.S. prior to the initial meeting. He had been in a lot of trouble. The researcher had approached his teacher and asked her for some information regarding R.S. She said that he was physically abusive to others and that he wanted to drop out of school just like his older brother had.

The initial meeting took place outside of his classroom and he was so quiet and sad-looking. The researcher introduced herself and R.S. said, "I've been a bad boy." The researcher asked him why and R.S. responded that he didn't know why. The researcher thought initially that he was a boy who simply had been pegged as being "bad".

However, the researcher and R.S. met quite a few times. R.S. had stated several times that when he got really angry, he felt as though he could kill someone. The researcher immediately informed his case manager of those words. Also, R.S. was arrested in school for pulling a pair of scissors on his teacher and hitting her. R.S. was removed from the school and placed in a better-suited environment. R.S. clearly had some issues that the researcher could not handle on her own. She had made some progress with him but not enough to change his behaviors.

N.J. was an eighth grader that attended all regular education classes. The researcher knew N.J. fairly well since he was in the researcher's homeroom last year.

N.J. ran away from home last year and the researcher was contacted via the Vineland Police Department when they were looking for him. They got a hold of the researcher's name and they wanted to know if the researcher knew of N.J.'s whereabouts. N.J. was found three days later at a friend's house.

N.J. had been in foster care ever since and when the researcher met with him, N.J. told her that he was not happy. N.J. said that he was "trying to be good" but he was having problems with some teachers. N.J. seemed receptive to the idea of talking with the researcher occasionally regarding school and other issues.

N.J., the researcher, and his guidance counselor were all working together to try and assist N.J. The guidance counselor spoke with the researcher many times and together they supported N.J. as much as they could. N.J. was a very bright young man who seemed to need female attention. He didn't seem to have any problems with the female teachers. He did however have problems with his male teachers.

R.J., who is in the fifth grade, was in regular education classes.

The researcher met with R.J. in the waiting area of the office. He was not very talkative. He did say though that he tended to fight with others and that he talked about people a lot. He said that he did get along with teachers. He liked Math, Allen Iverson, and baseball.

R.J. was not very forthcoming with the researcher. He was always polite to her but he didn't seem to want to open up much.

R.R. was in the fifth grade and he attended all regular education classes.



R.R. was not very talkative but he did say that Gym was his favorite class. The researcher told R.R. that she heard his name over the intercom a lot and R.R. just smiled. He also said that he liked the Lakers and the Eagles.

R.R. was not very inclined to open up to the researcher during their conversations.

M.T. was in the fifth grade and he attended all regular education classes.

The researcher went to the in-school suspension room to get M.T. because he was in there for fighting. When the researcher asked M.T. about the fight, he said that the other student “got in my face”. M.T. was very smiley and giggly. He said he liked the Eagles, primarily Pinkston, and he really liked the Sixers.

M.T. seemed to be somewhat of a kidder. He laughed a lot and didn’t take much seriously when he met with the researcher.

After the initial meetings with students, the researcher continued to meet with them regularly. The researcher also continued to look over the daily attendance sheet in order to know which of these students had continued to receive in-school suspension or out-of-school suspension.

R.R (in the sixth grade) received in-school suspension once. He was disrespectful to his teacher.

R.C. received in-school suspension twice. The first one was for fighting and the second one was for being disruptive in class.

V.A. received in-school suspension once. He was being disruptive in class.

W.C. received in-school suspension once for being disruptive in class. He also received out-of-school suspension three times. He was out of school for three days for being incredibly disruptive.

V.J. received in-school suspension once and out-of-school suspension once. He received the in-school suspension once for being disrespectful and out-of-school for fighting.

R.S. received in-school suspension once for being disruptive. He also received out-of-school suspension seven times for fighting in class. R.S. was no longer in our school. He hit his teacher and picked up a pair of scissors to use as a weapon. The police were contacted and R.S. was placed in another facility.

N.J. received in-school suspension twice for being disrespectful and out-of-school suspension six times. Five were for fighting and one was for being extremely disruptive.

R.R. received in-school suspension four times for fighting.

What did it mean?

The researcher found that most of students were receptive to the meetings. The students did not deem the researcher to be a disciplinarian; therefore, many of them spoke freely. Those students who received in-school suspension and out-of-school suspension were very forthcoming about the events that transpired that led them to be disciplined. The researcher then checked to see if what they were saying was truthful. The researcher spoke with the assistant principal and with the teachers. In all cases, the students were being truthful.

The meetings were successful and the researcher was able to form a rapport with all students. Some student continued their misbehavior and received in-school and out-of-school suspensions. Others, like V.M., M.T., and R.J., did not receive any further in-school or out-of-school suspensions.

The researcher had an impact on all students. Some, like V.M., M.T., and R.J. may have been influenced in a more positive way than the others who continued to receive in-school and out-of-school suspensions.

Overall, all the students seemed to like the positive attention they received from the researcher. Some students preferred any attention, even if it was negative, to no attention at all. And when someone was willing to give them positive attention, it was even better.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study

#### Conclusions and their Implications

The researcher's efforts to decrease student discipline problems were not in vein. She was able to establish relationships with all students and she was able to reach them in ways that other teachers, assistant principals, and guidance counselors could not. The researcher did not pose a threat to the students. She was not the disciplinarian, she wasn't their teacher, and she wasn't their guidance counselor. She was a positive force that was trying to help them stay out of trouble.

How did the study effect your leadership growth per the dictums of the ISLLC Standards?

The researcher's efforts to provide extra assistance to students with a pattern of discipline problems allowed her to evaluate her leadership growth per the dictums of the ISLLC Standards.

According to ISLLC Standard 1, the researcher was able to facilitate and implement a shared vision. The vision was to reduce student discipline problems. The researcher spoke with teachers, the assistant principal, and the guidance counselors in order to facilitate the vision of assisting students with their discipline issues.

According to ISLLC Standard 2, the researcher was able to provide a nurturing environment for the students by meeting with them and establishing a relationship with them. This nurturing was conducive to student learning and to student reduction of

discipline issues. The researcher did not pose a threat to the students, therefore, they were receptive to the nurturing and fostering of a healthy relationship.

According to ISLLC Standard 4, the researcher ensured that the meetings held with students were effective, safe, and efficient. The researcher always made the students feel safe. They met in a neutral place, where no one could say anything negative about them. The meetings were always effective and efficient. They were to the point, succinct, and nurturing and caring.

According to ISLLC Standard 5, the researcher conducted her research with integrity, fairness, and with ethics. The researcher gave all students the benefit of the doubt. She also made sure that all the information she obtained was accurate. She treated all students and staff with integrity and she was always ethical in her research.

And, according to ISLLC Standard 6, the researcher influenced the larger social context of the school. By reducing student discipline problems, the social context of the school was altered. Even though it was only a handful of students, each student was influenced positively and in return, they influenced other students in their classes the same way.

How did it change the organization?

The school was changed in a more positive way. For the first time, someone was actually tracking students and their discipline referrals. And, for the first time, someone was actually providing extra assistance to those students. The researcher's role was not one of a disciplinarian, therefore, many students felt comfortable with the researcher's efforts to influence them and steer them in a positive way.

What further study is needed?

In order for such a study to be entirely successful, one person would need to be hired to solely do what the researcher was trying to do. This person would meet with students all day in order to help them with their discipline problems. This person would be more successful if she could reach more students and give more time to these students. Another way more students could be influenced if the school initiated and established some kind of teacher-student mentoring program. This way, students could be steered in a positive direction.

Overall, the researcher was able to assist in reducing discipline problems with some students. All students though were influenced more positively and all students received a helping hand.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**Discipline referral**



D'IPPOLITO INTERMEDIATE SCHOOL DISCIPLINE REFERRAL

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Room # \_\_\_\_\_

Homeroom # \_\_\_\_\_ Period (Time) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the incident in detail:

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Previously Taken by Teacher:

Individual student conference -	( ) Parent contacted
Date: _____	Date(s): _____
Assigned different seat -	( ) Parent conference
Date: _____	Date(s): _____
Assigned detention -	( ) Other: _____
Date: _____	_____
Time Out - # _____	
Referred to Guidance -	
Date: _____	

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FOR OFFICE USE ONLY  
-----

Disposition/Recommendation:

Warning/Reprimand	( ) Administrative Detention _____
Conference (Student, Guidance, Parent, Teacher, Other)	( ) I.S.S. _____
Parent Contacted	( ) Suspension _____
Referred to Guidance	( ) Child Study Team Notification
Peer Mediation	( ) Other - _____

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File - White

Teacher - Pink

**APPENDIX B**  
**Discipline infraction list**

D R Grade 5	Not staying for teacher detention 3
R R Grade 5	Not staying for teacher detention 9 Defiance 5 Disrespect/Disruption 6 Substitute Cafeteria Altercation with another student Altercation 2 Roaming Hallway Substitute Teacher detention
V R Grade 6	Not staying for teacher detention
A R Grade 6	Not staying for teacher detention Defiance 5 Disrespect/Disruption 4 Roaming hallways Harming a teacher/staff Altercation
J R Grade 7	Not staying for teacher detention 7 Defiance 3 Disrespect/Disruption 2 Substitute 2 Roaming hallways Off-school promises Cafeteria Writing curse words Bus problems 3 Cutting class

**APPENDIX C**  
**Discipline infraction list**

	Walking out of class Left with wrong bus group Gym infraction Not staying for teacher detention Throwing food
C W Grade 5	Defiance 5 Disrespect/Disruption 13 Roaming hallways Sexual Advances/harassment Not staying for teacher detention Altercation 5 Substitute 11 Foul language Disrespect/Defiance 8 Bus Infraction
B R Grade 6	Disrespect/Disruption Left with wrong bus group
J V Grade 7	Disrespect/Disruption 2 Not staying for teacher detention 5 Drugs Disrespect/Disruption Altercation
L R Grade 7	Altercation
N R Grade 5	Altercation

**APPENDIX D**  
**Student schedule sample and notes**

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## DISPLAY STUDENT SCHEDULE

SA0051

Vineland NJ 08360-2640  
 Dob 08/13/93 Schl 230 DIS  
 Age 11 Grade 6  
 Stat R1 11/08 Hrm A006

Title.....	Terms	Days....	Periods	Teacher....	Room..	Units.
Read/Lng Arts 6	1234	MTWRF	1-2	Wozunk Mrs	A005	1.00
Math 6	1234	MTWRF	3	Lundberg Mr	A006	1.00
Block 6 H	1234	MTWRF	4	Scull Ms	ART	1.00
Lunch/Study 6	1234	MTWRF	5	Hickman Ms	A006	1.00
Science 6	1234	MTWRF	6	Wozunk Mrs	A005	1.00
Soc Studies 6	1234	MTWRF	7	Lundberg Mr	A006	1.00
Phys Ed 6	1234	ACEGI	8	Lundberg Mr	A006	1.00
Acad Supp 6	1234	BDFHJ	8	Lundberg Mr	A006	1.00
Art 6	1	A	10	Scull Ms	ART	1.00
Computers 6	1	B	10	Benedetto Mr	B001	1.00
Health 6	1	C	10	Dibiase Mrs	A007	1.00
Lang & Cult 6	1	D	10	O'Neill Mrs		1.00
Music 6	1	F	10	Seidemann M	C008	1.00
Phys Ed 6	1	A	11	Ruskoski Mr	GYM	1.00
Quest 6	1	B	11	Landi E Mrs		1.00

OK

Cancel

4 - Very talkative  
 d time w/ teachers  
 primarily sees Mrs East  
 ceptive

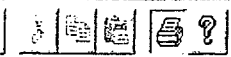
CAP NUM

**APPENDIX E**  
**Student schedule sample and notes**





7



Administration

## DISPLAY STUDENT SCHEDULE

SA0051

First Name: J. V.	Dob: 06/26/90	Schl: 230	DIS: DIS
Last Name: [Redacted]	Age: 14	Grade: 8	4
Address: Vineland NJ 08360-2106	Stat: RI 09/07	Hrm: D001	

Title.....	Terms	Days...	Periods	Teacher.....	Room..	Units.
Phys Ed 8	123	MTWRF	1	Ruskoski Mr	D001	1.00
Health 8	4	MTWRF	1	Dibiase Mrs	C008	1.00
Soc Studies 8	1234	MTWRF	2	Kuhnreich Ms	C006	1.00
Science 8	1234	MTWRF	3	Ardito Mrs	D003	1.00
Acad Supp Math	1	ACEGI	4	Dis.Staff	C014	1.00
	2	ACEGI	4	Weeks Mrs	C002	
	3	ACEGI	4	Lapenz Mr	D003	
	4	ACEGI	4	Slavoff Mr	C011	
Acad Supp Read	1234	BDFHJ	4	Chalow Miss	D002	1.00
English 8	1234	MTWRF	5	Vena Mrs	C009	1.00
Study/Lunch 8	1234	MTWRF	6	McCarthy Mr	C010	1.00
Block 8	1234	MTWRF	7	O'Neill Mrs	C009	1.00
Math 8	1234	MTWRF	8	Swayne Miss	C012	1.00
Art 8	1	A	10	Scull Ms	ART	1.00
Computers 8	1	B	10	Benedetto Mr	B001	1.00

OK

Cancel

happy spring  
 commands  
 quiet we've been  
 each other

CAP NUM

**APPENDIX F**  
**List of students who exhibited a pattern of infractions**

# List of students

- |         |         |
|---------|---------|
| 1. R.R. | Grade 6 |
| 2. R.C. | Grade 6 |
| 3. V.A. | Grade 6 |
| 4. V.M. | Grade 7 |
| 5. W.C. | Grade 6 |
| 6. V.J. | Grade 8 |
| 7. R.S. | Grade 5 |
| 8. N.J. | Grade 8 |
| 9. R.J. | Grade 5 |
| 10.R.R. | Grade 5 |
| 11.M.T. | Grade 5 |

**APPENDIX G**  
**List of students and further infractions**

Student	Grade	In-school suspension	Out-of-school suspension
R.R.	6	1	0
R.C.	6	2	0
V.A.	6	1	2
V.M.	7	0	0
W.C	6	1	3
V.J.	8	1	1
R.S.	5	1	7
N.J.	8	2	6
R.J.	5	0	0
R.R.	5	4	0
M.T.	5	0	0

**APPENDIX H**  
**Attendance sheet sample**

GOOD MORNING TODAY IS DAY 3-A HAVE A NICE DAY.....MRS. MARINO

## Absent

## Absent

ALICEA, JOEL	8	WASHINGTON, MARESE	5
ALLEN, DAI'SHONDA J <i>Late</i>	5		
ALLEN, MARQUIS J <i>Late</i>	7	Tardy or Late	
ARTIS, EBONY L	6		
BAEZ, GEORGE A	7	ARRIGO, TYLER AUSTI	08:34
BENTON, DAVID G	8	CASTRO, JOSE L	09:18
BOYD, ANDRE	8	DAVIS, SHAVONNE C	08:39
BROWN, ARAMIS SHAUN	6	DENNY, BRANDON	08:56
CANNON, COURTNEY M	8	DONKERS, PIERRE	08:35
CARSON, I'ISHA L	7	FERRERA, RICARDO AL	09:21
COOK, ZACHARY E <i>LATE</i>	7	KOLLOCK, BRIANT L	09:04
DICKERSON, NAYA DAN <i>LATE</i>	6	LOPEZ, MIGUEL	09:20
DUKES, WILLIE JAMES	8	MOIR, ERIC K	08:33
IVANOV, INA	8	POLANCO, JOHNATHAN	08:43
JAMES, NICOLE R	6	REYES, JAZCELYN A	08:42
KETCHAM, JOHN J	7	TORRES, RAMON A	08:35
LAURENCIO, PATRICK	5		
LAURENCIO, SHAUN FL	6	Out of School Suspension	
LOPEZ, ALBERTO SANT	7		
LOPEZ, CINDY	5	BARREIRO, ANDRE J	6
MARTINEZ, ELLEANA M	6	JOHNSON, ANNTANETTE	6
MARTINEZ, JOSE L	5	WALKER, LATASHA N	6
MCNAIR, TEALAH I	6	WINCHESTER, BRIAN	6
MCTAMNEY, ARIANA M	6		
MICHAEL, ERIC J	7	In-School Suspension	
MOORE, TREY	5		
MUESSIG, BRANDON	5	PRESLEY, DEMETRY RO	6
ORTEGA, GABRIELLA	7	WELLS, CODIE D	5
PARSON, BRYAN S	8		
PITTMAN, JASMINE MA	5	Totals	
REISER, CHRISTOPHER	8		
ROSADO, DESMOND R	6	ADA+	93.58%
SANCHEZ, MICHAEL A	8		
SAONER, MICHAEL J	5	Reentry	
SCHNECK, CODIE J	5		
SMINKEY, HANNAH	7	MORALES, EMILY E	5
SMITH, TAYLOR A	7		
STELMACH, ANTHONY M	6		
TOLLINCHI, DANICA E	6		
TOLLINCHI, NASIA I	5		
VAZQUEZ, CHARLEEN	7		
VELEZ, JONATHAN <i>LATE</i>	7		

*Detention**11/29*

*John Marchuk*  
*Zachary Cook*  
*Mariah Boone*  
*Ashley Lopez*  
*Carl Chessman*  
*Kerry Crowder*  
*Verne Williams*  
*Destiny Harris*

CEO - CARLOS RUIZ PLEASE ADD MICHAEL ARROYO C-14

PLEASE REMOVE EZEQUIEL ORTIZ FROM C-3 PLEASE SEE THE BACK OF THIS SHEET