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School service projects for students serving in after-school detentions

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SCHOOL SERVICE PROJECTS FOR STUDENTS SERVING

IN AFTER-SCHOOL DETENTIONS

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ABSTRACT

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SCHOOL SERVICE PROJECTS FOR STUDENTS SERVING
IN AFTER-SCHOOL DETENTIONS
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The purpose of this study was to investigate student attitudes when a voluntary school service project alternative was offered to those serving a school detention. Another purpose was to examine the potential benefits reaped by the school as a result of these students' work. The sample population for study (n=60) was selected voluntarily from high school juniors and seniors. Data was collected through the use of: 1) student surveys for those who participated in a school service project, 2) material culture collected from student discipline records, and 3) surveys completed by custodians, teachers, and administrators in the school building. Data analysis of the student and staff surveys was conducted on an ongoing basis. A structured analysis of the material culture was conducted at the conclusion of the project. The findings of this study suggest that the majority of students, when given the option of performing a service project to sitting in a detention, will volunteer for such a service. Additional findings indicate a latent desire among the students for a neat and clean school facility. The study concluded that for students, voluntary school service projects were more productive alternatives to that of serving a traditional detention.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Focus of the Study

Throughout the history of public school education, learning theorists and practitioners have universally accepted the positive value of an established student code of conduct within the school environment. Traditional disciplinary methods (Kimbrough & Burket, 1990) for correcting student behavior problems include: 1) corporal punishment, 2) reprimands, 3) detention, 4) enforced duties, 5) in-school suspension, 6) external suspension from school, and 7) expulsion from school. Along with a set policy, those charged with enforcement must be consistent, tough, deliberate, fair, just, and compassionate and perceived as such (Cunningham & Cordiero, 2000). But are we, as educators, making better students by virtue of our traditional disciplinary measures? Could a more efficient use of the students' time spent in the detention hall be used in such a way that their offenses could be made up to the school community? At issue was the value of students sitting idly in the detention hall during for a prescribed period of time, versus the possibility of deriving some kind of positive result from what was initially a negative disciplinary action.

The focus of this study centered on the value of school service projects performed by students serving after-school detentions. Specifically, this investigation concentrated on the attitudes of those students who have voluntarily and actively participated in such

service projects and on the attitudes of the school's educational leaders toward this deviation from an otherwise traditional form of discipline.

Purpose of the Study

This study investigated student attitudes that school service projects had on those participating students and on the potential benefits reaped by the school as a result of the students' work.

One of the many issues related to this project will be the school's adherence to federal and state law. Could the critic deem this type of project a type of corporal punishment of the students? With regard to any physical labor, Ubban, Hughes, & Norris (2001), cite important guidelines must be followed if the use of corporal punishment in a school setting is deemed to be prudent and reasonable. State labor laws are additional considerations as a potential entanglement with custodial and maintenance contracted responsibilities could occur.

Based on the activities of this study, the intern expected to find that the vast majority of students in the detention hall are making no productive use of their time. If offered an alternative project to sitting in detention, the intern hypothesized a significant number of students would be willing to try the service project alternative. Finally, the intern expected to see some development of self-worth and school pride in those students that participated in these school service projects.

The purpose of this study was to 1) provide voluntary school service opportunities to students who are serving after-school detentions, 2) identify any changed attitudes such opportunities had on these students, and 3) identify the ways in which the school might benefit from these school service projects.

Definitions

For purposes of this study the following terms were defined as follows:

Corporal punishment – a disciplinary action by the application of physical force, used for modifying behavior.

Detention – a punishment assigned to a student where one hour of time after school must be served.

Detention Hall – the location of the place where students are to report if assigned a detention. At Washington Township High School 11-12 Building, this is located in one of the two cafeterias.

Student Empowerment – the provision of opportunities for students to assume some type of ownership of the school organization and facility

Suspension – a period of time when a student (for disciplinary reasons) is prohibited from attending regular classes in the school.

Expulsion – a termination of the student's legal right (for disciplinary reasons) to attend school in the local district.

WTHS 11-12 – Washington Township High School, Grades 11-12 Wing

Limitations of the Study

Data gathering techniques for this study were survey instruments distributed to: a) all WTHS students who participate in this study, and b) administrators and maintenance/custodial workers housed in the WTHS 11-12 Wing. While this may be considered to be a small sample, the information gleaned from these surveys reflected a convincing representation of how students and staff at WTHS view the use of school service projects as an alternative to traditional disciplinary measures. However, these

findings cannot necessarily be generalized to anticipate how other school students and school officials feel about such a program.

Due to the nature of this data collection, the validity and reliability of the results could be tainted. The findings were based on what was hoped to be honest and unbiased feedback, especially on the part of the student participants. In addition, a similar, but more informal program had existed at WTHS 11-12 in the past. The building administrators had indicated a keen interest in seeing this study succeed for the 2003-2004 school year and in the future.

<u>Setting of the Study</u>

Washington Township is a premiere community in Gloucester County, New Jersey, with an ideal location between Philadelphia and Atlantic City. Covering approximately 22 square miles, it is also the largest community in Gloucester County, New Jersey. The population is 47,500. Washington Township is governed by an elected mayor and five elected Council persons. Over the past forty-five years, Washington Township has changed from a primarily rural, farming community to a sprawling residential, suburban community with the most rapid growth taking place in the past fifteen years. The first major development of land took place in the 1950's when several single- family housing developments were built. The next phase of major development began in the 1980's and continues today. The orchards and farmlands that once dominated the countryside have gradually given way to housing developments. Population growth became so rapid at one point in the 1990's that the community called for a moratorium on building.

As the population of Washington Township has grown over the years it has also grown in diversity. A population that was once primarily European-American has expanded to represent many other cultures and ethnic groups including African-Americans, Latinos, Asian Americans, and American Indians.

As the community population increased over the years the school population grew at such a fast rate that the district often had difficulty providing adequate facilities to house all the students. For a period of time in the 1970's, the district used split sessions to accommodate all of the students at the secondary level. The New Jersey School Report Card cited that, as of the 2001-2002 school year, the average student-to-teacher ratio at WTHS 9-12 was 11.8 to 1.

The educational history of the Washington Township Public Schools dates back to the Old Turner's Schoolhouse, which was eventually replaced in 1855 by a new two-room school called the Bunker Hill School. Then, in 1922, the New Bunker Hill School was built. It was comprised of four classrooms with two grade levels in each room.

The rapid growth of the school district over the years has led to a steady pattern of building new facilities as follows: In 1936 Grenloch Terrace School was built; Hurffville School in 1957; Washington Township High School in 1962; Whitman Elementary School in 1965; Bells School in 1967; Birches School in 1968; Wedgwood School in 1970; Washington Township Middle School in 1980; Thomas Jefferson School in 1984; Orchard Valley Middle School, Chestnut Ridge Middle School and the Early Childhood Education Center in 1990: and the High School Core Facility and Bunker Hill Middle School in 1996. The school district experienced a significant period of growth during the years of 1985 to 1995 when student enrollment escalated by thirty-seven percent. The

student enrollment of the Washington Township Public Schools was estimated to be 9836 for the 2003-2004 school year.

As of the 2001-2002 school year, the expenditure figure of total comparative cost per pupil in Washington Township was $9075, compared to the state average of $10,138 per pupil. These figures include classroom salaries and benefits, general supplies and textbooks, purchased services, and other expenditures. They also include support services, salaries, and benefits, administrative salaries and benefits, operations and maintenance of plant salaries and benefits, total food services costs, total extracurricular costs and total of extra miscellaneous costs. (New Jersey School Report Card, 2001-2002).

The Washington Township School System has a central administrative staff consisting of a Superintendent, a School Business Administrator/Board Secretary, an Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, an Assistant Superintendent of Student Personnel Services, a Supervisor of Student Personnel Services/Child Study Teams, a Director of Secondary Curriculum and Instruction, a Director of Elementary Curriculum and Instruction, and a School/Community Relations Coordinator.

The administrative configuration of the various schools in the district is as follows: The pre-school and the six elementary schools each have a principal. The two largest elementary schools also have assistant principals. The three middle schools have a principal and two assistant principals. Finally, the high school has a principal, two executive assistant principals overseeing the operations of the 9-10 and 11-12 wings, four grade level assistant principals, an assistant principal in charge of student activities, an assistant principal in charge of athletics, and nine department chairpersons.

The first graduating class of Washington Township High School in 1962 had approximately 120 students. In contrast, the class of 2002 numbers 678. The total student population of Washington Township High School for the 2001-2002 school year is 2912. The present high school facility consists of a large complex, which includes a 9-10 Wing, an 11-12 Wing, and a Core Facility. There are 249 faculty members/supervisors and 46 teaching assistants.

The Washington Township High School students come from primarily middle-income families. Academically, they perform consistently well with 89 percent of the population earning a GPA of 80 percent or above in the 2002-2003 school year. Results from Grade 11 New Jersey High School Proficiency Assessment test takers in the 2001-2002 school year indicate that 94.1 percent of all regular and special education students from WTHS passed. Approximately 79 percent of Washington Township High School seniors take the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT). Baseline data from the 2001-2002 school year are as follows: Mean Verbal SAT Score - 515; Mean Math SAT Score – 518. As of 2002, Washington Township High School graduated 99.7% of its eligible seniors. Approximately 90 percent of WTHS graduates go on to some form of post secondary education (55 percent to four year colleges, 35 percent to two year colleges) and the remaining students go on to attend trade or technical schools, join the work force or enter the military (New Jersey School Report Card, 2002).

The high school dropout rate at WTHS for the 2001-2002 school year was 1.9 percent in comparison to the New Jersey state average of 2.7 percent. The attendance rate was 94.3 percent, while the state average was 92.9% (New Jersey School Report Card, 2002).

The total district budget for the 2003-2004 school year is $103,181,210. Of that total budget, $49,982,737 comes from local taxes. The school tax rate is $2.098 per $100 of assessed value, which means the average homeowner with an assessment of $125,772 pays $2,638 in taxes. Of the 24 communities in Gloucester County, Washington Township ranks fourteenth in the amount of property tax paid. In spite of this information, the voters of Washington Township have approved only two school district budgets over the past decade. Voter turnout is usually poor and has been as low as thirteen percent. (M. Meehan, personal communication, August 29, 2003.)

Significance of the Study

The concept of students performing school service projects is not a new one at Washington Township High School. The solicitation of student help for such projects from the detention hall has occurred on a more informal basis in previous years. The School's idea of service is not limited to students with discipline issues. In addition to numerous service-oriented extra-curricular clubs and activities, students of the senior class have become actively involved in community-wide service projects at their annual Senior Service Day held each spring.

The encouragement of participation in service-oriented activities is consistent with the school district's adopted mission statement:

The Washington Township School District will provide a safe

educational environment for all students to attain the skills necessary for

full participation in our global community as responsible, self-directed,

and *civic-minded citizens* [italics added] (Mission Statement of the

Washington Township School District, 1999).

On a larger scale, a current school reform known as *student empowerment* has emerged as a highly publicized topic among educational theorists and practitioners. This concept of empowerment allows the target stakeholders of the school, whether they are administrators, staff, students, parents, or the community-at-large, to share in decisions and practices that influence the school. It is desired that, through empowerment, all stakeholders will derive a sense of ownership and of self-gratification for their involvement.

In his research on motivation, Richard Sagor (1993) identified five needs that humans have the innate desire to satisfy: (a) the need to feel competent, (b) the need to belong, (c) the need to feel useful, (d) the need to feel potent, and (e) the need to feel optimistic. Sagor's study concluded that if an activity satisfies the needs as listed above, people would commit themselves unconditionally. If administrators can empower students, who sit idly in a detention hall, by providing opportunities to perform school service projects, would this fulfill the students' need to feel useful? There is evidence that supports Sagor's conclusion that schools who succeed in motivating alienated students inspire those same students with strong feelings of membership, engagement, and commitment (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989).

Organization of the Study

The remaining chapters of this study will includes a review of literature in chapter 2; a description of the design of the study in chapter 3; a presentation and interpretation of data in chapter 4; and conclusions, relationships to the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards, and discussion in chapter 5.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Review on the Problem

Student discipline continues to be the most consistently discussed problem in public schools and the problem that plagues most educators (Short, Short & Blanton, 1994). What is discipline? The word and concept are derived from the Latin word *discipulus*, meaning pupil desire to learn. According to the Short study, this verb is different from the traditional aspect of punishment, intended to correct or train that always focuses on short-term gains. The Latin verb also includes a long-term training component that is expected to encompass mental and moral improvement.

Today's educators choose the way they respond to student discipline problems based on their expectations, beliefs, and previous experiences. However, their particular roles and the schools in which they work may often limit their choices. Cunningham & Cordiero (2000) outline several traditional methods for correcting student behavior. These include corporal punishment, reprimands, detention, enforced duties, in-school suspension, external suspension from school, and expulsion from school. The disciplinarian must be consistent, tough, deliberate, fair, just, and compassionate and perceived as such. Educators should be mindful to constantly evaluate the effectiveness of their chosen methods of discipline, both for the student in question, the other students in the class or school, and for the school as an organization. Whenever problem solvers restrict themselves to a single type of solution, they may become relatively insensitive to

feedback concerning the effectiveness off that solution (Short, et al 1994). Literature indicates that there are many possible solutions to the growing number of discipline problems in schools due to inappropriate interpersonal behaviors. Among these possible solutions are: instruction in social and life skills, conflict resolution, cooperative learning, character education, and student respect and responsibility education (Cook & Rudin, 1997). These authors define good character as knowing, desiring, and doing the good. With the increase of crime, lack of self-control, and deteriorating morals and values of today's youth, there is an increased need for character education.

Review on Major Concepts Related to the Problem

With this study, the author intended to introduce, evaluate, and report one alternative to the traditional approaches of discipline. This study focused on a voluntary option of school/community service for students who are serving detentions. Definitions of service learning vary considerable among those who embrace it (University of Colorado, 1998). Kraft (1996) states that some agreement has been achieved on the definition of service-learning in recent years, but that practices do not always match the definition. Roberts and Moon (1997) define community service learning as a teaching/learning method that connects meaningful community service with academic learning, personal growth and civic responsibility. Billig (2002) describes service-learning as an instructional practice in which activities are planned and implemented by students, based on authentic community needs. While most research characterizes service-learning as an activity that is tied into classroom instruction, student work that occurs after school falls under the definition of community service. Skinner and Chapman (1999) define community service as activities that are non-curriculum based

and are recognized by and/or arranged through the school. These activities may be carried out as school-wide events, separately organized school programs, or projects conducted by school-sponsored clubs. Billig (2002) further summarizes the basic differences between service-learning and community service in the following:

> Community service, which is aimed toward helping the recipient, has service as its primary focus. Community service programs are typically based on social causes and intend to produce civic, ethical, and interpersonal outcomes. In contrast, service-learning is typically based on an academic discipline, provides benefits for both the recipient and provider of the service, and intends to produce both academic and civic outcomes (p. 3).

Nationally, public service was brought politically to the fore by President George Bush with his signing of the National and Community Service Act of 1990, an initiative to revitalize an ethic of service in communities across the nation. President Clinton then signed the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, thus creating the Corporation for National Service, which funds and administers service program such as Americorps and Learn and Serve America (Ward, 1996). In summarizing the work of Frank Newman, executive director of the Education Commission of the States, Krehbiel and MacKay (1988) cite three reasons for the renewed interest in volunteerism: (a) young adulthood is the time when persons are most open to the concept of citizen responsibility, (b) society today demands that young people understand the great impact of social issues and make a commitment to the public, and (c) classroom study does not of itself suffice to teach public leadership and civic responsibility.

The importance of volunteer work, community service, and service-learning is well documented in research. Krehbiel and MacKay (1988) stated that cultivating the character and civic commitment of students is one of the main charges of American education. Teaching responsibility for the common good, developing independent thinking, and providing for economic contributions to society are specific goals. In their research on the impacts of service-learning for the student, Ward and Vernon (1999) point out that service-learning enhances students' psychosocial and moral reasoning abilities. Such involvement can enhance career goals, social responsibility, personal efficacy, critical thinking, and problem solving skills. Billig (2002) asserts that service-learning is an important school reform because it revitalizes the civic mission of schools. This validates an earlier study, which found that a majority of public schools in the United States have public service integrated into their philosophy and mission statements (Ward, 1996). In reviewing the work of Beth M. Miller, Perkins-Gough (2003) outlines the links between after-school program participation and educational success. Her research shows that students show improvements in academic performance and social competence, including better grades, improved homework completion, higher scores on achievement tests, lower levels of grade retention, improved behavior in school, increased competence of self as a learner, better work habits, fewer absences from school, better emotional adjustment and relationships with parents, and a greater sense of belonging in the community.

Research has outlined several benefits to community service, service-learning, and student volunteerism. Roberts (1981) contends that student service promotes learning and change in both the affective and cognitive domains. In their study of other benefits,

Short et al (1994) found that such school practices may ultimately decrease the occurrence of discipline problems.

> Student participation in school activities strongly relate to student commitment to schools. Activities that increase status, visibility, recognition, and group cohesiveness may decrease student alienation. Students want to be part of schools that solicit their involvement and input. Negative student behaviors seem to decrease in schools in which the faculties have created climates of student belongingness and involvement (p. 8).

Other research studies show community service-learning methodology linked to gains in self-esteem, increases in social and civic responsibility, moral reasoning skills, and positive feelings about adults and groups with whom participants are involved (Roberts & Moon (1997). Billig (2002) also reports statistically significant short-term impacts with overall engagement with school with students who participated in such programs. Her study further shows that service-learning participants were more likely to accept cultural diversity, become aware of community needs, and develop an ethic of volunteer service. Billig's study found that the effects of service-learning were generally greater in high schools than in middle schools, and that over 95 percent of the participants reported satisfaction with the experience. Finally, her results found that most service-learning activities promote emotional intelligence and a strong social climate.

In his study of public schools, Boyer (1986) states that students should be able to see a connection between what they are learning and the values of their own lives. He concludes that the nation not only has a school problem, but a

youth problem. His data revealed that students felt unconnected – not only to school, but to the community at large. In a speech delivered to a national PTA convention, Boyer summarizes his findings as follows:

> Today's students can graduate from high school and never be asked to participate responsibly in life – never be asked to spend time with older people who are lonely; never be given the opportunity to help a child who has not learned to read; and never even be encouraged to clean up litter on the streets.

Service-learning usually has a two-fold goal: to meet community needs and to provide meaningful learning experiences for students (Ward & Vernon, 1999). The most often stated goals of volunteer service programs include building a tradition of service in the community's children, teaching responsibility, building a sense of community in our young people, teaching students the importance of cooperation and communication, and giving students a sense of accomplishment that comes from helping others (Morris, 1992). Through volunteer service, students have learned essential lessons about responsibility to others (Krehbiel & MacKay, (1988).

Research has published a plethora of statistics regarding service-learning, community service, and volunteerism. In a study conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics (1992), a survey reported that sixty-four percent of all public schools, including 83 percent of public high schools, had students participating in community service activities recognized by and/or arranged through the school. These schools reported they did not receive outside financial help to fund their programs. It also reported that fifty-seven percent of all public schools organized community service

activities for their students. Most of these schools cited strengthening relationships among students, the school, and the community as key reasons for practicing service-learning. Finally, the study indicates that larger schools (i.e., those enrolling 1,000 or more students) are more likely to have students participating in community service activities than schools with lower enrollments.

Richard Sagor (2002) outlines five needs that students have the innate desire to satisfy: the need to fell competent, the need to belong, the need to feel useful, the need to feel potent, and the need to feel optimistic. When an activity satisfies those needs, students will commit themselves completely to it. Additional research has found that there are ways to inspire students with strong feelings of membership, engagement, and commitment (Wehlage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko, & Fernandez, 1989). McCombs & Whisler (1997) contend that sharing power and control with students (through volunteerism) addresses the personal domain. This is considered to be a learner-centered practice that results in increased motivation, learning, and achievement. Research has also revealed that students who were most affected by a voluntary service experience were those who were engaged in meaningful activities in which they had some interest and responsibility, and where they felt challenged (Billig, 2002). In looking at what motivated students to volunteer, another study revealed that many students are neither apathetic nor uninterested in the welfare of others, as they might appear (Krehbiel and MacKay, 1988).

The very essence of our educational system includes participating in the ownership of the organization (Lautzenheiser, 1992). In addition to student volunteers, a service-oriented program should have a coordinator to plan and supervise before, during

and after the close of the experience. According to Roberts (1981), successful service-learning program planners and coordinators need to remember the following:

1. Service does not mean asking students to do jobs around school that others are unwilling to do or using volunteer help as a form of cheap labor.

2. Even in a required program, students should have a choice of activities so that their needs and enthusiasms may be accommodated.

3. Programs that send students into the community without preparation, continuing help, and follow-up do not promote learning, or probably, service.

4. A good program expresses its objectives in terms of the service given clients.

The literature offers several recommendations if a school is to offer service-learning and voluntary community service projects to its students. Ward & Vernon (1992) advocate open communication lines between the different parties involved in identifying service opportunities for students. In addition, guidelines need to be developed that clearly outline the purpose and expectations of different campus-based service initiatives. Billig (2002) stresses the importance of the support of the building principal for such a project. This support includes a shared vision, promoting collaboration of the involved stakeholders, flexible scheduling, securing transportation, and checking on relevant policies, including liability. Finally, Ward (1996) charges advocates of service-learning projects to transcend the criticism as another fad for

educational reform by integrating the concept into campus cultures and occupying a place of centrality to the organizational mission.

For purposes of this study, there are numerous legal issues that must be examined if an administrator is contemplating the utilization of student volunteers from after-school detention for service projects. Washington Township High School, like most other schools in the nation, has a written disciplinary policy for its students. The punishment for school discipline violations range from verbal warnings and teacher detentions, to administrative detentions and suspensions (Washington Township High School 2003-2004 Student Planner/Handbook (2003). In the most serious of offenses, expulsion may also be considered. State and local law provide school officials the authority to temporarily detain students after school as a punishment, as long as the student is afforded a way to get home. As in any punishment, the detention must be reasonable. Charges of false imprisonment may be alleged if a principal or teacher wrongfully detains a student, or the detention lasts for an unreasonable length of time. As in any punishment, the main test is one of fairness. If school officials are found to act fairly and in good faith in dealing with students with disciplinary issues, their actions will most likely be upheld by the courts (Ubban, Hughes, & Norris, 2001).

In looking at the legal issues surrounding the soliciting of student volunteers from the detention hall, the first question to be considered is whether this act could be considered one of corporal punishment. LaMorte (1999) defines corporal punishment as, "…the use of physical contact (such) as striking, paddling, or spanking a student by an educator." In a more generalized interpretation, Ubban, Hughes, & Norris (2001) define corporal punishment as a, "…disciplinary action by the application of physical force."

Upon the author's interview of the topic with the Washington Township Board of Education solicitor, it was suggested that, "The student's body must be hurting as a result of the discipline" (interview with Joseph Betley, Esq., October 27, 2003). Betley continues to say there is nothing to suggest that students who voluntarily perform approved school service projects could possibly be construed as "corporal punishment" in a court, "...except to the very broadest and loosest possible sense of the law."

A second legal concern is one of adherence to child labor laws. In an interviewed conversation, Mr. David Hespe, former N.J. Commissioner of Education, advises on the consultation of state child labor laws and of federal Occupational and Safety Health Administration (OSHA) guidelines (interview with David Hespe, on October 1, 2003). The New Jersey Department of Labor provides written statutes, which employers must accept in employing children within certain age groups. The following guidelines will be integrated into the intern's project, as derived from N.J.S.A. 34:2-21.17d:

1. No minor shall operate any power driven machinery

2. No minor shall be permitted to work as a volunteer except under the direct supervision of an adult

3. No minor shall be exposed to hazardous waste products or other substances

4. No minor shall be permitted to work on any excavation, scaffolding or roofing

5. No minor shall be permitted to work during regular school hours, or before 7 a.m. or after 7 p.m.

6. No minor shall be permitted to work during more than five consecutive hours without a half-hour break, and for more than 18 hours per week when school is in session.

In addition, New Jersey Administrative Code restricts minors less than 18 years of age from working with certain dangerous materials (New Jersey Department of Labor, 2003). Finally, keeping with the intent of the child labor laws, a student's voluntary service must be, "…limited to the timeframe of the detention…" (interview with David Hespe, on October 1, 2003).

A third legal point for consideration is whether student service projects might interfere with the contractual obligations of custodial and maintenance employees within the school. According to the New Jersey Employer-Employee Relations Act (2003), there is no specific procedural reference to the scenario, as described above. However, the act does establish the Public Employees Relation Commission (PERC) to be the power that prevents anyone from engaging in any unfair labor practice. Therefore, employees who fear for their job security because students may be doing some of the work that was reserved to hired employees would file their grievance through the PERC. Joseph Betley, Washington Township Board of Education solicitor, advises that, while a school's administration has the right to introduce a voluntary program, if the program has any kind of impact on what paid employees do, that is, on the terms and conditions of employment, it must be negotiated through the appropriate union (interview with Joesph Betley, 2003).

The fourth consideration to be reviewed is the issue of liability and accident insurance for students or staffs who are involved with after-school activities. The area of

law that address these concerns is known as tort law (LaMorte, 1999.) Most school districts are immune from legal action if they are acting in a governmental function. However, by virtue of students performing a service to the school, if the courts deem the action as a proprietary function, the school district could be held to legal accountability (Reutter, 1994). For the reason, it is advisable to clearly spell out that the purpose of such service projects is to, "…make better students…that is a learning lesson for them" (interview with David Hespe, 2003). Hespe concludes by outlining three boundaries for introducing a voluntary community service option for student discipline problems:

1. "You can't use kids who are serving a suspension or who are expelled."

2. "There can also be no physical distress inflicted on the student at any time."

3. "You can't use students in a capacity where they might be exposed to any associated potential danger, such as cleaning solvents. You also must provide any necessary training if students are to use certain machinery, but you may want to avoid having them do something like that."

According to the Board Secretary of the Washington Township School District, "…liability insurance covers students whenever they are under our care." - M. Meehan (electronic communication, September 23, 2003). This policy includes students on school field trips or other on-site activities. The district also carries liability insurance in case a child is injured. This insurance goes in to effect when the students' family health insurance has reached its maximum in benefits.

Conclusion

In their summation, Ward & Vernon (1996) declare that service-learning should not be solely about good "P. R." for the school. It should be an integrated strategy that addresses the needs of the students, faculty, and the mission of the educational institution. Further, it provides a place and time where all students can belong, where the community is served and where research is effective and applicable.

Chapter 3

Design and Methodology

Sample Population

Washington Township High School serves a suburban middle class and upper-middle class community. The student population is approximately 3000. The high school complex is divided into two wings: one houses freshmen and sophomores, the other houses juniors and seniors. A "core" facility connects these two wings. For disciplinary purposes, two after-school detentions run simultaneously, which are conducted from the 9-10 and 11-12 cafeterias. Detentions are held Monday through Thursday each week, and last one hour each day.

A sample was selected from juniors and seniors who were serving detention in the 11-12 cafeteria. The sample population was selected voluntarily, and was not informed that this formalized study was being conducted.

Description of Sampling and Sampling Techniques

The intern, at the conclusion of each detention time, surveyed all students who volunteered to perform a service project that day. In addition, a review of the discipline records of the sample population was conducted at the conclusion of the project. This material culture was reviewed at random from the sample population. Finally, a survey was distributed to building administrators, detention supervisors, and building custodial and maintenance personnel.

Development and Design of the Research Instruments

On the student survey, students were asked to verify in writing, that they had indeed volunteered for the service project. The intern also wanted to document the various motivations for volunteering for such a project. Having completed a service project for the day, the survey provided an outlet for students to compare the project to the traditional method of sitting quietly in a detention in the cafeteria. Questions such as, "Do you consider this a worthy alternative to serving a detention in the cafeteria? Why?" and, "...would you (again) opt to perform a service project instead of serving a traditional style of detention?" allowed the intern to document student preferences between the two options. Finally, the survey allowed for the sample population to elaborate on any discovered appreciations for the condition of the school plant, and/or for those who oversee the daily upkeep of the facility.

The staff survey focused on their awareness of the program's existence and viability. The questions were designed to elicit a response as to whether the student volunteers made their jobs easier, and whether the student volunteers were genuinely on task during their project. A final component of the staff survey was designed to focus on the potential legal infringement of employee rights and responsibilities. As discussed in the previous chapter, the successful implementation of voluntary service projects hinges on avoiding labor disputes with those employees charged with the upkeep of the school facility.

Description of Data Collection Approach

The sample for this study was limited to juniors and seniors attending Washington Township High School who were assigned one or more detentions for violating specific discipline policies as outlined in the student handbook. From that population, those students who volunteered to perform a service project instead of serving the traditional detention were included in the sample for this study. Detentions are normally assigned for infractions that do not include violent behavior problems, or class and/or school attendance issues.

At the beginning of the detention, after attendance had been taken, the intern would introduce himself to the students. He then explained that he would like volunteers to assist in custodial or maintenance projects in the school. In return for their service, they would be permitted to leave up to thirty minutes earlier than those serving the normal detention time. Depending on the project for the day, he would take the first four to six volunteers, as indicated with a raised hand. Those students were taken to an office area, where the intern reiterated the fact that this was strictly voluntary on the students' part. After recording the names of the participating students, the intern explained the project to be completed along with the ground rules for students to successfully complete their time requirement. Necessary articles, such as work gloves and trash bags, were distributed and students were escorted to the jobsite. In general, the intern monitored the work as performed by the students, although he also would occasionally physically assist them, if he felt they needed further example or direction. After approximately thirty minutes, time was called and the students returned to the office area to return the work articles and to complete the survey. Following these tasks, the students were free to leave.

<u>Description of the Data Analysis Plan</u>

Data analysis of the student surveys was conducted on an ongoing basis. These data were codified into two categories, according to the nature of the responses. The first category focused on student opinion as to the viability of service projects as an alternative the traditional approach to detentions. The second category addressed any discovered attitudes or renewed appreciation for the condition of the facility, or for those employees charged with the day-to-day operations of the school plant.

In addition, a structured analysis of the material culture was conducted at the conclusion of the project. Again, these data were organized into patterns in behavior that required disciplinary action. Finally, a data analysis of the staff surveys was performed. These data were also codified into two categories. The first classification centered on their awareness of the service project program and the perceived evaluation of its effectiveness: from the perspectives of their job, the overall maintenance of the school plant, and for the educational development of the students involved. The second category looked at the possible interference with employee responsibilities, and the labor issues that might have been created by students doing voluntary projects in school maintenance.

Chapter 4

Presentation and Interpretation of Data

<u>Presentation of Data</u>

At Washington Township High School, juniors and seniors who are assigned

detentions are to serve the time in a cafeteria. The detention commences 10 minutes after

the school day has ended, and lasts for 70 minutes. Two teachers, working under the

direction of the assistant principals, supervise all detentions. For the duration of the

detention, students are separated as much as possible to minimize talking or other

disruptive behaviors. As a rule, talking and/or sleeping during this time are not permitted.

Students are generally encouraged to make use of this time to complete homework

assignments or other school-related work.

It was reported by the supervising teachers that the vast majority of students

serving in the detention sat idly during the assigned period of time. Very few were

reported as being engaged in something interpreted to be "constructive", such as doing

homework or silent reading. It was reported that some students had a difficult time in

sitting for the assigned period. Consequently, there would be an occasional disruption

resulting in additional detentions being assigned to the student who caused the

disturbance.

Prior to the detention, the intern consulted with administrators and custodians as

to necessary projects that needed to be addressed around the school building and grounds.

Once a service project was decided upon, the intern secured the necessary materials to

accomplish the chosen task. For purposes of this study, service projects were limited to five tasks. Outside projects included pulling weeds from flowerbeds and picking up trash from the grounds, parking lots, and athletic fields. Inside projects included cleaning mirrors and windows in the hallways and classrooms, sweeping the hallways and cafeterias, and dusting around doorframes, window frames, and pictures in the hallways.

Approximately five minutes into the detention time, the intern entered the cafeteria and addressed the student population. Students were told that, as an alternative to serving the detention, an alternative service project was available for their voluntary participation. In return for their voluntary service, those students selected would be permitted to leave 30 minutes earlier than the students serving the detention. The first four to six students (depending on the project needs) who raised their hands were selected. These students were taken to the office. They were again instructed that their service was voluntary, and that they would be filling out a post-project survey following their service time. The service project for the day was then outlined. The service time lasted from thirty to thirty-five minutes. Following their service, the students were brought back to the office, where they completed the student survey, and were then dismissed.

When provided the opportunity to volunteer for the alternative service project, the intern noted that in 11 of the 12 detention days, over fifty percent of the students in the cafeteria had volunteered for the alternative service project. In all detentions, students had to be turned away from the volunteer project due to the limited number of students required to complete the project, or because of a lack of adult supervision for the number of students and for the locale of the project. In a review of the discipline files of those

.students who were selected to participation of the service project, the data indicated that 67 percent of the behavior issues related to attendance; either late to class or school, or cutting class or detention.

Results of the student survey verified that each student participated in the school service project voluntarily. Of the students surveyed (n=60), 38 percent responded they were volunteering to leave the school 30 minutes earlier than the traditional detention permitted. 25 percent of the student respondents indicated that the traditional detention was boring, or that the service project offered them something to do, rather than just sitting idly in the cafeteria. An additional 20 percent stated that the service project was a better use of their time and/or that the time served went faster when being active with the service project.

Responding to the survey, 100 percent of the students who volunteered for the service project indicated that the activity was worthy alternative to the traditional detention setting. In citing their rationale for this answer, 40 percent of the respondents reported that the service project was a better use of their time or that the projects made the required time to serve go faster. Another rationale (23 percent) was their involvement in the service project was beneficial to the school, the building custodians, or to themselves. An additional 15 percent indicated their ability to leave 30 minutes earlier than the detention as the benefit to the service project option.

The data collected from the student survey indicated that 100 percent of the sample population would in fact volunteer again for the school service project in lieu of serving a traditional detention. In conversation with the student workers, the intern discovered that a number of students were selected on multiple occasions. Knowing the

intern's procedure for selection from serving earlier detentions, those students reported raising their hands immediately, knowing that they would probably be the first ones selected.

The student survey indicated that 82 percent of the students who completed the voluntary service project had developed an appreciation for the appearance and condition of the school building and grounds. In addition, 95 percent reported an appreciation for those who must maintain or oversee the daily upkeep of the building. Of those that responded in the affirmative, 25 percent stated that they wanted the building to have a nice appearance and appreciated attending a clean school. An additional 20 percent realized the hard work involved in maintaining a clean building and well kept grounds.

At the conclusion of the student survey, the student was given the opportunity to write any comments regarding his experience with the service project. This was done in an open-ended format. Of those that responded, 43 percent indicated that the voluntary service project alternative was a good idea, and/or such a program should be maintained. Another 19 percent reiterated that the service project was not as boring as the traditional method of serving a detention.

Building administrators, detention supervisors, and custodial personnel (n=10) also completed an additional survey. The subjects were asked about the benefits of students doing voluntary school service projects in lieu of serving a traditional detention. In their responses, 40 percent delineated the appearance of the school building as receiving the greatest benefit. Another 20 percent cited the custodial staff and student body as the beneficiaries of such a project. Finally, 20 percent deemed the project to be beneficial to the student performing the service.

Eighty percent of the respondents reported observing the student volunteers working in the building after school. Of those that answered in the affirmative, 100 percent responded that the students appeared to be engaged and on task at the time of observation. According to the survey, specific results of the service projects were less trash in the building and on the grounds, cleaner windows, and the note that the observed students appeared to be content with doing the assigned work.

The response to the survey question regarding the value of the school service projects as a viable alternative to a student serving a detention was unanimously in favor of such an opportunity. The responses as to why they are a valuable alternative were diverse and are outlined below:

"Students should spend their time productively, and their productivity should be rewarded by serving less time."

"(Service projects) improve the school building by modifying student behavior."

"(Service projects are) a constructive use of time. Other staff members see what they do and also think it is a good idea."

"Some students can't sit still for 60 minutes. (The service projects) kept them from getting in to trouble."

"It has helped keep the building clean."

"(Students service projects) help to maintain the building."

"It makes students realize how the building gets dirty, and how their peers make the mess."

"Detention is generally wasted time except for the few who do homework. Alternates are more productive."

"If they realize that people have to do these types of jobs, perhaps they would care more about the condition of the building."

("Service projects are) more productive than trying to stay awake for 45 minutes with nothing to do."

According to the survey responses, the results of these student projects did not infringe, undermine, interfere or otherwise have a negative effect on the morale or responsibilities delegated to paid employees. To the contrary, three of the four custodian respondents indicated that they were appreciative of the help, and that the student service projects should continue.

<u>Interpretation of Data</u>

This study was designed to answer the question of how high school students, who find themselves required to serve assigned detentions for behavior problems, utilize their time. The study also explored whether students in these positions might take advantage of opportunities to make use of their served time in a more productive way. Specifically, the purpose of this study was to allow alternative opportunities for this target group to use their detention time in a more productive way, namely working with hands-on service projects within the school building and grounds.

The data from this study suggests a lack of productive use of students' time while serving a detention. It was reported by student and teacher respondents that students rarely take advantage of the opportunity to complete homework assignments or to do any type of assigned or recreational reading during the detention period. Consequently,

students used this time to sit idly in the cafeteria. Students and detention supervisors report this is difficult for some, and can lead to additional discipline problems. A significant number of students report the experience as boring or a waste of time.

The findings of this study suggest that the majority of students, when given the option of performing a service project to sitting in a detention, will volunteer for such a service. The relief from boredom and the earlier dismissal time were cited as major factors in the great number of student volunteers. Independent variables, such as the inside or outside location of the project, or the specific tasks involved did not have an influence on the number of students volunteering. In the vast majority of situations, there were more students volunteering than could be accommodated. Repeat volunteers became commonplace, and all surveyed students reported a willingness to volunteer for such projects again, if given the opportunity.

The findings of this study further suggest that school service projects are a viable alternative to the traditional detention. In an optional open-ended format, 43 percent of the student responses indicated that the voluntary service project alternative was a good idea, and that such a program should be permitted to continue.

Chapter 5

Conclusions, Relationships, and Discussion

Conclusions

It was not possible to conclude that detention students who volunteered for service projects developed a sense of school ownership, based on the design of this study. It can be reported however, that significant number of students (82 percent) who had completed a service project did develop an appreciation for the appearance of the school building and grounds. A greater number of students (95 percent) reported an appreciation for those adults charged with the cleaning and upkeep of the school facilities.

In reviewing the data collected from administrators, detention supervisors, and custodial personnel, it can be concluded that there is positive support for offering the service project alternative to students serving detentions. These stakeholders reported the improved cleanliness of the school facilities, acknowledged that the involved students were consistently engaged in a productive use of time, and that a respect was developed for the adult who must do these jobs on a daily basis.

Finally, the results of this study suggest an obvious improvement in the appearance of the school building and grounds, as provided by the student service projects. It is unclear as to whether students truly assume ownership of the school, as outlined in the review of relevant literature. It is clear however, that the students who did volunteer do prefer a clean school environment. There is some personal pride with their contributions, as cited by some of the students who had volunteered for the service

projects. Finally, it can be concluded that the student volunteers did recognize the hard work involved with the daily upkeep of the school facility, and an appreciation for those responsible for that upkeep.

Relationships to ISLLC Standards

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards were developed for the purpose of outlining recommended practices for educational leaders (Council of Chief School Administrators, 1996). These six standards focus in the areas of knowledge, dispositions, and performances. The conceptual framework, design, results, and conclusions of this study have related directly to these ISSLC Standards. In the following paragraphs, the ISSLC Standard and specific area of focus are outlined. This is followed by a synopsis of the relationship between the ISLLC Standard and this particular study.

ISLLC Standard 1: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the local school community.

Performance #8: The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that an implementation plan is developed in which objectives and strategies to achieve the vision and goals are clearly articulated.

The encouragement of participation in service-oriented activities is consistent with the school district's adopted mission statement: "The Washington Township School District will provide a safe educational environment for all students to attain the skills necessary

for full participation in our global community as responsible, self-directed, and civic-minded citizens". The very nature of volunteerism develops civic-minded citizens, and is fostered even at the highest levels of the federal government. At Washington Township High School, the implementation of the service project alternative was one that addressed the district mission statement and simultaneously embraces the ISLLC Standards.

ISLLC Standard 2: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Disposition # 3: The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to the variety of ways in which students can learn.

Performance #3: The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that students and staff feel valued and important.

Performance #4: The administrator facilitates processes and engages in activities ensuring that the responsibilities and contributions of each individual are acknowledged.

As mentioned in the discussion section of this thesis, the results of this study have implicated the need for further investigation into the unique ways in which the detention students prefer to learn. As a result of participating in the voluntary service project, several students had reported a sense of satisfaction that they were able to help out with the upkeep of the building and grounds. At the conclusion of each service project, the

student contributions were acknowledged and rewarded by being permitted to leave earlier than the students serving the detention.

ISLLC Standard 3: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Knowledge #7: The administrator has knowledge and understanding of legal issues impacting school operations.

Disposition #2: The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to taking risks to improve schools.

In this study, exhaustive research was conducted in an effort to remain within the parameters of federal, state, and local laws, especially with the laws governing child labor. School service projects were selected with the safety of the student participants in mind. Specifically, the use of cleaning materials and supplies were limited to those products found in the home. The risk factor involved in this project was one of perception. At the outset, there was an unanswered question of how the faculty and students would perceive and accept the service project alternative to serving a detention.

ISLLC Standard 5: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.

Disposition #1: The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to the ideal of the common good.

Disposition #2: The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to the Bill of Rights.

Performance # 8: The administrator treats people fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect.

Performance # 9: The administrator protects the rights and confidentiality of students and staff.

The findings of this study have outlined the many benefits of student service projects. It was reported that the appearance of the building and grounds had improved, due to the work of the student volunteers. The custodial personnel were grateful for the help of the students who assisted in the building upkeep. Finally, some of the student volunteers had reported a degree of satisfaction in helping out with the upkeep of the facilities. Throughout the duration of this study, every effort was made to maintain the rights of each student, as guaranteed under the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Finally, during the data collection process, all student surveys and discipline records were kept confidential.

ISLLC Standard 6: A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context.

Knowledge # 3: The administrator has knowledge and understanding of the law as related to education and schooling.

Disposition #5: The administrator believes in, values, and is committed to using the legal systems to protect student rights and improve student opportunities.

Performance #4: The administrator facilitates, processes,

and engages in activities ensuring that the school community

works within the framework of policies, laws, and regulations

enacted by local, state, and federal authorities.

As stated before, a thorough review of the literature regarding federal, state, and local

laws was conducted. Every aspect of the design and implementation of this study was

scrutinized to ensure compliance with these laws. As a result, there were no complaints

filed to the contrary.

Discussion

The findings of this study lead one to inquire as to why more school leaders,

given the availability of available research, have not explored this or other alternatives to

the time-honored disciplinary technique of after-school detentions. Surprisingly, there

was very little research in the form of published material that directly addressed this

issue. The benefits of service learning are well documented in educational journals, and

the idea of fresh approaches to student discipline is certainly an ongoing topic of

conversation. Based on this lack of available research and the findings of this study,

additional investigation is recommended, perhaps focusing more on the intrinsic value of

student ownership.

In a review of relevant literature, the intern discovered that students who were

involved in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities were more likely to establish a

sense of ownership of the school. Perhaps a comparative study between this population

and the detention students might yield an innovative way by which at-risk students could

develop a "connection" to the school community. Conceivably, this connection could be a vehicle that reduces recurring discipline problems or by preventing them altogether.

In the research of student service projects for classroom learning, it has been suggested that by having the students initiate the ideas and develop the project, a higher degree of learning would be achieved. In like manner, this study could be modified to allow the detention students to identify areas of need within the school, plan a course of action, and to carry out the developed plan. The future study of such a modification could prove to reform traditional methods of student discipline.

The final item for discussion concerns the unique ways in which students learn. In her research of how students learn, Dr. Christine Johnston from Rowan University, New Jersey, developed an educational diagnostic tool called The Learning Combination Inventory (LCI). The LCI is a system designed to identify an individual's preferences regarding learning strategies. The four patterns/strategies of learning are sequential, precise, technical, and confluent. The relative reliance and avoidance of each of the four strategies portrays our approaches to learning. Once a person's scores are determined for each of the four strategies, it becomes evident what that person prefers, avoids, and uses only if needed. In this study, a number of student subjects shared how the detention time was "boring" or a "useless waste of time". These observations are consistent with statements made by a technical learner. It would be an interesting study to examine the preferred learning styles of those students who were encountering school discipline issues. Perhaps the discovery of their preferred style of learning could be addressed in the classroom before behavior issues became problematic.

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Appendix A

Student Survey - Detention Service Project

STUDENT SURVEY:
DETENTION SERVICE PROJECT

Information from this survey will be used as part of a study approved through Washington Township High School. To ensure anonymity, please do not put your name anywhere on this survey. Thank you for your help in this study.

1. Today's Date: _____

2. Reason for Detention: _____

3. Did you voluntarily agree to perform this service project instead of serving the

   detention?   YES   NO

4. Why did you volunteer to do this project? _____

   _____

5. What type of service did you perform? _____

6. Do you consider this a worthy alternative to serving a detention in the cafeteria?

              YES   NO

   a. If yes, why? _____

7. If you find yourself in a position of having to serve another detention, would you

   again opt to perform a service project instead?   YES   NO

8. As a result of doing this service project, have you developed any appreciation for

   the appearance and condition of our school building?   YES   NO

9. As a result of doing this service project, have you developed any appreciation for

   those who must work in or oversee the daily upkeep of the building?   YES   NO

10. If you answered yes to either of the above, why? _____

    _____

    _____

Appendix B

Staff Survey - Student Detention Service Project

STAFF SURVEY:
STUDENT DETENTION SERVICE PROJECT

Throughout the past several weeks, students serving detentions have been volunteering after school to perform service projects to improve the appearance and decorum of our high school.

1. In your position, what types of student projects helped in making your job easier?

   _____

2. Have you observed any of these student volunteers working in the building?

   YES   NO

3. If yes, did they generally seem to be on task?   YES   NO

4. Have you noticed any results of their efforts? (Please explain):   YES   NO

   _____

5. In your position, do you feel there is a value in this type of project as an

   alternative to serving a detention?   YES   NO

6. (If yes, please explain):_____

   _____

7. In your position, have the results of these student projects infringed, undermined,

   interfered or otherwise had a negative effect on the morale or responsibilities

   delegated to paid employees?   YES   NO

   (If yes, please explain):_____

   _____

Information from this survey will be used as part of a study approved through Washington Township High School. If you prefer to keep your identity anonymous, please do not answer the following questions. Thank you for your help in this study.

Name: _____

School Title: _____

Today's Date: _____