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The Behavioral Effects of Placing Emotionally Disturbed
Students in an Alternative School Day Setting

Allen Randall Smith

A Thesis

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

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ABSTRACT

Allen Randall Smith

The Behavioral Effects of Placing Emotionally Disturbed
Students in an Alternative School Day Setting.

May 2002

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Gerald Lysik

M.A. in Educational Administration

This study was designed to examine the effects on student behaviors, of taking emotionally disturbed students out of the regular high school and placing them in an alternative afternoon (1 PM – 5PM) program. The researcher attempted to determine whether removing the students from the regular population and placing them in a self-contained setting would improve their behaviors. The subjects of the study were all high school aged students attending a regional high school in southern New Jersey. Each of the students was classified as either emotionally disturbed or multiply handicapped. Prior to being placed in this program, the students had either attended the regular high school or been in a self-contained program during the regular school day during the previous school year.

During the first month of the school year the classroom teacher rated the students using the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC Scale). Students were rated on 138 different items covering three broad categories; they were Externalizing Problems, Internalizing Problems and School Problems.

Results indicate that only one student made significant behavioral progress during the study and that the behaviors of four of the students actually regressed or got worse. The results of this study would seem to indicate that simply placing students that exhibit problematic behaviors in an alternative setting will not improve their behaviors.

MINI-ABSTRACT

Allen Randall Smith

The Behavioral Effects of Placing
Emotionally Disturbed High School Aged
Students in an Alternative School Day Setting
May 2002
Dr. Gerald Lysik
M.A., Educational Administration

The study was designed to examine the behavioral effects of taking emotionally disturbed high school aged students out of the regular high school and placing them in an alternative afternoon (1 PM-5 PM) program.

Results indicate that only one student made significant behavioral progress during the study and that the behaviors of four of the students actually regressed, or got worse.

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Table of Contents

	Page
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Chapter 1 Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2 Review of Literature.....	10
Chapter 3 Design of the Study.....	20
Chapter 4 Presentation of the Research Findings.....	24
Chapter 5 Conclusions, Implication and Further Study.....	34
Reference.....	37
Biographical data	

Chapter 1

Introduction

Focus of the Study

The focus of this study was to examine the effectiveness of educating emotionally disturbed/at-risk high school students during the afternoon from 1:00 PM – 5:00 PM in a self-contained classroom setting. The study seeks to determine the legitimacy of educating those students who are the most disruptive to the educational process, in an alternative setting in the afternoon. The study will look at externalizing behaviors (hyperactivity, aggression and conduct problems), internalizing behaviors (anxiety, depression and somatization), and also school problems (attention problems and learning problems) as measured by the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC). The students in the previous school year were identified as being emotionally disturbed also, however their educational program was a shortened school day during regular school hours, not in the afternoon.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is to determine whether it is more beneficial to the students and the rest of the school to educate emotionally disturbed students in a self-contained afternoon program than to educate them in a classroom in the school building with the rest of the students. This study will try to determine if it is beneficial to the school building as a whole to educate those students who have been identified as having the most behavioral challenges, during an alternative time period. It will also attempt to

determine whether the behaviors, grades, tardiness and attendance of said students improve if they are educated in this alternative setting.

Other purposes of this study are to demonstrate this intern's leadership skills to: "Listen actively and respond appropriate to the ideas and opinions of others, apply behavior management strategies that will enhance the overall performance of the school, identify existing and potential support services to enhance staff and student performance, create a school climate which encourages optimum performance of students and adults, develop procedures which comply with local policies, state and federal rules and regulations and contractual agreements, utilize administrative practices which meet unique needs of students, identify, recruit, select and assign qualified personnel to assure accomplishment of the school's mission, facilitate coordination of community service agencies to assure the appropriate resources are provided for special needs children, identify alternative resources that support the school's program." (Capasso, 1998, p. 41-43).

Most of the Special Education programs for emotionally disturbed children have focused on academics and expect that by placing students in small classes (typically 6-12 students) that this alone will not only reduce the negative behavior of these students but bring about improved behavior. This however, has rarely been the outcome. Often these students feed off of each other and reinforce each other's poor behavior, which frequently leads to chaos in the classroom. In order to obtain the desired behavioral outcomes from emotionally disturbed students, many Special Educators have come to the conclusion that in addition to traditional academic instruction, the first goal for emotionally disturbed students is the remediation of the social and emotional problems which resulted in the

students' being placed in the special education class setting initially. It is imperative that the educational process (what teachers teach) includes teaching students what is expected of them. These expectations may be taught by the modeling of the teacher or it may be done by purchasing a teaching tool such as 'Skillstreaming', which asks students to participate in various role-play activities to simulate what is appropriate, and what are inappropriate behaviors. Some educator's content that one of the reasons students act inappropriately is because they have never been taught how to act appropriately.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study, the following definitions of terms will apply.

At-risk-Students who are considered to be at-risk typically exhibit these characteristics; chronic tardiness, poor attendance, academic malaise, discipline problems, referrals, in trouble outside of school with the law, drug/alcohol use.

Aggression-The tendency to act in a hostile manner (either vocal or physical) that is threatening to others.

Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder-Children with AD/HD differ from their peers due to their inability to concentrate or control their impulses. It is officially included with health and physical disabilities, since AD/HD is seen as more of a result of a genetic, biological imbalance than a pure behavioral problem (Cummings, 1992). New Jersey does not recognize ADD or ADH/D as a specific learning disability.

Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC) Scale-This is a behavioral rating system that is filled out by the classroom teacher. The teacher rates each student on a multitude of behaviors and a scale is generated from the responses. A pre-test was completed in September and a post-test was completed in March.

Conduct Problems-The tendency to engage in antisocial and rule-breaking behavior, including physical aggression and destroying property.

Depression-Feeling of unhappiness, sadness and stress that may result in an inability to carry out everyday activities (neuronegative symptoms) or may bring thoughts of suicide.

Classification-In New Jersey, a student who meets specific requirements may be found in need of special education under 12 different classifications. In the applicable regulation, NJAC 6:28-3.5, the classifications are (I must get the classifications form my special ed rules and regs book)

Curriculum-based assessment-Assessment of students relative to the degree to which they are learning specific curriculum content.

Whenever this term is used, it is used as defined in the New Jersey Special Education code, 6:28.

Emotionally disturbed-According to the New Jersey Administrative Code, emotionally disturbed means; "The exhibiting of seriously disordered behavior over an extended period of time. Which adversely affects educational performance and shall be characterized by an inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships; exhibits behaviors inappropriate to the circumstances, a general or pervasive mood of depression or the development of physical symptoms or irrational fears." (New Jersey Administrative Code 6:28). These children typically have difficulty with acting out behavior, attention-deficit disorders and frequently demonstrate aggressive and potentially violent behavior.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) details the following definition:

- I. A condition exhibiting one or more of the following characteristics over a long period of time and to a marked degree, which adversely affects educational performance.
 - A. An inability to learn which cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors;
 - B. An inability to build or maintain satisfactory relationships with peers and teachers;
 - C. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances;
 - D. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression;
 - E. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or gears associated with personal or school problems.

The term includes children who are schizophrenic or autistic. (Autistic is a separate category under IDEA). The term does not include children who are socially maladjusted, unless it is determined that they are seriously disturbed. (42 Fed. Reg. 478, 1977).

Inclusive schooling-A school setting in which students receive their educational instruction within the regular education setting for the entire or a substantial portion of their academic day (Hammeken, 1995).

Hyperactivity-The tendency to be overly active, rush through work or activities and act without thinking.

Impulsivity-Acting upon an impulse without consideration of the consequences of an action.

Individualized Education Plan (IEP)-All children who might be identified as eligible for special educational programming have the right to individual education programming. It must be developed by a team whose members meet, review the assessment information available about the child and design an educational program to address the child's educational needs. This meeting is called an IEP meeting. In New Jersey the IEP team generally consists of at least one member of the Child Study Team which includes; Learning Disabilities Teacher/Consultant, School Psychologist and Social Worker.

Learning Disabilities-According to the U.S. Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services in the Department of Education: Specific learning disability means a disorder in one or more of the basic psychological processes involved in understanding or in using language, spoken or written, which may manifest itself in an imperfect ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell or to do mathematical calculations. The term includes such conditions as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia and developmental aphasia. The term does not include children who have learning problems which are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps, or mental retardation, of emotional disturbance of or environmental, cultural or economic disadvantage. (42 Fed. Reg. 65083, 1977).

In practical terms the definition that is most often used is; Children with learning disabilities demonstrate a discrepancy between expected and actual achievement in one or more areas, such as spoken or written language, reading, mathematics, and spatial orientation. The learning disability is not primarily a result of sensory, motor, intellectual, or emotional handicap, or the lack of opportunity to learn.

Learning Problems-The presence of academic difficulties, particularly in understanding or completing schoolwork.

Least Restrictive Environment-Students are required to the maximum extent appropriate to be educated with students who are not disabled.

Mainstreaming-The least restrictive environment for educational placement; for example, integration of students into the regular classroom for all or part of the school day.

Perception-The process of organizing or interpreting raw data obtained through the senses.

Social Skills-The skills necessary for interacting successfully with peers and adults in home, school and community settings.

Somitization-The tendency to be overly sensitive to and complain about relatively minor physical problems and discomforts.

Withdrawal-The tendency to evade others and avoid social contact.

Limitations of the Study

The researcher identified just one classroom for inclusion in this study. This obviously limits the scope of the study. The students are all high school aged students, and they all attend the same high school.

Setting of the Study

The setting for the study is a comprehensive regional high school (grades 9-12) that serves the students of the three communities of S, L and N, which are located near the Atlantic Ocean coastline in New Jersey. The student population for the 2001-2002 school year is approximately 1530 students. At the end of the 2000-2001 school year the projected enrollment was to be 1430 students, however over the course of the summer

an additional 100 or so students enrolled in the high school. About 45 percent of the students come from S; about 30 percent come from N with the remainder of about 25 percent coming from L. The population of the three communities is fairly diverse and varies vastly, from low income to upper income.

S covers approximately 4.03 square miles and has a population of approximately 11,614 according to the 2000 census data. Of that number, 9,948 are white, 814 are black, 29 are American Indian, 368 are Asian, 696 are of Hispanic origin, 190 are of two or more races and 261 are considered 'other.' Various levels of socio-economic classes are represented. Most of the people would be considered to be in the middle-income bracket. There are seven apartment complexes in the town, with the bulk of the rest of the housing being single-family homes. There are a number of businesses in S, such as a movie theater, two large grocery stores, a large garden center, four fast food franchises, two recreational boat dealerships, several marinas, a country club, and over 30 restaurants, some of which serve alcohol. The largest single employer in the town is the local hospital. The student population for grades K-8 is approximately 1,237 students. Approximately 20% of the students are eligible for free or reduced lunch.

The town of L covers 3.83 square miles and has a population of approximately 7,172. 6,828 are white, 76 are black, 8 are American Indian, 173 are Asian, 130 of Hispanic origin. The school enrollment of the K-8 students is 986. This town is made up predominantly of well-maintained single-family homes. The prices of homes in L ranges from the low \$100,000's to well over a one million dollars. There are no apartment complexes in L. The income bracket is mostly middle to upper-middle income earners. L is home to many professionals, such as doctors, lawyers, educators, business owners

and casino executives. There are relatively few businesses, which contributes to making local property tax rate fairly high, even by New Jersey standards.

N covers 3.43 square miles and has a population of 7,725. 7,070 are white, 205 are black, 8 are American Indian, 193 are Asian, 338 are of Hispanic origin, 103 are two or more races and 140 are 'other.' The school enrollment is 1,017. N is mostly middle income to upper middle income. There are many businesses in N. Some of the businesses in N are; at least four fast food restaurants, a movie theater with six movie screens, a large office supply store, two large chain grocery stores, several strip shopping centers and a few small office buildings.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

Student conduct and discipline in school is of a major concern to teachers, school administrators, parents, boards of education and the general public. The way that schools deal with behavioral issues is of utmost importance to many people when they think about the school setting. School administrators are faced with developing an appropriate form of discipline to deal with behavioral concerns. There is an abundance of literature related to the need for discipline in schools, forms of punishment and the effectiveness of various forms of punishment and reward systems. The primary purposes of this study were to determine if placement of at-risk and or emotionally disturbed students in an alternative setting within a high school would improve the; tardiness/absenteeism rate, number of detentions, number of suspensions, number of dropouts, the number of occurrences of inappropriate behaviors and whether the student's grade point average improved.

For approximately the last 15-20 years the primary special education category used for the eligibility of any child with social, emotional or behavioral disorders, has been serious emotional disturbance (SED). The state of New Jersey does not use this classification; New Jersey uses the classification Emotionally Disturbed. Children may qualify in the serious emotional disturbance category only if they have a disorder in at least one of five specific areas. The five areas involve; (a) the inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory or health factors; (b) an inability to build or maintain satisfactory relationships with peers and teachers; (c) inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances; (d) a general pervasive mood of

unhappiness or depression; and (e) a tendency to develop physical symptoms or irrational fears associated with personal or school problems (Quay, 1992).

The environmental conditions under which children and youths display disordered emotions and behavior vary widely. Some youngsters endure extremely adverse circumstances, including abuse, neglect and pervasive disadvantage, without developing emotional or behavioral disorders; others succumb to adverse circumstances; and some develop disorders in environments that are clearly conducive to normal development. Although environmental conditions affect how children and youths behave, biological factors also exert a strong influence. (Kaufman, 1997).

Emotionally disturbed youths can cause negative feelings and reactions in others in many ways. Disordered emotions or behavior may be described according to two primary dimensions, externalizing (aggressive, acting out behavior) and internalizing (social withdrawal).

When the National Mental Health and Special Education Coalition was formed in the late 1980's, it created a working group assigned to propose a new definition. The working group represented more than a dozen different professional associations and advocacy groups. The proposed new definition reads as follows: I) The term emotional or behavioral disorder means a disability characterized by behavioral or emotional responses in school programs so different from appropriate age, cultural or ethnic norms that they adversely affect educational performance, including academic, social vocational or personal skills, and which; (a) is more than temporary, expected response to stressful events in the environment; (b) is consistently exhibited in two different settings, at least one of which is school related; (c) persists despite individualized interventions within the

education program, unless in the judgment of the team the child's or youth's history indicates that such interventions would not be effective. Emotional or behavioral disorders can co-exist with other disabilities. II) This category may include children or youth with schizophrenic disorders, affective disorders, anxiety disorders or other sustained disturbances or conduct or adjustment when they adversely affect educational performance in accordance with section I (Forness & Knitzer, 1992, p. 13).

Most individuals involved with the education of students who are classified as emotionally disturbed are acutely aware that a wide range of terms that are used evaluate and classify this population and there is little agreement of the best definition (Cullinen, 1984). In spite of difficulties with the definition, there is one issue that remains constant among this population, and that is, students who exhibit problem behaviors, whether called; emotional disturbed, emotionally handicapped, behaviorally disturbed, socially maladjusted, deviant or defiant-are difficult to teach.

Characteristics of students who are emotionally disturbed

During the last two decades, there has been an increased research interest in the academic, behavioral, social and other characteristics of seriously emotionally disturbed students (Wood, 1985). Such children show diverse problems including (a) extensive aggressive, disruptive and anti-social behavior; (b) social rejection by peers; (c) high levels of traits and characteristics of depression; (d) below average intelligence; and (e) inadequate academic achievement (Epstein, 1986). It is difficult to describe the characteristics of children who qualify for SED services in an unequivocal objective manner. Many professionals in special education believe that there are few clear-cut behavioral descriptors that are common for this population. Teachers of emotionally

disturbed children agree that extremes in intensity, frequency or duration of behavior are cause for concern.

Estimates vary greatly as to the incidence of children who have behavioral disorders. Some surveys suggest that anywhere from 0.1% to 30% of school-aged population was considered to be behaviorally disordered. Based on his survey of California schools, Bower (1981), concluded that two or three children in the average classroom (about 10%) can be expected to show signs of emotional disturbance. In the Rubin and Balow (1978) longitudinal study, 7.4% of all children in their sample (N=1,586) were considered to have a behavior problem by every teacher who rated them over a three-year period.

With such wide-ranging estimates, it is obvious that people are using different criteria to decide whether a child is emotionally disturbed. Wood and Zabel (1978) suggest the different has as much to do with the way the figures are collected as the use of different definitions. Most surveys ask teachers to identify students in their classes who display behavior problems at some point in time. Many children display inappropriate behaviors for short periods of time and such cross sectional sampling procedures will not identify them as being emotionally disturbed.

A major study of education for children with behavior disorders that investigated 26 programs in 13 states during the 1987-1989 school years supports the 'two-to-three students per classroom' figure: "Estimates suggest 10% of the child population has behavior problems serious or sustained enough to warrant intervention and three percent to five per cent are judged to be seriously emotionally disturbed." (Knitzer, Steinberg and Fleisch, 1990).

In 1995 a survey there was also extreme variation from 0.05%-2.08% reported among the states in the percentage of pupils identified as having emotional or behavior disorders and receiving special education under the federal category "serious emotional disturbance" (U.S. Department of Education, 1995).

Below average intellectual functioning and below average expected academic achievement are characteristics of students with emotional or behavioral disorders. Combined with conduct disorder, low intelligence and achievement provide a gloomy forecast for adulthood. School failure is not known to cause emotional or behavioral disorders; it frequently accompanies maladaptive behavior and possibly contributes to maladjustment. The demands of the school and the student's social and academic repertoire probably affect each other reciprocally. For years we have known that a circular reaction occurs between the student and the social context of the classroom (Glidewell, 1969; Glidewell, Kantor, Smith & Stringer, 1966). Students who are healthy, intelligent, upper-middle class, high achieving, high in self-esteem and adroit in interpersonal skills enter the classroom at a distinct advantage. They are likely to make positive approaches to others, who in turn are likely to respond positively; and these advantaged students will be sensitive to others' responses toward them and able to use their intelligence to further enhance their personal power and social status. Intelligence and achievement beget social acceptability, self-esteem, accurate social perception and status, all of which in turn induct positive social responses from others and facilitate achievement. (Colvin, Sugai, & Patching, 1993, Hess & Halloway, 1994).

Moreover, the same coercive process found in families of antisocial boys (Patterson, 1986) can be found in schools (Walker et al., 1995). Among their peers and interactions with teachers and administrators, students with conduct disorders may be caught in negative reinforcement traps. Educators (like parents) and classroom peers (like siblings) can become entangled in escalating contests of aversiveness, in which the individual who causes greater pain is the winner, obtaining negative reinforcement and digging in for the next round of conflict (Kaufman, 1997).

How a school affects a student's emotional or behavioral development depends at least to some extent, on his or her characteristics upon entering the educational system. The same type of interaction between the student's temperament and the parents' child-rearing techniques appears to occur between the student's temperament and the school's social and academic demands. The student who is slow to approach others, has irregular work habits, is slow to adapt to new situations, and is predominantly negative in mood is most likely to have difficulty in school, though any temperamental characteristic is susceptible to modification with proper handling (Martin, 1992; Thomas et al., 1968).

Since the students in this study are not only emotionally disturbed, but also considered 'at-risk' a review of the at-risk factors for dropping out follows.

Based on their study for The Metropolitan Educational Research Consortium, McMillan, Reed and Bishop, (1992), find at-risk students possess common characteristics brought on by a combination of home, school and societal factors that result in the student's possible failure to graduate from high school, attain work skills and become productive members of society.

Three groups of common at-risk characteristics emerge from their research:

Social/Family Background

- Sibling or parent dropout
- Low socioeconomic status
- Membership in an ethnic or racial minority group, especially if English is a second language.
- Dysfunctional family-lack of structure and stability, substance abuse, physical/sexual abuse, single-parent families, lack of family commitment to school
- Lack of parental education
- Inner city, urban area
- Poor communication between home and school

Personal Problems

- Trouble with the law
- Learning disabilities
- Lack of life goals, and an inability to see options
- Lack of hope for the future
- Significant lack of coping skills
- Work many hours per week
- Has responsibility of raising one or more children

School Factors

- Behavior problems; in trouble in school or community, acting out behavior, disruptive in learning environment
- Absenteeism
- Lack of respect for authority, feelings of alienation from school authorities
- Grade retention, especially in the early grades
- Suspensions/expulsions
- Course failure and poor academic record
- Tracking/ability grouping
- Dissatisfaction and frustration with school
- Lack of available and adequate counseling possibilities
- Inadequate school services-mental health, social services and health services (McMillan et al., 1992 p. 10).

Bruckner, (1995) reports researchers found multiple characteristics of dropouts including: “behind in grade level and older than classmates; poor academic performance; dislike of school; detention and suspension; pregnancy; welfare recipients and members of single-parent households; attraction to income-producing work; attraction to military service; undiagnosed learning disabilities and emotional problems; language problems.” (Bruckner, 1995, p. 12). Woods (1995) finds the same predictors of dropping out including absenteeism/truancy, poor academic performance, personal/social problems, a stressful/unstable home life, unsupportive parents and poverty.

Frymer (1992) analyzed the descriptive data on 45 risk factors collected by teachers and counselors on more than 21,000 students in grades 4, 7, and 10 in 275 schools in more than 80 communities. "Five factors emerged: personal pain, academic failure socioeconomic situation of family, family instability and family tragedy." (Frymer, 1992, p. 257). The author hypothesized that more students at risk on one item would be at risk on other items and found twice as many students at risk no one item were at risk on each of the other items. He concludes, "Children who hurt, hurt all over. Children, who fail, fail in everything they do. Risk is pervasive. If a student is at risk in one area, that student is very likely to be at risk in every other area." (Frymer, 1992, p. 258).

According to Griffin (1995), results from the *Phi Delta Kappa Study of Students at Risk* (Frymer, 1992) note four of the five Kappan categories of at-riskness are family-related. Griffin warns students can be considered at-risk for failing based on predisposing factors in their family histories and lifestyle situations and the process of dropping out can be as early as the elementary years. Predisposing factors found in his research review include: "parent alcoholic, family used drugs, family illness/death in last year, low socioeconomic level, low parental education level, sibling dropped out of school, disrupted home life, changed schools frequently, student employed outside of school, student pregnant or parenting." (Griffin, 1995, p.26).

It is very difficult for regular education classroom teachers to deal with students who present as verbally abusive and possibly physically abusive. Most regular education teachers have not been trained in behavior management techniques, and the ones who have been trained; often they are not trained to deal with the most severe behavioral

problems. These acting out students often become a danger to other students and the teacher and they adversely affect the educational process.

Griffin says that teachers refer students to the principal's office for repeated minor offenses. They feel their attempts at controlling the student have failed and that their principal's impact will send those students a strong message to discontinue their misbehaviors. These offenses generally encompass the range of misbehaviors from being told to pay attention to stop talking to sit still to absenteeism to name a few. (Guindon, 1992)

At M teachers refer students to the principal's office for repeated minor offenses. (There really isn't any policy on when a student should be sent to the office, that decision is generally left up to the teacher. Except when the student is being physically aggressive, has a weapon or is suspected of using drugs or alcohol).

Perhaps just coming to school later will help some of the students succeed in the afternoon program. There's research to show (Minneapolis, MN school district, 1997), that the typical high school student doesn't get enough sleep and that having to awaken at 6:00 AM and be at school by 7:20 AM is not a sound educational decision. Many people feel that it would be beneficial if high schools began their day sometime after 8:00 AM or 8:30, thus giving students more time to sleep. With more sleep the students would be better able to concentrate and learn.

Chapter 3

Design of the Study

In this chapter, the proposition of the study is defined. The methods used in selecting the sample is described, the instrumentation used and the procedures for collection of the data are discussed; and the procedures used in analyzing the data are explained.

Sample:

The subjects of this study consisted of students enrolled in a self-contained classroom at a comprehensive regional high school. The students in this particular classroom are all classified as being eligible for special education services. Most of the students are classified as emotionally disturbed, in accordance with NJAC Title 6A Chapter 14. This particular classroom of students meets at an alternative time during the day. The class hours are from 1:00PM to 5:00 PM. These students are in what's known as the TAP program. TAP is an acronym for Transitional Academic Program. In previous years this classroom met during the regular school day, in the high school, though the students were dismissed earlier than the other students in the school.

The students in this particular classroom are both male and female and range in age from 15-18 years old. Most of the students have experienced academic and behavioral difficulties for many years. The students are from the three sending districts, which are represented at the high school. The students have a wide range of ability levels, both socially and academically. The academic skills generally fall between the third and ninth grade levels. The students' placement in the program was determined by;

The Child Study Team, the IEP team, parental input, administrative input and student input.

Instrumentation:

There were four dependent variables in this study as measured by the Behavior Assessment System for Children (BASC). This instrument asks teachers to rate their student on 138 items, which represent four broad clinical factors that included: 1.) Externalizing Problems, 2.) Internalizing Problems, 3.) Social Problems and 4.) Adaptive Skills. The Teacher Ratings Scales (TRS) is a comprehensive measure of both adaptive and problem behaviors in the school setting. The BASC is designed for use by teachers, and other educators. The forms on the BASC contain descriptors of behaviors that the respondent rates on a four-point scale. The scale used was N-Never, S-Sometimes, O-Often, and A-Almost always.

In addition to scale and composite scales, the TRS provides a broad composite, the Behavioral Symptoms Index (BSI) that assesses the overall level of problem behaviors. The BSI is composed of those scales that best measure a general population factor underlying the TRS.

The TRS may be interpreted with reference to national age norms (General, Female or Male), or to clinical norms. In addition, selected critical items may be interpreted individually. The TRS includes a validity check in the form of an *F* (fake bad) index, designed to detect a negative response set on the part of the teacher doing the rating.

The certified special education teacher that administered the BASC was trained by this researcher (the Learning Disabilities Teacher/Consultant) on how to properly administer the pretests for reliability purposes.

The students in this study were all new to this alternative program at the beginning of the 2001-2002 school year. They were instructed in the academic areas; English, math, social studies, science, as well as in social skills.

Each participant in the study was rated in the BASC by their teacher, in the second half of September 2001. The posttests were given in February of 2002. All tests were scored and recorded by this researcher. The students will be ranked in the four composite areas of the BASC. There are four norms, which can be used on the BASC. The general norm will be used, since all of the students in this study meet the profile of a general group, according to the authors of the BASC.

One of the test creators was consulted on the question of which norm to use and he recommended that the clinical norm be used. He suggested that since these students have already been classified that they should be compared to the 'clinical' population of students. Additionally, we probably cannot expect these students to make substantial progress necessary in a short period of time, given the severity of their handicapping condition.

For students to be considered for the clinical category of the BASC ratings scale, they must fall into one or more of the following areas; conduct disorder, behavior disorder, emotional disturbance, attention deficit disorder, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, learning disabled, mild mental retardation and autism. Every student in the test

sample falls into one or more of these categories. The only category not officially represented in this study is autism.

Ranking the three factors measured by the BASC will be reported in terms of the subjects' percentile ranking compared to the clinical population on each of four factors and the fifth factor (BSI), of the composite.

Improvement of responsiveness to being in the TAP program will be noted in each of the subject's movement in the percentile rankings of the clinical norms, on the variables under consideration.

Analysis of Data:

Both the child psychologist and the Learning Disabilities Teacher/Consultant, who is the author of this study, will score the BASC scales. T-Scores will be generated and those scores will be converted into percentile rankings on the three broad categories. This will provide a clinical profile of each of the subjects. Pretest and post-test scores will be compared for each subject in the study.

A positive change in ranking of 25 or more percentile points, in two of the three broad categories previously mentioned will be considered as indicating meaningful improvement. Data will be presented in bar graph form and inspected visually.

Chapter 4

Results and Interpretation of Data

The results of this study are presented in a format that attempts to answer the research question listed in chapter 1. Bar graphs were prepared that compared each pupil's pre-test (fall) and post-test (spring) teacher rating scale scores from the BASC. The progress or lack of progress for each student was reported in terms of their percentile ranking compared to themselves. There are four group norms in the BASC; they are general, male, female and clinical. The students in this study are ranked in relation to the clinical group norms of the BASC scale.

The purpose of the study was to determine whether or not having emotionally disturbed high school aged students in an afternoon 1 PM-5 PM self contained program would positively alter their behavior.

As presented in chapter 1, the following research questions were investigated.

1. Do teenaged high school students show-improved behavior as measured by the externalizing problems sub-test of the BASC scale?
2. Do teenaged high school students show-improved behavior as measured by the internalizing problems sub-test of the BASC scale?
3. Do teenaged high school students show-improved behavior as measured by the school problems composite of the BASC scale?

A new classroom for emotionally disturbed students, meeting at the non-traditional time of 1 PM-5 PM, was started this school year. This was the only class that was part of this research. The classroom has one veteran male teacher and one veteran female aide. The assessment tool used is called the Behavior Assessment System for

Children (BASC). The teacher in the classroom rated each student on 138 different items. The scale used was N=never, S=sometimes, O=often and A=almost always.

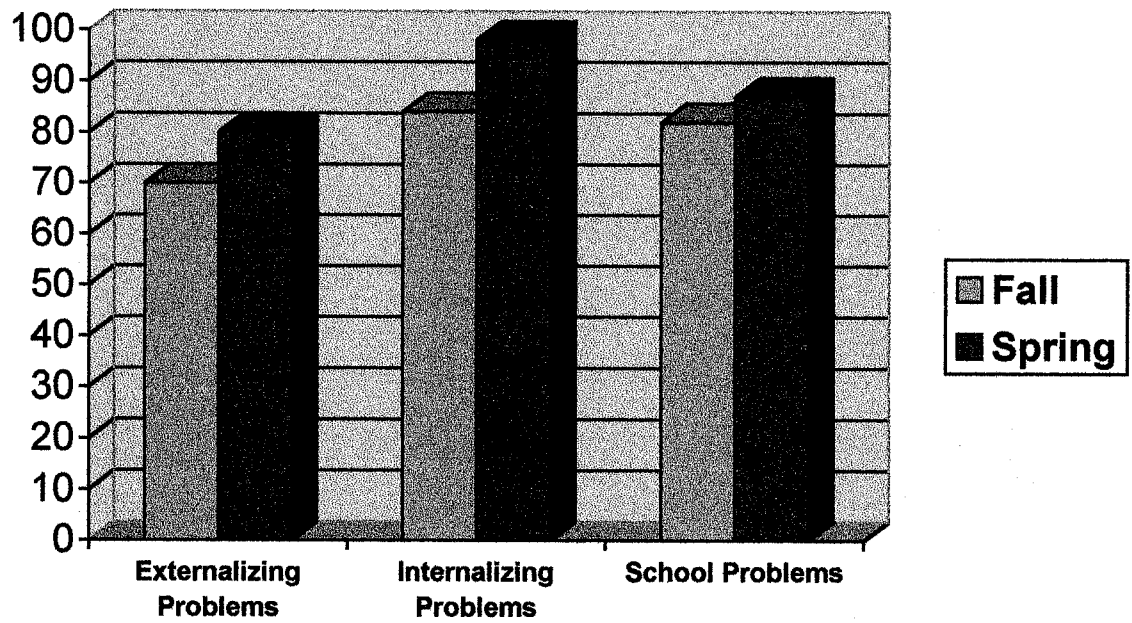
The reason behind the new class from the administration's standpoint was that the administration didn't want these students creating problems during the regular school day. Additionally some of the students were chronically tardy to school and absenteeism was also a problem for some students. The researcher wanted to see if those students would improve their behaviors if they were educated away from the rest of the school population and not having the some of the same expectations that the other students have. Additionally, it was thought that if these students didn't have to come to school until 1pm, they wouldn't have as much trouble getting up in the morning and coming to school. Tardiness had been a real problem for some of these students. Some students would be chronically late to school. When a student is late, they are 'written-up' and given a detention. If they don't serve the detention, they get what is known as a Saturday detention. If the student doesn't serve the Saturday detention, then they will be suspended from school for one day and also have to serve the Saturday detention. For some students this became a big problem. The whole episode snowballs on some students.

Raw scores were generated in three areas. The externalizing problems composite included hyperactivity, aggression and conduct problems. The internalizing problems composite included anxiety, depression and somitization. The school problems composite included attention problems and learning problems. T-scores and percentile rankings were then generated and a behavioral profile was developed using the percentile rankings.

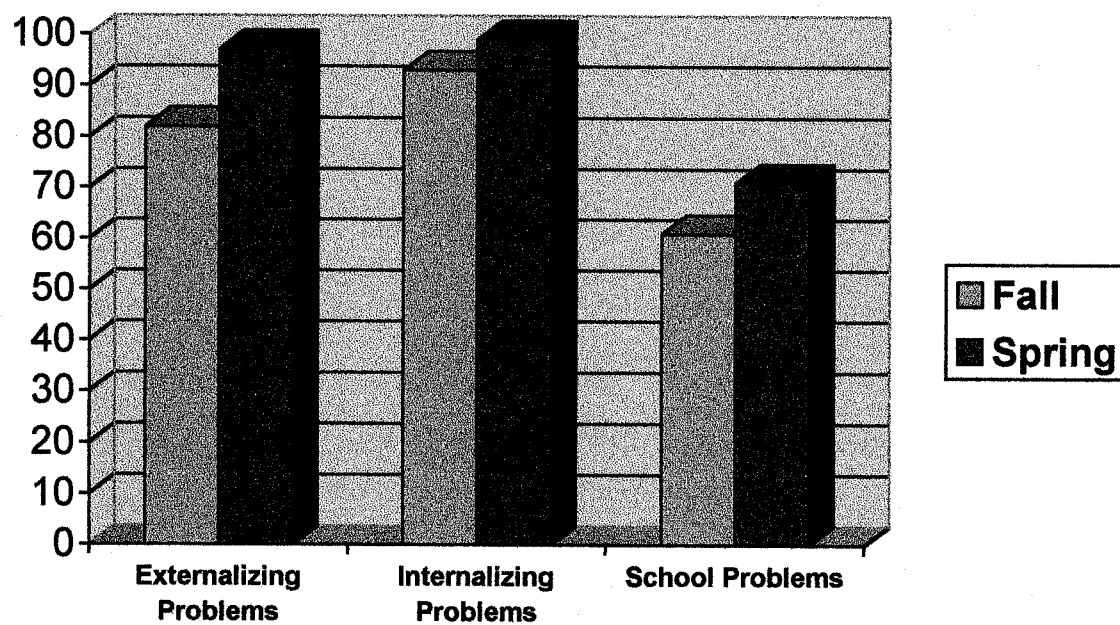
The study began with seven students and ended with seven students. There were a total of fifteen students that attended the program throughout the school year, but only seven were in the classroom to be part of the pre-test and post-test.

The results of the fall and spring BASC scores are found on the next seven pages. An inspection of the data shows that only one of the students made significant progress in any of the composite scores. There were four students whose scores were significantly worse in one or more of the areas. The rest of the scores were not significantly better or worse for the spring as compared to the fall, so there was no measurable change positively or negatively.

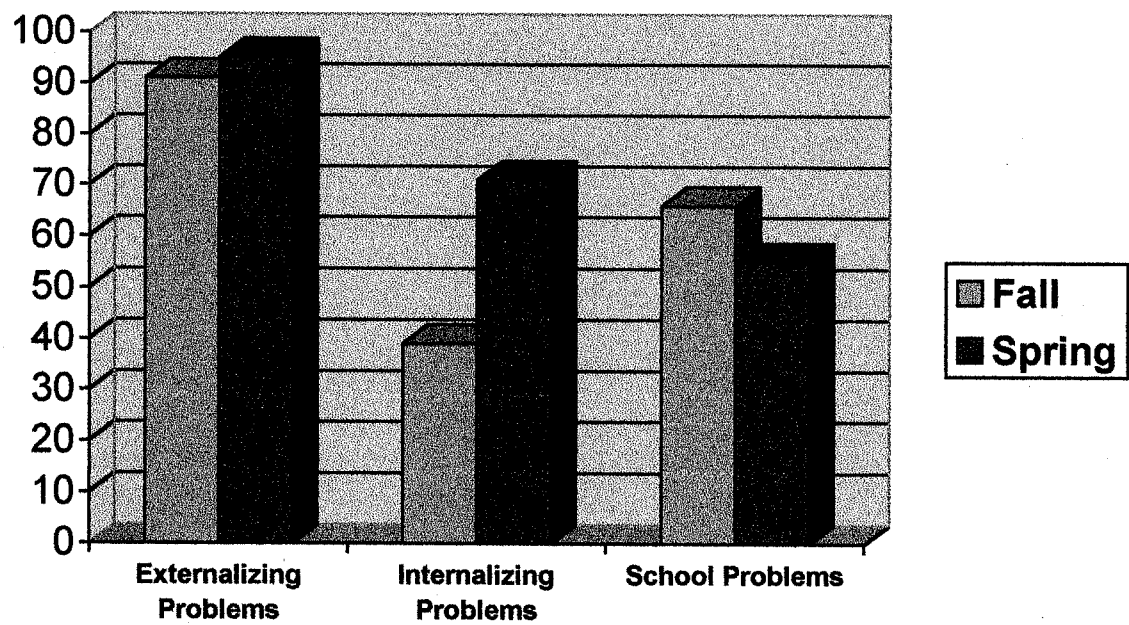
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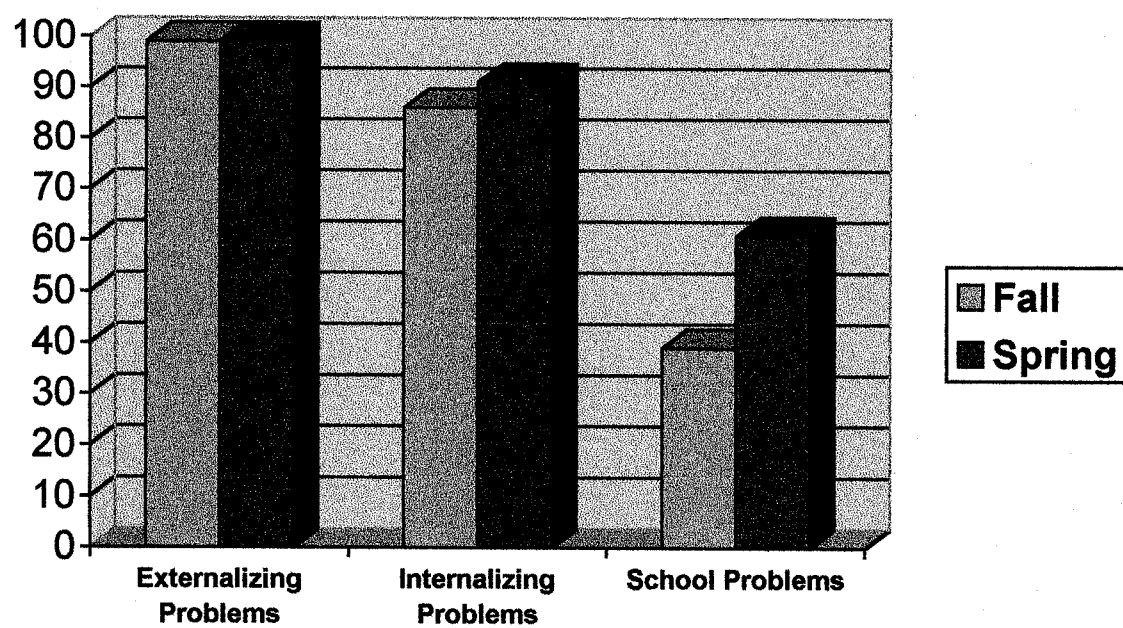
Student: G.R.



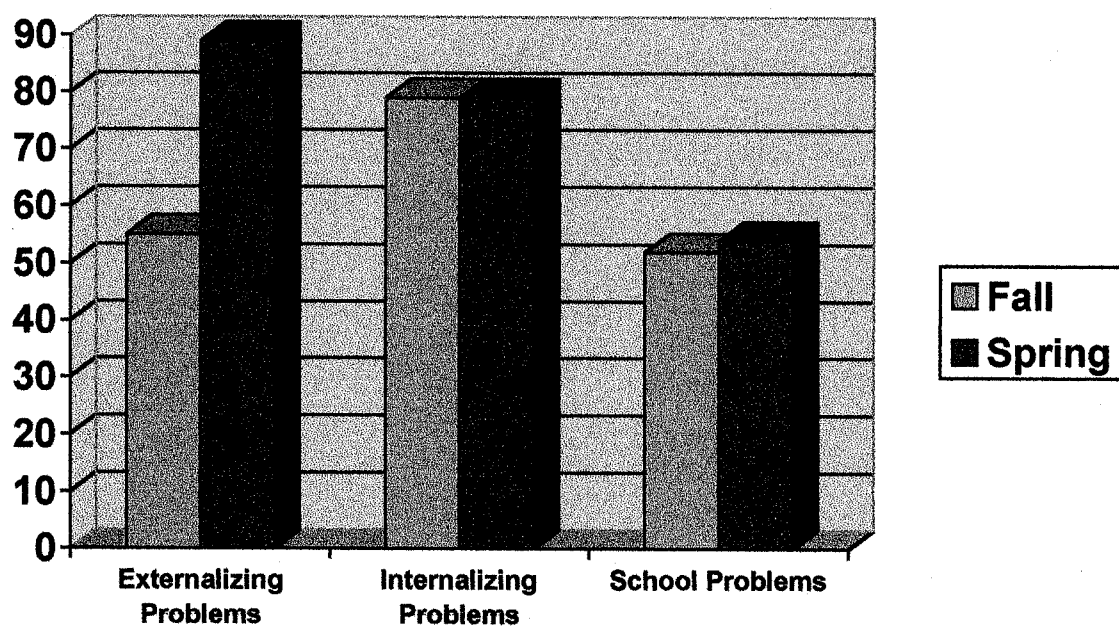
Student: T. Ro.



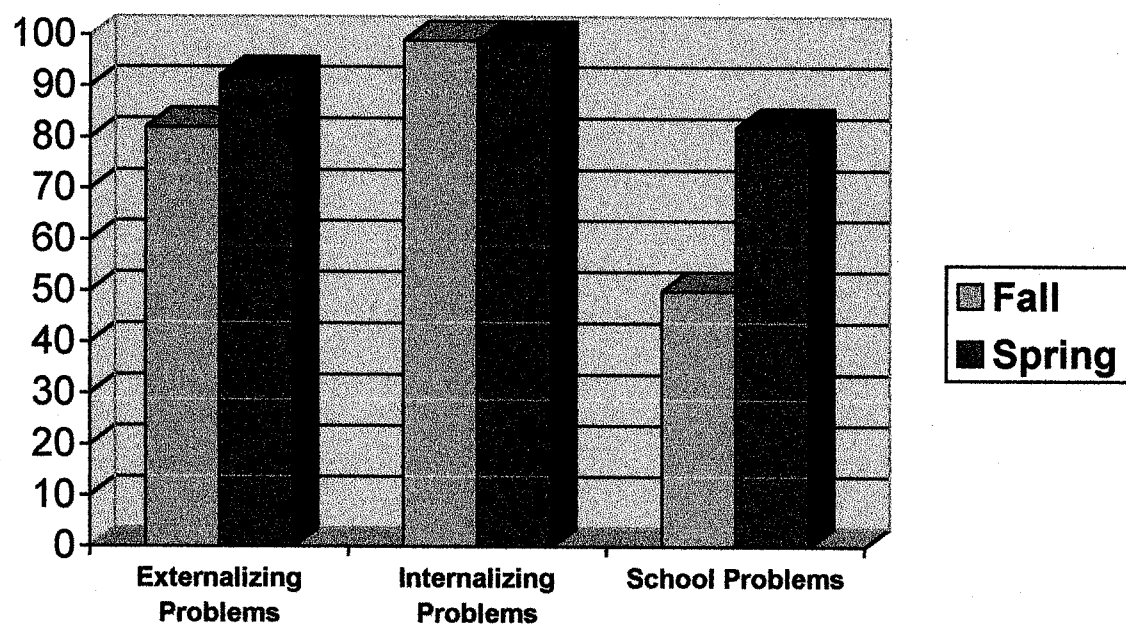
Student: J.V.



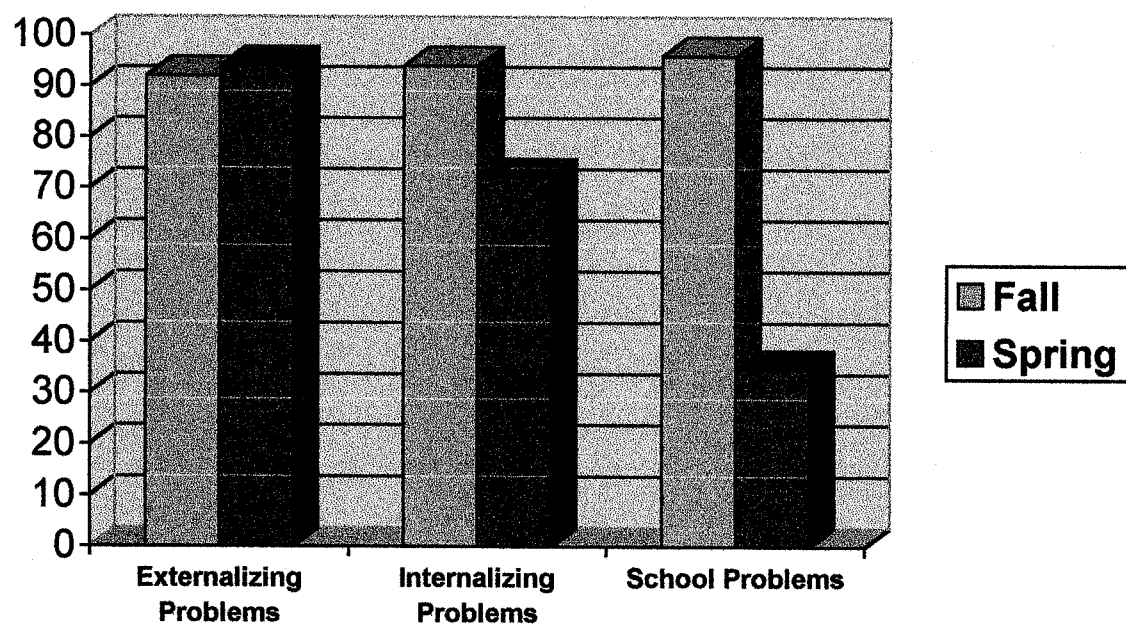
Student: A.M.



Student: C.L.



Student: V.B.



Chapter 5

Conclusions, Implications and Further Study

Conclusions:

Based on the results of the research in this study, one could possibly conclude that student's do not exhibit a positive gain in appropriate behavior by allowing them to attend high school in an alternative setting. As a matter of fact, based on some of the results, a case may be made that some students' behavior actually got worse after their enrollment in this type of setting.

Simply allowing students the opportunity to be away from the rest of the school population for most of their school day, does not either provide incentive or direction for them to positively change their behaviors.

What this placement does do is provide the rest of the school (administrations, staff and students) a respite from having to deal with the inappropriate behaviors that may be exhibited by these students that are in this alternative setting. Since this was part of the goal of the previous vice-principal and former acting principal, then part of the goal was accomplished.

This researcher's personal bias would be to also have these students not only be better behaved in the classroom, but to be able to generalize those more appropriate behaviors across various settings and to eventually be re-integrated into the regular school environment.

Since this sample for the research is so small, using only one classroom in one school, it's difficult to make any conclusions or recommendations as to its soundness in other settings.

The very fact that these students were removed from the regular school day and placed in a more restrictive environment does not in and of itself cause them to behave more appropriately. There probably needs to be a more structured curriculum or program to address the specialized needs and social deficits that these students exhibit. A class like the one that is set-up contains the students, but may not actually cause them to have better and more appropriate behaviors.

There were fewer discipline referrals to the office this year from the students in this classroom. Part of that could have been because the students were coming in later, and weren't forced to be here early in the morning. They were also able to walk around the campus after the rest of the school was dismissed, which may have proven beneficial for them.

This researcher has proposed to the administration the prospect of the school offering two TAP classes next year. One would meet from approximately 8:00 or 8:30 AM until 12:00 or 12:30 PM. The other class would meet from 1:00-5:00 PM, just as they're doing now. We could then set-up the earlier class up as an incentive class for the students to be re-integrated into the school. We could also possibly create a work-study program for those students who attend school in the AM. This sort of set-up would also be more efficient from a staffing standpoint. As it is not, the teacher who teaches the 1:00-5:00 PM class works fewer hours than other staff members. The for this is a stipulation in the teacher's contract that states that a staff member may not work more than four periods in a row. So, as a compromise, the teacher's bargaining unit and school administration agreed to allow the teacher to come in later and only work about five hours per day. Under this researcher's proposal, the schedule's of the two teaching staff

members could overlap, thereby allowing the teachers to work the full school day and getting more efficiency from the staff. Under this proposal, the morning teacher could come into school at 7:30 or 8:00 AM and work until 2:45 or so and the PM teacher could come into school at 10:45 AM or so and work until 5:30 PM. During the day they could cover for each other, thereby freeing each of them up not to have to teach more than four periods in a row.

This researcher would also propose that the school district write or purchase a curriculum that would address the social skills deficits exhibited by these students. A work readiness component would also be recommended. A yearlong in-service training schedule should also be set-up. This should begin in July or August, prior to the school year's start and continue throughout the year.

Additionally, school administrators should attempt to think about what's best for the student when making decisions. Removing students from the regular school day may be the best for the student and then again it may not be the best. Removing students from the regular school day may just be a way to have fewer discipline referrals for the school administration to deal with.

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